



United Nations  
International  
Children's  
Emergency Fund  
(UNICEF)



Topic: Dealing with  
widespread child  
malnutrition and  
severe interruption of  
education due to  
conflict and disasters.



**Committee:** United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

**Topic:** Dealing with widespread child malnutrition and severe interruption of education due to conflict and disasters.

**Moderator:** Marcelo Tamez Pérez

**Written By:** Marcelo Tamez Pérez

### Quorum

- Afghanistan
- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chad
- Ethiopia
- France
- Germany
- India
- Indonesia
- Kenya
- Mexico
- Nepal
- Nigeia
- Norway
- Pakistan
- Philippines
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sweeden
- Syria
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Yemen
- Zambia



## **I. Committee Background**

UNICEF was established on December 11, 1946, by the United Nations General Assembly to provide relief to children and mothers affected by World War II. UNICEF is an organization within the UN that cooperates with countries, nations, and rulers to help with providing funds and sheltering for mothers and children worldwide. UNICEF provides different types of aid, including financial aid, shelter, and basic necessities for people in need, aiming to improve their lives.

UNICEF is also aware of the number of mothers and children in need in each country, taking into account the root causes of their different circumstances. UNICEF takes charge, and through international cooperation, strategies, and programmes, provides aid to vulnerable children around the world. The aid fulfills their most pressing necessities, including the need of clean water, food, shelter, and education. UNICEF works with more than 190 countries and territories to save children's lives, teach them, protect their rights, and provide support for the time needed until the situation at hand improves.

UNICEF is the largest provider of vaccines, water, food, and education. They have the world's biggest humanitarian warehouse. UNICEF helps all children in need; including children with disabilities, children in places where various types of discrimination occur, children in war areas, and many more.

## **II. History of Topic**

According to the UN's State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025 report, about 8.2% of the world's population—roughly 670 million people—faced hunger in 2024. This marks a decline from 8.5% in 2023, representing around 15 million fewer people, and from 8.7% in 2022, a reduction of approximately 22 million people.

On November 15, 1979, a group of French scientists, doctors, and academics came together to develop a more effective approach to combating hunger. They founded Action Contre la Faim (Action Against Hunger) — the first and only non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated exclusively to eliminating hunger and malnutrition worldwide.

Amongst the people in deep hunger exist children, who for various reasons, are not able to access the proper nutrition they require for their growth and development. The lack of food for children whose families don't have the resources, and live in developing countries or war zones, is an



alarming issue that has been going on for years. Urgent action is necessary, as more and more malnourished children continue to starve daily.

The vision of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (to guarantee inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030) cannot be fulfilled without a stronger global commitment to plan, prioritize, and safeguard education, especially in contexts affected by conflict and crisis. In 2020, education received only 2.4% of the total humanitarian aid. Between 2015 and 2019, there were over 11,000 attacks on schools in 93 countries, impacting more than 22,000 students and teachers. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 127 million children and adolescents of primary and secondary school living in crisis-affected areas were out of school in 2019, accounting for nearly half of the world's out-of-school population.

### **III. Topic Information**

Wars, epidemics, and natural disasters affect children worldwide. More countries face conflict today than in the past thirty years, and many children grow up entirely in crisis. They lose their families, homes, safe water, healthcare, food, and education. The absence of education is a great risk for their future, as it is fundamental for their development into adult life, and a necessary step to prevent the cycle from repeating. UNICEF supports every child's right to education and safe learning, partnering globally and helping governments implement the Safe Schools Declaration to protect schools during armed conflict.

For decades, schools and educational institutions have been targeted during violence and conflict. Attacks on schools happen daily around the world, corrupting children's opportunities to study. For instance, the group accused of the recent attack at Lhubiriha Secondary School in Uganda was also allegedly responsible for a 1998 attack in the same country, which claimed the lives of 80 students. During conflicts, schools are often destroyed, looted, or occupied, leaving children with no place to learn. According to the UN, over 400 million children live in conflict zones, meaning millions are denied the opportunity for education and personal development.

Beyond education, children also lose the critical support that schools provide. School meals nourish children and help maintain food security in communities. Schools offer a safe environment essential for children's physical and emotional well-being, as well as spaces for social interaction, personal growth, and life skills. Without access to these resources, children are more vulnerable to exploitation, trauma, and setbacks, making it harder for them to reach their full potential and secure a brighter future.



