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**“Ensuring Equitable Access to Healthcare,
Education, and Protection for Children in
the Middle East”**



I. COMMITTEE BACKGROUND

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was founded in 1946 by the United Nations General Assembly, after the Second World War, to provide children affected by the war emergency assistance. It then became a permanent part of the United Nations and began working with children globally to protect their rights, help them survive, support healthy development and give them opportunities to reach their potential.



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is an important document adopted in 1989. Its main concept was that children are individuals who have their own rights, and countries are expected to prevent discrimination against children, protect them and provide healthcare, education and other essential services. UNICEF specifically supports countries in putting the Convention into practice and provides technical assistance to governments and organizations.

UNICEF works with governments, other UN agencies, humanitarian organizations, schools, healthcare providers and local communities. The work of UNICEF is especially important during conflict, displacement, poverty and natural disasters. Some examples of its work are vaccinations, nutrition, clean water, education, mental health support, protection against violence and exploitation.

For this topic, UNICEF's focus is cooperation between governments and international organizations to ensure that children in the Middle East can access basic rights and services. Major issues regarding the topic are conflicts, displacement, economic difficulties and unequal access to services.

II. INTRODUCTION TO TOPIC

UNDERSTANDING EQUITABLE ACCESS

Equitable access essentially means that every child should be able to access essential services, and access should be guaranteed regardless on the location, family income, gender, nationality, disability or personal circumstances. It is important to distinguish that equity does not mean giving everyone the same resources as children facing greater obstacles will most

likely need extra support and the ultimate goal is to give children comparable opportunities.

Middle Eastern countries have very different economic and infrastructure conditions; some have stronger healthcare and education systems whereas others experience long-term conflict, displacement, poverty and infrastructure destruction. These differences can create inequalities between children including differences between urban and rural communities, citizens and refugees and even refugees and internally displaced children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes children's rights to healthcare, education, protection from violence and exploitation. However, having a right recognized legally does not automatically mean the child can access it.

HEALTHCARE ACCESS

Access to healthcare is essential for the survival and development of a child, who needs regular medical care, vaccinations, nutrition, clean water, sanitation and treatment for injuries and illness. However, healthcare access can be disrupted when hospitals or clinics are damaged, healthcare workers are displaced, or medical supplies cannot reach communities. These conflicts can put major pressure on healthcare systems.

Conflict has placed significant pressure on healthcare systems in parts of the Middle East. In Gaza, for example, WHO reported hundreds of attacks affecting healthcare by March 2025. Therefore, only some hospitals and primary healthcare centers remained functional which had severe consequences for the children such as affecting children's ability to receive emergency treatment as well as treatment for chronic illnesses and other health needs.

Conflict is only one of the many barriers to healthcare access in those countries. Others include poverty, long distances to healthcare facilities, lack of healthcare workers and unequal distribution of services. Therefore,



solutions need to address both dimensions: emergency healthcare during a crisis and long-term improvement of healthcare systems.

EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Education is another fundamental right that should be provided to children. Schools provide children with academic knowledge, skills, structure, social interaction and a safe environment. When a child is unable to attend school for long periods, they may experience lost learning, greater vulnerability to child labor, early marriage, exploitation, and permanent dropout.

Access to education is a major concern across the Middle East and North Africa. UNICEF estimated that at least 30 million children were unenrolled in schools across 12 different countries in 2025 with conflict and other factors being major contributors. Children from poorer families, rural areas and with disabilities also have additional barriers to overcome.

Conflict can displace teachers and students, destroy schools, and make travelling to school dangerous. In Gaza, for example, UNICEF reported in September 2024 that at least 625,000 children had missed an entire school year and another 45,000 could not even begin first grade.

Therefore, governments and organizations need to consider both emergency education and long-term education development. Some possible measures are temporary learning spaces, remote learning, teacher support, rebuilding schools and financial support for vulnerable families.

CHILD PROTECTION

Vulnerable children can face many risks. Poverty, conflict and displacement can increase their risk of violence, exploitation, child labor, trafficking, recruitment by armed groups and early marriage. Displacement can also separate children from their families and communities and make protection services harder to access.



Girls and boys face different risks; UNICEF identifies gender inequality and conflict as large factors increasing vulnerability. Girls may face greater risks of gender-based violence and child marriage, whereas boys may face a greater risk of child labor and recruitment into armed groups.

Child protection should not only happen after harm occurs. Therefore, UNICEF works with governments and humanitarian organizations so that they can focus on preventing harm before a threat, not only as a response, but as a precaution. Some possible measures taken could be stronger child protection systems, better birth registration, family support, teacher training, healthcareworker training, safe spaces, systems allowing children to report abuse and access to assistance.

CONFLICT, DISPLACEMENT, AND MENTAL HEALTH

Conflict can affect both physical and psychological wellbeing of children, as they can lose their homes, lose family members, have schooling interrupted, lack food, lack healthcare, lack water and lack shelter.

In February 2025, UNICEF published a report on the effects of a recent war in Lebanon that had continued even after a ceasefire. It revealed that children had experienced anxiety, sadness, displacement, interrupted education and interrupted essential services.

Mental health is therefore important and should be considered as part of child protection. Some possible places for psychological support for children are schools, healthcare facilities, community programs and humanitarian organizations. However, this poses a challenge, as it is difficult for these services to reach displaced children and communities where healthcare infrastructure has been damaged.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

Children's problems can cross national borders, for example refugee children may depend on the healthcare and education systems of their host country;



therefore, it is important for countries and international organizations to cooperate so that children can be supported.

International cooperation can involve financial assistance, humanitarian aid, technical assistance, information sharing, healthcare programs, education programs and support for countries hosting displaced populations. However, funding can become a major challenge. UNICEF projected that reductions in aid between 2023 and 2026 could affect education systems across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and put more children at risk of dropping out of school. This means long-term programs can be threatened when funding decreases.

Long-term solutions should therefore consider how immediate emergency assistance can be combined with investment in national systems. The goal is not only to respond when a crisis happens, but also to build stronger systems beforehand, make healthcare, education, and protection resilient, and prepare for future crises.

III. ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS / KEY ISSUES

- 1. How can governments ensure that children have access to healthcare during conflicts and emergencies?**
- 2. How can countries improve healthcare access for children living in rural or disadvantaged communities?**
- 3. How can countries ensure that children affected by conflict can continue their education?**



- 4. What can be done to prevent children from permanently dropping out of school?**
- 5. How can countries provide equal educational opportunities to refugees and displaced children?**
- 6. How can governments protect children from violence, exploitation, and trafficking?**
- 7. How can countries address the mental health effects of conflict on children?**
- 8. How can governments ensure that children with disabilities are not excluded from essential services?**
- 9. How can international organizations and governments work together to fund long-term solutions?**
- 10. How can countries make sure humanitarian assistance reaches the children who need it most?**

IV. COUNTRIES LIST

- I. Arab Republic of Egypt
- II. Federal Republic of Germany
- III. French Republic
- IV. Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- V. Islamic Republic of Iran
- VI. Kingdom of Bahrain
- VII. Kingdom of Morocco
- VIII. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- IX. Lebanese Republic
- X. People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
- XI. Republic of Iraq
- XII. Republic of the Sudan
- XIII. Republic of Tunisia
- XIV. Republic of Türkiye XV. Republic of Yemen
- XVI. State of Israel
- XVII. State of Kuwait
- XVIII. State of Libya
- XIX. State of Palestine XX. State of Qatar
- XXI. Sultanate of Oman
- XXII. Syrian Arab Republic
- XXIII. United Arab Emirates
- XXIV. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland XXV. United States of America



V. SOURCES

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