

CERRITOS CONFERENCE 2021



UNESCO

TOPIC:
EDUCATION IN WAR-TORN
COUNTRIES

DIRECTOR: BRYAN FAN

October 9th, 2021

To Delegates of CHSMUN Novice 2021

Dear Delegates,
Welcome to CHSMUN Novice 2021!

It is our highest honor and pleasure to welcome you all to our 2021 novice conference here at Cerritos High School. On behalf of the Cerritos High School Model United Nations program, we are proud to host this conference, where you will become more knowledgeable on international issues, participate in intellectually stimulating discussions, and create new and everlasting friendships.

The CHSMUN program continues to compete around the world as a nationally ranked MUN program. Our delegates utilize diplomacy in order to create complex solutions towards multilateral issues in the global community. Our head chairs are selected from only the best seniors of our program, undergoing a rigorous training process to ensure the highest quality of moderating and grading of debate. Furthermore, all the topic synopses have been reviewed and edited numerous times. We strongly believe that by providing each and every delegate with the necessary tools and understanding, he or she will have everything they need to thrive in all aspects of the committee. We thoroughly encourage each delegate to engage in all of the facets of their topic, in order to grow in their skills as a delegate and develop a greater knowledge of the world around them.

Although there will be a few changes to our conference due to Covid-19, our advisors and staff have put in countless hours to ensure delegates have an amazing experience. Our greatest hope is that from attending CHSMUN 2021, students are encouraged to continue on in Model United Nations and nevertheless, inspired to spark change in their surrounding communities. With this strong circuit consisting of over 500 delegates, CHSMUN Novice 2021 will provide a quality experience for beginner delegates to enhance their speaking and delegating skills.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact us! We look forward to seeing you at CHSMUN Novice 2021!

Sincerely,

Anushka Panjwani & Naima Dellawar

sg.cerritosmun@gmail.com

Secretary-Generals

A Note From The Director

Delegates,

Hi! My name is Bryan Fan and I will be your chair for UNESCO. Since the past four years, I've been a part of my school's MUN program and this is my second time chairing for a conference. This topic I have chosen is very broad as you will see, meaning that there are multiple ways to go about and address the issue. Understandably, having to manage education during an armed conflict will have many setbacks and factors to consider. However, with so many resources, finding a feasible solution is definitely possible! I would consider myself to be a creative person by nature, therefore I highly encourage creativity and thinking outside the box when it comes to coming up with solutions, rather than using pre-existing NGOs, documents, etc. Though with this in mind, please remember to stick to your country's policy as education is often an issue that does not receive a lot of support or is even endorsed by governments all over.

One last thing. While committees can get competitive, remember to have fun and take pride for all your hard work and effort! I understand that as delegates, we want awards to reflect upon all the hours of research. However, that will greatly show as you keep attending conferences and when you have to present just about anything in the future. To me, acknowledging a buildup of confidence and readiness holds far more value over a piece of award, so as cliché as this may sound, just by attending this conference, you are all considered winners in my opinion. Collaborate with others, think deeply about the root of the issue, and communicate with everyone and we will have a successful conference. And while this is a Novice Conference, I expect you all to do your best and try hard to combat this topic with all your knowledge and preparation. Good luck!

Best Regards,

Bryan Fan
Director, UNESCO
Committee Email: Unesco.CHSMUN@gmail.com

Committee Introduction:

_____The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was established on November 16, 1945 and is one of the seventeen specialized agencies under the UN. UNESCO belongs to the Economic and Social Council and has a few areas of focus; most of it revolves around eradicating poverty, sustainable development, ensuring every child has access to education, and building a shared culture, essentially to promote peace in the process. UNESCO has a lot of networks especially in the field of education. For instance, it partnered with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), pledging to achieve the Education For All movement by 2015. Under UNESCO, education is considered a fundamental human right and a lot of its efforts goes into preserving it. Aside from this, the committee is dedicated to forming a shared network among member states to participate in the sharing of scientific knowledge, communications, and culture.

Topic: Education in War Torn Countries

Background:

Learning becomes a luxury to a child whose country is caught in an armed conflict. Desperate to continue their education in hopes of achieving a fulfilling future and getting a job, children in war ridden countries have to sacrifice their lives to earn one day's worth of knowledge. Around the world, there are 75 million children whose ages range between 3 and 18 that either cannot go to school or are kept from attending due to the dangers of dying or getting severely injured. Distributed across 35 countries that have been in a crisis since 2015, these children have to risk their lives to sit in a classroom with the fear of getting shot or stepping on a landmine on the way home. As of 2018, that number alone has evolved into 87 countries. Education is important to a child in that it preserves a sense of hope and safety and builds on their development when being in contact with other children and teachers. In addition, when a country is in peril, many children would feel less enthusiastic about going to school which can have a huge impact on the economy. Without schooling, these children are left to fight and would struggle to obtain jobs and have a harder time providing for their families in the future.

