United Nations Children's Fund

Recent activity

As the central children's protection agency of the United Nations, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has done much work to protect children in light of many emergencies and natural disasters that have destabilized entire regions. UNICEF continues to support various UN initiatives and partnerships for long-term improvement to children's lives, but recent crises have focused UNICEF's resources on emergency response.[1]

The situation in Syria

The humanitarian crisis in Syria has been a focus area for many UN agencies in the past months. UNICEF has expressed concern for the situation of children caught in the middle of the Syrian conflict. Even those removed from the fighting are at great risk of respiratory diseases and malnutrition due to lack of resources and adequate housing, especially given severe weather conditions.[2] In response, UNICEF has been providing clothing and blankets to many refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) within and outside of main fighting arenas. In addition to providing primary emergency care, UNICEF has tried to re-establish normalcy for many displaced children by resuming educational activities.[3] UNICEF's commitment to providing education to these vulnerable children and youth has helped combat the typically high school dropout rates for refugees and displaced persons.[4] The educational and recreational programs UNICEF is supporting have shown to provide stability and psychological relief to these traumatized children.[5] Additional resources will be needed to maintain these services for the increasing number of displaced children.[6]

The situation in Myanmar

UNICEF has also responded to health concerns following civil unrest in Rakhine, Myanmar. As a result of the unrest, many children are suffering from severe malnutrition and water-borne diseases, as many inhabitants of the region have fled and are now living in crowded and ill-equipped displacement camps.[7] UNICEF is providing vaccinations and health education to approximately 44,000 children.[8] Training has also been conducted to increase the number of services providers able to assist with these child protection programs.[9] Educational training programs for community leaders have also been provided.[10] As educational programs develop stronger roots within community leadership, upheavals and minor crises will be less likely to entirely disrupt schooling for children.[11] Medical stations have been set-up throughout the state, and qualified service care providers are training government personnel so that critical care can continue after UNICEF discontinues its present work.[12]

Reviewing UNICEF's working methods

[1] United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF: Syrian Crisis.*

[2] United Nations Children's Fund, *Syrian refugee children are dying, they are hurt and they need healing, says UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Sir Roger Moore.*

[3] United Nations Children's Fund, In Lebanon, *Palestinian refugees fleeing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic face new challenges.*

[4] United Nations Children's Fund, In Lebanon, *Palestinian refugees fleeing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic face new challenges.*

[5] United Nations Children's Fund, *Amidst talk of relocation, internally displaced children express themselves through recreational activities.*

[6] United Nations Children's Fund, *Syrian refugee children are dying, they are hurt and they need healing, says UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Sir Roger Moore.*

[7] United Nations Children's Fund, *Prevention of water-borne diseases and support for malnourished children a priority for UNICEF in Rakhine State, Myanmar.*

[8] United Nations Children's Fund, *Prevention of water-borne diseases and support for malnourished children a priority for UNICEF in Rakhine State, Myanmar.*

[9] United Nations Children's Fund, *Prevention of water-borne diseases and support for malnourished children a priority for UNICEF in Rakhine State, Myanmar.*

[10] United Nations Children's Fund, *First Joint Education Sector Working Group Meeting Reviews Rapid Assessment Findings to Date.*

[11] United Nations Children's Fund, *Prevention of water-borne diseases and support for malnourished children a priority for UNICEF in Rakhine State, Myanmar.*

[12] United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF scales-up response, calls for stronger combat against child malnutrition in Rakhine State.*

A review conducted by a network of donor countries has identified the key strengths and weaknesses of UNICEF in 2012.[13] UNICEF uses the triennial review to evaluate its performance and reorganize strategic practices and overall goals.[14] This process is especially important given the impending Millennium Development Goal (MDG) deadline in 2015. The review notes that as an agency, UNICEF has been particularly successful in mainstreaming gender equality throughout its various programs.[15] The focus on gender within UNICEF's core areas has resulted in better maternal and child health, gender equality and child survival, and development.[16] This is especially important to note given the importance of gender in the topics UNICEF is tasked with addressing. UNICEF has also shown efficacy in promoting and achieving universal basic education as reported by field partners working with UNICEF.[17] Though works remains to be done, the strong framework and successful past-programs of UNICEF in this field may serve as a guide for further successes.[18]

