



African Union (AU)

MUNUC 34



TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAIR LETTER.....	3
HISTORY OF COMMITTEE.....	5
TOPIC A: MALEDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND CONSEQUENT CHILD LABOR.....	6
Statement of the Problem.....	6
History of the Problem.....	10
Past Actions & Possible Solutions.....	20
Bloc Positions.....	22
Glossary.....	24
TOPIC B: HUNGER AND POVERTY IN THE AU.....	27
Statement of the Problem.....	27
History of the Problem.....	29
Past Actions.....	39
Possible Solutions.....	41
Glossary.....	42
Bibliography.....	45

CHAIR LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Hello! We are incredibly excited to have you in our committee for MUNUC 34. My name is Farah and I am your Chair for this year's MUNUC conference. I am a third year at the University of Chicago, majoring in Biology with a minor in Health and Society. Beyond academics and MUNUC, I work at UChicago Admissions as a tour guide, am a research assistant at the Patnaik Lab, and a consultant with the Community Programs Accelerator.

This committee will be discussing two critical topics that AU member states are currently dealing with: issues at the intersection of maleducation and child labor, as well as hunger and poverty. These dilemmas have carried an impact beyond the AU, and the first topic has impacted the global economy. As delegates, you will be able to not only consider these issues and their effects on your nations, but you will also have the opportunity to work together to create solutions that are efficient and effective.

As your Chair, I am here to support you and help you tackle these issues. This conference is meant to be a learning experience and I intend to make our committee a space for learning. I encourage you to ask questions when you have them, to speak up about the ideas that cross your mind, and to collaborate with others, as this will help you develop a more comprehensive and impactful solution. Please feel free to reach out with any questions. I look forward to meeting you all!

Best,

Farah Doughan

Chair, African Union

Delegates,

I am incredibly excited to have you in the African Union committee! As your chair, I have spent many hours preparing for conference, and in order for everybody to feel welcome, comfortable, and valued, I want to establish a few expectations for conduct in committee.

I aim to provide a safe environment for delegates to explore an interesting and relevant topic and to practice their public speaking skills. As such, anything that may damage such an environment will not be tolerated at all; this includes animosity towards people of any belief system, nationality, cultural identity, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other forms of self-identification. Even though you represent a nation whose policies and beliefs are not your own, you still represent yourselves and your school, and are expected to follow the standards described above. Sensitive topics should only be discussed with the greatest of respect and sincerity for the purpose of pedagogical development. Finally, it is important to ensure that all delegates are using inclusive language within committee.

I trust that delegates will be respectful and will be able to enjoy fruitful discussions that help them explore the topics at hand. If at any time you feel unsure whether something is acceptable or not, or feel uncomfortable yourself, I strongly urge you to reach out to the dais in order to help resolve the issue.

Once again, I am excited to meet you all, and anticipate that we will have an enjoyable, educational, and collaborative experience!

Best,

Farah Doughan

Chair, African Union (AU)

HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

The African Union (AU) was founded in 2002 and replaced the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).¹ This change was a consequence of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, which recognized the invaluable role of the OAU with respect to liberation and unity and was brought about by an intention to expand the partnership between the governments and societies of member states.² **The Constitutive Act** aimed to protect citizens and strengthen “solidarity and cohesion” among peoples to include “women, youth, and the private sector.”³ This Act established the African Union to fulfill a multitude of purposes, most notably to “accelerate the political and socioeconomic integration of the continent” and to “promote peace, security, and stability on the continent.”⁴ While the OAU was considered a union of leaders across Africa, the AU was meant to be a union of Africa’s peoples.⁵

The AU includes 55 member states and is guided by the vision of “*An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.*”⁶ The structure of the AU is particularly important as it consists of a group of sub-bodies, some of which serve to implement its work while others act as decision-making bodies. These include the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, The Permanent Representatives Committee, and the Pan-African Parliament.⁷ The judicial arm of the AU also consists of several bodies, including the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the AU Commission on International Law.

¹ “African Union,” Encyclopedia Britannica, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/African-Union>.

² “Constitutive Act of the African Union,” African Union, Accessed September 19, 2021, https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact_en.pdf.

³ “Ibid.”

⁴ “Ibid.”

⁵ Maria Nzomo, “From OAU to AU and NEPAD: Regional integration processes in Africa and African women,” Southern African Regional Poverty Network, October 27-31, 2003, <https://sarpn.org/documents/doooo6o8/page1.php>.

⁶ “About the African Union,” African Union, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://au.int/en/overview>.

⁷ “Ibid.”

TOPIC A: MALEUCATION OF CHILDREN AND CONSEQUENT CHILD LABOR

Statement of the Problem

Introduction to the Problem

Across the globe, over 70 million children are forced to work in **hazardous conditions**.⁸ This work extends across a plethora of industries, ranging from mining and tobacco farming to domestic labor.⁹ Across the African Union, and oftentimes in other nations where **child labor** is prevalent, this socioeconomic issue is concurrent with maleducation of children. Another prevalent factor that influences and exacerbates forced labor of children is poverty.¹⁰ The International Labor Organization (ILO) recognizes the lack of “accessible, affordable and good quality schooling as a factor” that increases the likelihood of children entering the workforce.¹¹ Overall, most people living across the geographical bounds of AU member states live in poverty, and this coincides with a large number of our member states being afflicted with **overpopulation**. Throughout this committee we will conceptualize child labor and **maleducation** as causes and consequences of one another, existing in a cycle.

Extreme poverty makes it difficult for parents to educate their children, particularly considering the issues of low physical access to schools and costly schooling, as well as the little net gain to educating children given the lack of employment opportunities for graduates. This, combined with the ease and profitability of child labor (especially for large families with many children) makes it an enticing option as it could alleviate the burden of poverty. As a consequence, children enrolled in **primary education** are often pulled into the dark hole of child labor which further stands in the way

⁸ “Child Labor,” Human Rights Watch, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/topic/childrens-rights/child-labor>.

⁹ “Ibid.”

¹⁰ “Child labor hinders children’s education,” Global Partnership for Education, June 12, 2016, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/child-labor-hinders-childrens-education>.

¹¹ “Ibid.”

of their education. Thus, this contributes to a cycle of maleducation, forced child labor, and persistent poverty.

Effects on Development

While the ethical issues that underlie child labor are obvious, and the effects of it are seemingly clear, there are some consequences that carry more weight than others and warrant explicit mention. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) highlights that when economic hardship comes “at the price of a child’s safety” the impact can be dire.¹² This can include severe bodily harm, emotional damage, and even death. Beyond this, child labor can spiral into slavery, as it is often a form of economic exploitation.¹³ Almost always, child labor either interferes with a child’s schooling or prevents it entirely, which restricts a child’s rights and heavily impacts their future in terms of personal development and growth opportunities.

Considering conflict-ridden regions within the bounds of the AU, child labor often affects the children in migrant camps who have been **displaced** and already suffer a myriad of traumas. In camps, these children have no immediate access to education and live in extreme poverty - a combination we’ve come to identify as a common driver for child labor.¹⁴ Above all else, UNICEF notes that:

“Child labour compounds social inequality and discrimination, and robs girls and boys of their childhood. Unlike activities that help children develop, such as contributing to light housework or taking on a job during school holidays, child labour limits access to education and harms a child’s physical, mental and social growth. Especially for girls, the “triple burden” of school, work and household chores heightens their risk of falling behind, making them even more vulnerable to poverty and exclusion.”¹⁵

¹² “Child labour,” UNICEF, Updated June 9, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-labour>.

¹³ “Ibid.”

¹⁴ “Migrant and displaced children,” UNICEF, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/migrant-refugee-internally-displaced-children>.

¹⁵ “Child labour,” UNICEF, Updated June 9, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-labour>.

Traditional Solutions

Child labor has been a long-lived problem across the world and particularly in the African Union. While a plethora of solutions have been attempted, and many policies have been passed targeting this issue, its persistence is a testament to the inadequacy or insufficiency of traditional solutions highlighted below.