The pace of growth is also delayed as a result. Many students ranging from 6 to 8 years old in countries such as Syria, Rwanda, Yemen, and Democratic Republic of Congo struggle to spell and perform basic mathematical concepts because of the environment and resources that the war has taken from them. Basic resources such as blackboards, desks, and required materials cannot be afforded due to uneven expenditures and funding towards the war. Right now, UNESCO is doing its best to contribute to the rehabilitation of school infrastructures. During 2011, it helped build 100 schools in Baghdad, Erbil, Nineveh, and Basra. Nonetheless, that alone is still not enough.

Schools become conflict zones in many countries because it is commonly seen as a place where kids gather, which makes it easier for armed forces to kidnap them, which results in assassinations, rape, or forced participation in the military. These infrastructures are a great place to set up bases and deport bombs, weapons, and plan attacks, and putting students in dangerous situations only add to the benefits. For instance, children can be used as shields which help arouse terror and is a great way to meddle with the security in communities. To add onto the fear, landmines are often placed next to the path to most schools and children would sometimes accidentally step on them, adding onto the 54% of general civilian casualties in 2019. Landmines can also have a toll on families, as some family members would get injured, leaving children no choice, but to drop out and provide for the family.

For female students and teachers, sexual violence and assault can arise during times like this. As women and young girls remain a vulnerable group during wartime, many can view them as a tool and use them for forced marriages, sterilization, and to engage in sexual activities. This holds a lasting traumatic impact on their mental health and interferes with the progress to make school a safe learning environment. From those experiences, young female students would also drop out as a result of such an event. For survivors of sexual assault, many also being teachers, such an experience can lead to unhealthy coping mechanisms and prevent them from living a fulfilling future due to untreated trauma. According to a research report done by Save the Children, a heavy amount of sexual assaults stems from armed forces and a lack of monitoring. Thus, government agencies need to understand the importance of regulating armed forces and the need to set up mental health services to assess this problem.

Under Article 28 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the right to an education is crucial to every child and cannot be taken away because of their race, religion, or status as a refugee. However, with armed forces occupying these territories, Article 28 is undoubtedly violated and many children are left to drop out after secondary school as a result of schools closing. So far, there are two legislations that defends the right to education: The International Humanitarian Law, where the 1989 CRC was derived from, and the International Human Rights Law. The International Humanitarian Law rules that no matter what type of conflict is occurring, civilian objects such as schools, houses, and public infrastructures are not to be utilized to aid war efforts and civilians are not to be in danger, while the International Human Rights Law stresses the right to security and education during conflict. For both laws to be effective, a lot of the work depends on the government and the measures they take to implement this policy.

United Nations Involvement:

The Safe Schools Declaration, led by Norway and Argentina and endorsed by the UN Member States in 2015, serves as an international agreement in the protection of education during wartimes. The declaration outlines the need for government officials to protect school infrastructures and ensure the safety of students during wartime. In addition, it prohibits schools and universities from being used for military purposes. So far, this is the only international agreement that emphasizes the value and protection of education during conflict. The United Nations Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG/CAAC) was created by the General Assembly in compliance with Resolution A/RES/51/77 and remains one of the highest UN bodies that stresses the importance of international cooperation to protect children during armed conflict. In addition, UNESCO is the founder of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), an agency that seeks out to promote the Safe Schools Declaration and assist governments in developing contingency plans that allows schools to operate during war without becoming a targeted location for airstrikes, etc. The UN Security Council also passed Resolutions 2225 in 2015 as a way of encouraging government officials to stop stationing armed forces in schools. As of now, UNESCO is also partnering with Education Cannot Wait and the Swedish International Development Cooperation agency to establish education information systems that help schools recover from attacks. These systems have been

implemented in countries such as Chad, Ethiopia, Palestine, and South Sudan for a trial phase in 2019.

