

# SOCHUM



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## Study Guide

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY - THIRD COMMITTEE

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND CULTURAL  
COMMITTEE

(SOCHUM) STUDY GUIDE

Agenda Item: Protecting Children's Rights in the Context of Armed Conflict  
and Humanitarian Crises

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## 1. Opening Letters

### 1.1 Letter from Secretary-General

To Our Distinguished Participants and Esteemed Delegates,

It is my greatest honor to welcome you all to first ever LeadersMUN'26. On behalf of the entire Secretariat team, I am thrilled to invite you to join us for what promises to be an inspiring and incredible conference.

We find ourselves in an era where unprecedented global challenges face us. From the intricacies of climate change to the subtleties of international security, the world does not simply need conversation; it needs cooperation, it needs innovation. This conference is intended to be an environment in which your voices matter, your solutions weigh heavily, and your diplomacy creates the future.

Remember that diplomacy begins with the courage to speak, the patience to listen and the determination to seek solutions even when challenges seem impossible.

As the Secretary General it is my privilege to say that I have such amazing friends by my side. We went through the good and bad times together. I am excited to see the outcome of our effort.

I am looking forward to witnessing the spectacular debates and resolutions that will emerge from your committees.

Best Regards,  
Elvin HANCI  
Secretary-General of LeadersMUN'26

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## 1.2 Letter from Under-Secretary-General

Dear Distinguished Delegates,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM). I am honored to serve as your Under Secretary General (USG) for this committee and to guide our discussions on one of the most pressing humanitarian challenges of our time. This study guide aims to provide you with the necessary background information, key concepts, and questions to help you prepare for an active debate. I strongly encourage all delegates to conduct further research into their assigned country's politics, regional dynamics, and existing international relations related to the committee. I look forward to seeing engaging debates, diplomacy, and solutions from all of you. Model United Nations is not only about representing a country, but also about improving skills such as diplomacy, critical thinking, research, and public speaking. I encourage all delegates to come well-prepared, to actively participate in discussions, and most importantly to approach the debates with respect and cooperation. Constructive dialogue and collaboration are what make committees both successful and enjoyable. I wish you the best of luck for this conference and look forward to having all of you in this committee.

Doğaç Bilgin  
Under-Secretary-General of Sochum

## **2. Introduction to the Committee**

The Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) is the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. The committee serves as an important place where member states discuss global challenges and work together to protect human rights. The committee goes back to the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 after the end of the Second World War. As the global powers realized the importance of protecting human rights and improving social conditions, the General Assembly created several committees to address different global problems. SOCHUM was responsible for addressing social, humanitarian, and cultural issues that affect individuals and communities around the world. Throughout its history, SOCHUM has played a huge role in protecting human rights. The committee has contributed to discussions surrounding the protection of vulnerable populations, gender equality, discrimination, and the advancement of social development. Many important international projects have been debated and supported within the work of this committee. Today, SOCHUM continues to have a big role in the UN, where member states address pressing humanitarian and social challenges. By encouraging dialogue, cooperation, and policy development, the committee aims to strengthen international efforts to preserve human rights and improve social conditions across the globe.

### **3. Agenda Item: Protecting Children's Rights in the Context of Armed Conflict and Humanitarian Crises**

#### **3.1 Preserving Children Rights In Armed Conflict**

One of the biggest issues faced during wars is the use of children . Children are often forced to be used as soldiers, messengers, or informants during the war. Children are also often exposed to physical and mental trauma, which can have a number of implications for their physical and mental health. The crises faced during the war, political instability, or displacement also often create a number of issues for the children. The separation of the child from the family also often means that the child is denied a number of facilities such as education, healthcare, and protection. The child refugees are also often denied a number of facilities that can provide a safe environment for the child. A number of conventions have been put in place to deal with the issues faced by the children during the war. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols have been put in place to protect the children during the time of conflict and have emphasized the role of the state in protecting the children from the use of child soldiers. Moreover, international organizations and other such bodies play an important part in providing assistance, monitoring the violation, and assisting the children. Nevertheless, there are still many loopholes and weaknesses in the enforcement of the existing child rights. For instance, there are not enough monitoring systems in many conflict zones, and sometimes it is difficult for such organizations and agencies to provide assistance due to security issues. Millions of children are still at great risk. According to recent estimates by the United Nations, nearly 450 million children live in conflict-affected areas, representing almost one in six children globally. This has doubled since the 1990s. They also verified that tens of thousands of cases of child recruitment in the past decade. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that more than 40 million children are currently displaced worldwide, Approximately 17 million of these children are refugees, while the rest are internally displaced.

