



# **ALMUN XV BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**General Assembly:**  
*UN Educational, Scientific,  
and Cultural Organization*

ALMUN XV:  
UN Educational, Scientific, and  
Cultural Organization

Chair: Maren Kirkpatrick

Co-chair: Vivenne van Nostrand

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# LETTER FROM THE **DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

Esteemed Faculty and Delegates,

Welcome to **ALMUN XV**! My name is Emmy K. Smith, and I have the pleasure to serve as the Director-General for the fifteenth iteration of the distinguished Alabama Model United Nations Conference. I am a current junior at The University of Alabama majoring in International Studies with a triple minor in Arabic, Counterterrorism, and the Blount Scholars Program with plans to pursue my Master's in Public Administration here at Bama. Although the last couple iterations of ALMUN have had to be canceled or virtually conducted, I am so excited to be back in person with the Southeast's premier MUN conference for high school students! We worked hard to offer a variety of committees for our delegates ranging from traditional General Assemblies to unexpected Crisis Committees to the blend of procedures that create the International Court of Justice and Press Corps.

I have participated in ALMUN since I was a junior in high school, and I fell in love with it instantly. Carrying into college, MUN has completely shaped my college experience, friend group, career goals, and opportunities. With the Alabama International Relations Club's MUN team, I have had the honor to travel the country, build lifelong friendships, and take chances that never would have been possible without MUN. Without MUN, I would be nowhere near the person I am today. The value of my experiences as a delegate, staffer, and secretariat member within the MUN world cannot be overstated.

If this is your first experience with MUN, I hope that you, too, will find that spark that ignites your life in a variety of ways. I sincerely hope that ALMUN can provide you with a renewed sense of passion and joy that will stay with you past high school. If you have any questions about ALMUN, your committee, AIRC, MUN, or anything else, please feel free to reach me at the email listed below. I wish you the best of luck in your research and preparation - see you at ALMUN, and Roll Tide!

Best,

Emmy K. Smith

Director-General of ALMUN XV

[almun.dg@gmail.com](mailto:almun.dg@gmail.com)

## A Note On RESEARCH, PREPARATION, & POSITION PAPERS

Your experience as an ALMUN delegate begins during the time spent leading up to the conference. Proper research and preparation are key to a successful and valuable experience at ALMUN and any MUN conference. For new delegates, this preparation may seem like a daunting task. However, the ALMUN staff is here to help, and these notes should help you structure your lead-up time.

The first place to start your research should be your committee's Background Guide. This is a document prepared by committee staff for their specific committees' delegates. It contains historical contexts, overviews of your topics, and what the staffers will expect from delegates. This document is the perfect jumping off point for all of your research and will also help understand the innerworkings, schematics, and purpose of your character/country assignment as well as your role as a delegate during the conference. These documents can be found on the ALMUN website under your committee.

Position papers are delegates' first interactions with the dais (your committee staffers) and is the final product of a student's preparation and research for any Model United Nations conference. It contains informed perspectives and histories of the state a delegate represents and is crucial to creating an authentic MUN experience. Specific expectations for position papers are listed below.

All delegates are *strongly* encouraged to submit position papers. Position papers are required for a delegate to be considered for awards. Additionally, there is an award for Best Position Paper within each committee.

### FORMAT

- GA position papers should be exactly two pages: one page for each topic. Topics should be separated by a page break. Position papers should not exceed two pages.
- Documents should be written in single spaced, 12 pt, black, Times New Romans font.
- The document should begin with a three line header on the left side that reads as such:

Name of Delegate

Delegate's Country Assignment

Delegate's Committee

- Following the header, delegates should center and identify the title of the first topic, as such:

Topic A: [Insert Title of Topic]

- References should be cited using footnotes in MLA format. When citing electronic sources, include the URL; electronic sources are strongly encouraged for ease of reference.
- Position papers should be saved as a PDF file and entitled “ALMUN XV\_[Committee]\_[Country].”

## CONTENT OF POSITION PAPERS

Position papers should include three paragraphs for each topic, outlined as follows:

1. **First paragraph:** Introduces the topic from the point of view of the nation represented; discusses the history of the topic, specifically in relation to the country.

- 2. Second paragraph:** Analyzes the topic's context and expresses research done on the topic; discusses past action or inaction, successes or failures, and the represented nation's current thoughts and feelings towards the issue.
- 3. Third paragraph:** Informed discussion of solutions to be proposed by the delegate; uses research to present new and creative ideas based on the represented nations.

