

Background Guide



World Health Organization

Topic A: Promoting the Aid and Recovery for Resettled Refugees' Mental Health

Topic B: Equalizing Vaccine Access to Uplift COVID Economies

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TAEMUN IX

December 8-9, 2023

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World Health Organization

Greetings Delegates,

I'm Ahora Rahman and this year I will be assisting the World Health Organization Committee, otherwise known as WHO. I'm currently a junior at Thomas A. Edison High School and am enrolled in MUN as an afterschool activity. Outside of school I enjoy drawing, playing games, writing, and regularly spending time with my friends. I took a break from MUN for about two years (due to the pandemic), but I came back from 7th grade with much more interest and knowledge. Originally, I joined MUN to become comfortable with public speaking, but my interest grew as I gained many lifelong friendships. My reasons now have matured quite a bit as I now benefit from MUN by gaining knowledge about all sorts of current issues around the world, while getting to resolve them. I highly appreciate everyone who is planning to attend TAEMUN IX and I hope you enjoy the upcoming conference!

Sincerely,

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Topic A: Promoting the Aid and Recovery for Resettled Refugees' Mental Health

Background:

The refugee crisis has evolved over the decades, with waves of displacement resulting from wars, decolonization, and ongoing conflicts. In the 21st century, there has been a massive increase in levels of forced displacement, with millions seeking refuge from conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and other regions. In response, a variety of organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, have emerged to provide aid and support to refugees. Organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Health Organization (WHO) offer services such as food, shelter, healthcare, education, and legal assistance to help refugees rebuild their lives. While organizations often make a significant impact when it comes to providing basic needs at times of crisis, they tend to overlook a far greater issue of the aftermath. Many refugees often face significant psychological and emotional challenges as a result of the trauma and hardships they have experienced during their displacement. Recognizing the importance of addressing mental health in refugee populations, various organizations, governments, and humanitarian agencies have implemented programs and initiatives to provide support. For example, around 60% of UNHCR's programs worldwide integrate mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) components, ensuring that the mental well-being of refugees remains a central focus. This integration involves training approximately 15,000 staff and partners annually, making them better equipped to recognize and respond to mental health needs among refugees. The UN's capacity-building initiatives have helped train over 10,000 local health professionals and community workers in host countries, bolstering their ability to provide essential mental health services that are more than a necessity for unintegrated and displaced refugees.

Current Situation:

In recent years, there have been many areas of conflict, and from these arise mass amounts of refugees looking for new homes. Some examples of these war-torn countries with a plethora of refugees are Syria (6.5 million), Ukraine (5.9 million), or Afghanistan (6.1 million). All these countries have a unique and separate conflict of their own, but the refugees from these areas are all forced to flee to host countries such as Turkey. Turkey specifically is known to be the biggest host country for refugees to this day. It is the responsibility of these host countries, the UNHCR, and the WHO to construct an elaborate and intricate plan to combat the struggle to aid refugees. For example, the WHO and UNHCR created the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) to highlight the importance of the mental state of refugees from such traumatic backgrounds. While this aid is provided digitally through an online course, it's a step in the right direction. By integrating courses like these into refugee camps, which some places already have started, fastens the reintegration of refugees. The UNHCR also mentions that they provide health professionals, and train them with basic knowledge of psychological therapy to mend the deep rooted trauma and PTSD that many of these displaced refugees may feel. In even more severe situations they even fund mental health professionals (psychiatric nurses or psychiatrists) to address more complex refugee mental health conditions. With 69% of refugees becoming displaced in areas that are near their home countries, refugee camps need to find manageable ways to integrate the aid for them. This is especially prevalent for not only outwardly shown injuries (physical), but also for the very overlooked mental damage.

