

UNICEF STUDY GUIDE



UNICEF
Protecting the rights of children in war zones

Letter from the Secretary General

Meritorious Participants,

It is with immense pride and excitement that I welcome you all to the very first session of CBKMUN'26. As the Secretary-General of this event, it is both an honor and a profound responsibility to lead this journey that we are beginning together.

CBKMUN'26 marks not only the start of a conference, but the beginning of a tradition. Every established institution once took its first courageous step, and today, we are taking ours. This conference has been built on dedication, long nights of preparation, passionate debates, and a shared belief that young minds have the power to shape tomorrow's world.

Our academic and organizational teams have worked tirelessly to ensure that this first edition of CBKMUN reflects excellence, inclusivity, and intellectual depth. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our Academic Team, Organization Team, and every volunteer who contributed to transforming this vision into reality. Without their commitment and resilience, this conference would not have been possible.

Model United Nations is more than formal speeches and draft resolutions. It is a platform where future diplomats, policymakers, and global leaders learn the values of dialogue, compromise, and cooperation. In a world increasingly defined by polarization and uncertainty, diplomacy remains our most powerful tool. At CBKMUN'26, we aim to create an environment where diverse perspectives are respected, critical thinking is encouraged, and meaningful solutions are pursued.

As this is our very first conference, you are not only participants—you are pioneers. The debates you engage in, the friendships you form, and the standards you set will define the spirit and legacy of CBKMUN for years to come. You are shaping the identity of this conference.

I encourage each of you to step beyond your comfort zone, speak with confidence, listen with empathy, and challenge ideas with respect. Let this conference be a place where ambition meets responsibility and where collaboration triumphs over division.

On behalf of the entire Secretariat, I welcome you once again to CBKMUN'26. May this be the first of many remarkable chapters in our story.

Kind Regards

İsmail Sevgen

Letter from Head of Academy

Honorable Secretary General, Fellow Academy and Dear Delegates;

I am Rana Gülerler and wishing you an informative yet exciting three days at our first ever holding of ÇBKMUN. To briefly introduce myself, I am both the Head of Academy and Chair of the UNEP committee. Being a part of this project is an honor to me. Both me and my fellow Academy members, though our backgrounds may be distant, we came together with our shared endeavours and created each Agenda Item.

To vaguely talk about our Agendas; in our Junior committees, delegates will fight for women's and children's rights in conflicted areas. In our UNEP committee, they will discuss the unethical usage of Artificial Intelligence and how it is badly affecting our environment. In our SOCHUM committee, they will acknowledge the current events the Uyghurs are facing within Central Asia. In our ECOSOC committee, delegates will argue about tariffs within international trade, and in our UNHRC committee they will advocate for the protection of journalists and the right to information.

I hereby encourage each delegate of their respective committee to meticulously prepare and act vigilant in our debates in order to secure a flawless ambiance of debate. Your endeavours and hard work will forever be acknowledged diligently.

As the Head of Academy, I once again wish you an experience at our conference which will bring you productivity, valuable experiences, and lasting memories. You can always find me within the premises if you would like to discuss something.

Best Regards,
Rana D. Gülerler

I. About UNICEF

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was founded in 1946 to provide emergency relief to children after World War II. It became a permanent agency of the United Nations in 1953.

Today, UNICEF operates in over 190 countries and territories. Its mandate is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which establishes that every child has inherent rights regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, or gender.

UNICEF's core areas of work include:

- Emergency humanitarian response

- Child protection services

- Vaccination and public health programs

- Nutrition and food security

- Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)

- Policy advocacy

In conflict zones, UNICEF works on the ground by:

- Delivering emergency supplies

- Establishing temporary schools

- Supporting family reunification

- Monitoring grave violations against children

- Coordinating with governments and NGOs

UNICEF does not impose sanctions or deploy military forces. Its influence depends on funding from member states and cooperation from governments.