UNICEF Executive Board Meeting
The beginning of the 2013 sessions with the Executive Board meeting in February will also play a big role in the management and change of UNICEF's major projects. UNICEF's medium-term strategic plan, which started in 2006, will end in 2013.[19] This meeting will be a key forum to determine the goals and strategies to be included in the new strategic plan starting 2014.[20] In preparation, UNICEF has drawn up report for the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), reviewing the efficacy and successes of the 2006-2013 strategic plan.[21] The report presents results by focus area reflecting UNICEF's key priority areas and themes.[22] Both this report, as well as UNICEF's annual report to ECOSOC for 2012, provide key details regarding UNICEF's strengths and shortfalls which may guide delegates' work on the committee topics.[23]

The Committee at the National Model United Nations Conference

While UNICEF mostly writes reports, at NMUN 2013, UNICEF will be a resolution-writing body, reflecting the decision-making process within the Executive Board. As a fund, UNICEF does not follow the same structure as larger plenary committees; instead of a UN plenary, UNICEF is run by an Executive Board of 36 Member State representatives elected by ECOSOC. While UNICEF falls under the supervision of the General Assembly, the UNICEF executive board reports to ECOSOC. Resolutions adopted by UNICEF during the conference will be presented to ECOSOC for voting.

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[13] United Nations Children's Fund, *Assessment of UNICEF finds strategic improvements over last three years.*

[14] United Nations Children's Fund, *Assessment of UNICEF finds strategic improvements over last three years.*

[15] Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, *Assessment of Organisational Effectiveness and Development Results: UNICEF 2012,* xii

[16] Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, *Assessment of Organisational Effectiveness and Development Results: UNICEF 2012,* 3

[17] Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, *Assessment of Organisational Effectiveness and Development Results: UNICEF 2012,* 61

[18] Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, *Assessment of Organisational Effectiveness and Development Results: UNICEF 2012,* 61

[19] United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF Executive Board: First Regular Session 2013.

[20] United Nations Economic and Social Council, Report on the End-of-Cycle Review of the Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2006-2013.

[21] United Nations Economic and Social Council, Report on the End-of-Cycle Review of the Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2006-2013.

[22] United Nations Economic and Social Council, Report on the End-of-Cycle Review of the Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2006-2013.

[23] United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Annual Report to the Economic and Social Council.*

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> *This report assesses the successes and overall effectiveness of UNICEF from 2009-2012. This report is compiled by the MOPAN on behalf of various donor countries to evaluate the use of resources and redirect resources to other projects for the upcoming years. UNICEF uses this independent report to guide agenda items and priorities for the upcoming years.*

United Nations Children's Fund. (2012). *In Lebanon, Palestinian Refugees Fleeing Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic Face New Challenges.* Retrieved January 14, 2013 from: http://www.unicef.org/education/lebanon_66189.html

> *This article shows the work UNICEF has been doing to ensure education, basic needs and a sense of security are provided to refugees and displaced children from the Syrian conflict. The tools used to ensure education continues, including training and soothing psychological activities, may provide valuable lessons that can be incorporated in the discussion of similar topics within the committee.*

United Nations Children's Fund. (2012). *Prevention of water-borne diseases and support for malnourished children a priority for UNICEF in Rakhine State, Myanmar.* Retrieved January 15, 2013 from: http://www.unicef.org/media/media_66362.html

> *This article demonstrates UNICEF's longstanding involvement with certain vulnerable communities, which better allows UNICEF to respond in times of crisis. In this case, basic training for services and education ensures the continuity of these programmes even in consistently unstable environments.*

United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2012). *Annual Report to the Economic and Social Council.* Retrieved February 5, 2013 from: http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2013-3_EXD_annual_report-ODS-English.pdf

> *This report to ECOSOC details the progress reached by UNICEF on many key issues in the last year. This is one of the more recent reports on progress being made and overall practices, and may be especially relevant when examining the current committee topics. The section on gender mainstreaming mentions various gender-focused task forces and programmes that will be useful for UNICEF topics, all of which have an important gender dimension.*

United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2012). *Report on the End-of-Cycle Review of the Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2006-2013.* Retrieved February 5, 2013 from: http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2013-4-End-of-cycle_review-MTSP-ODS-English.pdf

> *This report to ECOSOC contains summaries of UNICEF's activities within the strategic plan from 2006-2013. This overall report will allow ECOSOC and UNICEF to reassess priorities and practices when creating the next strategic plan, effective 2014. The report is organized into key thematic areas of focus throughout UNICEF programmes, many of which are relevant in the topics the committee will discuss.*

