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Update for the United Nations Children’s Fund

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Committee Overview

Recent Developments

Since the publication of the Background Guides, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has continued to work on some of the most pressing children’s issues. This update will review the most recent session of the Executive Board of UNICEF, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and UNICEF’s involvement in the ongoing crisis in Syria.

The Executive Board held its second regular session from 8 to 10 September 2015.¹ In UNICEF’s Executive Board’s published annual report, it highlighted the priorities of the past year and reviewed the Board’s first and second regular sessions, in addition to its annual session of 2015.² At the session, various delegates reviewed the progress made by their country programs and updated the Executive Board on progress their countries had made.³ In reviewing the work throughout the year, the Executive Board congratulated UNICEF particularly for its work in response to the Ebola outbreak.⁴ Various speakers at the session applauded UNICEF as a good example of how to respond to an emergency with coordination and a breaking down of “the artificial divide between humanitarian and development work.”⁵ Delegations at the second regular session also expressed their views that humanitarian crises would likely continue to be a large priority for UNICEF in the coming year.⁶

The SDGs, adopted in September 2015 and officially in action in January 2016, were an important theme discussed by UNICEF in the past several months.⁷ UNICEF has expressed its support for the SDGs and committed itself to working towards these ambitious goals “in partnership with governments, civil society, business, academic and the United Nations family,” in addition to working with youth.⁸ The Fund also recently reaffirmed the importance of children in meeting the Goals and in achieving a more sustainable and prosperous future.⁹ At the second regular session in September, delegations emphasized the importance of achieving the SDGs for children, while placing specific emphasis on “the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children,” which “included children affected by armed conflict and other humanitarian crises, including mass migration, and children who were unaccompanied refugees, living with disabilities, or were born into poverty.”¹⁰

Some of the goals explicitly mention children, including Goal 2, Target 2, which prioritizes ending malnutrition and stunted growth in children under the age of 5; Goal 3, Target 2, which pledges to “end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age;” and Goal 11, Target 2, which stresses the importance of safe and public green spaces, particularly for children.¹¹ Even those goals that do not make specific reference to children are undoubtedly important in the lives and futures of today’s youth; for example, SDGs that are meant to improve the environment and curb climate change mean that, if successfully met, “children may inherit a healthier planet.”¹² The SDGs also put a special emphasis on equity and specifically gender equality, as well as education, economic policies, health services, and water and sanitation resources.¹³

Additionally, one of the biggest concerns recently for UNICEF has been the crisis in Syria.¹⁴ Some of UNICEF’s work to help the children affected by this humanitarian crisis has been supporting schools in Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon in providing education to refugee children, and in working with other learning initiatives where access to formal schools is not available.¹⁵ In Syria, UNICEF has worked with governments of the United Kingdom and Japan

¹ Taylor, *Anticipating the Sustainable Development Goals: UNICEF Executive Board discusses funding and programming*, 2015.

² UNICEF, *Report on the first and second regular sessions and annual session of 2015 (E/2015/34/Rev.1)*, 2015, p. 47.

³ UNICEF, *Report on the first and second regular sessions and annual session of 2015 (E/2015/34/Rev.1)*, 2015.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

⁸ UNICEF, *Global Goals for Every Child*, 2015, p. 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ UNICEF, *Report on the first and second regular sessions and annual session of 2015 (E/2015/34/Rev.1)*, 2015, p. 49.

¹¹ UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹² UNICEF, *Global Goals for Every Child*, 2015, p. 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Al-Masri, *Syria Crisis Monthly Humanitarian Highlights & Results – September 2015*, 2015.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

to provide access to water and sanitation in schools, particularly in cities where large numbers of internationally displaced children are currently living.¹⁶ For example, UNICEF workers have handed out bars of soap alongside information on proper hand washing and sanitation, in addition to repairing and cleaning toilets and providing clean water.¹⁷ UNICEF employees have also worked to provide protection services for children in transit through Turkey, most of whom are Syrian refugees.¹⁸ Finally, UNICEF has sought to protect Syrian children from cold weather conditions since the beginning of winter, providing necessary items like jackets and blankets, helping children, who are especially vulnerable to respiratory infections.¹⁹ Various international conflicts will likely be a high priority for UNICEF in 2016; the committee reported that in 2015, over “16 million babies were born in conflict zones,” representing 1 in 8 births globally, including in Afghanistan, South Sudan, Syria, and the Central African Republic.²⁰

The Executive Board held its first regular session of 2016 on 2 to 4 February 2016.²¹ The results of this meeting reflect some of what the priorities of the upcoming year will be.²² Going forward, UNICEF will continue to address significant issues related to the rights of children in the international community, including child survival, education, and protecting children during humanitarian crises.²³

¹⁶ Saker, *UNICEF/UK AID partnership improves water and sanitation in Syrian schools*, 2016.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*; Children of Syria, *In Syria, UNICEF and Government of Japan partnership provide schools with improved drinking water, sanitation facilities and hygiene education*, 2015.

¹⁸ Al-Masri, *Syria Crisis Monthly Humanitarian Highlights & Results – September 2015*, 2015.

¹⁹ Hasen & Mebrahtu, *UNICEF provides life-saving winter assistance to one million children in Syria*, 2015; UNICEF, *UNICEF plans to reach 2.6 million Syrian children with winter supplies and cash*, 2015.

²⁰ UNICEF, *More than 16 million babies born into conflict this year: UNICEF*, 2015.

²¹ UNICEF, *First regular session 2016*, 2016.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ UNICEF, *UNICEF*.

Annotated Bibliography

United Nations Children’s Fund. (2015). *Global Goals for Every Children* [Position Paper]. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: http://www.unicef.org/post2015/files/Global_goals_for_every_child_2_pager_Sept_2015_.pdf

This two-page document was written by UNICEF to draw explicit connections between the newly-adopted SDGs and children. In addition to providing a general overview of the compelling reasons that children must be a priority in implementing the new development agenda, they also draw linkages between specific themes and children, including sustainability, health, poverty, and education. This resource will be helpful for delegates in understanding generally how issues related to children connect to the SDGs.

United Nations Children’s Fund, Executive Board. (2015). *Report on the first and second regular sessions and annual session of 2015 (E/2015/34/Rev.1)*. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: www.undocs.org/E/2015/34/Rev.1

This annual report published by the Executive Board of UNICEF provides notes and information about all three meetings that the board held in 2015. It is a key resource for delegates in reviewing the work of UNICEF in the past year, as well as to learn more about the priorities for the coming year. Most recently, the Board met for its second regular session, the discussions of which are summarized in the paper. They covered such topics as the SDGs, humanitarian work, UNICEF’s financing, and country programs.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2015). *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: www.undocs.org/a/res/70/1

The SDGs are a highly important document in the UN’s development agenda for the next 15 years, and were adopted in September 2015. It is critical for delegates to understand the new goals and objectives underpinning the UN’s work, which are all articulated in the resolution adopted by the General Assembly. Delegates can consider for themselves which priorities they think are the most important for UNICEF to consider at the conference, and can look at how the goals all relate to children.

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Children of Syria. (2015, December 21). *In Syria, UNICEF and Government of Japan partnership provide schools with improved drinking water, sanitation facilities and hygiene education*. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: <http://www.childrenofsyria.info/2015/12/21/in-syria-unicef-and-government-of-japan-partnership-provide-schools-with-improved-drinking-water-sanitation-facilities-and-hygiene-education/>

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Taylor, K. (2015, September 15). *Anticipating the Sustainable Development Goals: UNICEF Executive Board discusses funding and programming* [Article]. United Nations Children’s Fund. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: www.unicef.org/about/execboard/index_83179.html

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United Nations Children's Fund. (2015, December 17). *More than 16 million babies born into conflict this year: UNICEF* [Press Release]. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: www.unicef.org/media/media_86560.html

United Nations Children's Fund, Executive Board. (2015). *Report on the first and second regular sessions and annual session of 2015 (E/2015/34/Rev.1)*. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: www.undocs.org/E/2015/34/Rev.1

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United Nations Children's Fund, Executive Board. (2016). *First regular session 2016* [Website]. Retrieved 1 February 2016 from: www.unicef.org/about/execboard/index_86293.html

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventieth session. (2015). *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)* [Resolution]. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1>

I. Advancing Children's Rights in the Digital Age

Recent Developments

Advancing children's rights in the digital age has been a very important issue for the international community in recent months. New efforts include online child protection, access to information and communications technologies (ICTs), and the linkage between ICTs and development.²⁴ Although the Executive Board of the United Nations (UN) Children's Fund (UNICEF) did not explicitly discuss the topic, other UN bodies and the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre were engaged in relevant activities.²⁵

In November 2015, Global Child Forum and UNICEF presented the Children's Rights and Business Atlas.²⁶ The Atlas is an online tool that provides businesses with the opportunity to identify, understand, and assess the impact on children's rights by their operations.²⁷ The Atlas includes data on 198 countries and 10 business sectors, including the ICT sector.²⁸ It also conveys information to businesses to raise awareness about children's rights.²⁹

In addition, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a specialized agency of the UN, published its annual *Measuring the Information Society Report* in November 2015.³⁰ Evaluating the progress of the "Connect 2020" agenda, the report predicts that while 56% of households are likely to have Internet access by 2020, which is above the target of 55%, the goal of ensuring Internet access for 60% of people worldwide will not be achieved.³¹ Although all 167 Member States improved their ICT Development Index (IDI) values in the last five years, further progress and efforts remain necessary.³²

In December 2015, in cooperation with the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, the Global Commission on Internet Governance published a paper on children's rights and Internet governance.³³ The report highlights the importance of protecting children's rights in the online world.³⁴ Although one-third of all Internet users are children, most legal approaches to consumer protection assume that the Internet user is an adult.³⁵ The paper recommends constructive dialogue between Internet governance and child rights organizations to develop mechanisms, such as codes of practices, guidelines, and monitoring mechanisms, to enable children's participation online while at the same time guaranteeing child protection.³⁶

Also in December, 10 years after the UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), delegates from Member States met at WSIS+10 to discuss recent developments related to ICTs and to identify new priorities and innovations.³⁷ The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), in cooperation with ITU, enabled the discussion between Member States on a road map for incorporating ICTs into new development strategies.³⁸ In the outcome document on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of WSIS, Member States emphasized the importance of paying particular attention to challenges for children.³⁹

²⁴ UN DPI, *With high-level forum, UN Assembly aims to narrow digital divide, harness power of information technology*, 2015.

²⁵ Livingstone, et al., *One in Three: Internet Governance and Children's Rights*, 2015, p. vi.

²⁶ Global Child Forum, *New Digital Tool Helps Business Analyse Impact On Children's Rights*, 2015.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ UN DPI, *Some 3.2 billion people now online, but number still falls short of Internet target – UN report*, 2015.

³¹ UN ITU, *Measuring the Information Society Report 2015*, 2015, pp. 6-9.

³² Ibid., p. 44.

³³ Livingstone et al., *One in Three: Internet Governance and Children's Rights*, 2015, p. vi.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 51.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

³⁷ UN DPI, *With high-level forum, UN Assembly aims to narrow digital divide, harness power of information technology*, 2015.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ UN General Assembly, *Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (A/70/L.33)*, 2015.

In January 2016, the World Bank Group published the *World Development Report* on “Digital Dividends.”⁴⁰ The report declares that the world is currently undergoing “the greatest information and communications revolution in human history.”⁴¹ Likewise, it highlights the importance of ICTs for education, for example, through video conferencing or for childcare registration via the Internet on government websites.⁴²

In recent months, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also been working at the regional level on strengthening children’s rights with regard to the use of ICTs.⁴³ In November 2015, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) on Violence against Children, Marta Santos Pais, participated in a regional conference hosted in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and organized by Chicos.net, RedNatic (a network of children’s rights organizations in Latin America promoting safe use of ICTs), and Save the Children.⁴⁴ The conference facilitated a discussion with more than 200 children on strategies to increase effective and safe access of ICTs and to exchange opinions on “digital citizenship and digital literacy.”⁴⁵ The opinions expressed by the participating children supported recommendations from the SRSG’s 2014 report on “ICTs, the Internet and Violence against Children,” such as the importance of encouraging dialogue among teachers, governments, and social workers on this issue.⁴⁶

UNICEF has continued to strengthen its efforts in cooperation with NGOs and other UN bodies to ensure that children’s rights in a digital age are being addressed.⁴⁷ As the number of children using ICTs is rapidly increasing, considering the role of ICTs globally is highly important, and UNICEF will play a major role in advancing children’s rights in the digital age.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ The World Bank, *World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends*, 2016.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 155.

⁴³ UN SRSG, *SRSG Santos Pais calls for protection of children from online violence at Digital Literacy Forum in Argentina*, 2015.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ European NGO Alliance for Child Safety Online, *Annual Report 2013/2014*, 2015; UN ITU, *ICT Facts & Figures*, 2015.

⁴⁸ Sozio, et al., *Children and Internet use: A comparative analysis of Brazil and seven European countries*, 2015, p. 4.

Annotated Bibliography

European NGO Alliance for Child Safety Online. (2015). *Annual Report 2013/2014*. Retrieved 5 January 2016 from: <http://www.enacso.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Annual-Report-2013-2014.pdf>

The report, published in November 2015, summarizes the third project phase (2012-2014) of the European NGO Alliance for Child Safety Online (eNACSO), which aims to secure children's rights on the Internet. eNACSO is an alliance of NGOs and 28 EU and non-EU states. This report summarizes its objectives for 2015-2016, which include raising awareness of children's rights on the Internet within the EU. Delegates should use this as example to find similar networks in their regions and consider how such alliances might be implemented or strengthened.

Livingstone, S., et al. (2015). *One in Three: Internet Governance and Children's Rights*. Global Commission on Internet Governance Paper Series No. 22. Retrieved 5 January 2016 from:

https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/no22_2.pdf

By emphasizing that 33% of Internet users are children, the authors of this paper highlight that Internet governance bodies have a responsibility to address children's rights in the digital age. The paper, developed with the support of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, highlights that children's digital rights cannot be distinguished from their "offline" rights. The paper includes six recommendations for how Internet governance bodies can include children's rights in their policies and activities. Delegates might think about whether their countries' Internet governance bodies address this issue or how the recommendations can be implemented on the national and international stage.

Sozio, E.S., et al. (2015). *Children and Internet use: A comparative analysis of Brazil and seven European countries*. Net Children Go Mobile. Retrieved 5 January 2016 from: <http://netchildrengomobile.eu/ncgm/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/FullReportBrazilNCGM.pdf>

This study was conducted as part of the Net Children Go Mobile project, which uses quantitative and qualitative methods to examine changing conditions for the safety of children Internet users. The report outlines a cross-country comparison on Internet access between the ICT Kids Online Brazil survey and seven countries in Europe. The results demonstrate differences in accessing the Internet and the important impact of socioeconomic factors on Internet access. The report provides recommendations to families, media, awareness campaigns, governments, and industries. Delegates should think about how to implement these recommendations and further expand the recommendations with original ideas.

United Nations, International Telecommunication Union. (2015). *ICT Facts & Figures* [Fact Sheet]. Retrieved 5 January 2016 from: <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2015.pdf>

This fact sheet provides a current estimation and update of relevant data regarding ICTs at the end of 2015. This includes the number of households with different types of ICT access and a diagram of the development between 2000 and 2015. Regional statistics indicate that in Europe, 82.1% of households have Internet access, compared to only 10.7% in Africa. In addition, for more than 40 selected countries, an overview on broadband speed is provided. This source will assist delegates with identifying regions where Internet-based educational or protection approaches can be used to promote children's rights.

United Nations, International Telecommunication Union. (2015). *Measuring the Information Society Report 2015*. Retrieved 5 January 2016 from: <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/misr2015/MISR2015-w5.pdf>

This annual report provides a worldwide overview of ICTs that summarizes the latest developments. The report looks to inform the ICT policy discussion in Member States by examining their performances in the field of ICT and demonstrating possible improvement opportunities. The report highlights that only 6.7% of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) households have access to the Internet, compared to 80% of households in developed countries. In addition, the report includes the 2015 ICT Development Index (IDI) and analyzes the developments in the field of ICTs between 2010 and 2015. Delegates can use the report to gain understanding of ICTs. In addition, the report is particularly useful in assessing the gap between LDCs and more developed countries.

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II. Realizing the Rights of Indigenous Children

Recent Developments

In recent months, the international community has continued its efforts to advance the rights of indigenous peoples and children globally. A wide range of relevant topics has been discussed, including equitable opportunities for all children, extending technological advancements to all groups of a population, ensuring that the rights of indigenous peoples are upheld in global climate change policies, and the importance of revitalizing and preserving indigenous languages.⁴⁹ Along with other UN agencies, governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations (UN) Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has actively worked to address these issues.

In November 2015, UNICEF released *For Every Child, a Fair Chance: The Promise of Equity*, a report that emphasizes the critical need to ensure equal access of all children to economic development opportunities.⁵⁰ The report highlighted that inequality is costly and can take a toll across multiple generations, as well as that children from impoverished households are twice as likely to die before the age of five, compared to children in affluent households.⁵¹ Notably, indigenous children are disproportionately vulnerable to poverty and inequality, thus rendering these grave statistics a stark reality.⁵² Importantly, the report holds that poverty can be reversed and children are not predestined to a cycle of unequal opportunity.⁵³

UNICEF continues to support targeted action by national governments to support indigenous children and reverse cycles of exclusion and poverty.⁵⁴ In December 2015, UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake praised the Bulgarian government’s commitment to children.⁵⁵ Lake commended the government’s investment in early childhood development, particularly in regard to reaching the most marginalized groups of children, such as indigenous children.⁵⁶ Over the past 25 years, with UNICEF’s support, Bulgaria has made substantial strides for vulnerable children, thereby reducing high levels of poverty and social exclusion.⁵⁷

Other UN entities are also continuing to advance the rights of indigenous children. The UN General Assembly recently adopted resolution 70/137 on the “Promotion and protection of the rights of children.”⁵⁸ This resolution specifically reaffirms the importance of protecting marginalized populations, including indigenous children.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) is providing critical, national-level support for indigenous children through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Fund.⁶⁰ At present, the SDG Fund works in 18 countries worldwide, leading an “integrated approach” to development that emphasizes equitable economic growth; water, sanitation and hygiene-related issues; and food security for vulnerable populations.⁶¹

Indigenous peoples and children often have limited opportunities to participate in the information society.⁶² From 15 to 16 December 2015, government officials, NGOs, and representatives from the private sector convened for the UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on “the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World

⁴⁹ UNICEF, *For every child, a fair chance: The promise of equity*, 2015; UN SPFII, *World Summit on Information Society important for Indigenous Peoples*, 2015; UN SPFII, *Statement on COP21 by Permanent Forum Chair, Professor Megan Davis*, 2015; UN SPFII, *Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Languages in January 2016*, 2015.

⁵⁰ UNICEF, *For every child, a fair chance: The promise of equity*, 2015, pp. 2-7.

⁵¹ UNICEF, *Universal Children’s Day: Why fair matters*, 2015.

⁵² UN OHCHR, *Mandate of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations*, 2016.

⁵³ UNICEF, *For every child, a fair chance: The promise of equity*, 2015, pp. 10-22.

⁵⁴ UNICEF, *Closing the Gaps in Bulgaria: UNICEF urges greater investment in the youngest and most vulnerable children*, 2015.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ UN DPI, *General Assembly Adopts 64 Third Committee Texts Covering Issues Including Migrants, Children’s Rights, Human Rights Defenders*, 2015; UN General Assembly, *Resolutions: 70th session*.

⁵⁹ UN DPI, *General Assembly Adopts 64 Third Committee Texts Covering Issues Including Migrants, Children’s Rights, Human Rights Defenders*, 2015.

⁶⁰ UN DESA, *SDGFUND: Joining Efforts for Sustainable Development*.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² UN SPFII, *World Summit on Information Society important for Indigenous Peoples*, 2015.

Summit on the Information Society” (WSIS+10).⁶³ UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his opening speech, highlighted the importance of eliminating the accessibility gap to information and technology and establishing a “sustainable, equitable and connected world for all.”⁶⁴ Notably, paragraph 12 in the WSIS+10 outcome document specifically makes reference to the importance of including indigenous peoples.⁶⁵

Indigenous populations often bear the burden of climate change and have minimal resources to handle the associated challenges.⁶⁶ At the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), which was held from 30 November to 12 December 2015, indigenous populations lobbied for inclusive language that upholds and advances their human rights globally.⁶⁷ Ultimately, a landmark international agreement to cut carbon emissions was reached by Member States at the conclusion of COP21.⁶⁸

Notably, the vast majority of indigenous languages are in grave danger of extinction.⁶⁹ Indigenous languages are integral to protecting the heritage and identity of indigenous peoples.⁷⁰ Based on a recommendation from the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in 2015, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) coordinated an international expert group meeting on indigenous languages from 19 to 21 January 2016.⁷¹ Participants discussed strategies “to recover, use, revitalize and disseminate indigenous languages.”⁷² The introduction to the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* contains a “pledge that no one will be left behind” and that the international community “will endeavor to reach the furthest behind first.”⁷³ In its ongoing work to implement the SDGs, UNICEF will continue to address the diverse and widespread challenges frequently experienced by indigenous peoples and specifically children, who constitute a particularly vulnerable group.⁷⁴

⁶³ UN SPFII, *World Summit on Information Society important for Indigenous Peoples*, 2015.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ UN SPFII, *Statement on COP21 by Permanent Forum Chair, Professor Megan Davis*, 2015.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ UN SPFII, *Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Languages in January 2016*, 2015.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² UN SPFII, *International Expert Group Meeting on the theme Indigenous Languages*, 2016, p. 7.

⁷³ UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 3.

⁷⁴ UN SPFII, *Home*, 2015; Child Rights Connect, *About Child Rights Connect*.

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Child Rights Connect. (n.d.). *About Child Rights Connect* [Website]. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: <http://www.childrightsconnect.org/about-us/>

This website provides an overview of the most pressing global issues relating to the rights of the child. Child Rights Connect is a group of 84 NGOs working toward advancing the rights of the child as a collective global force. This source provides a synopsis of relevant issues disproportionately affecting indigenous children, such as violence against children, birth registrations, and armed conflict. Delegates should utilize this source to understand the obstacles inhibiting global progress for children broadly.

United Nations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2016). *Mandate of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations* [Website]. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IPeoples/Pages/MandateWGIP.aspx>

The Working Group on Indigenous Populations is a subsidiary body of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. This source from the Working Group is highly useful and provides a central location for relevant treaties, progress updates, and reports pertaining to indigenous populations. The Working Group includes experts, members of the Sub-Commission, governmental organizations, NGOs, and UN entities. Presently, this Working Group is one of the most widely recognized UN fora in the area of human rights. This website will provide delegates with critical information about indigenous rights in a centralized location.

United Nations Children's Fund. (2015). *For every child, a fair chance: The promise of equity* [Report]. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/For_every_child_a_fair_chance.pdf

This document provides an overview of UNICEF's work advancing equitable opportunities for all children globally. It highlights the importance of investing in the most vulnerable children, including children from impoverished households, girls, children with disabilities, migrants, and indigenous children, among various other groups. This analysis presents two main assertions with respect to closing the inequality gap. First, the cycle of inequality is neither unquarable nor unavoidable. Second, inaction is costly. Essentially, not adequately investing in equitable opportunities for all children leads to greater and unforeseen costs in the future, thereby negatively affecting the livelihoods of future generations. This report is highly useful and details policy suggestions that are essential in advancing the rights of indigenous children.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). *SDGFUND: Joining Efforts for Sustainable Development* [Website]. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/SDGfund>

The SDG Fund is a collaborative development system initiated by UNDP to support global development progress. This website provides relevant data and case studies that target vulnerable areas and attempt to reverse inequitable development trends. Many of these trends are related to promotion of the rights of the indigenous child. Each case study provides comprehensive information regarding the progress and status of children's rights. Delegates should review these reports to develop an understanding of the existing initiatives and respective outcomes.

United Nations, Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. (2015). *Home* [Website]. Retrieved 7 January 2016 from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/>

This website provides up-to-date information on the UN Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, as well as other international activities relating to indigenous populations. This website is particularly useful for staying apprised of breaking news with an impact on indigenous rights. Delegates should use this as a tool to understand current policy trends that affect indigenous children and as a basis to frame issues when considering respective country positions.

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III. Ending Child Marriage

Recent Developments

In recent months, the international community has continued to discuss the causes and effects of child marriage, as well as measures to eradicate it, and many partners achieved several milestones in relation to ending child marriage.⁷⁵ Although the Executive Board of the United Nations (UN) Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has not met since September 2015, much work has been done internationally on the subject of child marriage: Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have conducted additional research; Member States have worked on implementation of measures to eradicate child marriage; and the African Union (AU) hosted its first ever African Girls’ Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa, in which UNICEF participated.⁷⁶

In November 2015, the AU hosted its first ever African Girls’ Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa in Lusaka, Zambia.⁷⁷ This followed the May launch of the AU’s Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa.⁷⁸ The Summit was attended by Heads of State and Government, NGOs, Ministers, UN agencies, community leaders, and women and girls affected by child marriage.⁷⁹ The objectives of the meeting, as outlined in its concept document, were to secure commitments from stakeholders to accelerate ending child marriage, share the experiences of the countries that had already launched the campaign, and to have discussions with community leaders and affected women and girls on the successes and challenges of ending child marriage.⁸⁰ Participants of the Summit committed to ending child marriage in Africa by 2030, and made recommendations on how to achieve this.⁸¹

In December 2015, UNICEF and the NGO Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) independently released updated statistics on the prevalence and severity of child marriage across Africa, with UNICEF predicting that Africa will be home to almost half of the child brides in the world by 2050 if current trends continue.⁸² Human Rights Watch, an NGO that conducts research and advocates for human rights globally, also published information that analyzed causes and effects of child marriage, and made recommendations on how to best address it.⁸³ It recognized gaps in law enforcement and customary and religious beliefs as agents in perpetuating child marriage in Africa.⁸⁴ It also recommended ratifying international instruments such as the *Maputo Protocol*, strengthening national laws and policies, and developing effective monitoring and evaluation processes.⁸⁵ Plan International and Coram International, a United Kingdom-based children’s legal charity, have also released a summary report on Child Marriage in Asia that used data collected from Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Pakistan to collate information and guide efforts in Asia.⁸⁶ This research aimed to “gather in-depth and detailed evidence on the root causes of child marriage practices,” and will be used by Plan International to strengthen the effectiveness of its child marriage elimination programs.⁸⁷ The report lays out many key factors affecting child marriage, including religion and social conceptions on marriage.⁸⁸ It recommends addressing poverty, improving education, increasing access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, and strengthening laws in order to decrease child marriage.⁸⁹

⁷⁵ The African Child Information Hub, *Africa: 6 Reasons Why We Made Huge Progression Child Marriage in 2015*, 2016.

⁷⁶ African Union, *Draft Concept Note: Africa Girls’ Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa*, 2015; African Union, *Outcome Statement of the First Africa Girls’ Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa November 2015*, 2015.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ African Union, *Draft Concept Note: Africa Girls’ Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa*, 2015, p. 3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸¹ African Union, *Outcome Statement of the First Africa Girls’ Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa November 2015*, 2015, pp. 2-5.

⁸² UNICEF, *A Profile of Child Marriage in Africa*, 2015, p. 3; CARE, *Vows of Poverty: 26 Countries Where Child Marriage Eclipses Girls’ Education*, 2015.