## OTHER TIPS & NOTES

- Do not write in first person! Instead, write as the nation represented (e.g. "The Republic of Burkina Faso leans...")
- Avoid the passive voice.
- Write matter-of-factly rather than with embellished language.
- Use the example position paper provided on the ALMUN website for ideas on how the writing and style should look, as well as how to present the information needed to prepare for the conference.

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If you are looking for more information on how a committee runs and debate flows, please check out our [Delegate Resource Guide](#) and [Handbook for Rules and Procedures](#). These two documents will break down everything you need to know about awards, parliamentary procedure, and even offer a brief rundown and history of your committee's branch.

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Please submit all position papers to [this Google Form](#)  
no later than February 10th, 2022 at 11:59 p.m. CT.

**DELEGATES THAT DO NOT SUBMIT POSITION  
PAPERS WILL BE INELIGIBLE FOR AWARDS.**

## Letter from the Chair

Hello Delegates! My name is Maren Kirkpatrick and I am your chair for the United Nations Education, Arts, Sciences, and Culture Organization (UNESCO). I am currently a junior at the University of Alabama studying Public Health, Religious Studies, and International Studies with a minor in French Language. Besides school and Model United Nations on campus, I am heavily involved with my sorority, Sigma Kappa, and the Baptist Campus Ministry. Whenever I am not on campus, I can be found dog sitting for my friend's hyperactive golden retriever (pictures of dog can be provided on request) or at Rita's Italian Ice and Italian Ice on the Strip (of which, I highly suggest you go to during your lunch or dinner break since its so close to where we will hold our committee sessions). In my free time I enjoy reading the Bible and watching anime. That, that is it.

I am so excited to serve as your chair for this committee. Model United Nations has made such a positive impact on my life by helping me to explore my interests in international politics and peacekeeping. Before discovering Model United Nations and receiving the opportunity to compete at a conference, I struggled to find my fit within the world of debate and public speaking. I was massively interested in learning about and discussing human rights issues and politics, but I wanted a debate environment in which I can collaborate with others on finding solutions to these problems and where I could openly consider both sides of an argument. I found this in Model United Nations. By participating in Model United Nations in high school, I was able to explore my interests and learn what I wanted to major in and possibly pursue in a career. I am so thankful that I am able to participate in Model United Nations in university. Since I

went to high school in Alabama, I had the opportunity to attend ALMUN, this very conference. I am so thankful for this conference and I am so excited to be able to participate in ALMUN beyond high school.

Delegates, from this experience, I hope you have the opportunity to learn more about how representatives in the U.N. collaborate together to write legislation to benefit the countries they represent and the international community as a whole. UNESCO, the committee of the United Nations in which you are about to participate in, focuses on promoting international peace through the means of education concerning science and culture. My co-chair Vivienne and I purposefully chose both of our topics to focus on protecting and preserving important aspects of every country during times of crisis. By focusing on preserving these important aspects, we hope to achieve UNESCO's goal of promoting international peace. These two important aspects of the running of every country that we chose to focus our topics on were that of protecting journalists and education. We both believe that in order for a country to continue on to function to its best ability during a time of crisis that journalism and education must be protected. During the committee, I hope that there will be collaboration between representatives of all countries on how to preserve both of these during times of crisis. I am so excited to see how delegates collaborate together to achieve these goals and promote international peace.

I hope that you learn a lot, but also that you have fun and enjoy your ALMUN experience!

Roll Tide and Roll MUN!

Maren Kirkpatrick | Chair

## Letter from the Co-Chair

Hello Delegates! My name is Vivienne van Nostrand and I am your co-chair for the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). I am a freshman at the University of Alabama majoring in Economics and Psychology with a minor in Liberal Arts. Besides school and Model United Nations, I am heavily involved in the Undergraduate Research Program for psychology and the Blount Scholars Programs. When I am not doing things on campus, I am almost guaranteed to be making or buying bubble tea with my friends. In my free time, I enjoy running and attempting to learn how to cook.

I am so excited to serve as your co-chair for this committee. I started in Model United Nations when I was 12 and it has stayed as a positive influence on my life. During middle school and high school, I took part in more than 15 different conferences, so conferences hold a special place in my heart. Through learning how to research, publicly speak, communicate ideas clearly, and understand world events, Model U.N. has been an amazing program for finding my passions and creating meaningful skills. I am really excited to be working in this conference. From this experience, I hope that you guys will learn more about the United Nations infrastructure and the cooperation that is intended to work together. I hope that you enjoy your ALMUN experience!