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United Nations Children's Fund. (2012). *Prevention of water-borne diseases and support for malnourished children a priority for UNICEF in Rakhine State, Myanmar.* Retrieved January 15, 2013 from: http://www.unicef.org/media/media_66362.html

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United Nations Children's Fund. (2013). *UNICEF Executive Board: First Regular Session 2013*. Retrieved February 5, 2013 from: http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/index_66173.html

United Nations Children's Fund. (2012). *UNICEF scales-up response, calls for stronger combat against child malnutrition in Rakhine State.* Retrieved January 15, 2013 from: http://www.unicef.org/media/media_66437.html

United Nations Children's Fund. (2013). *UNICEF: Syrian Crisis.* Retrieved January 15, 2013 from: http://www.unicef.org/index.php

United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2012). *Annual Report to the Economic and Social Council*. Retrieved February 5, 2013 from: http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2013-3_EXD_annual_report-ODS-English.pdf

United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2012). *Report on the End-of-Cycle Review of the Medium-Term Strategic Plan 2006-2013.* Retrieved February 5, 2013 from: http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2013-4-End-of-cycle_review-MTSP-ODS-English.pdf

I. Gendered and Sexual Identities in Relation to Education

Achieving Educational Equality in East Asia

East Asia is one region which has made greater strides than others in reducing inequality and gender bias in educational systems. The United Nations Girls' Educational Initiative (UNGEI) is committed to narrowing the gender gap in primary and secondary schooling.[24] UNGEI also seeks to promote women's equality through gender-focused programming within schools.[25] UNICEF's success with UNGEI programs in East Asia may serve as a framework for further UNGEI and UNICEF efforts in other countries.

UNGEI has been successful in many countries in East Asia because of its close work with national and regional educational ministries, supporting a streamlined and consistent approach.[26] Because of cooperation between NGOs, UN agencies and government bodies, overall school enrollment in East Asia has increased leading to greater gender parity for most countries in the region.[27] Cambodia, for example, formed a Gender Mainstreaming Secretariat under an education committee responsible for overseeing increased gender equality in schools, as well as in educational management and curriculum.[28] The greatest strides have been made in achieving gender parity in classrooms. Many countries have achieved gender parity in primary schooling, while other countries such as the Republic of Korea have achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary schools.[29]

While achieving gender parity in educational systems often focuses on disadvantages faced by girls, in many parts of East Asia including Malaysia, the Philippines, Fiji and Thailand, girls' enrollment in primary and secondary education outnumbers boys' enrollment.[30] Low enrollment of boys in these countries, particularly in more advanced grade levels, may be due to needs for extra help with household duties, agriculture or supporting family enterprise.[31] It is important that in securing access to education for girls, the boys in these states are not overlooked and are also targeted to achieve educational gender parity. Another challenge in achieving gender equality in education in East Asia is the difficulty in adjusting existing curricula to adequately deal with sexism and traditional gender roles. Female representation in certain sectors, specifically science and technology, remains drastically low, keeping many of the higher-paying jobs out of the reach of women.[32] Technical and vocation training in many states tends to be dominated by men, which may be more useful in finding long-term employment than other areas of study.[33] The problem is especially persistent in rural areas, where traditional mindsets and gender roles are a critical part of rural life and community.[34] In order to free young boys and girls from imposed gender roles, UNGEI calls for discussions of biological sex, gender identity, and gender roles and attributes to be incorporated into school curricula and discussions at the primary level.[35]

UN Progress on Education

Despite being one of the MDGs, progress on achieving universal access to education has been mixed. The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, has shown renewed commitment to universal education by launching Education First, a global educational initiative launched in September 2012.[36] UNICEF is one of many strategic partners in this initiative. Education First seeks to expand primary school enrollment, increase the number of

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[24] United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, *About Us.*
[25] United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, *About Us.*
[26] United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, *East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI.*
[27] UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, *Gender Equality in Education: East Asia and the Pacific,* 9
[28] UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, *Gender Equality in Education: East Asia and the Pacific,* 24
[29] UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, *Gender Equality in Education: East Asia and the Pacific,* 26
[30] East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI, *Making Education Work: The Gender Dimension of the School to Work Transition,* 12
[31] East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI, *Making Education Work: The Gender Dimension of the School to Work Transition,* 12
[32] East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI, *What's the Difference? Confronting Factors that Affect Gender Equality in Education,* 3
[33] East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI, *Making Education Work: The Gender Dimension of the School to Work Transition,* 29
[34] UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, *Gender Equality in Education: East Asia and the Pacific,* 38
[35] East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI, *What's the Difference? Confronting Factors that Affect Gender Equality in Education,* 11
[36] United Nations Children's Fund, *United Nations Secretary-General Launches Global Education Initiative.*

returning students, and improve the overall quality of education to support equality and global citizenship.[37] Education First is especially committed to increasing educational access, particularly for more vulnerable groups, especially girls. Key stakeholders across UN agencies, governments and civil society to ensure dialogue and collaboration are engaged in each component of the program.[38] Though these new programs signal shifting priorities for the UN, gendered and sexual identities are not always a key part of educational programs and advocacy. Marked progress on this issue will continue to be slow unless educational goals and programs make this a key component of their work.

UNICEF has also partnered with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to hold a series of discussions about education as a global priority after the 2015 MDG deadline.[39] The discussions are meant to identify challenges and solutions that are thwarting progress on achieving universal education.[40] The discussions are also meant to examine the main issue areas surrounding education, including gender stereotyping, gender discrimination and sexual education.[41]

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[37] United Nations, *UN Education First: Our Priorities.*
[38] United Nations Children's Fund, *United Nations Secretary-General Launches Global Education Initiative.*
[39] United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF and UNESCO Launch Post-2015 Global Consultation on Education.*
[40] United Nations, *The World We Want 2015*
[41] The World We Want, *Post-2015 Global Thematic Consultation on Education.*

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http://www.unicef.org/eapro/UNC_UNGEI3_130109_Final_Web.pdf
>*This report outlines some of the main reasons for continuing gender inequality in East Asia. The gap in fields of study between girls and boys reflect disproportionate employment opportunities for each gender, where women oftentimes miss out on more lucrative work because of a lack of applied training. This discrepancy is seen even more in technical and scientific fields that are dominated by men.*

United Nations. (2013). *UN Education First: Our Priorities.* Retrieved January 13, 2013 from:
http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/priorities.html
>*This outlines the priorities of the Secretary-General's new initiative, Education First, meant to address the gaps in achieving universal education. The initiative also looks at addressing regional and gender disparities within educational enrollment to eliminate persistent inequalities that result from inadequate or discriminatory access to education.*

United Nations Children's Fund. (2012). *UNICEF and UNESCO Launch Post-2015 Global Consultation on Education.* Retrieved January 13, 2013 from: http://www.unicef.org/media/media_66551.html
>*This article features the UNICEF-UNESCO partnership designed to create a forum for dialogue and collaboration in creating an education plan for the post-2015 world. The consultation is expected to yield future plans based on the relative shortfalls and successes in achieving universal education through the MDG framework.*

UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office. (2009). *Gender Equality in Education: East Asia and the Pacific.* Retrieved January 13, 2013 from: http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/Gender_progressNote_web.pdf
>*This report outlines some of the main challenges in creating lasting change in gender and education, namely the reluctance of adopting more gender equitable curricula. Even when these curricula are adopted, they may be inconsistently applied between regions, or the lessons may be thwarted by the firm gender roles entrenched in many communities.*

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II. Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Children in Post-Conflict Societies

The topic of rehabilitation and reintegration of children in post-conflict societies remains a critical subject for discussion in many countries around the world. Continual work in the field of human rights and post-conflict societies has lead to an increase in awareness of this topic at the international level; and an increase in media coverage regarding the effects of conflict on children has lead to an increase in the discussion at the state level. The following section will highlight several advancements on this topic, as well as note areas in which further work will be required, so as to adequately address the complex needs of these children and the societies that must now be rebuilt.

The need to address not only the physical needs of children, but also the psychological and developmental needs of children in post-conflict societies is an ongoing topic amongst NGO youth advocates and international organizations that seek to promote children's rights. Amongst these organizations, Child Soldiers International published a report in December 2012 that described a ten-point checklist to help states and international organizations pinpoint at-risk youth and noted preventative measures to minimize the likelihood of children becoming child soldiers.[42] This type of work is vital in order to effectively rehabilitate children in more at risk societies and demonstrates a continued discussion of this topic at the international level, post the development of the Paris Principles in 2007, which developed key principles in the reintegration of children affected by armed conflict.[43]

In many parts of Africa rehabilitating children and reintegrating them into society is made even more difficult due to the rise in food prices and the drought that persists in the region.[44] These conditions have lead to an increase in refugees to areas like Kenya and Ethiopia, and represent one of the more pressing areas in which rehabilitation mechanisms must be implemented.[45] UNICEF is currently working towards increasing the humanitarian aid to this region in particular.[46] In addition, UNICEF has continued to expand its work on helping states develop more sustainable social and economic policies. Most recently, UNICEF published a working paper on the development of social protections for families and children living in the Republic of the Congo, which touches on the vulnerability of children and their unique needs; including the needs of girls and children with disabilities.[47]

Moreover, further work in this field will be necessary in order to fully rehabilitate children that are currently living in states in conflict, such as those living in Syria.[48] UNICEF has found that over 2.5 million people have been affected by the crisis in Syria, while many others have sought refuge in neighboring states.[49] The Syrian conflict has been particularly detrimental to children, as they have found themselves the target of vicious attacks, while also becoming a particularly vulnerable group when resources have become scarce. In order to address the immediate needs of these children UNICEF has begun setting up educational programs for those affected by this violence, but more will need to be done to rehabilitate these children into society and help them overcome the hostility they have witnessed.[50] Many still do not have access to proper education, let alone have access to a safe environment to play and grow. States facing such destruction will require multilateral efforts from states, NGOs, and the international community to put in place the infrastructure and resources needed to overcome such a crisis.[51]

What is more, societies involved in armed conflicts make up one third of all cases of extreme poverty in the world, half of the children that do not have access to primary school education and half of the children who perish before the age of five. Those living in post-conflict societies are not much better, and therefore require better means of addressing the needs of the children in these environments.[52] Unique measures will have to be taken to adequately address this topic at the international level, in order to provide children in post-conflict societies the adequate tools

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[42] Child Soldiers International, *Louder Than Words: States Still Using Child Soldiers*, 2012.
[43] UNICEF, Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, 2007.
[44] UNICEF, *Funding Appeals and Humanitarian Action Updates*, 2012.
[45] UNICEF, *Funding Appeals and Humanitarian Action Updates*, 2012.
[46] UNICEF, *Funding Appeals and Humanitarian Action Updates*, 2012.
[47] UNICEF, *Strengthening Social Protection for Families and Children in the Republic of the Congo,* 2012.
[48] BBC NEWS, *Syria Conflict: Victims of the 'war on childhood'*, 2012.
[49] UNICEF, *At a Glance: Syrian Arab Republic*, 2012.
[50] UNICEF, *At a Glance: Syrian Arab Republic*, 2012.
[51] BBC NEWS, *The Syrian Children Desperate for Normality*, 2012.
[52] Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Children And Armed Conflict: Strategic Framework 2011-2012*, 2011, p.11.

to develop and grow following the turmoil they endured. Moreover, it remains important to address the distinct needs of differing societies in establishing programs meant to further develop educational systems. A recent study on the situation in Ghana has demonstrated that the inflexibility of many school systems make life more difficult for families that require children, especially girls, to help in household chores.[53] In these situations a traditional curriculum may not be beneficial for the children or the society as a whole, and more innovative techniques may be needed.[54] The current conflict in Syria and the on-going struggle of child soldiers in Africa provide clear examples of why more must be done to fund rehabilitation and reintegration programs for children, and should serve as examples of the struggles these children must overcome.

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[53] ICSEI, *26th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement*, 2013.
[54] ICSEI, *26th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement*, 2013.

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BBC NEWS. (2012, December 7). *The Syrian Children Desperate for Normality*. Retrieved January 19, 2013 from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20625443
> This news article presents a fairly detailed description of the lives of Syrian children that are placed at the center of this conflict. It allows one to understand the trauma that these children will need to overcome later on in life and the resources that will need to be put in place to rehabilitate them and their families during this crisis and after. In addition, it presents a good example of one of the hundreds of articles that was written about Syria in the past few months and the state of these children at the present time.

ICSEI. (2013, January 2-6). *26th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement*. Retrieved February 5, 2013 from https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/cce/publications/Swaffield_ICSEI2013.pdf
> This publication focuses on one particular case study; the situation in Ghana. It provides an overview of past policies that were implemented to attempt to help integrate and educate the children following post-colonial rule and conflict in the region. The preliminary results were less then satisfactory and this account details the reasons why and what needs to be done in this region and in other states facing similar problems around the world. It also notes new projects that have been implemented and the results that these have shown in Ghana, as well as detailing the further work that must be done in order to assure a higher level of education for the children in this region.

International Rescue Committee. (2013). *Post Conflict Development*. Retrieved February 5, 2013 from http://www.rescue.org/our-work/post-conflict-development
> This site details the work of an organization that focuses on post-conflict development. It provides a good source for ideas in terms of how to address post-conflict societies and the particular needs of both children and their families. It demonstrate one example among many of the work currently being done by non-governmental organizations in the field of post-conflict development and should be viewed as a good starting off point for delegates attempting to find new means of addressing this issue.

UNICEF. (2012, November). *Strengthening Social Protection for Families and Children in the Republic of the Congo*. Retrieved January 19, 2013 from http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Social_protection_in_RoCongo_-_SEP_formatted_Working_paper(2).pdf
> This document represents a unique example of UNICEF's ongoing work in the field of humanitarian aid and their collaboration with states to develop policies in regards to rehabilitating children in post-conflict societies. Many of the topics addressed in this document are problems that most, if not all, post-conflict societies face and it presents a good starting off point for further research on the development of socio-economic programs in these states.

Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. (2011, June). *Children And Armed Conflict: Strategic Framework 2011-2012*, New York: United Nations Publications.
> This publication highlights the specific needs of children in armed conflicts and those that have lived through such conflicts, in addition to means in which international organizations and state institutions can help rehabilitate the children involved. This framework is both recently developed and currently in use, which provides interesting insight into one subset of this topic at the UN level and the work currently being done to address child soldiers internationally.

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III. Working towards MDG 5: Achieving Universal Access to Reproductive Health

The topic of reproductive health is growing in importance at both the state and international level. High profile cases involving the reproductive health of women have found themselves front and center in the news and have lead to more open discussions on the topic. One such example of this stems from the death of Savita Halappanavar, an Irish born citizen who was unable to receive an abortion and who later died due to complications while miscarrying her child. [55] Not only is the government of Ireland currently reviewing its policies, but the topic has lead other states to question the validity of their own abortion laws and sparked a renewed debate between the role of the church and the state in deciding such matters. [56] Women in Ireland, and many others around the world, who seek to terminate an unwanted pregnancy must either travel to other states with more liberal policies on abortion or find an alternative solution, which can often place the mother's health at risk. [57]

Conversely, in parts of South-East Asia, women are choosing to abort their female children causing an increase in health risks for these women and an unhealthy drop in the female population. [58] A lack of awareness of the complications that can result from an abortion, as well as the consequences related to terminating female pregnancies has lead many countries to begin seriously discussing gender norms in society and reevaluating the populations sexual health education. Nevertheless, in other areas of the world, such as Pakistan, the strict gender norms still in place, associating women with their role as child-bearers, has added an additional burden to the women in these societies, which must marry and form a family or feel ostracized because of their lack of children. [59] As such, striking differences in educational systems globally, demonstrate the need to further expand the resources available to educators in less developed countries. Moreover, in areas like India where women are now the minority, many girls are being forced to marry at a young age, increasing their risk of health complications, as they become young mothers. Even more alarming, many are being sold into the sex trade or rapped before they even reach the age to marry. [60] These issues demonstrate the complexities of the topic and the wide breath of problems that result from a lack of reproductive health rights in many areas of the world.

Equally distressing, the problems surrounding reproductive health in Africa persist. WHO have estimated that in Nigeria over 800,000 women are living with a condition known as fistula, often due to complications during childbirth, and in Tanzania alone over 9,000 women die every year due to complications during their pregnancy. Many African countries lack both the resources and adequate infrastructure to properly address this situation. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, states are spending on average less than $2 per citizen for maternal health related expenses, when United Nations experts agree that a state must spend at least $8 to provide adequate care. [61] However, some states have been able to institute programs that have begun addressing maternal health concerns. In Senegal, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Ministry of health have instituted a program that is helping train workers, who are able to bicycle to women in remote villages, in monitoring pregnancies. A similar type of program is currently being instituted in Rwanda as well. [62]

Advances in reproductive health have also continued to occur around the world. As of 2012, awareness-raining campaigns on both sexual and reproductive health had reached an estimated 20, 000 young people in the Nippes and South-East regions of Haiti. [63] This type of educational development can help solve a wide breath of health issues for women later on in life, as their knowledge can help keep themselves and their children from contracting sexually based diseases and help improve their overall health. Similarly, in 2012 alone, over 47,000 Haitians, still living in camps, were able to receive preventative health information on sexually transmitted diseases and reproductive health

