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Presidents' Letter

Dear delegates,

We want to welcome you to the 20th version of CCBMUN. We're Ilana Malca and Antonia Böhmer, 11th-grade students from Colegio Bolívar, who have been involved in several MUN models, and achieved recognition awards for our performances throughout these debates.

In this year's model, we're extremely proud to be your presidents, and we look forward to guiding you through the topics addressed in the United Nations Children's Fund. Our main goal throughout this model is for delegates to develop your debating skills and forge your knowledge on humanity's most critical problems known to the present day.

As delegates, your main purpose is to represent your country's position in a meticulous way, while at the same time accommodating to situations occurring throughout the debate. We seek for you to use the best of your abilities to come up with creative solutions to the problems presented, and to always take into consideration what's best for the country you're representing. The whole point of this debate is for countries to come together to an agreement, partially sacrificing their positions and beliefs in order to come to an agreement with other delegations present.

We are very pleased to have you live this amazing MUN experience with us, and we're thrilled to experience our first time as presidents. We can assure you that this is an experience full of lessons, where you will fill yourself with new knowledge while developing debating skills throughout the different discussions on the programme. As we're acquainted with the difficulties that may arise throughout the model as delegates, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries. We hope you find these topics compelling and enjoy this CCBMUN model's experience!

Cordially,

Ilana and Antonia

UNICEF Chair

Simulation Topic: *Addressing severe malnourishment in children*

I. History/Context

Severe malnourishment has been an ongoing problem in the world, especially for young children, who are most vulnerable to infection and disease if they are undernourished. The problem is often due to poverty and conflict, causing lack of resources to provide children with the resources that they need. Often this leads to severe acute malnutrition in children, which is a condition when: "…there's extremely low weight in the body when compared to height, visible and severe wasting and/or the presence of oedema. An estimated 20 million children are currently suffering from SAM." (Food for Famine, 2022). This crisis refers directly to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 2.2: "End all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons." (WHO, 2022).

During the hunger emergencies of 1980-1990 in Africa, therapeutic feeding centres (TFCs) were trying to combat acute malnutrition. However, the method of treating malnourished children with special milk wasn't very effective, as it required clean water and the need of 24-hour medical staffing to attend the children. The Centres were often far away from communities, could be targets in situations of conflict, and clean water wasn't always available. As famine threatened millions of people throughout the Horn of Africa in 2000, TFCs were even banned in Ethiopia as they were believed to be ineffective.

Developers started looking at more effective ways to provide malnourished children with the treatment they needed. In 1996 French research scientist, André Briend invented a portable, non-perishable peanut-based paste that gave malnourished children the vital nutrients they needed in order to recover and be healthy. This paste was called, Plumpy'Nut and until today is the most well-known RUTF (ready to use therapeutic food). This product was found to be highly effective given that it also worked for babies that weren't ready for solid foods yet, taking into account they are one of the most affected populations by malnutrition. RUTF's ingredients and components may vary depending on the brand, but they are composed of

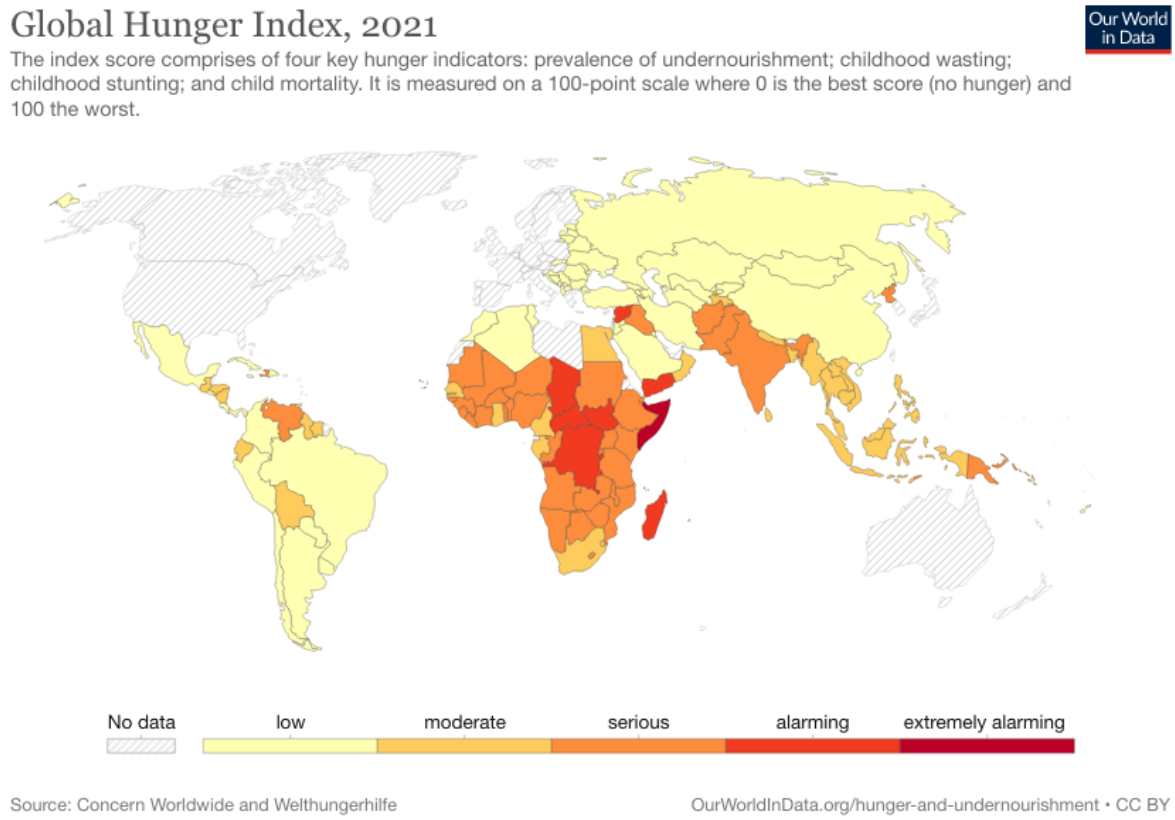
mainly the same things and focus on the same features such as being high in calories, having a lot of nutrients and as many vitamins as possible. All of them try to achieve the same objective which is to improve children's health by helping them to overcome acute malnutrition and by causing rapid weight gain.