Nearly 40% of displaced children are under the age of 14. Over 222 million crisis-affected children require urgent educational support. It is estimated that more than 250,000 children are currently used by armed forces or armed groups worldwide. Over the past two decades, more than 130,000 child soldiers have been released from armed groups and participated in rehabilitation programs. It is estimated that around 40% of child soldiers are girls. Nearly 50% of children in conflict-affected regions lack consistent access to basic healthcare services. Around 40% of global deaths of children under the age of five occur in conflict-affected areas. Between 30% and 50% of children living in conflict zones show signs of trauma or severe psychological distress. In regions experiencing prolonged conflicts, approximately one in three children is at risk of depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In crisis regions, up to 20% of children may be pushed into child labour. Displaced children face a three times higher risk of abduction and human trafficking compared to non-displaced children. There are 6 grave violations against children and their rights.

These are:

1. Recruitment and use of child soldiers
2. Killing or maiming of children
3. Sexual violence against children
4. Abduction of children
5. Attacks on schools and hospitals
6. Denial of humanitarian access

More than 315,000 grave violations against children were verified globally between 2005 and 2022. All of these statistics show that the consequences of defying these violations are not enough at all.

### 3.2 Trauma Handling And Treatment

Children face the worst side conflicts and disasters. They are rooted from their homes, their education is interrupted, and their safety is compromised. But this isn't just a crisis of today without the right support, the effects extend into adulthood, and even to the next generation. A child experiences trauma when they feel physically or emotionally threatened, lose a sense of control, and cannot make sense of what is happening. Because the same event can make children react differently, assessment is always sensitive to age, context, and culture. Trauma is understood not so much through the event itself, but through how the event is experienced by the child and the impact it leaves. Therefore, a trauma informed approach considers the "event-experience-impact" triad together and aims to support the child without harming them. Armed conflicts increase the risks of explosive residue, attacks on schools and hospitals, forced recruitment into armed groups, and gender-based violence. Many children leave their homes; some are separated from their caregivers. At the same time, access to health, education, and protection services is disrupted; mental health needs are often overlooked. Sirens, explosions, and checkpoints undermine the belief that "the world is a safe place." This manifests as symptoms such as sleep problems, nightmares, and excessive vigilance. Child-friendly safe spaces are the first step in reducing the perception of threat. Forced migration weakens access to shelter, water, food, and healthcare. Emotional recovery slows without securing basic needs. Therefore, mental health and psychosocial support are planned to be integrated with food and shelter; they are not a secondary service competing with them.

Separation and grief challenge children's emotional regulation. When parents' own stress levels rise, their capacity to provide support decreases. Symptoms vary depending on age and context: somatic complaints such as headaches, abdominal pain, sleep problems, withdrawal or aggression, and attention and learning difficulties may occur. If prolonged, it can lead to decreased school performance, damaged social relationships, and the development of risky coping behaviors. Early, layered, and culturally appropriate support can reverse this trend. Reexperiencing, avoidance, and negative emotional patterns are characteristic. If functioning is significantly affected, clinical evaluation and evidence-based treatments are necessary; traumatic themes are frequently seen in children's play drawings. Ongoing uncertainty fuels anxiety and hopelessness. Some children become withdrawn, while others exhibit difficulties with impulse control. School based psychoeducation, regular group activities, and peer bonding can alleviate these symptoms. When trust is damaged, building relationships becomes difficult; impairments in attention, memory, and executive functions may occur. Providing teachers with trauma-sensitive classroom management practices and mental health and psychosocial support reduces learning losses in education. Trauma, while an individual experience, is transmitted through family and society. Parental hyperarousal, avoidance strategies, and narratives influence how children interpret the world. At the societal level, the "normalization" of insecurity and violence can fuel new cycles of conflict. Being a major problem in children's lives, Trauma has remained unsolved in most cases, to change this there is a new way of treatment called ECT.

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is one of the effective treatment methods which was used in treatment of childhood psychiatry. Although the effects and side effects of ECT intervention in child and adolescent psychiatry are similar to adult psychiatry, mental health professionals might be reluctant to prefer ECT in children due to limited knowledge and negative attitude to ECT. Because the articles on ECT among children and with severe mental disorders were limited studies of case reports, it could not reach any article which evaluated ECT holistically, it was thought to discuss ECT intervention, legal issue and nursing care in this issue. ECT has been used as an effective method in the treatment of mental disorders since 1938. In child psychiatry, cases treated with ECT were first reported in the early 1940s in France by Dr. Bour Heuyer. The first large-scale application of ECT was performed by Dr. Laretta Bender in 1947, and significant improvements were observed in children and adolescents diagnosed with schizophrenia. Due to the introduction of psychotropic drugs in children and adolescents in the 1950s, the frequency of ECT use decreased from the 1960s to the 1980s. However, the use of ECT began to increase again in the 1980s due to the realization that psychotropic drugs had limited effectiveness in some cases. After the 1990s, the number of studies demonstrating the effectiveness of ECT in child and adolescent psychiatry increased. Despite this the general usage of it and information about it is still limited and this makes people think if it can solve the problems about trauma if deeply researched and used correctly.

### 3.3 Child Soldiers

Nowadays, one of the critical issues of remaining wars is child soldiers worldwide. According to the research of the UN and other human rights organisations, huge numbers of children are forced to fight by insurgent and militant groups. This situation doesn't merely threaten children's physical health, however it also strongly affects their psychology, educational rights and futures. For this reason, protecting child soldiers and eradicating this issue has become one of the most essential responsibilities for international communities.

Child Soldiers could be as young as 8 or 9 years old. Children may be used in various ways in fights. Some children are forced to be soldiers from a very young age, while others are forced to be a spotter, chef, or even labourer. In other cases children were manipulated to accomplish assassinations. A high number of these children were pressured to kidnap, threaten or participate in insurgent groups. Factors, for instance Poverty, lack of education and lack of security could make the target of a militant group for these children

Child soldiers are victims whose participation in conflict bears serious implications for their physical and emotional well-being. They are subject to abuse in general, and most of them witness death, killing, and sexual violence. Many are forced to commit violent acts, and some suffer, causing serious long-term psychological consequences. The reintegration of these children into civilian life is an essential part of the work to help child soldiers rebuild their lives.

In 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict to protect children from recruitment and use in hostilities.

- a. States aren't allowed to collect children as child soldiers and prepare them to fight in any kind of Military Field.
- b. States will assist to prevent spreading child soldiers in the long term and abandon militant groups. The states will develop new laws that aim to minimise child soldiers.
- c. The states will ensure that these ex-child soldiers get psychological support and reintegrate into civilian communities

Human rights law declares 18 as the minimum legal age for recruitment and use of children in hostilities. Recruiting and using children under the age of 15 as soldiers is prohibited under international humanitarian law and is defined as a war crime by the International Criminal Court. Parties to conflict that recruit and use children are listed by the Secretary-General in the annexes of his annual report on children and armed conflict.

### 3.4 Education In War Zones

Education is a lifeline for children in crises. Conflicts spare no children. War and similar events and crises revoke children from getting their education more and more every year. Globally, the number of school-aged children in crises who require urgent support to access quality education is rapidly rising – increasing by an estimated 35 million over the past three years, reaching 234 million by the end of 2024. Similarly, climate-related hazards interrupted schooling for at least 242 million children in 2024 alone. Over 50 million children have been forcibly displaced around the world, mostly after fleeing from armed conflict. Nearly half of all school age refugee children are out of school. Parents and children affected by the crisis consistently share that education is a top priority. When children are educated, entire communities benefit in the long term. Education fuels economic growth, reduces poverty, and strengthens the society. It enhances children's knowledge and ability to lead healthy lives, participate in society, and build peaceful futures. It is also a critical tool in breaking cycles of crisis and building long-term resilience. Still, despite the enormous benefits to children, societies, entire countries and the world, education is often the first service suspended and the last to be restored during crises. On average, the education sector receives less than 3 per cent of humanitarian aid. Funding is not the only shortfall. In emergency settings, teaching and staff shortages prevent education systems from meeting children's many needs. Data gaps hinder decision makers from assessing the situation and responding effectively. And coordination challenges inhibit humanitarian teams from acting as efficiently as needed. While foundations like UNICEF work towards solving these enormous problems, as the numbers show it is not enough. This is an issue that should immediately be pressed. For children in emergencies, education is about more than the right to learn, it is lifesaving and lifechanging.

### 3.4 Involved Countries

#### *United States*

The United States plays a highly critical role in the education and prevention of child soldiers in the field of battle, which provides essential fundamental assistance to international organisations. It also supports educational programs with UNICEF and other establishments; however, there are some allegations regarding the military operations of the United States harming children's education especially now that a new war has broken out.

#### *Russia*

Russia holds a substantial position in military and political affairs, specifically in Syria and Ukraine. According to the reports, battle has highly affected children's education, psychology, health, and fundamental rights.

#### *China*

China assists diplomacy and economic support more than direct military power. China strongly believes that projects regarding providing peace shall be enhanced, and also educational support shall be provided.

#### *Türkiye*

Türkiye particularly enables education and accommodation for millions of immigrant children. In Turkey, temporary education centres and state schools support access to education for children affected by war.