[55] BBC News, *Irish Government Hears Abortion Submissions*, 2013
[56] BBC News, *Cardinal's Christmas Message reiterates Anti-Abortion Stance*, 2012.
[57] BBC News, *Marie Stopes Private Abortion Clinic to Open in Belfast*, 2012.
[58] BBC NEWS, *The Girls Stolen From the Streets of India*, 2013.
[59] Mumtaz, Shahid & Levay, *Reproductive Health,* 2013
[60] BBC NEWS, *The Girls Stolen From the Streets of India*, 2013.
[61] United Nations, *Investing in the Health of Africa's Mother's*, 2012.
[62] United Nations, *Investing in the Health of Africa's Mother's*, 2012.
[63] United Nations, *Haiti: Moving Forward Step by Step*, 2012, p.15.

in general.[64] In other areas new laws are being introduced to provide access to reproductive health, as is the case of the new law passed in the Philippines on January 17th, which will allow for more of the population to have access to contraceptive measures that were previously unavailable to those less economically stable.[65] These changes at the state level will help grant access for many lower income women and families to resources that they need to keep themselves and their families healthy. Similar programs must continue to be developed by states, so as to further aid less fortunate families receive the medical assistance they require.

To conclude, although progress in regards to reproductive health has been slow in some areas, effective measures have been put in place in several states, leading to a decrease in maternal and infant health issues, as well as a decrease in birth rates among women. However, more must continue to be done to address this topic and more effective educational programs must be put in place to continue educating men and women on the importance of reproductive health, so as to effectively address MDG 5.

[64] United Nations, *Haiti: Moving Forward Step by Step*, 2012, p.15.
[65] GMA NEWS, *Reproductive Health Law Takes Effect Thursday*, 2013.

Annotated Bibliography

BBC News. (2012, December 26). Cardinal's Christmas Message reiterates Anti-Abortion Stance. Retrieved January 20, 2013 from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20843668
>This article presents only one example of the many news articles published on the death of Savita Halappanavar in Ireland. It also presents the views of the important religious denominations in Ireland and their opinion on the matter, which can provide a good starting off point to understanding the role of the church on this matter. Although it is only the catholic viewpoint that is outlined, one can clearly make links with other religions and their unique opinions on abortion.

BBC NEWS. (2013, January 8). *The Girls Stolen From the Streets of India*. Retrieved January 20 from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20938125
>This article serves to highlight a growing problem in the East with a rise in abortions targeting female offspring. It notes the vicious cycle that has continued to exist in a society in which a female child is seen as a burden and the resulting rise in violence towards women, as the male population rises far beyond that of its female counterpart. The unsafe means by which some women seek out abortions and the lack of education around the topic has lead to a very dire situation in India, and other states that practice this type of gender-specific abortion in mass numbers.

Mumtaz, Z., Shahid, U. & Levay, A. (2013). Understanding the Impact of Gendered roles on the Experiences of Infertility Amongst Men and Women in Punjab. *Reproductive Health*, 10 (3).
>This journal article presents an interesting view of the impact of strict gender norms on men and women in society that are facing problems of infertility. While the main subject of the text remains fertility in Pakistan, the underlying themes associated with both reproductive health and the stigmatization of women as child-bearers presents a good base for developing a discussion on how to address the norms and values in society that place particular obsticles in addressing reproductive health.

Reproductive Health. (2013). *Articles.* Retrieved February 5, 2013 from http://www.reproductive-health-journal.com/
>This database provides a good overview of recent publications on the topic of reproductive health. In particular it focuses on women in developing nations and their particular needs as well as an overview of current projects underway around the world that are attempting to address the problems associated with women's access to reproductive health. Many outline new strategies currently underway and should provide an interesting view point on new approaches to addressing MDG5.

United Nations. (2012, September 5). *Investing in the Health of Africa's Mother's*. Retrieved January 20, 2013 from http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/special-edition-women-2012/investing-health-africa's-mothers
>This article details very well the current problems with access to reproductive health in Africa. It provides several clear examples of areas that need improvement and the resulting complications of insufficient access to contraceptive measures and maternal health overall. It also notes problems in health policies across Africa and could provide a good starting off point for research on the areas which need the most improvements.

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