Roll Time and Roll MUN!

Vivienne van Nostrand | Co-Chair

## Committee Overview

The United Nations Educational, Science, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was founded after the Second World War to promote and protect international peace through the means of education, science, and culture. By promoting and protecting a culture of international peace, UNESCO hopes to eradicate material poverty by promoting sustainable development and supporting an open dialogue across all countries or cultures.<sup>1</sup> UNESCO seeks to eradicate poverty through scientific and cultural education efforts. In order to eradicate material poverty, UNESCO believes it essential to promote sustainable development through education.

Material poverty addresses a form of poverty in which individuals are unable to stably afford basic needs, such as food, housing, or clothing. In developing countries, where material poverty is more prevalent, UNESCO seeks to support educational institutions to allow individuals living within developing countries to learn how to support themselves. UNESCO or other United Nations committees could only provide temporary material needs to support those suffering from material poverty. However, as the old proverb goes, “If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime”.<sup>2</sup> It would be irresponsible of the United Nations to force a developing country to become reliant on them. Many developing countries are still developing due to being subjugated to colonization for years. If the United Nations forced a developing country to become reliant on the U.N. for resources, than it would be subjecting them as if they were still colonized. In that case, helping would do more harm in the long-run.

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<sup>1</sup> UN.org.

<sup>2</sup> Lao Tzu

The first topic that delegates will be confronted with will be concerning that of protecting journalists. Throughout the research conducted when creating this background guide, your chairs found it necessary to first-off address the protection of journalists during times of crisis. By protecting journalists, your chairs hope that the necessary information provided by journalists will aid in the promotion of education on the current issues within the country in which the journalist resides. By promoting education on current issues, UNESCO hopes to eradicate material poverty through this education by making citizens of a nation aware of potential injustices that are occurring during a time of crisis. By making citizens aware, then they might be able to take action against injustices that keep them in material poverty. Journalists also help facilitate education in general by providing information concerning current events, scientific discoveries, or cultural topics. The second topic that delegates will be confronted with will be that of protecting journalists during times of crisis. Even if there is no obvious crisis occurring within a country, such as an epidemic or an armed conflict, the state of poverty in a country itself qualifies as a crisis. Poverty, like an epidemic or armed conflict, greatly harms the citizens of a country and must be dealt with. On that note, the second topic that will be addressed in the background guide is that of protecting education during times of crisis. This topic branches off of the first one, in that journalists promote education. However, the second topic will focus on protecting the general institution of education, such as universities or schools, during times of crisis. By protectings the institutions where people can receive an education, the citizens of a nation are able to have access to institutions that help prepare them to hold jobs one day in order to support themselves or their families along with their economies.

## Topic A: Protecting the Freedom of Expression of Journalists

### *Introduction*

In order for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to achieve its long-term goal of eradicating poverty through scientific and cultural education, it is essential that the rights and the wellbeing of journalists are protected. The way that we perceive the world and are able to act on issues that we perceive is based on the accurate information that journalists provide. Journalists must be protected in order to improve the condition of the world. Internationally, journalism remains a dangerous profession with risks to safety in the process of gathering data for their stories. Journalists have been killed in military conflicts as the result of them attempting to gather data during the conflict.. Journalists have also been intentionally murdered as backlash against their attempts to gather data concerning controversial issues involving human rights issues such as human trafficking or violations concerning environmental or political issues. Though journalists may be unintentionally killed during armed conflicts, many journalists are intentionally murdered for their attempts to provide accurate information concerning stories.<sup>3</sup>

Every four days a journalist is killed in an act of violence due to their profession. Between 2006 and 2020, over one thousand and two hundred journalists lost their lives because of their profession.<sup>4</sup> The lives of journalists are in danger and continue to be and those who intentionally murder journalists continue to not be held accountable for their crimes. Those who murder journalists have diverse motivations for doing so,

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO. "Threats to Freedom of Press: Violence, Disinformation & Censorship."

<sup>4</sup>Unesco. "Safety of Journalists." UNESCO.org.

however, a common motivation is to gain or keep their power over others. By gaining power over others, then they will be able to continue to continue their abusive influence. Journalists make people aware of those who are subjecting them to injustices so that those victims can take action to improve their situation. This is the core of a journalist's job and they face the threat of violence for attempting to help those experiencing injustice.