Malnutrition, especially among children, is alarmingly high in places like the Gaza Strip, Mali, Sudan, and Yemen, with nearly 38 million children under five acutely malnourished across 26 crises. Economic shocks, including inflation and currency devaluation, have caused hunger for 59.4 million people in 15 countries, while extreme weather, particularly droughts and floods, has triggered food crises for over 96 million people in 18 countries. The Global Network Against Food Crises urges investment in local food systems and integrated nutrition services to reduce long-term vulnerabilities and build resilience.

#### **IV. Current Issues**

##### **Uganda**

Malnutrition threatens to destroy a generation of children in Uganda. More than one-third of all young children – 8.3 million – are stunted. Whether poor or wealthy, children are malnourished for similar reasons. Women tend to get pregnant when young and have low birth-weight babies, which predisposes children to malnutrition. Another factor is the price of food. Food typically varies from 10000 UGX ( 2.8 dollars) to 100000 UGX (28 dollars). Even though this might seem cheap, it is not sustainable using the wages earned by people in Uganda.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomes a contribution of UGX 2.5 billion (US\$680,000) from the Government of Uganda to support Home-Grown School Feeding programmes in the Karamoja region of north-east Uganda. WFP supports 250,000 children in 320 schools in Karamoja with daily nutritious meals through these programmes. The initiative provides children with safe, diverse, and nutritious foods sourced locally from smallholder farmers and school gardens. Providing a meal at school can increase attendance and enrolment, and reduce dropout rates.

##### **Afghanistan**

Afghanistan has one of the world's highest rates of stunting in children under the age of five: 41 per cent. Stunting is a sign of chronic undernutrition during the most critical periods of growth. The rate of wasting in Afghanistan is also extremely high. Only 12 per cent of Afghan children aged 6-24 months receive the right variety of food in the quantity needed for their age.

Afghanistan is facing one of the world's most severe food and nutrition crises, with over 3.5 million children under five suffering from wasting. The country ranks among the top globally for child food poverty, wasting, and stunting. With only five years remaining to achieve the SDGs and global nutrition targets set by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, together with WHO, the World Food Programme, and other UN agencies, is joining forces and calling for urgent,



coordinated, and multisectoral action to accelerate nutrition progress in Afghanistan. This initiative builds on progress made, over 6.5 million children treated for wasting in the past three years, and aligns with global momentum in 2025 for integrated action across health and nutrition, food systems, WASH, education, and social protection to prevent, detect, and treat all forms of malnutrition.

### **Nigeria**

According to UNICEF, Nigeria has the second-highest number of stunted children in the world, with a national prevalence rate of 32 percent among children under five. An estimated 2 million children in Nigeria suffer from severe acute malnutrition (SAM), but only two out of every ten affected children currently receive treatment.

One in every five of the world's out-of-school children is in Nigeria. Even though primary education is officially free and compulsory, about 10.5 million of the country's children aged 5-14 years are not in school. Only 61 percent of 6-11 year-olds regularly attend primary school. Girls are disproportionately affected, especially in northern regions, where cultural barriers and insecurity further limit their access to education.

### **Syria**

More than 609,900 children under five in Syria are stunted due to chronic undernutrition, and the number of children aged 6–59 months suffering from severe acute malnutrition increased by 48% from 2021 to 2022. Economic collapse, conflict, and the devastating 2023 earthquakes have worsened the crisis, with nearly 90% of the population living in poverty and over 3.75 million children in need of nutritional assistance.

UNICEF reports that the “Back-to-Learning” campaign is helping children across Syria return to school under a unified national calendar and education framework. This includes rehabilitating damaged schools, training teachers, supplying learning materials, and providing additional support such as remedial classes and non-formal education to children who dropped out or never enrolled.

## **V. UN Actions**

Education is everyone's right throughout life. UNESCO's Education Sector provides global and regional leadership to ensure that every child, youth and adult has access to quality education



throughout life, with a focus on Africa and gender. The Organisation can catalyse transformation in education by bringing stakeholders together around the ambitious Education 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, particularly the targets set by Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition is a commitment by United Nations Member States to undertake ten years of sustained and coherent implementation of policies, programmes, and increased investments to eliminate malnutrition in all its forms, everywhere, leaving no one behind. The Nutrition Decade highlights nutrition, particularly in relation to SDG 2 and SDG 3.