Case Study: Iraq

Since the 1980s, wars such as the Iran-Iraq War, as well as the Gulf War of 1991, has stripped at least 1.2 million Iraqi children of their right to an education in 2013. In addition to the destruction of infrastructures and inadequate necessities such as electricity and school equipment, the educational system consists of an outdated curriculum, a very tight budget, and the usual rundown classrooms. According to UNICEF, 50 percent of the public schools in Iraq cannot maintain construction due to the continuation of school infrastructures being destroyed, and with troops stationed nearby, the issue of security is also being challenged. Universities have been looted and many have been stationed with troops which arouses fear of going back to school. Since the 1990s, many have shown discontent for the Iraqi government's inability to treat such a situation. Before that, however, literacy rates have been maintained fairly well. In the 1970s, Iraq introduced a literacy campaign to attract employment in the oil sector, in accordance with the dedication of 5% of the national budget towards education. All this kept until the 1990s, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, resulting in famine and economic sanctions. Because of this, the economy was rather poor, which left the government with no choice but to discontinue supporting the education system. Since then, schools lacked basic sanitation and running water, as well as electricity, all of which were present before the war started. That issue is currently ongoing today, as little has been done by the government to fix this problem.

Basic Solutions:

While many NGOs have been created for this matter, solely relying on them for solutions does not mitigate the issue. For starters, funding is a key factor that often prevents schools from reconstructing during aftermaths of damage. In order to do that, legislative action that organizes funding can help governments understand the need to prioritize and manage funds so that not all of it is dedicated towards the military. During World War II, the United States devoted the aid that was supposedly for schools towards the Allied war effort which left schools without a lot of budget for reconstruction, etc. In addition, holding government and authority figures accountable for the negligence of protecting educational institutions can be a possible solution that drives them to take action. By doing so, it prompts the government to understand the necessities of education as well as its impact on the economy. There are many other factors that can also be tackled first. For example, promoting the issue with education in war torn countries would still count as a qualified solution, as many still are not aware that this problem exists and has a heavy toll on the children. On top of that, employing peacekeeping operations can better help policy makers negotiate and lessen the damage inflicted during wars. Most of the peacekeepers perform tedious tasks such as deactivating landmines, bombs, and other explosive weapons while actively seeking out the needs of children and families. Taking this into consideration, education can be brought in to highlight the values of civilians during the peacekeeping process.

Bloc Positions:

Western Bloc: Most countries such as the US and most of Europe struggled to keep students at school during World War II. In countries such as Germany, Austria, and the UK, children were forced to evacuate and were left under air raid shelters, discontinuing their education for the time being before the prime minister of the UK decided to reopen schools in 1939. However, even though the economy wasn't stable and schools had to close down, these countries were pretty resilient in reopening schools and ensuring the continuation of education for their students.

Latin America and the Caribbean Bloc: Like the Western Bloc, armed forces that patrolled most of the cities created widespread fear which kept 60% of the students in Guatemala and other countries from attending, causing schools to close. Latin America has an usual case for violence in times of conflict and therefore those who drop out of school end up joining gangs and participating in violent acts. Although this is a severe case, the government in most countries do not properly address this and continue to leave the population uneducated. Right now, much of the help has been coming from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which has been trying to aid Latin American countries in achieving quality education during conflicts.

African Bloc: Many countries in West and Central Africa are using schools to occupy troops and organize armed attacks. To combat this, 17 African Union member states have joined in the development of the Safe Schools Declaration and The Central African Republic government has recognized and signed the declaration, which began its journey in using UN Peacekeeping to mitigate the issue later on. Namibia, a country in the Southern African region, adopted its first resolution to prohibit the use of child soldiers with the help of the Security Council in 1999. With these in mind, there is still a long way to go in ensuring that the countries acknowledge the need to secure the schools to allow students to continue their education.

Asian-Pacific Bloc: There are currently 18 million adolescents and children in Asia that are unenrolled in school due to three factors, one of them being armed-conflict. Countries such as Syria, Iran, and Myanmar are prone to many attacks from large groups such as the Liberation Army in China and other separatist groups. Being the largest region with the most attacks, policy makers need to negotiate with other nations to grow out of the conflict through peace deals and political action to carry out ceasefires.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did my country distribute its budget during past wars, conflicts, etc, and how much of it goes towards education?
2. How can my country aid other countries who are lacking infrastructures, materials, and a safe environment?

3. What can be done to ensure that students are not sent to fight or provide for their families?
4. How should I position troops and weapons far away from educational institutions and how can I make it so that schools do not become a conflict zone?
5. How can I make sure that students do not drop out of school even during tough times?
6. Are there any legislations, acts, or documents that can be created to emphasize the value of education and guarantee students to finish school?
7. Does my country need to update its current educational curriculum?
8. Do government and authority figures need to be held accountable for neglecting the safety of their own students and what kind of punishment should be imposed for violating this?
9. How can my country help refugee children and families adapt to my country's education system and ensure they are continuing their education in a different setting?
10. Besides repairing schools, what else can be provided to aid in the success of students during times of crises?
11. What other mental health services can be made to mend the psychological trauma that students face at school?

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