II. Defining the Issue

What Is Armed Conflict?

Armed conflict refers to organized violence between:

Two or more states (international armed conflict)

A state and non-state armed groups

Multiple non-state armed groups within a state (civil war)

Modern conflicts are often prolonged, involve irregular armed groups, and occur in populated areas. This increases civilian casualties, especially among children.

Who Is Considered a Child?

Under international law, a child is anyone under the age of 18.

Children require special protection because:

Their bodies are still developing

Their psychological resilience is limited

They rely on adults for survival

They lack political power

These vulnerabilities mean that war affects children differently and often more severely than adults.

III. How War Affects Children

1. Recruitment of Child Soldiers

Children are recruited in countries such as:

Democratic Republic of the Congo

South Sudan

Myanmar

Recruitment occurs through:

Forced abduction

Threats to families

Economic desperation

Ideological manipulation

Lack of education access

Children are used as:

Frontline fighters

Porters carrying weapons

Messengers

Spies

Suicide bombers

Human shields

The consequences include:

Physical injury or death

Severe psychological trauma

Loss of education

Social stigma upon return

Difficulty reintegrating into society

Reintegration programs must provide education, psychological counseling, and economic opportunities to prevent re-recruitment.

2. Displacement and Refugees

Conflicts in:

Syria

Ukraine

Yemen

have displaced millions of children.

Displacement leads to:

Interrupted education

Increased poverty

Family separation

Limited healthcare access

Increased risk of trafficking

Refugee children often face language barriers and discrimination in host countries.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees coordinates refugee protection alongside UNICEF.

3. Attacks on Schools and Hospitals

Schools may be:

Bombed

Looted

Occupied by military forces

Hospitals may be destroyed or lack supplies.

This violates the Geneva Conventions.

Consequences include:

Long-term loss of educational development

Increased dropout rates

Reduced economic growth

Spread of preventable diseases

The destruction of infrastructure prolongs post-war recovery.

4. Hunger and Disease

War disrupts:

Agricultural production

Supply chains

Water systems

Healthcare facilities

Children are especially vulnerable to:

Acute malnutrition

Cholera

Measles

Malaria

Malnutrition weakens immune systems, increasing mortality rates.

5. Psychological Trauma

Children exposed to violence may develop:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Depression

Anxiety disorders

Aggressive behavior

Social withdrawal

Untreated trauma can lead to long-term social instability and cycles of violence.

Mental health services are often underfunded in humanitarian responses.

IV. International Legal Framework

1. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

The CRC guarantees:

Right to life and survival

Protection from violence

Right to education

Right to healthcare

It is one of the most widely ratified treaties in the world.

2. Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflict

This protocol:

Prohibits compulsory recruitment under 18

Requires states to prevent underage participation in hostilities

However, non-state armed groups often ignore it.

3. Geneva Conventions

The Geneva Conventions protect civilians during war and prohibit:

Targeting civilians

Torture

Cruel or degrading treatment

Violations constitute war crimes.

4. International Criminal Accountability

The International Criminal Court prosecutes individuals responsible for war crimes, including recruiting child soldiers.

Challenges include:

Limited jurisdiction

Political resistance

Difficulty arresting suspects

Accountability mechanisms remain inconsistent.

V. Case Studies

Syrian Civil War

Since 2011:

Millions of children displaced

Thousands of schools damaged

Increased child labor

Humanitarian access has been restricted in certain areas.

War in Ukraine

Since 2022 escalation:

Large-scale displacement

Infrastructure damage

Increased protection concerns

Humanitarian corridors have been used but remain politically sensitive.

Yemen Crisis

Prolonged conflict has led to:

Severe malnutrition

Disease outbreaks

Recruitment of minors

Blockades have complicated aid delivery.