Journalists expose mistreatment within private and public industries. Public industries include that of the government, military, and the law. Private industries companies and businesses that are not owned or funded by the government. Journalists need to be protected from threats from people in both the public and private sectors who would pose harm to their safety. People in authority within business do not want journalists to expose their wrong-doings so they can continue to increase their profits. People in government want to continue to maintain political control, so they do want journalists to expose their wrong-doings.<sup>5</sup>

### *Historical Context*

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization, since its formation in 1945, has advocated for freedom of speech and expression. In the United Nations pursuing its aim to protect the freedom of speech and expression, the U.N. created the Nineteenth Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Nineteenth Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created to give everyone the right to express their opinion. In 1993, the General Assembly of the United

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<sup>5</sup>UNESCO. "Threats to Freedom of Press: Violence, Disinformation & Censorship."

Nations created the World Press Freedom Day in respect of the work that journalists do for the Nineteenth Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since then, World Press Freedom Day has been celebrated on the third of May. This celebration has helped journalists to come together and unite in their struggle to support their freedom of speech. World Press Freedom Day has allowed for journalists to entirely dedicate a day to sharing their stories with each other. This sharing of stories helps journalists to unite in their common struggle.

UNESCO has an executive board and a general conference. The executive board meets every six months and consists of fifty-eight members to handle the basic management of UNESCO. The general conference of UNESCO only meets every two years. At their twenty-ninth general conference in 1997, UNESCO called upon the Director General to condemn all forms of violence against journalists. Resolution 29, entitled “Condemnation of Violence against Journalists,” was adopted at this conference. This initiative helped kick-start UNESCO’s mission to protect journalists against violence. After the adoption of Resolution 29, UNESCO implemented a six year strategy broken into two year cycles to review their attempts concerning the safety of journalists. The five key approaches to address and implement in this resolution were to promote the safety of media-specialists, encourage media diversity, regulate media law, raise awareness, and advance ethical standard setting. Resolution 29 focuses on the support of freedom of speech in order to protect journalists. During the World Press Day of 1997, UNESCO created the UNESCO Freedom Prize, also known as Guillermo Cano Isaza prize, was created to award anyone that promotes the freedom of expression,

especially in the face of danger. Since then, the implications of Resolution 29 have been to protect journalists everywhere, especially in the face of violent threats.<sup>6</sup>

### *Past Solutions*

Journalists need to have freedom of press and expression in order to perform their job. In the United States, freedom of press is protected in the first amendment. With this protection, journalists are able to freely write about the unethical events that they uncover so that people are able to take action against these unethical events or conditions. A famous example of a journalist being able to safely use their freedom of press to make people aware of an unethical condition is that of Upton Sinclair for his novel *The Jungle*.<sup>7</sup> This novel exposed the unsafe and unsanitary working conditions of the meat-packaging industry of Chicago during the early 1900s. *The Jungle* shocked the American public with its graphic descriptions. As a result of this novel, new food safety laws were passed in the United States. Sinclair's piece of writing did not receive any sort of backlash from the United States government due to the protection that they received from the first amendment. Laws that protect journalists freedom of speech and expression do work and need to be passed nationally and internationally by the United Nations in order to support Journalists in their work. As a result of protecting freedom of speech, those who commit acts of violence against journalists practicing their freedom of speech can be prosecuted for their crimes. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, nine of the twelve journalists that died in the United States between 1992 and 2022 were murdered.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>"About the Prize." UNESCO.org. Accessed November 21, 2022.

<sup>7</sup>Sinclair, Upton. *Jungle*. S.l.: SELTZER BOOKS, 2018.

<sup>8</sup>"Committee to Protect Journalists." Committee to Protect Journalists. Accessed November 21, 2022.