⁸³ Human Rights Watch, *Ending Child Marriage in Africa: Opening the Door for Girls’ Education, Health, and Freedom From Violence*, 2015.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Yarrow, et al., *Getting the Evidence: Asia Child Marriage Initiative Summary Report*, 2015.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 10.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Recently, End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT), an international network of NGOs seeking to protect children, also released a report on child sexual abuse and exploitation in child marriages.⁹⁰ In this report, ECPAT calls for societies to not just view child marriage as a grave health issue for children, but a multi-faceted legal and social issue that includes sexual violence as well.⁹¹ It sets out legal standards for defining the “commercial sexual exploitation of children,” and discusses sexual violence as both a cause and effect of child marriage.⁹² ECPAT also established an eight-step Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Conceptual Framework to eliminate child marriage and sexual violence.⁹³

Moving into 2016, the Assembly of Heads of States in Africa will consider the implementation of the recommendations made at the First African Girls’ Summit, and countries will continue to participate in the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa.⁹⁴ In February, the UNICEF Executive Board will hold its first regular session of 2016, during which the Board will review UNICEF’s work over the last year and plan for 2016.⁹⁵ The issue of child marriage will likely remain a high priority for the international community in 2016.

⁹⁰ ECPAT, *Thematic Report: Unrecognised Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in Child, Early and Forced Marriages*, 2015.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 5.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-89.

⁹⁴ African Union, *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*, 2014; African Union, *Draft African Common Position on the AU Campaign to end Child Marriage in Africa*, 2015.

⁹⁵ UNICEF, *First regular session 2016*, 2016.

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http://pages.au.int/sites/default/files/Outcome%20Statement%20in%20English_0.pdf

This source outlines the key outcomes of the First African Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage and provides a summary of a pivotal gathering of African leaders. It lays out the collective goals of African Member States going forward, as well as recommendations drafted by Member States themselves. Although brief, it will assist delegates in contextualizing efforts to end child marriage.

Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere. (n.d.). *Vows of Poverty: 26 Countries Where Child Marriage Eclipses Girls' Education* [Website]. Retrieved 6 January 2016 from: <http://vowsofpoverty.care.org/>

This report by CARE is an information rich source, providing important and recent statistics on child marriage globally. It will enable delegates to direct their research towards predominantly affected areas, and consider solutions within the relevant regional contexts. This is especially important because although child marriage is a universal problem, the most effective methods of addressing the issue differ across regions and cultures.

End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes. (2015). *Thematic Report; Unrecognized Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in Child, Early, and Forced Marriages*. Retrieved 6 January 2016 from: http://ecpat.net/sites/default/files/Child%20Marriage_ENG.pdf

In this study, ECPAT provides an important perspective of child marriage in the context of sexual violence. It is an in-depth study that examines the problems with a multi-faceted legal, social, commercial, and health approach. The Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Framework established here will be very useful to delegates in understanding the complexity of child marriage and relating it to existing international legal instruments.

Human Rights Watch. (2015, December 9). *Ending Child Marriage in Africa: Opening the Door for Girls' Education, Health, and Freedom from Violence*. Retrieved 6 January 2016 from:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/09/ending-child-marriage-africa>

This article provides further analysis into the social construction of child marriage across different regions. It makes recommendations to the African Union and African Member States individually on how to eliminate child marriage and monitor progress. Read in conjunction with the recommendations in the Outcome Document of the First African Girls' Summit, this publication will assist delegates in forming priorities when considering action that countries need to take.

Yarrow, E., et al. (2015). *Getting the Evidence: Asia Child Marriage Initiative Summary Report*. Coram International. Retrieved 6 January 2016 from: <https://plan-international.org/getting-evidence-asia-child-marriage-initiative#download-options>

Much of the recent information on child marriage is focused on Africa, and as such, this report gives delegates useful insight into the problem in another region of the world. The methodology used and detail given in the report is particularly useful, as it provides a comparative analysis of different Asian countries. This report also makes recommendations of its own for the Asia initiative, and will be useful in comparing these recommendations to those given for addressing the problem in Africa.

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