Subsidized Education

This solution is explored in more detail below, but the most important element to note is its partial success. Africa has experienced a surge in primary education enrollment and this is largely attributed to **subsidization** and financing of primary education across the nation. This was only partially successful because it did not increase or impact the already low enrollment rate for **secondary** and **tertiary** education and is not particularly sustainable.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

This document was the first to assign rights to all children internationally, and defined children as individuals below the age of 18.¹⁶ It recognized the importance of protecting children from economic exploitation and hazardous work but also included a “light work provision” which deemed it acceptable for children to perform 14 hours of “light work” weekly between ages 13-15.¹⁷ One key dilemma with this convention is that it was not ratified by all nations, and even the United States did not ratify convention No. 138.

UNICEF, The International Labor Organization (ILO), and Sustainable Development Goal 8.7

Sustainable development goal (SDG) 8.7 set out to “take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by

¹⁶ “Convention on the Rights of the Child,” United Nations General Assembly, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, November 20, 1989, <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/professionalinterest/crc.pdf>.

¹⁷ Jo Becker and Zama Coursen-Neff, “When is it okay for children to work?,” Human Rights Watch, April 4, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/04/04/when-it-okay-children-work#>.

2025 end child labour in all its forms.”¹⁸ The ILO and UNICEF are considered the “co-custodians” of SDG 8.7.¹⁹ While both organizations have worked to reduce child labor, the Annual Report on Child Labor for 2020 cited the first increase in child labor in two decades, noting that “progress against child labor has stagnated since 2016.”²⁰

Minimum Working Age

The ILO sets the minimum working age at 15, and many AU member states have also adopted minimum working ages of their own.²¹ Unfortunately, the international age standard is oftentimes not the same as that decreed in national law, and there are many loopholes that employers can pursue to work around this restriction. For example, this age protection does not affect children outside of “formal working relationships” in many countries including Botswana, Eritrea, Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda.²²

¹⁸ “Sustainable Development Goals,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.unodc.org/southeastasiaandpacific/en/sustainable-development-goals.html>.

¹⁹ “Child Labour,” International Labour Organization, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>.

²⁰ “Child Labour: Global Estimates 2020, trends and the road forward - Executive Summary,” International Labour Organization, June 10, 2021, https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_800278/lang--en/index.htm?ssSourceSiteId=global.

²¹ Silja Frölich, “A ban on child labor in Africa is not enough,” DW News, June 12, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/a-ban-on-child-labor-in-africa-is-not-enough/a-49147888>.

²² “Ibid.”

History of the Problem

Introduction to History of the Problem

It's difficult to trace the history of child labor in Africa due to the prevalence of child labor and its long-term use. Child labor began long ago and its common use has contributed to a strong economic dependence on child labor in many of the AU member states. Some important historical facts are that 20% of African children, around 72 million, were involved in child labor as of 2016, with around 45%, or 31.5 million, of those laborers being involved with hazardous work - the highest rates in the world.²³ Unfortunately, progress against child labor has stalled, and between 2012 and 2016, while the rest of the world was making progress with respect to this issue, child labor was going up in sub-Saharan Africa.²⁴ This trend occurred irrespective of different policies being passed and implemented with the goal of decreasing child labor.

The key to understanding and tackling the issues of child labor and maleducation of children is to understand why these issues are prevalent independent of one another, and then to consider their relation.

Maleducation

Although Africa reports a large increase in elementary school enrollment over the past few decades - as a consequence of strong efforts to expand education and build schools throughout the continent - lack of education remains a fundamental issue.²⁵ In previous reports, the AU has noted that the expansion in elementary school enrollment "masks huge disparities and system dysfunctions and inefficiencies" in different, underdeveloped educational subsectors.²⁶

²³ "Child labour in Africa," International Labour Organization, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.ilo.org/africa/areas-of-work/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>.

²⁴ "Ibid."

²⁵ Zipporah Musau, "Africa grapples with huge disparities in education," Africa Renewal, United Nations, March 2018, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2017-march-2018/africa-grapples-huge-disparities-education>.

²⁶ "Keynote Address by H. E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, African Union Commission," African Union, December 10, 2019, <https://au.int/en/speeches/20191210/keynote-address-h-e-prof-sarah-anyang-agbor-commissioner-human-resources-science>.

The educational inequities can be attributed to a wide array of root causes, including but not limited to:

1. Unequal Distribution of and Access to Educational Facilities and Schools:

While most regions in Africa face barriers to education, educational exclusion is at its highest rate in sub-Saharan Africa.²⁷ Around 9 million young girls in the 6-11 age bracket will not attend school, presenting a substantial **gender gap** in education very early on in these childrens' lives.²⁸ Beyond this, educational institutions and opportunities are largely unequal. For example, in South Africa, educational exclusion and educational inequality are related to class, race, and income, as well as "allocation of targeted resources."²⁹ Overall, children in rural Africa and poorer areas are less likely to be able to physically access high quality education than children living in African cities. While some schools are effective, others, like those in Sokoto, Nigeria, are prime portrayals of the educational crisis; recent studies show that 80% of Sokoto's children in the third grade "cannot read a single word" as a consequence of their "zero value-added schooling."³⁰ The **Learning Barometer** shows different assessments which identify the impact and effectiveness of education in schools across Africa (with 28 countries covered) and demonstrates the commonality of zero-value-added schooling.³¹ Ultimately, national institutions cannot ensure equity across geographical boundaries.³²

2. Low Secondary and Tertiary Enrollment:³³

Across Africa, around 28% of youth are enrolled in secondary school. The remaining 72% amounts to over 90 million teenagers who ultimately are likely to wind up forced into labor, working for low

²⁷ "Education in Africa," UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Accessed September 19, 2021, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/education-africa>.

²⁸ "Gender Equality in Education," UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Accessed September 19, 2021, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/gender-equality-education>.

²⁹ Susannah Hares and Jack Rossiter, "A Review of "South African Schooling: The Enigma of Inequality,"" Center for Global Development, January 27, 2020, <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/book-review-south-african-schooling-enigma-inequality>.

³⁰ Kevin Watkins, "Too Little Access, Not Enough Learning: Africa's Twin Deficit in Education," Brookings, January 16, 2013, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/too-little-access-not-enough-learning-africas-twin-deficit-in-education/>.

³¹ Justin van Fleet, Kevin Watkins, and Lauren Greubel, "Africa Learning Barometer," September 17, 2012, <https://www.brookings.edu/interactives/africa-learning-barometer/>.

³² "Ibid."

³³ Wilson Macha and Aditi Kadakia, "Education in South Africa," World Education News + Reviews, May 2, 2017, <https://wenr.wes.org/2017/05/education-south-africa>.

wages in unsafe conditions.³⁴ To contextualize this: the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member states, which are mostly countries in Europe and Central Asia, report that a child “entering the education system... has an 80 percent chance” of receiving tertiary education. In sub-Saharan Africa, the comparable statistic is 6%.³⁵

3. The Cost of Education

The key indicator of the role that money plays as a barrier to education in Africa is the impact of subsidized schooling. In fact, subsidized schooling becoming an option was a significant contributor to the increase in primary education enrollment in Africa.³⁶ Most African families live in poverty, as their household incomes are limited, making it inconvenient for parents to educate their children, particularly when the alternative is to force their children into labor, which is ultimately a profitable option for their families.³⁷ This, combined with the fact that there is an extreme lack of employment options for school and university graduates, draws many families to child labor.³⁸

The Allure of Child Labor and Its Many Dangers

As previously described, many families force their children into labor for reasons rooted in poverty and economic distress. Some factors that play into the allure and dangers of child labor are highlighted below.

Overpopulation and Family Planning

One factor to consider is that families living in poverty will often have no access to contraceptives or no understanding of their use, and as such will end up with large families, thus increasing the burden of poverty and making child labor more appealing. As such, family planning has been shown to have

³⁴ Kevin Watkins, “Too Little Access, Not Enough Learning: Africa’s Twin Deficit in Education,” Brookings, January 16, 2013, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/too-little-access-not-enough-learning-africas-twin-deficit-in-education/>.

³⁵ “Education GPS,” OECD, 2021, <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/Home>.

³⁶ “Ibid.”

³⁷ “What Are The Main Problems In African Education,” The African Exponent, June 20, 2019, <https://www.africanexponent.com/post/10399-what-are-the-main-problems-in-african-education>.

³⁸ “Poverty and Education in East Africa: Breaking the Cycle,” Habitat for Humanity, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/blog/2017/04/poverty-and-education-east-africa/>.

positive economic effects.³⁹ Alternatively, some families will note the economic advantage of child labor and subsequently have more children for the added income, as they represent a potential source of revenue.

Human Trafficking

The **ILO Convention No. 182**, passed in 1999, discusses the “Worst Forms of Child Labor” and was the first international labor standard to be ratified universally.⁴⁰ This convention defines the worst forms of Child Labor to include the following;

- a. “all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- b. the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- c. the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- d. work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.”⁴¹

Note that, although it is an important issue to consider, this committee will not be discussing the sexual exploitation or trafficking of children for profit. When child labor is prevalent and profitable, there exists an additional incentive that drives child trafficking, and aside from the direct

³⁹ “The Economic Effects of Contraceptive Access: A Review of the Evidence,” Institute for Women’s Policy Research, Center for the Economics of Reproductive Health, Accessed September 19, 2021. <https://iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/reproductive-health/the-economic-effects-of-contraceptive-access-a-review-of-the-evidence/>.

⁴⁰ “Convention C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999,” International Labour Organization, June 17, 1999, https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C182.

⁴¹ “Ibid.”

risks posed by their working conditions, child laborers are at risk of being trafficked and further exploited for their labor capacity.⁴²

Risk to Children and Loss of Lives

Child labor poses a direct risk to the lives of children because of the different types of labor into which they are forced. While some children are exploited in the home environment to do chores and some work in mundane industries like cattle herding, others become employed in hazardous sectors like the trade of illicit goods and factory work. Hazardous work, as previously described, is defined as work that is “likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children.”⁴³ This includes work that occurs in unhealthy environments, such as tobacco farming, which exposes children to carcinogens and insecticides and poses risk of heat stroke, as well as work in factories with large machinery that can cause immediate bodily harm or death.

One can also consider hazardous work as child abuse or neglect, given that it often involves reckless endangerment of children. **Child abuse** is “harm resulting from intentional human action,” and emotional abuses expands this to specify harm that “impairs children’s emotional development or sense of self esteem.”⁴⁴ **Neglect** is failure to provide for a child’s “basic physical or emotional needs,” and it is rather clear why child labor oftentimes constitutes a combination of these three.⁴⁵ Exposure to hazardous circumstances has long-term consequences. If childhood exploitation for labor results in injury or health issues, then there will be an observed effect on adulthood employability and quality of life.⁴⁶

⁴² “Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - South Africa,” Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2020, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/south-africa>.

⁴³ “Hazardous child labour,” International Labour Organization, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/WorstFormsofChildLabour/Hazardouschildlabour/lang--en/index.htm>.

⁴⁴ “Child Labor and Child Abuse in Developing Countries,” Unite For Sight, Accessed September 19, 2021, <http://www.uniteforsight.org/gender-power/module4>.

⁴⁵ “Ibid.”

⁴⁶ “Ibid.”

The Role of Capitalism and Western Exploitation

It's critical to note the impact of capitalism and the role it has played in the persistence and expansion of child labor. Multinational corporations play a big role in the problem, as child labor is particularly prevalent in nations affected by colonialism over time, as colonial powers initially set out to exploit natural resources and agricultural products like cocoa.⁴⁷ African countries are consistently exploited in the name of capitalism, with **fast fashion** being a prime example. Within fast fashion, children are a critical element of the fast fashion supply chain: children work the cotton fields, run spinning machines in yarn factories and cotton processing centers, and work at production sites to make clothing.⁴⁸ Chocolate production is also a noteworthy example, with major corporations like Hershey's and Nestle consistently missing deadlines that they had set for eliminating child labor from their supply chains, with these "chocolate giants" not facing lawsuits regarding their use of child slavery.⁴⁹

Child labor is ultimately cheaper and large corporations will move their production operations to countries in the developing world where child labor laws are weak or absent. Many AU member states have been victim to this labor force exploitation, and these companies employ children to increase profit margins, thus fueling a socioeconomic dilemma our nations have been struggling to combat.

Maleducation and Child Labor: A Vicious Cycle

Maleducation contributes to poverty as it hinders children's development and prevents them from acquiring and strengthening key skills that would contribute to their employability. Thus, uneducated individuals are rendered somewhat helpless and optionless, and thereby forced to become day laborers or to work in agriculture, mining, or other one-skill industries, relegating them to a life of poverty. This poverty persists through familial formation which occurs in poor families

⁴⁷ Anna Canning, "How Do We End Child Labor? Start by Addressing Corporate Capitalism," Fair World Project, June 11, 2020, <https://fairworldproject.org/how-do-we-end-child-labor-start-by-addressing-corporate-capitalism/>.

⁴⁸ "Ibid."

⁴⁹ Olivia Rosane, "Child slavery lawsuit targets Hershey, Nestle, Mars and other chocolate giants," People's World, February 16, 2021, <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/child-slavery-lawsuit-targets-hershey-nestle-mars-and-other-chocolate-giants/>.

that are drawn to the option of child labor for sustenance. The link between child labor and education is inherently inextricable, as child labor interferes with children's right to education by acting as a time barrier as well as posing a risk to the child's physical and mental wellbeing.⁵⁰

Child Labor as a Perceived Solution to Poverty

Regardless of access to education, children from poor families will oftentimes enter the workforce to generate added income and relieve the burden of poverty. This is even more likely in instances where education is costly and thus increases the burden of poverty.

The Impossibility of Having Your Cake and Eating it Too

Once involved with child labor, it becomes nearly impossible for children to continue their education. One reason for this is that employers will often prohibit their child laborers from attending school, in part due to the time constraint or distraction it would cause, but also to increase worker retention.⁵¹ Other employers will implicitly prohibit schooling by increasing hours. When children try to enroll in school and work simultaneously, they are often presented with insurmountable challenges which include: insufficient study time, poor performance due to time constraints or health issues, or having to miss class. These eventually compound, causing children to quit school and ultimately sacrifice their education for work commitments.⁵²

Inadequacy of Compulsory Education Laws

Many governments have instituted **compulsory education laws** which require that children be enrolled in school up to a particular age. Unfortunately, the failed implementation of these laws has contributed to an "education deficit," which is the gap between the educational reality that children experience and the ideal that governments have promised and intended to implement, as depicted

⁵⁰ "Child labor," Educate a Child, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://educateachild.org/explore/barriers-to-education/poverty/child-labor>.

⁵¹ "Failing Our Children: Barriers to the Right to Education | Child Labor," Human Rights Watch, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/education0905/8.htm>.

⁵² "Ibid."

in different laws and treaties.⁵³ Many governments have sworn to implement policies that serve to increase education access, such as policies that make primary education “free and compulsory,” but these are often left unmonitored and unenforced.⁵⁴ These compulsory education laws also oftentimes fail to make secondary education compulsive, which presents an issue given the aforementioned inefficiency of primary education. As such, these laws are fundamentally ineffective.

The Impact of Child Labor Across the African Union

All member states are related, even if not explicitly, to issues of child labor and maleducation, even though some nations are more burdened by these issues than others. Below are specific examples of the manner in which child labor and maleducation affect the populations of some AU member states. **Note that this is not an exhaustive list of member states facing issues,** but a set of examples designed to inspire thinking and further research.

Uganda

Uganda is troubled by overpopulation and child labor. Women in Uganda have an average of 4.8 children between the ages of 15 and 49 years old.⁵⁵ Children in Uganda oftentimes engage in the worst forms of child labor, and 2019 reports show minimal advancement in the current state of affairs with respect to the topic of concern.⁵⁶ While Ugandan law meets international standards for the minimum age for work, the prohibition of child trafficking, and the identification of hazardous occupations or activities for children, it fails to meet standards for the compulsory education age and the minimum age for hazardous work.⁵⁸ Moreover, the laws that do meet standards often go

⁵³ “The Education Deficit | Failures to Protect and Fulfill the Right to Education through Global Development Agendas,” Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/06/09/education-deficit/failures-protect-and-fulfill-right-education-through-global>.

⁵⁴ “Ibid.”

⁵⁵ Aaron O’Neill, “Uganda: fertility rate from 2009 to 2010,” Statista, July 21, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/447612/fertility-rate-in-uganda/>.

⁵⁶ “Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Uganda,” Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2020, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/uganda>.

⁵⁷ “Child Labor Reports | Uganda,” Department of Labor, Accessed September 19, 2021, https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2019/Uganda.pdf.

⁵⁸ Igi Nderi, “Child Labour in Uganda,” Humanium, October 10, 2017, <https://www.humanium.org/en/child-labour-uganda/>.

⁵⁹ “Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Uganda,” Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2020, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/uganda>.

unenforced. Ugandan law only requires education until the age of 13, but the minimum age to work is 16, leaving children from ages 13 to 15 vulnerable to the influence of child labor. Additionally, a loophole in Ugandan law allows children aged 12 or older who are involved in apprenticeship programs to participate in hazardous work that otherwise would have been prohibited, leaving them susceptible to manipulation by employers.⁶⁰

South Africa

One common occurrence of child labor in South Africa is forced begging, which also occurs as a consequence of trafficking.⁶¹ Although South Africa has ratified a plethora of ILO conventions regarding child labor laws (such as Convention 183, which sets the minimum age for labor, Convention 182, which establishes the worst forms of child labor, and the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons), the legal framework that exists is inadequate for protecting children. In particular, there is no prohibition on the exploitation of children for armed conflict.⁶² Another example is that the Departments of Transport and Basic Education in South Africa are required to ensure transport for children in K-12 education who live more than three kilometers from the nearest school (approximately 1.9 miles). In spite of this, many children walk up to an hour to reach their schools, indicating that students living further than that distance must walk to school.⁶³ As such, this is an example of a nation where laws exist that should theoretically protect children from child labor, but whose lack of enforcement leaves children vulnerable and renders them unprotected.

Rwanda

The ILO recognizes that Rwanda has ratified all key international treaties and ILO conventions regarding child labor.⁶⁴ The nation has made many efforts to combat child labor, in particular a series

⁶⁰ "Laws about Minors and Youth at Work in Uganda," Africapay, March 11, 2021, <https://africapay.org/uganda/labour-laws/fair-treatment/minors-and-youth>.

⁶¹ "Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - South Africa," Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2020, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/south-africa>.

⁶² "Ibid."

⁶³ "South Africa: Broken and unequal education perpetuating poverty and inequality," Amnesty International, February 11, 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/02/south-africa-broken-and-unequal-education-perpetuating-poverty-and-inequality/>.

⁶⁴ "Child Labor Reports | Rwanda," Department of Labor, Accessed September 19, 2021, https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2017/rwanda.pdf.

of laws passed in 2017 which constitute the Ministerial Instructions Related to the Prevention and Fight Against Child Labor.⁶⁵ This set of regulations applies to the **formal and informal sector**, identifying different types of prohibited work as well as penalties for employers and for parents who do not send their children to school.⁶⁶ However, the existing gaps within the government systems and enforcement agencies prevent the successful implementation of these laws.

Lack of Enforcement as a Trend

Ultimately, as evidenced by the examples above and others that were not included, many AU member states have ratified ILO conventions regarding child labor laws. Moreover, many nations have written and passed laws that serve to tackle child labor and facilitate its elimination. Unfortunately, there seems to be a large gap when it comes to applying these laws and enforcing them, most likely as a consequence of the cost of creating checks and balances and different agencies that would bear this responsibility.

⁶⁵ "National Policy for the Elimination of Child Labor," Rwandan Government, 2013, https://ncc.gov.rw/fileadmin/templates/document/national_policy_for_elimination_of_child_labor.pdf.

⁶⁶ "Ibid."

Past Actions & Possible Solutions

While some traditional solutions were highlighted above under the “Traditional Solutions” section, as well as during the exploration of the role that the ILO conventions have played, it is critical to note that these “solutions” have remained unsuccessful and insufficient. As such, some alternative possible solutions are explored below.

Expanding on Past Actions

The previous examples demonstrate the abundance of laws that have been adopted in member states to eradicate child labor, as well as their failure, which has often been a consequence of implementation difficulties. As such, one key step is to expand on these past actions - past actions being existing laws and regulations - by either creating new laws to supplement them, or providing member states with resources and cross-continental infrastructure that aid in enforcement.

Expanding Schools

The United Nations (UN) has deemed 2021 as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor, noting the importance of ending the practice by 2025.⁶⁷ Increasing access to education is instrumental to this goal, as educating children will properly equip them to become adults who are useful in the labor market, thus breaking the cyclical nature of child labor as a practice. This expansion in education could take many shapes and should address geographic, class, and caste barriers to education. Some considerations include expansion of subsidized education, which should be considered hand in hand with a means of phasing out of this non-sustainable practice.

⁶⁷ Emeline Wuilbercq, “Africa’s Children Need to Get Back to School to Avoid ‘Lost Generation,’” Global Citizen, April 23, 2021, <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/covid-19-child-labour-africa-back-to-school/>.

Stimulating the Economy

Africa suffers from a high rate of youth unemployment, which should not be confused with child unemployment.⁶⁸ AU member states largely have not undergone a transformation that involves moving labor and funneling it toward high productivity sectors.⁶⁹ Economic expansion and the acceleration of this structural transformation will stimulate the economy in a way that is likely to increase employment opportunities for adults and young adults who are establishing families. This would relieve some financial burden and decrease the allure of child labor for poor families.

International Laws and Bodies

One additional solution is the expansion of international laws and judicial practices regulating child labor. Particularly, delegates should consider the legality and implementability of potential laws on child labor that are stricter than local laws. An example of such a law would be one that strictly punishes multinational corporations who exploit the youth of African nations, subjecting them to fines, legal action, or other punitive measures.

Expansion of EAC Partners

The East African Community of the EAC is an organization with 6 partner states, and its role is to integrate and strengthen the economies of partner states. Different implementing partners of the EAC, such as BRAC, have had a positive impact in their contribution to the fight against child labor. BRAC, for example, has informal education programs which allow children whose educations were affected or prevented due to labor commitment to have a second chance to become empowered and literate, and in essence make up for lost time.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Kingsley Ighobor, "Africa's jobless youth cast a shadow over economic growth," Africa Renewal, United Nations, 2017, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/special-edition-youth-2017/africas-jobless-youth-cast-shadow-over-economic-growth>.

⁶⁹ Louise Fox, "Good news, Africa is creating jobs-but the narrative is complicated," Brookings, April 6, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2021/04/06/africa-is-creating-jobs-but-the-narrative-is-complicated/>.

⁷⁰ "Child labor," Educate a Child, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://educateachild.org/explore/barriers-to-education/poverty/child-labor>.

Bloc Positions

Throughout this conference and in committee, delegates will be expected to work together to create cohesive solutions and formulate resolutions that address the topic at hand. While all delegates are encouraged to work together, it is logical that some groups of nations work together based on common denominators with respect to policy, and the manifestation of the topic among their respective peoples. The blocs are not predetermined, and delegates are encouraged to determine their own perspective; moreover, this is not a comprehensive list of the issues that might divide delegates.

ILO Convention No. 182

Convention 182 is a convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor. It has been extensively referenced in previous pages, and is defined more explicitly in the glossary. It was ratified universally by all member states of the ILO.⁷¹ Nations that have ratified the ILO (member states) should work together to find ways to realize the goals and expectations that the convention sets out to accomplish. Note that the ILO consists of 186 out of 193 UN member states, and delegates should consider their nation's membership and work done to apply and actualize the convention.

Countries disproportionately burdened by child labor

Most AU member states are deeply burdened by child labor dilemmas and have broken educational systems. This being said, some member states are disproportionately impacted, meaning that the percentage of children forced into labor is higher or that the forms of child labor are more hazardous. Delegates should consider common denominators with respect to the manner in which they and other member states are affected. For example, some nations' troubles are heavily centered around culture, others economics, and so on. Nations with similar manifestations of the same problem could gain an upper hand by approaching the issue together due to combined experience.

⁷¹ "ILO Child Labour Convention achieves universal ratification," International Labour Organization, August 4, 2020, https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_749858/lang-en/index.htm.

Current policies

This guide has referenced a plethora of different regulations or solutions that are “in place,” such as mandatory or compulsory education, counseling, subsidized schooling, and more. In the AU, the difference is not only a matter of whether nations have laws in place or not, but also how long the compulsory education period is. Malawi, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Niger all have compulsory education laws, as do other member states, but their respective periods of enforcement and implementation methods vary. Commonalities in these laws could support shared initiatives between certain nations, or at the very least analogous policy questions.

Glossary

Child Labor: Work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.⁷²

Child Abuse: Harm resulting from intentional action and emotional abuses, entailing harm that "impairs children's emotional development or sense of self-esteem."⁷³

Child Neglect: Failure to provide for a child's basic physical or emotional needs.

Compulsory Education Laws: Laws which require that children be enrolled in school up to a particular age.

Displaced: A displaced individual is someone who has been expelled, deported, or forced to leave their home as a consequence of war, oppression, or other circumstances.

Fast Fashion: An approach to the design, creation, and marketing of clothing fashions that emphasizes making fashion trends quickly and at a low cost, such that the consumer is also paying a low cost.⁷⁴

Formal Sector: Includes employment that is structured and paid in a formal way and of which there is a formal record - this type of labor contributes to a nation's gross national product.⁷⁵

Gender Gap: The gender gap is the difference between women and men as reflected in social, political, intellectual, cultural, or economic attainments or opportunities.⁷⁶

⁷² "What is child labour," International Labour Organization, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>.

⁷³ "Ibid."

⁷⁴ Audrey Stanton, "What Is Fast Fashion, Anyway?," The Good Trade, Updated February, 2021, <https://www.thegoodtrade.com/features/what-is-fast-fashion>.

⁷⁵ Sampson Quain, "Working?," azcentral, Updated April 30, 2018, <https://yourbusiness.azcentral.com/difference-between-formal-informal-working-25912.html>.

⁷⁶ Briony Harris, "What is the gender gap (and why is it getting wider)?," World Economic Forum, November 1, 2017, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/11/the-gender-gap-actually-got-worse-in-2017/>.

Hazardous Work Conditions: Work conditions that are generally unsafe, whether due to exposure to substances, operating unsafe machinery, or other reasons.

ILO Convention 182: Passed in 1999, the convention discusses the “Worst Forms of Child Labor” and was the first international labor standard to be ratified universally.

Informal Sector: A sector that includes employment that is paid without formal record. This employment is not subject to national labor legislation, income taxation, social protection, or entitlement.⁷⁷

Overpopulation: The state of having a dense population such that it can cause environmental issues, impair quality of life, or create other large-scale issues.

Learning Barometer: Shows different assessments which identify the impact and effectiveness of education in schools across Africa (with 28 countries covered) and demonstrates the commonality of zero-value-added schooling.

Maleducation: Education that is faulty or incomplete.

Primary Education: Education from kindergarten through sixth grade.

Secondary Education: Follows primary education and constitutes education from seventh through twelfth grade (graduation).

Subsidization: Supplemented by the government, a subsidy usually removes a burden and is considered in the overall interest of the general public or common good.

Sustainable Development Goals: 17 goals adopted by the UN, which member states aim to achieve by 2030.

⁷⁷ “Informal economy,” International Labour Organization, Accessed September 19, 2021, https://www.ilo.org/ilostat-files/Documents/description_IFL_EN.pdf.

Tertiary Education: College or upper level education, or trade school.

The Constitutive Act: The Act which established the African Union.

TOPIC B: HUNGER AND POVERTY IN THE AU

Statement of the Problem

Although Africa is a quickly growing economic region, poverty has been a persistent issue in the region for decades.⁷⁸ While economic growth was expected to bring about some change with respect to this particular dilemma at hand, poverty levels have continued to rise.⁷⁹ The African Union has defined “Poverty, Inequality, and Hunger” as one of its priority areas for the current agenda, falling under the overarching goal of establishing a “High Standard of Living, Quality of Life and Well Being for All Citizens.”⁸⁰ The aforementioned agenda is **Agenda 2063**.

Although much of Africa is riddled with extreme poverty, Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the most people living in this condition, with approximately 413 million people living with less than \$2 per day. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regions have approximately 19 million people living with less than this daily amount.⁸¹

To best equip oneself with the knowledge necessary for tackling such a widespread and overwhelming issue, it’s necessary to have a baseline understanding of what poverty and hunger are. **Hunger** is a baseline term to mean circumstances of food insecurity under which individuals don’t eat for days at a time as a consequence of poverty, lack of access, or other barriers.⁸² The definition for **poverty**, though, is more subjective. While everyone needs a similar basic quantity of food and intake of nutrients for sustenance, the value of money is contextual. As such, poverty entails lack of

⁷⁸ Paola Nuñez, “Can the African Union Passport Help Reduce Poverty?,” The Borgen Project, August 29, 2019, <https://borgenproject.org/african-union-passport/>.

⁷⁹ “Ibid.”

⁸⁰ “Goals & Priority Areas of Agenda 2063,” African Union, January 31, 2015, <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/goals>.

⁸¹ “Global Poverty and Hunger,” Action Against Hunger, Accessed September 19, 2021, https://www.actionagainsthunger.org/global-poverty-hunger-facts?gclid=CjoKCOjwklGKBhCxARIsAINMioloa535HzlWhtjKZ8EYO4API3HKwnCYAY-VgPwD4ZK95Rh1L3DXt2kaAh2IEALw_wcB.

⁸² “World Hunger: Key Facts and Statistics 2021,” Action Against Hunger, September 19, 2021, <https://www.actionagainsthunger.org/world-hunger-facts-statistics#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20UN's%20Hunger,to%20of%20C%20oor%20other%20resources>.

income such that one's income does not suffice for them to afford their basic needs. In other words, it's an insufficiency of income and resources that can allow one to secure a sustainable livelihood.⁸³

⁸³ "United Nations Definition of Poverty," Learning For Justice, Accessed September 19, 2021, https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/tt_poverty_h1.pdf.

History of the Problem

Introduction to History of the Problem

As previously mentioned, the disastrous effects of poverty and hunger are loud and easy to pinpoint, especially given how long the issue has burdened African communities. The prevalence of hunger in Africa and among AU member states dates back many decades, but one of the more recent marked instances was the East Africa famine in 2011/2012. During that period, it is estimated that 13 million people in Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti were faced with hunger as a consequence of extreme **drought**, which raised food prices.⁸⁴ The root causes, however, are extensive and not as easy to pinpoint. These include but are not limited to geographic barriers that leave rural communities without access, conflict-related difficulties that lead to instability of certain communities, cities, and even economies, and unequal distribution of wealth.

Sources of the Problem

Geography and Hunger

Geography plays a role in hunger due to the correlation between geography and weather. Geography determines relative vulnerability to droughts, **aridity**, soil quality, and potential for the spread of disease.⁸⁵ As such, certain countries are disproportionately affected by specific climate changes and environmental incidents and more likely to be burdened. Moreover, different environments and geographies will vary in both their natural and man-made resources.

⁸⁴ "Horn of Africa Famine," Direct Relief, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.directrelief.org/emergency/2011-2012-africa-famine/>.

⁸⁵ Robert W. Kates and Partha Dasgupta, "African poverty: A grand challenge for sustainability science," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 104, no. 43 (October 23, 2007): 16747-16750, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2040431/>.

Unequal Wealth Distribution

Most AU member states are afflicted with severe wealth gaps.⁸⁶ Income inequality refers to the unequal distribution of wealth within a given nation. South Africa is an excellent example of this circumstance; most live in poverty but a small minority is very wealthy. That being said, while South Africa has one of the most developed economies in the region, it is one of the most unequal in the world.⁸⁷ Beyond this, **infrastructure** in most of Africa is also unequal, which plays into the geographic barriers detailed above.

Conflict

There is a notable connection between conflict and poverty.⁸⁸ Conflict ridden nations are oftentimes burdened with poverty and tend to have higher poverty rates, less education, and persistent inequality, which then make poverty reduction more unlikely.⁸⁹ South Sudan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Somalia are all great examples of this and are expected to reach extreme poverty by 2030 as a result of conflict.⁹⁰ Poverty makes countries more prone to civil war, and in turn, conflict makes governments weak and economies less efficient and sufficient, which increases the likelihood of further conflict and increases poverty.⁹¹ Moreover, “high rates of unemployment and inequality, combined with low levels of education and development, are thought to soften the ground for recruitment and provide motives” to mobilize for violence.⁹² In summation, violence and unrest increase food insecurity and poverty.⁹³

⁸⁶ Kingsley Ighobor, “Closing Africa’s wealth gap,” Africa Renewal, United Nations, March 2018, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2017-march-2018/closing-africa%E2%80%99s-wealth-gap>.

⁸⁷ “Ibid.”

⁸⁸ Payce Madden, “Figures of the week: Fragility and extreme poverty,” Brookings, January 24, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2019/01/24/figures-of-the-week-fragility-and-extreme-poverty/>.

⁸⁹ “Accelerating Poverty Reduction in Africa: In Five Charts,” The World Bank, October 9, 2019, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/publication/accelerating-poverty-reduction-in-africa-in-five-charts>.

⁹⁰ “Ibid.”

⁹¹ Zoe Marks, “Poverty and conflict,” GSDRC Applied Knowledge Services, October 2016, <https://gsdrc.org/professional-dev/poverty-and-conflict/>.

⁹² “Ibid.”

⁹³ “Ibid.”

Corruption

While it has been a significant barrier to all types of development, corruption has particularly affected already impoverished people. Transparency International, a watchdog NGO, conducted a recent survey, estimating that 75 million people across sub-Saharan Africa had to pay bribes in the previous year.⁹⁴ These bribes were required to access basic services, such as police protection, healthcare, education, food, and official documentation; moreover, the people who were forced to pay these bribes lack funds in the first place. Corrupt individuals in power also hoard wealth that should be used for public works. This corruption is rampant, and completely impedes any progress in combating poverty or hunger, two deeply systemic problems.

Economic Stagnation is not a Consistent Cause

Although it is tempting to credit economic instability for poverty and hunger dilemmas in Africa, this presumption is largely inaccurate. This can differ for different member states not geographically located in Africa, but this subsection is focused on African nations. These nations certainly experienced economic stagnation in previous decades and even centuries as they were exploited for resources and labor, and left behind in the developing and underdeveloped world. However, for the most part, African nations have recently experienced unprecedented economic growth.⁹⁵ Nations in particular that have been attractive to investors are Morocco, Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Senegal, and Togo.⁹⁶ Note that poverty on the continent is increasing irrespective of this observed growth.

Impact of Poverty and Hunger

Understanding the manner in which poverty and hunger have affected individuals, communities, and overall socioeconomic and political progress among AU member states provides important context and allows for a clearer understanding of the urgency with respect to this issue. However, while many predicted that rising hunger in the 21st century would be a consequence of unsustainable

⁹⁴ Milena Veselinovic, "Why corruption is holding Africa back," CNN, January 8, 2016, <https://www.cnn.com/2015/12/24/africa/africa-corruption-transparency-international/index.html>.

⁹⁵ "Africa: More poverty despite economic growth," DW, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/africa-more-poverty-despite-economic-growth/a-52840817>.

⁹⁶ "Ibid."

overpopulation, our world is “awash with cheap surplus food.”⁹⁷ How is it that Africa continues to bear the huge impacts of poverty and hunger?

Hunger

Over the past several decades, many efforts have been made to eradicate hunger across the world. In spite of treaties and projects, however, the number of hungry and undernourished people has continued to increase. In 2017, 28 countries in Africa and 37 globally were dependent on food aid, many of them are AU member states.^{98,99} While **famine** undeniably results in widespread hunger, hunger is not always a consequence of famine circumstances.

Malnutrition

The **Millenium Development Goals**, which were adopted in 2000, set out a goal to halve the proportion of undernourished people, a goal which was undoubtedly not achieved. In its place now stands one of the **Sustainable Development Goals**: end hunger by 2030.¹⁰⁰

In low-income and middle-income countries, approximately one third of children face undernutrition.¹⁰¹ Beyond this, in 2018 the World Health Organization estimated that 45% of child deaths worldwide are related to malnutrition. The consequences of malnutrition can be alarming, and the UN estimates that 40% of children in Sub-Saharan Africa are too small for their age or stunted as a consequence of malnutrition.¹⁰² Some children suffer severe acute malnutrition, which

⁹⁷ “Ibid.”

⁹⁸ “Hunger and Food Scarceness in Africa,” SOS Children’s Villages, Accessed September 19, 2021, https://www.sos-usa.org/about-us/where-we-work/africa/hunger-in-africa?gclid=CjoKCQjwv5uKBhD6ARIsAGv9a-zCOpSQjPyjPuMb4NBPYToXucAio4qGg2w1UJD3hP76zn4agM9gz-4aAvdgEALw_wcB.

⁹⁹ These 28 referenced countries are: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Djibouti, DR Congo [or Democratic Republic of the Congo], Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, Iraq, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Uganda, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

¹⁰⁰ “Ibid.”

¹⁰¹ “Ibid.”

¹⁰² “Ibid.”

can cause death in only a few days of suffering during which childrens' vital organs slow down and then stop functioning.¹⁰³

Children and Behavioral, Developmental Consequences

Malnutrition affects all those who are in hunger or starvation conditions, but the effect is disproportionately burdensome on children as they are going through critical developmental changes and phases. Malnutrition and food insecurity hinder childrens' ability to achieve their potential.¹⁰⁴ Biologically, it has been shown that malnutrition impairs **neurocognitive functioning**, which can predispose children to externalizing behavior and "acting out."¹⁰⁵

COVID-19

COVID-19 has increased food insecurity on a global scale, largely as a consequence of reduced incomes due to loss of jobs and economic stagnation.¹⁰⁶ While delegates may be tempted to focus on the effects of the pandemic on their respective nations, **COVID-19 will not be addressed in this committee**, as it is a still occurring issue that has had an impact on many of us.

Hunger: Impact

For contextual aid and for reference, below are some examples of how hunger has affected different nations. **Note that this is not an exhaustive list.**

¹⁰³ "The Devastating Effects of Child Starvation & Malnutrition in Africa," Save the Children, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response/helping-starving-african-children>.

¹⁰⁴ "Africa hunger, famine: Facts, FAQs, and how to help," World Vision, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.worldvision.org/hunger-news-stories/africa-hunger-famine-facts>.

¹⁰⁵ Jianghong Liu and Adrian Raine, "The effect of childhood malnutrition on externalizing behavior," *Current Opinion in Pediatrics* 18, no. 5 (October 2006): 565-70, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16969174/#:~:text=From%2oanimal%2oand%2ohuman%2ofindings,impairments%2o predispose%2oto%2oexternalizing%2obehavior>.

¹⁰⁶ "COVID-19 Brief: Impact on Food Security," U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, Updated August 12, 2021, <https://www.usglc.org/coronavirus/global-hunger/#:~:text=The%2oCOVID%2D19%2opandemic%2oincreased,poorest%2oand%2omost%2ovulnerable%2opopulations>.

Somalia:

Aside from the aforementioned 2011-2012 famine, which affected around 4 million Somalians, the nation's hunger crisis was made worse by conflict. **Al Shabaab** militants have stood in the way of aid agencies, preventing refugees and displaced people from accessing any food or other aid resources.¹⁰⁷ Many were driven to seek refuge in other nations, like Kenya, and perished on the journey there.¹⁰⁸

Nigeria:

As a consequence of conflict and terror under the threat of **Boko Haram** militants, a Nigerian "exodus" took place, leaving many hungry and without resources or means of sustenance.¹⁰⁹

South Sudan:

South Sudan's famine is even more recent than the 2011-2012 famine cited above, and in 2017 the UN labeled the nation's circumstances as a hunger emergency.¹¹⁰ The famine can be traced back to a series of different causes, but was exacerbated by violence, weather conditions, and the economic impact of COVID-19.¹¹¹

Yemen:

The crisis in Yemen has been dubbed a catastrophe and is considered one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. Over 20 million people are in need of assistance, and around 2.3 million children

¹⁰⁷ "Africa hunger, famine: Facts, FAQs, and how to help," World Vision, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.worldvision.org/hunger-news-stories/africa-hunger-famine-facts>.

¹⁰⁸ "Ibid."

¹⁰⁹ "Ibid."

¹¹⁰ "Ibid."

¹¹¹ "South Sudanese 'one step away from famine', as UN launches humanitarian response plan," UN News, United Nations, March 16, 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1087492>.

are at risk of starving to death.¹¹² 16.2 million Yemenis face food insecurity, and the level of hunger is internationally unprecedented.¹¹³ The crisis is largely attributed to famine and civil war.¹¹⁴

Poverty

27 of the world's poorest 28 countries are in Africa. Each has a poverty rate of over 30%, and the region's population is notably growing faster than other regions.¹¹⁵¹¹⁶ Poverty in Africa and among AU member states is exacerbated by different socioeconomic and political issues including, but not limited to: population overgrowth, gender disparities, conflict and instability, corruption, and disease.¹¹⁷ When these conditions are coupled with **drought** or famine, this leads to a crisis. Below, some of the consequences of poverty are explored. Note that most, if not all, of these are exacerbated by hunger conditions or food insecurity.

Mental illness

Low income and poverty are positively associated with a variety of mental illnesses as well as suicide attempts, and fluctuations in income are associated with anxiety, substance abuse, and mood disorders.¹¹⁸ For adults living in poverty working to sustain families or households, the circumstances can lead to the aforementioned consequences by means of dealing with stress, stigma, and direct or generational trauma resulting from poverty.¹¹⁹ For children and adolescents, the effects are notable

¹¹² "Yemen 2021," MATW Project, Accessed September 19, 2021, https://matwproject.org/product/yemen/?gclid=CjoKCQjwv5uKBhD6ARIsAGv9a-xxGA7MYhN37BNxYF6A2mpHbPSYAC692pQkR1nPdgwNu-BM-g5DRs8aAIExEALw_wcB.

¹¹³ "Yemen emergency," World Food Programme, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/yemen-emergency#:~:text=The%20current%20level%20of%20hunger,million%20Yemenis%20are%20of%20food%20insecure>.

¹¹⁴ "Yemen," World Food Program USA, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.wfpusa.org/countries/yemen/>.

¹¹⁵ Nirav Patel, "Figure of the Week: Understanding Poverty in Africa," Brookings, November 21, 2018, www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2018/11/21/figure-of-the-week-understanding-poverty-in-africa.

¹¹⁶ "Population, total - Sub-Saharan Africa," The World Bank, Accessed September 19, 2021, data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=ZG.

¹¹⁷ "Hunger in Africa," Compassion, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.compassion.com/poverty/hunger-in-africa.htm>.

¹¹⁸ "Low income associated with mental disorders and suicide attempts, study finds," ScienceDaily, JAMA and Archives Journals, Accessed November 26, 2021, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/04/110404161716.htm>.

¹¹⁹ Lee Knifton and Greig Inglis, "Poverty and mental health: policy, practice and research implications," *BJPsych Bulletin* 44, no. 5 (2020): 193-196. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7525587/#:~:text=Poverty%20in%20childhood%20and%20among,or%20of%20fragmentation%20of%20social%20relationships>.

as they internalize and are influenced by both parental and personal stress.¹²⁰ Mental illness can also further one's state of poverty and contribute to a generational cycle, as it can interfere with one's employment potential, motivation, and physical health.

Crime

African leaders have found that "mass poverty and under-development interact with, and exacerbate, crime."¹²¹ International studies have confirmed this correlation, noting that income inequality, poverty, and unemployment increase crime rates.¹²² South Africa can be taken as a case example - the nation is plagued with what researchers identified as "three social evils: high crime rate, inequality, and poverty," and it has been found that drug-related crimes in the nation are particularly related to poverty.¹²³

Unemployment

In sub-Saharan Africa, around 70% of workers are in **vulnerable employment** - for context, the global average is around 46%.¹²⁴ While the economies of AU member states are mostly growing, that growth has not generated sufficient jobs, and African youth consequently face the highest unemployment rate in the world.¹²⁵ The relation between unemployment and poverty is clear, as unemployment and lack of job growth have "retarded poverty reduction" in the region.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Carol Dashiff, Wendy DiMicco, Beverly Myers, and Kathy Sheppard, "Poverty and Adolescent Mental Health," *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing* 22, no. 1 (February, 2009): 23-32.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1744-6171.2008.00166.x>.

¹²¹ "Crime and Development in Africa," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, June 2005,

https://www.unodc.org/pdf/African_report.pdf.

¹²² Muhammad Khalid Anser, Zahid Yousaf, Abdelmohsen A. Nassani, *et al.*, "Dynamic linkages between poverty, inequality, crime, and social expenditures in a panel of 16 countries: two-step GMM estimates," *Journal of Economic Structures* 9, no. 43 (June 5, 2020). <https://journalofeconomicstructures.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40008-020-00220-6>.

¹²³ Priviledge Cheteni, Gisele Mah & Yohane Khamfula Yohane, "Drug-related crime and poverty in South Africa," *Cogent Economics & Finance* 6, no. 1 (October, 2018). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23322039.2018.1534528>.

¹²⁴ "Facing the growing unemployment challenges in Africa," International Labour Organization, January 20, 2016, https://www.ilo.org/africa/media-centre/pr/WCMS_444474/lang--en/index.htm.

¹²⁵ "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Africa," International Labour Organization, 2020,

https://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_737670.pdf.

¹²⁶ "Growth, Jobs, and Poverty in Africa," African Development Fund, Accessed September 2021,

https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/2018AEO/African_Economic_Outlook_2018_-_EN_Chapter2.pdf.

Education

This topic is explored in greater depth in Topic A, but poverty heavily impacts education and education access. Education is key to rising above poverty and breaking the generational cycle, and children in low-income or poor families face more barriers which instead extend the cycle by an additional generation.¹²⁷

Disease

Diseases like **AIDS** and **Ebola** can simultaneously be regarded as causes and results of poverty in Africa and among AU member states.¹²⁸ This is a combination of a lack of education and awareness, healthcare, and stable living conditions. Poor living conditions and crowded housing (such as those characteristic of refugee camps) can facilitate the spread of **communicable disease**. Poverty is associated with the spread of noncommunicable diseases as well, given that the aforementioned circumstances like stress and malnutrition can affect cardiovascular disease, cancer occurrence, and diabetes commonality.¹²⁹

Combined Impact: Hunger and Poverty

Quality of life is a “multidimensional concept” which takes into account positive and negative aspects that ultimately dictate a standard of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by an individual or a certain group.¹³⁰ Poverty and hunger impact one’s quality of life in the ways described above. Beyond this, those conditions impact mortality rates and life expectancy. In 2013, the average life expectancy for individuals in sub-Saharan Africa was 46 years, which is around 32 years less than

¹²⁷ Bailey Gerber, “How Poverty Impacts Education,” Forgotten Children Worldwide, March 19, 2020, https://www.forgottenchildren.org/how-poverty-impacts-education/?gclid=CjoKCCQjwv5uKBhD6ARIsAGv9a-wmqSNDijxyBAwnebp4nhkUrDI1DYE2-VrdXiKXhgRq8_xWikfxl4aAjQfEALw_wcB.

¹²⁸ “On the poorest continent, the plight of children is dramatic,” SOS Children’s Villages, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.sos-usa.org/about-us/where-we-work/africa/poverty-in-africa#:~:text=Diseases%20such%20as%20AIDS%2C%20malaria,number%20of%20orphans%20is%20increasing.>

¹²⁹ “Poverty,” World Health Organization, Accessed September 19, 2021. <https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/poverty>.

¹³⁰ “Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQOL),” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, October 31, 2018, <https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/concept.htm>.

the average life expectancy of developed countries' residents. This can be attributed largely to poverty, hunger, and their consequences.¹³¹

¹³¹ Josh Forgét, "5 Poverty Statistics on Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa," The Borgen Project, July 27, 2013, <https://borgenproject.org/5-poverty-statistics-on-sub-saharan-africa/>.

Past Actions

Given how prevalent and persistent poverty and hunger have been, it's important to reflect on previous solutions and address gaps and shortcomings to ultimately answer one key question: why have poverty and hunger remained stubbornly prevalent, in spite of economic growth and consistent political efforts?¹³²

Relief Organizations and NGOs

A large part of the progress made with respect to hunger and poverty crises can be attributed to the work of non-governmental and humanitarian relief organizations. World Vision, for example, has launched a program to help feed over 3 million people across Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda.¹³³ However, reliance on third parties is not a sustainable nor a practical solution in the long term. Beyond this, it is easy to limit the access that these organizations have to vulnerable populations: for example, in refugee camps in conflict-impacted areas.

Creative Solutions and Innovation

Some medicines and foods exist to help malnourished children.¹³⁴ Plumpy'nut, for instance, can bring malnourished kids back to health within 2-4 weeks.¹³⁵ However, these products are expensive and inaccessible to the populations that need them, as they require a medium for their delivery such as NGOs or aid organizations operating in the area.

¹³² Louise Fox, "Assessing past and future strategies for reducing poverty in Africa," Brookings, October 21, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2019/10/21/assessing-past-and-future-strategies-for-reducing-poverty-in-africa/>.

¹³³ "Ibid."

¹³⁴ "Innovative Solutions to Poverty and Hunger," The Borgen Project, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://borgenproject.org/innovative-solutions-to-poverty-and-hunger/>.

¹³⁵ "Plumpy'Nut," nutriset, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.nutriset.fr/products/en/plumpy-nut>.

Clinics and Care

Establishing immediate care clinics throughout the region has had some success, but these establishments - although protected under laws of **medical neutrality**- can be easy targets for militant groups.

Government Policies

While this may seem vague, the generalization of failed government policies is deeply rooted in the issue of corruption and the hold that it has on AU member states. Beyond this, governments are underfunded, and as such do not have the means to implement solutions in the treaties to which they agree. There have also been documented cases in which government intervention has worsened the issue - for example, when money is allocated toward care or education, but the funds are captured by corrupt powerful elites, a limited proportion of the designated amount reaches the intended target, leading to a limited impact.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Shanta Devarajan, "What will it take to end poverty in Africa?," World Bank Blogs, September 20, 2012, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/what-will-it-take-to-end-poverty-in-africa>.

Possible Solutions

Reducing Population Growth

This potential solution has been largely ignored in policies and efforts geared toward reducing hunger and poverty.¹³⁷ Based on historical precedent, “no country has successfully sustained economic growth and reduced poverty at the average fertility level of sub-Saharan Africa.”¹³⁸

Different ways to approach this include increasing awareness of preventative measures for birth control and reducing fertility, or creating resources for women to access birth control options, but this could be difficult given the role that religion and culture play.

Access to Education

As addressed in Topic A, much has been done already to increase access to education. However, efforts have been insufficient. As such, a comprehensive solution should take into consideration different ways to increase access to quality education in order to empower a more skilled and educated workforce.¹³⁹

Ethical Investment

As previously mentioned, the regional economy is growing. This can allow for investment opportunities that would create new job opportunities, but in the past investment has led to low-level jobs or exploitation. Delegates should explore strategies to fuel the economy while factoring in ways to prevent the past from repeating itself.

¹³⁷ “Ibid.”

¹³⁸ “Ibid.”

¹³⁹ Zachary Patterson, “10 Ways to Stop World Hunger,” The Borgen Project, October 2, 2016, <https://borgenproject.org/10-ways-stop-world-hunger/>.

Glossary

Agenda 2063: A plan for “transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future.”¹⁴⁰

AIDS: AIDS is the late stage of HIV infection that occurs when the body's immune system is badly damaged because of the virus.¹⁴¹

Al-Shabaab: An Islamist militant group which, in 2006, waged an insurgency in Somalia.¹⁴²

Aridity: Deficiency of moisture.

Boko Haram: A group based in Nigeria who seeks to overthrow the government. The group's name literally translates as “western education is forbidden.”¹⁴³

Communicable Disease: A disease that can spread from one person to another through a variety of ways that include contact with blood and bodily fluids.¹⁴⁴

Drought: A prolonged period of abnormal dryness.

Ebola: A deadly disease with occasional outbreaks that occur mostly on the African continent.¹⁴⁵

Exodus: Departure or emigration of a large number of people.

Famine: According to the UN, any of the three below conditions constitute famine:

¹⁴⁰ “Agenda 2063,” African Union, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://au.int/en/agenda2063>.

¹⁴¹ “What Are HIV and AIDS?,” HIV.gov, Updated June 5, 2020, <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/about-hiv-and-aids/what-are-hiv-and-aids>.

¹⁴² “al-Shabaab | Somali-based militant group,” Encyclopedia Britannica, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/al-Shabaab>.

¹⁴³ “Boko Haram,” National Counterterrorism Center, Accessed September 19, 2021, https://www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/boko_haram.html.

¹⁴⁴ “Communicable Disease,” Alameda County Public Health Department, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://acphd.org/communicable-disease/>.

¹⁴⁵ “What is Ebola Virus Disease?,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/about.html>.

20% of households suffer from extreme food shortages, 30% of the population is acutely malnourished; and two out of every 10,000 people, or four children, die daily from food shortages.¹⁴⁶

Hunger: A baseline term that describes circumstances of food insecurity under which individuals don't eat for days at a time as a consequence of poverty, lack of access, or other barriers.¹⁴⁷

Infrastructure: System of public works and resources.

Malnutrition: Deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients.¹⁴⁸

Medical Neutrality: An international agreement that states medical personnel is to be treated as a neutral party during times of war.¹⁴⁹

Millenium Development Goals: 8 goals that UN member states had aimed to achieve by 2015.¹⁵⁰

Neurocognitive Functioning: Functioning that largely determines one's ability to think and reason.¹⁵¹

Poverty: Poverty entails lack of income such that one's income does not suffice for them to afford their basic needs. In other words, it's an insufficiency of income and resources that can allow one to secure a sustainable livelihood.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ "Hunger and Food Scarceness in Africa," SOS Children's Villages, Accessed September 19, 2021, https://www.sos-usa.org/about-us/where-we-work/africa/hunger-in-africa?gclid=CjoKCQjwv5uKBhD6ARIsAGv9a-zCOpSQjPyjPuMb4NBPYToXucAio4qGg2w1UJD3hP76zn4agM9gz-4aAvdgEALw_wcB.

¹⁴⁷ "Ibid."

¹⁴⁸ "Malnutrition," World Health Organization, June 9, 2021, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/malnutrition>.

¹⁴⁹ Angelina Walker, "Medical Neutrality War Violations: 5 Facts Nurses Need To Know," nurse.org, June 23, 2018, <https://nurse.org/articles/medical-neutrality-war-violations-nurses/>.

¹⁵⁰ "Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)," World Health Organization, February 19, 2018, [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/millennium-development-goals-\(mdgs\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/millennium-development-goals-(mdgs)).

¹⁵¹ "Definition of neurocognitive," National Cancer Institute, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/def/neurocognitive>.

¹⁵² "United Nations Definition of Poverty," Learning For Justice, Accessed September 19, 2021, https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/tt_poverty_h1.pdf.

Quality Of Life: A “multidimensional concept” which takes into account positive and negative aspects that ultimately dictate a standard of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by an individual or a certain group.¹⁵³

Starvation: The state of having no food for a long period, often causing death.

Sustainable Development Goals: 17 goals adopted by the UN, which member states aim to achieve by 2030.¹⁵⁴

Vulnerable Employment: Employment that entails economic risk, physical risk, or other risks.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ “Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQOL),” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, October 31, 2018, <https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/concept.htm>.

¹⁵⁴ “Local Action for Global Solutions,” United Nations Foundation, American Leadership on the Sustainable Development Goals, Accessed September 19, 2021, <https://unfoundation.org/what-we-do/issues/sustainable-development-goals/u-s-leadership-on-the-sdgs/>

¹⁵⁵ “Precarious Employment and Vulnerable Workers,” Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, Updated March 16, 2017, <https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/legisl/vulnerable.html>.

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