

Houston Area Model United Nations Specialized Committee

UNICEF



Chair | Arya Kordia
Topic B

Houston Area Model United Nations 51
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Delegates,

Howdy! Welcome to the 51st annual Houston Area Model United Nations conference! My name is Arya Kordia, and I'm beyond excited to be serving as your chair for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) committee this year.

I am an undergraduate sophomore majoring in nutritional science and pursuing the pre-med path at Texas A&M University. I joined Model UN my freshman year of high school amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite having all the meetings and conferences through Zoom that year, I instantly fell in love with Model UN, leading me to become the vice president and eventually the president of my high school's chapter. Model UN has been a transformative experience that has not only taught me the importance of international diplomacy but also improved my public speaking skills, refined my research abilities, and compelled me to expand the horizons of my creativity. This past year at HAMUN 50, I had the amazing opportunity to chair the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) committee, focusing on promoting climate-smart agriculture through biotechnology and globally enhancing responsible business conduct (RBC) within fisheries. I have really enjoyed my experience with HAMUN these past five years and am extremely grateful to be back. I am certain that this conference will be full of astonishing discussions, incredible diplomacy, and lots of fun!

Within this committee, we will be focusing on two main topics: 1) Expanding the accessibility of ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTFs) for children with acute malnutrition and 2) Strengthening protections against child labor and exploitation in the global supply chain. As these topics are multi-faceted, they will require inclusive and innovative solutions in order to be addressed.

A few last-minute tips: Do not procrastinate! I know that is easier said than done, but to truly succeed and do your best at the conference, it is imperative to start early. Try to push yourself outside of your comfort zone and actively participate! This conference is a safe learning experience for all delegates, so do not be afraid to speak up and engage in committee. Please research in advance and come to the conference prepared! Thoroughly explore information about your own country as well as other countries in the committee. Researching beforehand and writing your position paper is a great way to get the most out of your conference experience. Lastly, have fun! HAMUN is a wonderful opportunity to meet new people and make friends.

Best of luck delegates!

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What is UNICEF?

The United Nations Children's Fund is a specialized agency within the United Nations dedicated to protecting children and mothers across more than 190 countries and territories. UNICEF's initiatives are driven by five main core values: care, integrity, respect, accountability, and trust. Through its extensive partnerships with governments, non-governmental organizations, and other UN entities, UNICEF has significantly reduced mortality and improved the quality of life for countless women and children around the world.

A Brief History

Established on December 11, 1946, The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund was created by the United Nations General Assembly to meet the urgent needs of children in Europe after the second world war. By 1953, it became a permanent part of the UN system and was renamed to the United Nations Children's Fund. In its early years, UNICEF's efforts focused on providing emergency relief through aid like food, clothing, and healthcare. The 1960s and 1970s then marked a transformative period in UNICEF's history as they expanded their operations across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, focusing on addressing issues pertaining to health, nutrition, and sanitation. In the recent decades, UNICEF has expanded its focus to incorporate emerging global threats, with notable accomplishments including vaccinating 45% of children around the world under the age of five, ensuring safe water accessibility for 35 million people every year, and supporting more than 115 million children since 2021 receive access to education. Today, this specialized United Nations agency continues to play a pivotal role globally in providing safety and security to millions of women and children.

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Executive Summary

Child labor and exploitation remain widespread challenges within global supply chains, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where poverty, limited access to quality education, informal labor markets, and weak labor protections persist. Millions of children are engaged in hazardous or exploitative work in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, mining, and domestic labor. Globalized supply chains often obscure these practices, making it difficult to identify violations and hold actors accountable. Economic pressures, social inequality, migration, and conflict further increase children's vulnerability to exploitation, depriving them of their right to education, health, safety, and a dignified childhood,

In addition, UNICEF invests in education, skills development, and child protection services to provide safe alternatives for children at risk or already engaged in labor. By using data and evidence to inform advocacy, UNICEF helps drive policy reforms and mobilize resources that prioritize children's well-being. Together, these efforts aim to build ethical, transparent supply chains and create environments where children are protected from exploitation and empowered to learn, grow, and thrive.

Topic Concept

Child labor and exploitation remain pervasive challenges within global supply chains, driven by structural inequalities such as poverty, limited access to education, weak labor protections, and insufficient regulatory enforcement. As supply chains become increasingly complex and globalized, exploitative labor practices involving children are often hidden from oversight,

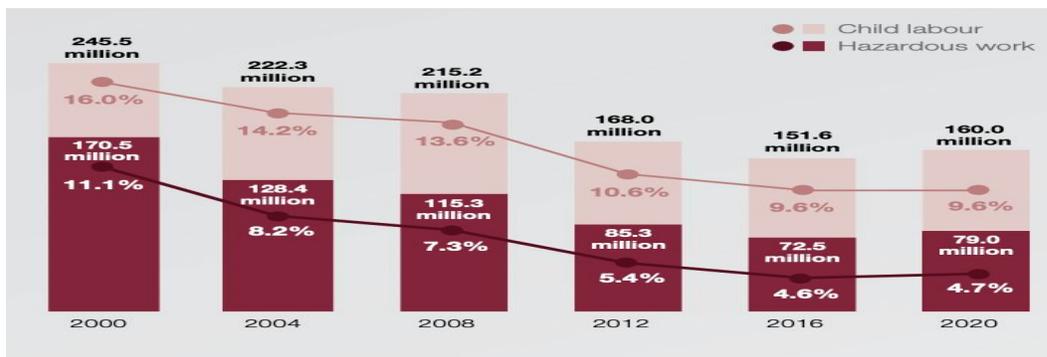
particularly in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, mining, and informal labor. These conditions place millions of children at risk of physical harm, educational exclusion, and long-term social and economic disadvantage.

This topic explores strategies for strengthening protections against child labor and exploitation across global supply chains by examining the roles of governments, international organizations, and the private sector. It emphasizes the importance of child-centered policies, improved labor standards, and supply chain transparency, alongside investments in education, social protection systems, and community-based interventions. By addressing both the immediate risks and root causes of child labor, this work highlights the need for coordinated, multisectoral approaches to ensure ethical sourcing, corporate accountability, and the protection of children's rights. Strengthening these protections is essential to building equitable supply chains that support children's safety, development, and long-term well-being.

Millions of children are still forced into work that deprives them of education, play, and basic rights. Child labor is defined as work that harms children's physical or mental health, social development, or schooling. Agriculture is the largest sector where child labor occurs, followed by services and industry, including mining and manufacturing. An estimated 138 million children were engaged in child labor in 2024, and although this reflects a decrease since 2020, the world missed the target to eliminate child labor by 2025. Sub-Saharan Africa bears the highest burden, while rates have declined in Asia and the Pacific. Poverty, financial insecurity, conflict-driven displacement, and migration increase children's risk of

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exploitation, including trafficking and hazardous work. The article highlights UNICEF's work—partnering with governments and communities to support social protection, expand access to quality education, and strengthen laws and enforcement to protect children. It also features the story of a 12-year-old boy in Yemen who dropped out of school to support his family, underscoring how child labor undermines children's futures



Source: ILO and UNICEF: Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward (New York, 2021).

Topic History

Early Recognition of Child Labor (19th–20th Century)

Child labor has existed for centuries, particularly during the Industrial Revolution, when children worked long hours in factories, mines, and agriculture under hazardous conditions. Early reform movements in Europe and North America led to labor laws limiting child working hours and mandating basic education. These historical efforts set the stage for global recognition of child labor as a violation of children's rights.

International Legal Foundations (1919–1989)

- 1919: The International Labour Organization (ILO) is founded, focusing on improving labor standards, including protections for children.
- 1973 & 1976: ILO Conventions No. 138 (Minimum Age) and No. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labor) establish international standards prohibiting hazardous work and exploitative practices.
- These conventions provided the first global framework for defining and addressing child labor, though enforcement relied on national governments.

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Global Supply Chains and Corporate Responsibility (1990s–2000s)

With globalization, multinational corporations increasingly relied on complex supply chains in developing countries. Child labor often became hidden in subcontracted or informal work, particularly in agriculture (cocoa, coffee), textiles, and mining.

- 1990s: Awareness rose due to investigative reports exposing child labor in chocolate, apparel, and electronics industries.
- Companies faced pressure from NGOs and consumers to adopt corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies, including ethical sourcing standards.

Multilateral Agreements and Monitoring Systems (2000s–2010s)

- Harkin-Engel Protocol (2001): A voluntary agreement by major chocolate companies to reduce child labor in cocoa production in West Africa.
- Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS): Implemented in cocoa-producing communities, combining community monitoring, school enrollment programs, and remediation for affected children.
- Governments, NGOs, and international organizations increasingly emphasized supply chain transparency and child-centered interventions.

Recent Developments and Current Focus (2015–Present)

- Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 (2015): Calls for immediate action to end child labor in all forms by 2025.
- UNICEF, ILO, and other partners work to strengthen protections through:
 - Legal reforms and enforcement
 - Corporate due diligence and ethical sourcing regulations
 - Education access and social protection programs
 - Data-driven monitoring of supply chain practices
- Challenges remain due to informal labor markets, migration, conflict, and the complexity of global supply chains. Millions of children, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, remain at risk of hazardous work.

Case Study: Nestle Cocoa Supply Chain

Nestlé's case study highlights the company's efforts to address child labor within its cocoa supply chain through the **Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation System (CLMRS)** — a pioneering initiative first introduced in Côte d'Ivoire in 2012 and later expanded to Ghana. The system was developed in partnership with the **International Cocoa Initiative (ICI)** to respond to research showing that an estimated **two million children were engaged in hazardous work** in West African cocoa production. (UN Global Compact Decent Work Toolkit).

Approach and Strategy:

Nestlé's CLMRS operates at the community level, selecting **Community Liaison People (CLPs)** from within cocoa-growing communities to conduct household visits, raise awareness about child labor risks, and gather data on children performing hazardous tasks. When a child is identified as at-risk, the CLP works with the family to explain why certain work is dangerous and to implement **remediation activities** tailored to that child's situation. These activities often focus on **improving access to education**, supporting family income, and assisting with farm-related tasks so that children can attend school instead of hazardous work.

Outcomes:

As of 2019, the CLMRS was operating at scale across all 87 Nestlé Cocoa Plan cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire, covering over 1,750 communities. It monitored nearly **78,580 children**, identifying around **23% of them (18,283 children)** as engaged in unacceptable labor. Follow-up data reported that **55% of these children were no longer performing hazardous work** at their most recent check-ins, demonstrating the impact of targeted remediation and education-focused support.

Lessons Learned:

Nestlé's experience shows that **education and community engagement are critical** in reducing child labor risks. While no single approach fits all situations, combining awareness-raising with practical support — especially education and income-support measures — has proven effective. The company continues to refine the system, improve access to quality education, and tailor remediation activities to individual needs.

Case Study: ILO Child Labour

The ILO *Business Case* on eradicating child labour and forced labour highlights that progress against child labour has stalled since 2016, with approximately 160 million children still engaged in child labour worldwide. The ILO emphasizes that to meet global targets—such as ending child labour by 2025 and forced labour by 2030—efforts must accelerate significantly compared to past decades. (International Labour Organization)

The case outlines the international legal framework guiding this work, including key conventions such as the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182), which establish standards for minimum working age and prohibit the most hazardous forms of work.

The ILO plays a central role in supporting governments, employers, and workers to implement these standards, offering training, data collection, and advocacy to inform evidence-based national policies. The organization also leads and participates in multi-stakeholder platforms addressing child labour in global supply chains—such as the Child Labour Platform, the Global Business Network on Forced Labour, and Alliance 8.7—which bring together businesses, governments, and civil society to tackle child labour and modern slavery.

Specific initiatives include the ACCEL Africa project, which targets household- and community-level drivers of child labour in cocoa, coffee, cotton, gold, and tea supply chains across several African countries by strengthening institutions, policies, and partnerships.

The case also includes a human story illustrating how community support can help a young girl exit hazardous labour and return to school, underlining the importance of coordinated prevention and remediation efforts.



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Questions to Consider

- What structural factors (e.g., poverty, lack of education, migration, conflict, informal economies) most strongly contribute to child labor within global supply chains, and how do these factors vary by region and sector?
- How effective are existing international frameworks (such as ILO Conventions, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and due diligence laws) in preventing child labor, and where do implementation gaps remain?
- What mechanisms can improve supply chain transparency and traceability, particularly in multi-tier and informal supply chains where child labor is most difficult to detect?
- How can governments and the private sector be held accountable for child rights violations within supply chains while balancing economic development and employment needs?
- How can data collection and monitoring systems be strengthened to accurately measure child labor prevalence and assess the impact of prevention and remediation strategies?
- What child-centered remediation approaches are most effective when child labor is identified, ensuring that children are protected without causing further harm to their families' livelihoods?
- How can UNICEF leverage partnerships with governments, civil society, and businesses to scale evidence-based solutions and promote sustainable, child-safe supply chains?



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