From April twenty-nine to May third of 1991, a collection of statements were put together by African newspaper journalists. These statements promoted freedom of speech and press for African journalists in Windhoek, Namibia. These statements came to be known as the Declaration of Windhoek. This very event inspired the United Nations to create the World Press Freedom Day in honor of the Declaration of Windhoek to protect journalists and their right to expression. The right of expression of journalists, as discussed in this declaration, allows for issues to be brought to the attention of the public and dealt with through information. These issues include that of HIV/AIDS, economic instability, poverty, etc. The Windhoek Declaration emphasizes the need for the government to be supportive of journalists and their other citizens of their right of expression. While governments should be supportive of their citizens rights to freedom of expression, governments should also avoid any control over the media.<sup>9</sup>

### *Current Issues and Proposed Solutions*

On April 22, 2012, the United Nations chief of executive board endorsed the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists. Since that endorsement, UNESCO has embraced this plan of action and has referenced it in resolutions (official opinion statements made by the United Nations). Since its initial introduction, there have been two reviews made of this document. The first was made in 2014 and the second made in 2017. In its 2017 review, UNESCO helped create a questionnaire for stakeholders concerning the safety of journalists. Comments made on how to strengthen the UN Plan

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<sup>9</sup>“Declaration of Windhoek - European Parliament.”

of Action and Safety of Journalists were included in the revision of this document in 2017.<sup>10</sup>

The Plan of the Action on the Safety of Journalists contains six areas of focus. These six areas of focus include that of “raising awareness, standard setting and policy making, monitoring and reporting, capacity building, and research”. UNESCO focuses on raising awareness by establishing public holidays; such as World Press Day, International Day for Universal Access to Information, and International Day To End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists. These days serve to make people aware of the harm that could occur to journalists and the importance of the information that they provide. After people are made aware of this issue, UNESCO then encourages countries to pass laws in order to protect journalists. Since the passage of The Plan of the Action on the Safety of Journalists, around fifty countries have passed laws or strengthened their current laws to further protect journalists. Laws that were passed to protect journalists help bring justice to those journalists, however many of the killers are not caught because of the uncertainty of investigations. Increased surveillance on journalists could help to keep them safe and, as a last resort, to be able to catch their killers. Increasing surveillance and documentation of journalists have been proposed to increase journalists safety and guarantee post-mortem justice. UNESCO aids the entirety of the UN in recording data recording any attacks that have occurred on journalists. The purpose of data collection concerning attacks against journalists is for the data to be observed and learned from so that people see patterns of how to protect journalists from future attacks For instance, keeping track of where journalists are mostly likely to be killed or what time (day or night) they are most likely to be killed

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<sup>10</sup>OHCHR. “UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.”

could help journalist learn what environments to avoid. When these attacks occur, the UN assists in helping those that were affected by these attacks by training those who were affected on how to cope.

Women journalists are more likely to experience violence than male journalists due to the added factor of their gender. Elections are times of increased violence against journalists in general, keeping in consideration that women journalists are more likely to experience violence during times of elections than men. Non-binary and trans journalists, like women, are also more likely to experience violence due to their gender than men. However, more data currently exists concerning violence against women journalists. During elections, journalists cover the lives and values of candidates. This coverage of candidates might reveal negative aspects of a candidate, harming their chances to be elected. In response to negative press coverage, there are acts of violence committed against journalists. These acts of violence can include that of death or rape threats, actual death or rape, gendered hate speech, sexual assault, doxxing, and so on of journalists.<sup>11</sup> UNESCO has currently been aiding in the effort to educate women journalists on how to avoid these violent attacks. In one example, UNESCO has helped run education programs in the Philippines to educate women journalists prior to upcoming local and national elections. All the women that came to this training came from areas with high conflict, such as Laona del Sur or Baslin. This training was to prepare women journalists on how to remain safe from violent attacks while they attempt to share the most truthful information possible. In this training, women were made more aware of legal and therapy resources available for them. UNESCO has helped train judges in bringing justice to cases concerning crimes against journalists.

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<sup>11</sup> “Women Journalists Face Violence and Sexualized Attacks - Un Expert- #JournalistsToo – Women Journalists Speak Out.” OHCHR, November 25, 2021.

UNESCO also provides group therapy sessions to women, men, and nonbinary journalists in order for them to vocalize their issues and to receive support for them from trained therapists. These sessions especially have received positive feedback from women journalists concerning their ability to help them cope with their fears of violence. Nidal Al-Wheidi, a photojournalist, told the United Nations that “it was an opportunity to release what was inside of us.”<sup>12</sup>

With the war occurring in Ukraine, it is necessary that journalists are protected so that truth and potentially life-saving information is provided to the citizens of Ukraine. UNESCO’s communication and information has been providing resources to journalists in Ukraine to make sure that they have the proper resources to protect themselves during war. The general threat that exists towards journalists in Ukraine and in wars in general is the threat of physical harm from reporting in combat zones. These threats of physical harm can be similar to that of a soldier, since journalists are in the same areas as soldiers reporting conflict. Journalists, like soldiers, have the threat of being shot at or caught in bombing explosions. Around one hundred and twenty-five bullet-proof vests and helmets have been provided to journalists in Ukraine. UNESCO has also been working to relocate Ukraine’s two journalists unions, the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine and the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine, to safer parts of the country to ensure necessary infrastructure will not be damaged to where they cannot do their job. UNESCO makes sure to respond quickly to the need requests made by these journalists unions.