VI. Major Challenges

1. Armed groups ignoring international law
2. Funding shortages for humanitarian programs
3. Political disagreements in the United Nations Security Council
4. Insecurity limiting humanitarian access
5. Weak domestic legal enforcement

VII. Role of UNICEF in Conflict Zones

UNICEF provides:

Emergency Relief

Ready-to-use therapeutic food

Water purification systems

Vaccination campaigns

Child Protection

Family tracing

Reintegration programs

Monitoring violations

Education in Emergencies

Temporary learning spaces

School rehabilitation

Distribution of supplies

Advocacy

Reporting violations

Advising governments

Promoting legal reform

VIII. Bloc Positions

Western States

Emphasize accountability and sanctions

Support ICC prosecutions

Major financial contributors

Russia and China

Emphasize sovereignty

Oppose intervention without consent

Prefer negotiated solutions

Developing Countries

Emphasize development assistance

Focus on poverty-conflict links

Conflict-Affected States

Prioritize security

May resist external monitoring

IX. Possible Solutions for Delegates

Delegates may propose:

1. Increased funding commitments to UNICEF
2. Expansion of reintegration programs
3. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms
4. Safe Schools agreements
5. Targeted sanctions
6. Expanded mental health services

7. Partnerships with regional organizations
8. Post-conflict reconstruction funds

All proposals should include:

Funding sources

Implementation timeline

Oversight mechanisms

X. Questions to Guide Debate

1. How can child recruitment be prevented?
2. Should violators face sanctions?
3. How can humanitarian access be ensured?
4. How can education continue during conflict?
5. How can mental health services be expanded?
6. What role should regional organizations play?

XI. Conclusion and resources

Children in war zones face threats that endanger both their immediate survival and long-term development. Despite strong international legal protections, enforcement gaps persist due to political, financial, and logistical challenges.

UNICEF plays a critical humanitarian role, but it depends on state cooperation and funding.

Protecting children in conflict is not only a moral obligation but also essential for sustainable peace and global stability.

Delegates must balance sovereignty, accountability, and humanitarian needs while producing realistic, actionable solutions.

(these links were used during the research for this study guide recommended extra links are below these ones)

<https://www.unicef.org/>

<https://data.unicef.org/>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-rights-child-involvement-children-armed-conflict>

<https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions>

<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/>

<https://www.unhcr.org/>

<https://www.icc-cpi.int/>

<https://www.savethechildren.org/>

<https://www.hrw.org/>

<https://www.amnesty.org/>

<https://www.protectingeducation.org/>

<https://www.unocha.org/><https://www.wfp.org/>

<https://www.who.int/>

XII. Extra Websites for more information (recomended)

United Nations & Related Agencies

UNICEF – <https://www.unicef.org/>

Information on programs and reports about children worldwide.

UNICEF Data Portal – <https://data.unicef.org/>

Statistics on child health, education, and protection.

Children and Armed Conflict (UN Database) – <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/>

Tracks violations against children in conflict zones.

UNHCR – <https://www.unhcr.org/>

Information on refugee and displaced children.

UNOCHA – <https://www.unocha.org/>

Reports on global conflicts and humanitarian access.

Convention on the Rights of the Child – <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

International Law & Accountability

ICRC – Geneva Conventions – <https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions>

Laws protecting civilians and children in war.

International Criminal Court (ICC) – <https://www.icc-cpi.int/>

Prosecutes war crimes, including child soldier use.

NGOs and Advocacy Organizations

Save the Children – <https://www.savethechildren.org/>

Programs and reports protecting children in conflict.

Human Rights Watch – <https://www.hrw.org/>

Reports on child rights violations worldwide.

Amnesty International – <https://www.amnesty.org/>

Information on war crimes and child protection advocacy.

Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack –

<https://www.protectingeducation.org/>

Monitors attacks on schools and advocates for safe education.

Health & Humanitarian Organizations

World Health Organization (WHO) – <https://www.who.int/>

Child health data and emergency health programs.

World Food Programme (WFP) – <https://www.wfp.org/>

Information on hunger and nutrition programs for children.