(Food for Famine, 2022)

In the early 2000s, two organisations, Concern Worldwide and Valid, set up a pilot programme for community-based therapeutic care (CTCs), called Community-Based Management for Acute Malnutrition CMAM) in one part of Ethiopia. With the combined use of CMAM and RUTF, mortality rates reached a percentage of 4.5%, which meant an incredible number of lives were saved, as the usual mortality rate in this type of situation is 20 - 30%.

II. Current Situation

Nowadays, malnourishment has become one of the most critical problems regarding children. Globally, around 50 million children under the age of 5 are wasted/too thin at any one time; and of these, over 17 million are severely wasted. These young children have a high chance of death or developing illnesses and complications that will have a significant impact on their future growth. Stunting (failure to achieve normal growth in length or height) is far more frequent and affects more than 160 million children worldwide, primarily in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (GIFA, 2019). In the graph below, we can see how alarming is child malnourishment in each country, and it is very noticeable how this dilemma is much more shocking in Africa.



(Our World in Data, 2021)

Some underlying causes of malnutrition are lack of access to food, disease, conflicts, climate change, and lack of safe drinking water. Lack of access to food happens due to non-availability of food in markets, difficult access to markets due to lack of transportation, and insufficient financial resources within vulnerable communities. Disease also aggravates the circumstance since it weakens the metabolism and causes undernourishment and infection, which in turn makes people more prone to illness. For example, HIV and AIDS have become one of the leading causes of acute malnutrition in developing countries. Conflicts have also played a critical role in malnutrition since they compromise access to food and manage to have an influence on food security as well. Climate change (including droughts, floods, cyclones, etc.) has caused the decline in agricultural production, leading to malnutrition as scarcity in crops increases. Finally, the lack of safe drinking water has also worsened the crisis since poor sanitation and the absence of potable water entails more vulnerability towards disease, which are causes of severe acute malnutrition.

Many countries have also put in their part to battle child malnourishment and finance others

battling with this crisis. For example, in the 2021 Growth Summit in Tokyo, the European Union pledged 2.5 billion Euros for 2021-2024 in order to combat malnutrition with partner countries. These contributions are intended to cover both humanitarian assistance for immediate needs and assistance in tackling the underlying causes of starvation, including a longer-term reform in the food systems in EU partner countries. Countries in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean, more critically Afghanistan, Yemen, Ethiopia and the Sahel are among those who will be receiving assistance, as these nations place a high priority on nutrition in their partnerships with the EU. They will fund initiatives in areas related to nutrition, such as agriculture, water, sanitation, and hygiene, social protection, health, and education, with an emphasis on women, teenage girls, and young children. On past occasions, they have been seeking to expand nutrition investments by using co-financing, and they have been collaborating with EU Member States through joint programming, such as in Laos.

Ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTFs) have been a very recent product in development; they are basically pre-measured dosed sachet packets that do not perish, meaning that children can consume them without needing any assistance. Their main purpose is treating underfed children and, although the specific components in a RUTF might vary depending on the manufacturer, they are all rich in calories, nutrients, and vitamins to help children with acute malnutrition to gain weight quickly. They do not need fresh water to be added, and children can feed themselves. They are easy to use at home, so parents do not need to travel long distances to get help for their children.

During the RUTF treatment, a child needs to consume approximately 3 packets per day throughout 4-6 weeks, which will lead them to eventually gain up to one pound per week. This procedure is crucial, especially for new-borns who need to maintain their nutrient intake at this age because a child's full development potential can be determined within the first 1,000 days of life. According to the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 98% of children treated with RUTF were well nourished after six months and 96% were well nourished after a year. For these reasons, it is essential for starving children to receive RUTF treatments.

UNICEF is now the world’s main buyer of these products, using about 80% of the global supply of these emergency products. For example, between 2017 and 2021, they acquired around

two million cartons for South Sudan, which was facing severe problems due to years of conflict and high rates of poverty.