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<sup>12</sup> Unesco. “Women Journalists on the Frontline.” UNESCO.org. Accessed November 21, 2022.

### *Questions to Consider*

1. How can UNESCO incentivize countries' to develop and implement laws that protect journalists? Could UNESCO possibly provide more voting power to those countries who implement laws that protect journalists?
2. Beyond promoting education, what active measures can UNESCO and individual nations take to assure journalists' safety? How can the international community collaborate on creating international or national laws within their countries to protect journalists?
3. It is necessary for the international community and UNESCO to have a common definition of what rights journalists have. How should the international community come up with an agreed concept of what qualifies as a journalist's right?

### *Suggested Links*

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/safety-journalists/observatory>

<https://cpj.org/data/killed/americas/usa/>

## Topic B: Protecting and Promoting Educational Institutions

### *Introduction*

Education is important in order to promote the future of the world, especially during times of crisis. If education were to stop during a time of crisis, then the current and future progress of a nation would be halted. The progress of a nation will be greatly delayed by such crises. Education needs to be resumed back to normal after a time of crisis. Education allows for citizens of all age ranges and skill levels to learn practices that help maintain and progress the economic state of their nation.

One factor is academic education, as in education in subjects including mathematics, literature, science, history, political science, etc. A less prominent but equally important factor includes job instruction and socially development education. The social development aspect of education can provide information on essential factors of life including birth control, healthcare access, and voting registration to people of all ages. In order for someone to participate in the economy of their nation, they need to be educated on necessary job skills. In order to manage stores, someone might need to know how to perform arithmetic and accounting procedures. In order for someone to know how to promote the sales of products, they need to receive some form of education on the construction of these items.

With this information, UNESCO believes that education is a basic human right because it is necessary to raise or keep people out of poverty while supporting the sustainable development of a nation's economy. This sustainable development is supported by providing education so that people can learn necessary skills to work and

support themselves and thus not rely on their governments for support. In addition, the creation of a self-sustaining workforce enables nations to attain independence from fickle foreign help. UNESCO recognizes that around 244 million children and young people are unable to attend any form of educational institution, most commonly formal education institutions, due to some form of crisis.<sup>13</sup>

These crises include economic, political, or natural disasters. UNESCO believes that, in order to lift youth out of crises and poverty, education needs to be provided to all. Economic crises include the lack of funds for schooling, whether from a student or institutional source. Political crises can include violent conflict preventing people from attending educational institutions. In wartime, the threat of safety while traveling to an education institution or the destruction or damage of education institutions hinders education. Natural crises can include educational institutions being destroyed by a flooding or fire, but a natural crisis that prevents education could also be a pandemic or epidemic that makes it unsafe for people to attend school. It is the job of UNESCO to work through these issues in order to provide education to all people.

### *Historical Context*

After the second world war, UNESCO helped war-devastated countries to rebuild and maintain their educational and cultural institutions by promoting the diversity of cultures in the face of intolerance and prejudice. UNESCO also took part in helping countries that struggled to maintain or rebuild their cultures in the aftermath of colonization. The aftermath of the Second World War encouraged the decolonization of

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<sup>13</sup> Unesco, and UNESCO Right to Education Initiative. The Right to Education.

multiple countries. Twenty-six countries that were decolonized joined UNESCO and received support to help rebuild their own educational and cultural institutions after having another country dominate their culture for so long.<sup>14</sup> UNESCO promoted decolonization through education concerning cultures. One of the focuses of UNESCO is to promote cultural education. UNESCO has achieved that by promoting diversity in education topics and diversity in those who can be educated through initiatives such as Education for All.

Other organizations within the United Nations have launched initiatives to help improve education for children. An example of this is that of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI). CFCI was launched by UNICEF in 1996. The goal of this initiative is to create a safer and more equitable environment for children within cities. This initiative allows children to be more involved in the decisions of their local governments. It has helped children become more involved with their communities. Teenagers are able to participate in local government by volunteering.