Extreme hunger and malnutrition remain barriers to sustainable development and create a trap from which people cannot easily escape. It is projected that more than 600 million people will face hunger in 2030, highlighting the immense challenge of achieving the zero hunger target. Investments will be needed in rural and urban areas, as well as in social protection, so that poor people have access to food and can improve their livelihoods.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Children worldwide are increasingly affected by wars, epidemics, and natural disasters, with more countries in conflict today than at any time in the past 30 years. Millions grow up without families, homes, safe water, healthcare, or education, as schools are often destroyed, looted, or occupied, denying over 400 million children in conflict zones the opportunity to learn and develop. Beyond education, schools provide essential nutrition, safety, emotional support, and social development, and their loss increases vulnerability to exploitation and trauma. Malnutrition is severe, with 38 million children under five affected across 26 crises, while economic shocks and extreme weather have caused hunger for millions more. UNICEF works globally to uphold every child's right to safe education, partnering with governments to implement the Safe Schools Declaration, and advocates investment in local food systems and integrated nutrition services to build resilience and protect children's futures.

Countries like Uganda, Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Syria are the most affected by this topic. Kids' need for help in these regions is rapidly increasing. The UN promotes lifelong access to quality education for all, with a focus on Africa and gender equality, and drives global collaboration to achieve the Education 2030 Agenda and SDG 4. The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition commits Member States to ten years of coordinated policies and investments to eliminate all forms of malnutrition, supporting SDG 2 and SDG 3. With over 600 million people projected to face hunger by 2030, urgent investment in rural and urban food systems and social protection is essential to break the cycle of hunger and improve livelihoods.



## VII. Guiding Questions

1. What are the primary causes of child malnutrition in countries affected by conflict or natural disasters, and how do these causes differ across regions?
2. How can UNICEF and member states ensure continuous access to education for children living in conflict zones or displacement camps?
3. What strategies can be implemented to protect schools from attacks, occupation, or destruction during armed conflict?
4. How can local food systems be strengthened to reduce dependency on international aid and improve long-term nutrition outcomes for children?
5. What role should governments, NGOs, and international organizations play in improving early childhood nutrition and preventing stunting and wasting?
6. How can the international community improve the delivery of essential services—such as food, clean water, healthcare, and sanitation—to children in crisis-affected regions?
7. What policies can be introduced to ensure girls and other vulnerable groups have equal access to safe, quality education during crises?
8. How can countries create effective school feeding programs that continue during emergencies or school closures?
9. What steps can be taken to provide mental health and psychosocial support to children traumatized by conflict, displacement, or hunger?
10. How can UNICEF and member states collaborate to achieve SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 4 (Quality Education) despite increasing global conflicts and disasters?

## VII. References

UNICEF. (2019). UNICEF. Unicef.org. <https://www.unicef.org>

interactive strategies. (2019, November 15). 40 Years Leading the Fight Against Hunger. Action against Hunger. <https://www.actionagainsthunger.org/story/40-years-leading-fight-against-hunger/>

INEE. (2018). Education in Emergencies | INEE. Inee.org. <https://inee.org/education-in-emergencies>

UNICEF. (2020). Nutrition, for every child. Www.unicef.org. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/nutrition-strategy-2020-2030>



UNICEF. (n.d.). Education in emergencies. [Www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org); UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/education/emergencies>

UNICEF. (2024). Malnourished Children: How UNICEF Fights Child Hunger. UNICEF USA. <https://www.unicefusa.org/what-unicef-does/childrens-health/nutrition/fight-childhood-malnutrition>

How Does War and Conflict Impact Education? (2023, June 26). Khanyi Mlaba. <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/how-do-war-conflict-impact-education>

Acute food insecurity and malnutrition rise for sixth consecutive year in world's most fragile regions. (2024). Unicef.org. <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/press-releases/acute-food-insecurity-malnutrition-rise-sixth-consecutive-year>

UNICEF Uganda. (2019). Nutrition. [Www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org). <https://www.unicef.org/uganda/what-we-do/nutrition>

World Food Programme. (2023). World Food Programme. World Food Programme. <https://www.wfp.org/>

Nutrition. (2025). Unicef.org. <https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/nutrition?>

UNICEF. (2019). Nutrition. Unicef.org. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/nutrition>

UNICEF Syria. (n.d.). [Www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org). <https://www.unicef.org/syria/>

UNESCO. (2022). UNESCO's action in education | UNESCO. [Www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org). <https://www.unesco.org/en/education/action>

Decade of Action on Nutrition. (n.d.). [Www.un.org](http://www.un.org). <https://www.un.org/nutrition/>

UN. (n.d.). Goal 2: Zero Hunger. United Nations Sustainable Development. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger>