



UNICEF

**United Nations
Children's Fund** *Study
Guide*



AGENDA

***Mitigating the effects of air,
water, and land pollution on
children in conflict zones.***

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COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

The UNICEF, or United Nations Children's Fund, is an agency which provides humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide.

Its work includes:

- Child survival and health
- Nutrition
- Education and child protection
- Clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)
- Emergency humanitarian response
- Environmental resilience and climate protection
- Safeguarding children from violence, exploitation, and neglect

INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA

Children living in conflict zones face a constant battle for survival, yet one of the most dangerous threats they face is silent: pollution. When war destroys homes, hospitals, water systems, and sanitation networks, the environment around children becomes toxic. Explosions release hazardous dust and chemicals into the air; damaged pipelines contaminate drinking water; and explosive remnants seep into the soil. These forms of pollution do not disappear when the fighting stops—they linger for years, affecting the growth, health, and development of an entire generation.

Children are especially vulnerable. Their bodies absorb pollutants faster, their organs are still developing, and their access to healthcare is limited or nonexistent. A child forced to breathe smoke from burning waste, drink untreated water, or play on contaminated ground faces lifelong risks ranging from respiratory illness to neurological damage.

This agenda asks delegates to confront pollution not only as an environmental issue, but as a violation of children's fundamental rights. UNICEF's role is to protect those who cannot protect themselves, yet in conflict zones, its work is challenged by insecurity, access restrictions, and limited resources. Solutions must therefore be innovative, low-cost, and realistic—centered on ensuring that every child can live, grow, and recover in a safe environment.

FORMS OF POLLUTION IN CONFLICT ZONES

1. Air Pollution

Bombings and Explosions releasing toxic dust. Smoke from destroyed infrastructure, and the use of chemical weapons affect children's respiratory systems, increasing the chances of asthma & higher risk of cancer later in life.

2. Water Pollution

Due to damaged pipelines and sewage networks, contamination of wells and blocked/militarised access to drinking water has effects on children such as waterborne diseases , malnutrition , stunted growth and kidney damage.

3. Land Pollution

Landmines leaking chemicals, heavy metals deposited in soil, oil spills and toxic debris from destroyed buildings cause children absorption of toxins through skin, contaminated crops and livestock, unable to attend school or play outdoors.

KEY AREAS OF CONCERN

1. Health Impacts on Children

Children in conflict zones already face weakened immunity due to malnutrition, trauma, and limited healthcare access. Pollution intensifies these vulnerabilities dramatically. Air pollution from explosions and burning waste leads to chronic respiratory issues such as asthma, bronchitis, and reduced lung capacity—conditions that may last a lifetime. Contaminated water exposes children to cholera, diarrhea, typhoid, and parasites, all of which are leading causes of child mortality in emergencies. Soil pollution from heavy metals and explosive remnants can trigger neurological damage, developmental delays, and reproductive health issues later in life. For children, pollution does not just cause illness; it shapes their entire future.

2. Collapse of Essential Infrastructure

Conflict destroys the systems needed to maintain a safe environment. Water treatment plants, sewage lines, electrical grids, waste management facilities, and hospitals become targets or collateral damage. Without these systems, pollution rapidly accumulates, and communities lose the ability to manage it. This infrastructural collapse makes it nearly impossible to provide clean water, safe sanitation, or proper waste disposal—leaving children exposed daily to toxic conditions.

3. Impact on Displaced Children and Refugee Camps

Displaced children suffer the highest exposure to pollution. Overcrowded camps often lack reliable waste management, clean water sources, or safe cooking fuels. Open defecation, stagnant water, uncollected garbage, and contaminated soil create a cycle of disease that spreads quickly among children. Limited space forces children to play, sleep, and eat in polluted environments. Humanitarian agencies frequently struggle to keep pace with population surges, making sustainable sanitation a persistent challenge.