During World War II, cities were in constant danger of air attacks. This would disrupt the education of children in obvious factors of the destruction of these education systems, risks with attending school and the need for students to go underground at times. In West Ham, there were supposed to be 60 council schools open but during the worst point there were only 16 open. 430,000 children were getting no education at all. As a solution, England and Wales created the legislation of the Education Act 1944 - this resulted in the school leaving age to be raised from 11 years to being at 15 years.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>HistoryExtra. "How Did WW2 Affect Schools in London?" HistoryExtra. HistoryExtra, August 30, 2022.

<sup>15</sup>"The Education Act of 1944 - UK Parliament." Accessed November 21, 2022.

In 1953, UNESCO launched the Scheme of Co-ordinated Experimental Activities in Education for Living in a World Community with 33 secondary schools within 16 countries - the goal was to empower schools to drive innovation for global citizenship, intercultural understanding and sustainability, and knowledge sharing and partnerships between countries and schools and building capacity for innovative teaching and participatory learning. By 2022, the organization is still working together and has grown to be made out of 120,000 schools within 182 countries together.<sup>16</sup>

### *Past Solutions*

UNESCO was established as a result of both world wars in hopes of preventing another war by promoting a peaceful, international dialogue through the means of education. The founders of UNESCO believed that in order for a peaceful international dialogue to be maintained, there would need to be education concerning freedom of expression and a respect for human rights.<sup>17</sup> UNESCO works with educators to promote human rights by debunking false theories regarding various populations. The projects that UNESCO has promoted with the educators they have worked with include The Universal Copyright Convention (1952), the Man and the Biosphere Programme (1971), World Heritage Convention (1972), and The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003).<sup>18</sup> All of these programs have played a part in promoting ethical education throughout the world. The Universal Copyright Convention protects copyright internationally in order to encourage people to make new inventions and share those inventions to the public since they will be able to make profits off of

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<sup>16</sup>“What You Need to Know about UNESCO Associated Schools Network.” UNESCO.org.

<sup>17</sup>“UNESCO -- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization -- International Affairs Office.” Home. US Department of Education (ED),

<sup>18</sup> “History of UNESCO.” UNESCO.org.

their inventions. The Man and the Biosphere Programme promotes a mutually beneficial relationship between people and their environments. The World Heritage Convention focuses on promoting the protection of cultural sites around the world. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has promoted ethical education by promoting education concerning other cultures.

In 1990, the “World Conference on Education for All” was supported by UNESCO, other committees within the United Nations, and the World Bank. With this conference came the establishment of Education for All. Education for All was created to improve education around the world in order to promote international peace to increase mutual understanding and to decrease poverty. The six goals of Education for All include:

1. Improving and expanding upon early childhood education and care,
2. Ensuring that children of all genders and ethnicities have access to education by 2015 (as of 1990),
3. Bettering equitability within education,
4. Expanding adult literacy by 2015,
5. Advancing gender equality in basic education, and
6. Enhancing education access to literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Yi. “Education for All (EFA).” International Bureau of Education, May 25, 2016. <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/e/education-all-efa>.

### *Current Issues and Proposed Solutions*

Currently, UNESCO is focusing their efforts on their Education 2030 Agenda. Through their Education 2030 Agenda hopes to eradicate poverty through seventeen sustainable development goals by 2030. The overall goal of this agenda is reflective of the same goals promoted over thirty years ago during the world conference on Education for All. This goal is to promote equal access to education. The goals of this initiative have been made more difficult with the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>20</sup> COVID-19 has made it unsafe for billions of children to attend school. As of 2020 to 2021, COVID-19 deprived around 147 million children from attending education in person.<sup>21</sup> A lot of children could only receive education online, a platform where many of them struggled to learn. Many children around the world did not have access to a computer or the internet to learn online, so they had no choice but to fall behind in their education. This lack of technology has only worsened inequalities for children all around the world, leading children to be at greater risk of poverty in the future. UNESCO is further tasked with fixing these inequalities. Of the 147 million children that could not receive in-person instruction, around 24 million of them may never be able to or willing to return to school.<sup>22</sup> With the return to school after the height of the pandemic, many schools are struggling to become re-equipped with basics. Globally, as of 2019-20, around twenty-five percent of schools lacked basic sanitation methods, drinking water, and electricity while fifty percent lack computers and internet access.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “Goal 4 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” United Nations.