#### *Germany*

Germany holds an active role in international cooperation and support for immigration programs. Germany is one of the most finance providers to programs that aim education and psychological support for kids who were on the battlefield.

#### *Brazil*

Brazil is a diplomatic country that is involved in human rights and global peace. Brazil believes that children in battlefields' civil rights shall be protected and their access to education shall be increased. But, in certain regions, organized crime and gang violence expose children to exploitation and psychological trauma.

#### *Mexico*

In Mexico Organized crime and cartel violence makes serious risks to the safety of children. Other than that Migrant children traveling through the country face heightened risks of trafficking and exploitation.

### *Saudi Arabia*

Saudi Arabia helps financially in several crisis regions. It supports international programs addressing humanitarian emergencies.

### *Syria*

In Syria, The prolonged civil war has displaced millions of children. Access to education, healthcare, and psychological support services has been severely disrupted.

### *Afghanistan*

Decades of conflict have severely affected children's access to education and basic rights. Many children suffer from long-term psychological trauma related to conflict and instability. After starting a conflict with Pakistan too, they raised more questions about if they care about preserving child rights.

### *Lebanon*

Lebanon hosts one of the highest refugee populations relative to its population size. But access to education and psychosocial support for refugee children remains a major challenge.

### *Pakistan*

Pakistan has hosted large refugee populations for decades. Children in affected regions of conflict face challenges related to education, security, and access to essential services. After this new war with Afghanistan these problems grew even more.

### *Israel*

Ongoing wars have had significant psychological and social impacts on children living in conflict-affected areas. Civilian bombings they did has made children's lives way more difficult.

### *Palestine*

Children living in Palestinian territories are heavily affected by prolonged conflict and instability. Psychosocial support programs play an important role in addressing trauma experienced by young populations.

### *Ukraine*

The ongoing war has displaced millions of children and damaged education systems. Many children require psychological and humanitarian support due to the impacts of the war.

### *Sudan*

Armed conflict and political instability have created severe humanitarian crises affecting children. Access to education, healthcare, and protection mechanisms remain limited. In Conflicts with South Sudan horrific events occurred completely disregarding children's rights

### *Democratic Republic of Congo*

The recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed groups remains a major concern. International efforts focus on rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldiers.

### *Myanmar*

Political instability and armed conflict have affected children's safety and access to education.

### *Somalia*

Armed groups have been reported to recruit and use child soldiers. International organizations work to support child protection and rehabilitation programs. Ongoing internal conflict has damaged children's lives significantly.

### *South Sudan*

Thousands of children have been recruited as child soldiers during the country's civil conflict. Reintegration and trauma recovery programs remain essential. Bombings, civilian massacres and war crimes committed by Sudan has raised global concern.

### *Yemen*

Yemen is currently facing one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises. Food insecurity, limited healthcare access, and disruption of education severely impact children.

### *France*

France is an important supporter of international humanitarian aid and child protection initiatives.

### *United Kingdom*

The United Kingdom actively supports international policies and programs aimed at protecting children in conflict zones.

### *Nigeria*

Armed groups operating in the region pose significant risks to children, including abductions and forced recruitment.

### *Columbia*

Decades of internal conflict have resulted in the recruitment of children by armed groups. Rehabilitation and trauma recovery programs for former child soldiers have become a major priority.

### 3.6 Conclusion

The issue of the protection of children's rights in armed conflict and humanitarian crises is considered one of the most critical tasks for the international community. Children in these environments are often exposed to threats and challenges in terms of their safety, development, and rights, including displacement, exposure to violence, exploitation, and limited access to education and healthcare. These are not only challenges for the present and the children in the conflict zones, but they will have long-term implications for future generations too. In spite of the fact that critical international mechanisms and humanitarian actions have been put in place to address these challenges, critical gaps in the implementation of these mechanisms and actions have persisted. Strengthening international cooperation is critical in addressing the challenges and issues faced by children in conflict zones and zones of humanitarian crises. As members of the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM), delegates are encouraged to address the issue with international cooperation and the creation of environments where children's rights are protected in the most challenging and difficult of circumstances.

#### **4. Questions to be Concerned**

1. How can the international community strengthen the protection of children in areas affected by armed conflict and humanitarian crises?
2. How can governments ensure that schools remain safe and functioning during armed conflicts?
3. How can the international community improve access to healthcare services for children in crisis affected areas?
4. How can governments ensure long-term rehabilitation for children who have experienced violence and exploitation?
5. Is ECT viable to use and if it is how should it be implemented to healthcare system?
6. How can we prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers?
7. How can countries lower the risks of human trafficking and exploitation among displaced children?
8. What measures can be taken to prevent child rights violations in conflict zones?

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