Past UN Actions:

The topic of mental health and rehabilitation has been prevalent for many years, but around 2010 is when organizations like the WHO and UNHCR started advocating more for mental health awareness. In 2018 the Global Compact on Refugees recognized the importance of addressing mental health issues among refugees and displaced populations as part of a comprehensive approach to refugee crises. Another instance of the UN showing global awareness of mental health is when the WHO created the Mental Health Gap Action Program (mhGAP). The World Health Organization (WHO) introduced mhGAP to expand access to mental health services in low-resource settings, including refugee camps and host communities. This program provides training and resources for non-specialized health workers to deliver mental health care. Later in 2022, the UNHCR made the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been actively involved in providing MHPSS services to refugees. These services aim to address the psychological and emotional well-being of refugees, including trauma support and counseling. These initiatives reflect the UN's commitment to addressing the mental health challenges faced by refugees, but the specific programs and their implementation may vary from country to country and programs will hopefully improve over time.

Questions to Consider:

1. Where are the majority of refugees migrating from and why? How do these causes affect their overall thought process and mental health?
2. Does your country provide refugee settlements and shelters?
3. How can you contribute to the mental rehabilitation of refugees in your country?

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Topic B:

Background:

The United Nations plays a major role in equalizing vaccine access to uplift COVID-19 economics on a global scale. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the interdependence of nations and the overarching goal for collective action. Certain sectors of the UN's mission to ensure equitable vaccine distribution has far reaching economic implications. Initially, the WHO along with other organizations (UNICEF, Gavi, Cefi, PAHO) created the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) to ensure that people worldwide have access to the vaccine. They not only managed to accelerate the process of creating the vaccines, but also distributed them equally as fast. The overall efficiency proved to be super effective as 70% of the world had received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccination. Along with ACT, UNICEF released data showing the average pricing of these international vaccines, ranging from \$2-\$120. On the lower end, it's deemed cheaper for countries with an already weak economy. The higher range is most likely for countries with a more significant economy, being able to fund these through government affiliations. ACT also funded many hospitals worldwide, and provided basic equipment and resources in order to battle COVID-19. Millions had already been suffering in hospitals without proper care, because of the sheer amount of patients. UNICEF had given 66.9 thousand oxygen concentrators, greatly boosting many hospitals. With more supplies funded by this program, UNICEF and WHO single-handedly saved millions of lives. This rushed, but well rounded plan seemed to calm the worldwide panic that emerged in 2020, and healed the world collectively.

Current Situation:

In 2023, the WHO officially stated that COVID-19 is no longer a public health emergency. While the initial surge of COVID-19 has died down over the past couple of years, there are still new and different developed versions of the original virus. New variations have emerged worldwide as descendants from omicrons like HV.1 or EG.5. With HV.1 being shown in around 25.2% of cases, these new variants have to be handled with new and improved vaccines. Although new variations have to be handled, some countries still don't have proper access to the original COVID-19 vaccines. Countries that are undergoing conflicts like Syria, Afghanistan, or Haiti still struggle to gain the proper aid and care after the outbreak in 2020. Options of the initial vaccines are far from available for them, especially the new variants of vaccinations. On the other hand the WHO and the European Commission highly encourage all to get the newest vaccination, as it's most common for 63% of people have received a first COVID-19 booster, and only 29% have received their second. The newest forms of vaccinations are available in a few areas such as the United States along with many countries in the EU. Goals of spreading the new vaccination internationally are prevalent, but not as rushed as the first variant. Overall, new variations of COVID-19 now deserve the same type of efficiency and urgency as the first kinds, to ensure worldwide safety (prevent another outbreak) and stabilize the healthcare economy.

Past UN Actions:

When the COVID-19 pandemic first emerged, the United Nations took action to coordinate a global response to the crisis. Initially, the World Health Organization (WHO), issued its first situation report on the raging coronavirus outbreak, providing information and guidance to member states. Further along the year in March of 2020, The UN launched the

COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, requesting \$2 billion to support countries with weaker health systems, protect vulnerable populations, and ensure the global response was well-coordinated. Not only did the UN establish the Global Humanitarian Response Plan, but also they established the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, aiming to support the most vulnerable communities and strengthen health systems. These early actions reflect the UN's commitment to addressing the global impact of COVID-19 and managing efforts to combat the global pandemic effectively.

Questions to Consider:

1. Are COVID-19 vaccines available in your country? If so, what percentage of people get vaccinated?
2. What has your country done to provide vaccines for other countries?/Who is your country getting funded vaccines and aid by?
3. Where are most of the current COVID-19 vaccines getting produced?

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