<sup>21</sup> “With 23 Countries Yet to Fully Reopen Schools, Education Risks Becoming 'Greatest Divider' as Covid-19 Pandemic Enters Third Year.” UNICEF. Accessed November 21, 2022.

<sup>22</sup> “Covid-19: Education Risks Becoming 'Greatest Divider' | | 1UN News.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed November 21, 2022

<sup>23</sup> “1 In 3 People Globally Do Not Have Access to Safe Drinking Water – UNICEF, Who.” World Health Organization. World Health Organization. Accessed November 21, 2022.

On August 4th, 2020, there was a combination of blasts that ended up destroying 163 private and public schools within Beirut, Lebanon. This ended up affecting the learning of 85,000 students. The Qatar Fund for Development financed the action for UNESCO to cooperate with Lebanese University, American University of Beirut, and Saint Joseph University to rehabilitate 100 universities that were previously destroyed.<sup>24</sup> It took a month for the minorly damaged schools to be restored - minorly damaged was defined by repairs being limited to windows, doors, and glass. Meanwhile, students who were in destroyed schools could not take classes for five months, required to just return at the beginning of the next semester. This was a primary example of both humanitarian disaster of a pandemic and bombing occurring within the same period.<sup>25</sup> With the destruction of schools and the economic crisis from COVID-19, many parents were forced to put their children into public school, even though public schools were already close to the maximum capacity.

United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) aims to ensure that girls and boys have an equal opportunity to school - this organization deals with 370,000 children globally and works within various themes and contexts. This is made up of a variety of smaller organizations by country. For example, Social Changemakers and Innovators (SOCHAI) is from Nepal and focuses to support girls in reaching their full potential in life by improving the intergeneration well-being. SOCHAI has reached out to 6,000 women. Brac is another example from Bangladesh which empowers women in situations of poverty, illiteracy and disease. LEARN is an organization from Afghanistan that seeks

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<sup>24</sup>Service, Indo-Asian News. "UNESCO to Help Rehabilitate 100 Schools Destroyed by Beirut Blasts." The Siasat Daily, June 11, 2021.

<sup>25</sup>"UNESCO to Fund Restoration of 159 Schools Damaged by Beirut Port Blast." awsat. Accessed November 21, 2022.

the quality education and healthcare for children - this has reached out to over 7,000 people. Thinking Classroom Foundation is an organization monitored by Myanmar and Thailand, the organization helps provide education through critical thinking and curriculum development. Other countries with smaller organizations that partake in UNGEI are: Brazil, India, Lebanon, Pakistan, Peru, Nigeria, Madagascar, Mexico, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Myanmar, Thailand, Uganda, Yemen, Cambodia, Senegal.<sup>26</sup> Through actions in organizations such as UNGEI, the UNESCO data of 2022 demonstrates that the difference in rate of girls and boys out of school has been reduced to zero. Initially, the gender gap was at 2.5 percentage points amongst primary school children and 3.9 amongst second school children.<sup>27</sup>

There are four million boys and girls within Ukraine who are faced with the struggles of going to school during wartime. The war has resulted in thousands of schools across Ukraine being damaged or destroyed - less than 60 percent of schools within Ukraine are deemed safe for reopening. More than 1.7 million children and caregivers have benefitted from UNICEF mental health and psychosocial support interventions - additionally, UNICEF has been working with the governments and partners involved to make sure Ukraine refugee children either enrolled in school or have access to online learning.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>“Global Feminist Coalition for Gender Transformative Education.” UNGEI. Accessed November 21.

<sup>27</sup> “UNESCO Chief Calls for Transforming Education, with 244 Million Still out of School | | 1UN News.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed November 21, 2022.

<sup>28</sup> “UNESCO Chief Calls for Transforming Education, with 244 Million Still out of School | | 1UN News.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed November 21, 2022.

*Questions to Consider*

1. How can UNESCO aid countries in rebuilding after colonization without forcing a dominant countries' cultures of the United Nations on the rebuilding of nations?
2. How can UNESCO aid countries in providing material items to countries still suffering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic while supporting sustainable development?
3. How can education promote diversity while allowing for more people to participate in education?
4. What education levels should UNESCO focus their efforts on supporting? Should higher level education be included after or alongside primary education in UNESCO's efforts to improve education?

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