4. Toxic Remnants of War

Explosive remnants—shell fragments, military chemicals, fuel dumps, and destroyed industrial infrastructure—continue polluting long after battles end. These remnants release heavy metals into soil and groundwater, contaminate food sources, and pose long-term environmental hazards. Children, who often explore open fields or rubble, face direct exposure. The absence of post-conflict environmental cleanup leaves communities vulnerable for decades, turning pollution into a multi-generational threat.

5. Lack of Environmental Monitoring and Accountability

In conflict zones, environmental monitoring is nearly impossible. Air quality sensors, water testing facilities, and soil assessment tools are either destroyed or inaccessible. Without data, pollution cannot be measured, addressed, or used to hold parties accountable. The international legal framework surrounding environmental harm during war remains weak, and most pollution-related acts go unpunished. This accountability gap allows environmentally destructive warfare to continue unchecked.

6. Limited Humanitarian Access

Humanitarian organizations—including UNICEF—face major obstacles such as road blockades, targeted attacks, landmines, and political restrictions. These barriers delay or prevent the delivery of clean water, medical supplies, sanitation equipment, and pollution-monitoring tools. As access decreases, pollution exposure increases, leaving children trapped in unsafe environments with no support.

PAST ACTION

UNICEF, in collaboration with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and WHO launched the following programs over recent years:

- WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene) emergency programs
- Mobile health clinics for conflict zones
- Air quality monitoring pilots in northern Syria and Gaza
- “Pollution and Children” global initiative
- Rapid sanitation programs in Yemen & Rohingya refugee camps

Despite these efforts, some significant challenges like the lack of proper funding and implementation continue to hamper the effectiveness of such strategies, leaving children still; desperate for help.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER (QARMA)

1. How can UNICEF reduce air, water, and land pollution during active conflict?
2. What mechanisms will ensure safe humanitarian access to polluted zones?
3. How can we monitor pollution levels where equipment and electricity are unreliable?
4. What protections can be put in place for children suffering in war zones, and how can existing accommodations be made more effective in serving their purpose? (schools, hospitals, camps)?
5. How can states be encouraged to reduce environmental damage caused by military operations?
6. What low-cost, scalable technologies can provide clean water during War?
7. How can we rebuild environmental infrastructure (sanitation, waste systems) post-conflict?
8. What role can NGOs, private sector actors, and local communities play?
9. How can delegates ensure respect for sovereignty while protecting children?
10. How will international accountability work for severe environmental harm during conflict?

SUGGESTED

MODERATED CAUCUS TOPICS

1. Short-term Solutions for Reducing Child Exposure to Pollution in Conflict Zones for Immediate Relief
2. Innovative Technologies for Water Purification in Humanitarian Crises
3. Strengthening UNICEF's Emergency WASH Programs
4. Long-term Environmental Rehabilitation After Conflict
5. Child-Centered Health Monitoring and Data Collection in Conflict Zones
6. Accountability for Environmental Damage During Armed Conflict.

PRO TIPS

1. Read as many news articles as you can. Not necessarily for research, but rather to understand the framing of arguments relevant to your stance.
2. Although the use of AI is prohibited in the conference, you may use it during research to simplify any complex line/article/lexicon you come across. (Use the Prompt “Simplify xyz for a 12-year-old” on Google Bard)
3. Research from wherever you feel comfortable, however make sure that the research is also backed by a MUN prescribed “valid source”
4. Write minimum 2-3 GSL’s and prepare for at least 4 Moderated Caucus Topics.
5. When the facts don’t support you, argue the law. When the law doesn’t support you, argue the facts.
6. Do not hesitate to read laws, conventions, resolutions and adjudications. They might seem intimidating, but frankly speaking they are not at all complex to read, understand or decipher.
7. Research well upon your foreign policy.
8. You may listen to lectures by many professors or even personalities explaining their point of view. Although they are a terrible source for research, they very often provide you with some well framed arguments.

We, the Executive Board Members, hope that this guide was of help to you, but please do not limit yourself to these. Go ahead, and research as much as you can. We look forward to seeing you in the conference, pumped up to discuss, debate and deliberate!

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