RUTFs have many benefits in favour of children suffering from starving conditions. These products have allowed health authorities to extend effective treatment beyond hospitals, facilitating medicaments and liberating space in health units for more urgent incoming emergencies. It has also reduced health care costs, since, as mentioned before, it doesn't require hospitalization for treatment. The product's biggest advantage is that it doesn't require clean water, meaning it is still going to be effective within developing countries that lack accessibility to potable water.

This treatment has been proven time and again to be extremely effective in combating severe malnourishment in children. However, producing RUTFs locally is expensive as it requires the importation of packaging materials as well as ingredients, resulting in a price of €41.97 per carton, which is beyond the reach of many countries. The provision of these RUTF's in the countries that need them most usually depends on funding from humanitarian programmes, so they are basically only used to treat children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and not hungry children in general. SAM is just a small percentage of the malnourished children population, as 90% of malnutrition consists of forms other than SAM, and due to its high price, RUTFs are only provided critically for children with this specific condition (GIFA, 2019). Even though RUTFs do not require clean water, when children are being treated they will need extra water as they are in weak health, so the only way to achieve a successful treatment for a healthy child is by having enough clean water available. This product may also interfere in the children's taste for local food, something that can lead to malnutrition in the future.

III. Key points of the debate

- Addressing underlying causes of malnutrition
- Economic crisis/Poverty within African countries
- African struggles with child malnourishment and cases of severe acute malnutrition.

- Possible solutions to child malnutrition
- RUTF treatment benefits and drawbacks (addressing whether or not should it be implemented)
- Countries taking action against malnutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as other countries (mostly developing).
- Sustainable Development Goal 2.2

IV. Guiding questions

1. How many children in your country live in a food-insecure household? How has this rate changed over time?
2. What actions has your country taken to protect its children from malnourishment?
3. Does your country purchase or receive any RUTF products to combat child malnourishment?
4. Does your country produce or donate RUTF products for other countries?
5. Has your country worked with other countries to tackle child malnourishment? If so, which ones and in what ways?
6. Are RUTFs the best way to tackle child malnourishment in the world? If not, what alternatives do you suggest could be used?

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Topic 1: *Forced child marriage in Muslim ethnicities*

I. History/Context

According to UNICEF (2022), “child marriage refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child.” This is the UK government definition: “Forced marriage occurs when one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities or reduced capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage as they are pressurised, or abuse is used, to force them to do so” (GOV.UK, 2022). Considering these two definitions, forced child marriage occurs when a minor younger than eighteen years of age is pressured into marriage, mostly on behalf of the family’s interests. Although both boys and girls have been subjected to child marriage, the quantity of young females forced into this union surpasses that of young males.

Child marriage in Europe in medieval times (Sen Nag, 2017)

Often, child marriage is associated with developing countries, but this practice was once widespread in many countries across the world. In the sixteenth century in England, for example, the main purpose of marriage was to gain economic status. In this time period, girls as young as twelve and boys as young as fourteen could be legally married by the Church.

However, some children could be contracted into marriage much younger than that, at around four or six years of age. Even children as young as two could be taken to church and helped to recite vows of future consent so that they could be married as soon as they reached the age of consent (Dolan, 2018). Studies prove that these marriages mostly took place between a very wealthy family and another one looking to strengthen their social status.

Other families at that time might force their children into marriage with the purpose of paying off a big debt. In order to safeguard family fortunes, marriage between stepchildren was also prevalent (though technically prohibited). The children involved faced difficulties as a result of the young marriage, and they were often reported to be “weeping openly," on the day of their marriage.

Up until the 20th century, when life expectancy was only 40-45 years old, child marriage was enforced by law in many countries, since it was the fastest way to reproduce (Sen Nag, 2017). Typically, girls were married off as soon as they reached their teenage years, and perhaps even earlier. However, as nations started to develop, women began to receive education and voting privileges, among other rights. As a result, women began to enter the workforce, their economic conditions improved, and there were significant increases in life expectancy as a result of improved hygiene practices. As a result of this, the practice of child marriage started to be called into question. Industrialised societies around the globe saw this practice almost completely fade away over time. However, despite widespread opposition and protests, child weddings are still common in many other nations across the world.

Child marriage can be seen in many cultures and can be a result of particular traditions in communities, which may or may not have religious influences. Examples of child marriage can be found in Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other religions, but this committee will focus on child marriage in Muslim communities.

According to the holy book of Islam, the Qur’an, one of the Prophet´s wives, Aisha, was given to the Prophet at the age of 6, and the marriage was consummated when she reached puberty at the age of nine. Many Muslims say that they should, therefore, do what the prophet did, whilst other Muslims argue that the girl may have been much older when the marriage was consummated, as people were not very accurate about calculating their ages in those times.

(National Geographic, 2013)

It is often religious leaders who insist that children can be married at any age. For example, In Iran when the Islamic Republic was set up in 1982, the marriage age was lowered from just under 18 years to just under 13 years of age for girls.

II. Current Situation

In various Islamic ethnicities, child marriage is normal practice. Young girls below the age of puberty are forcibly married to older men, sometimes older than 50 years of age. Religious leaders and communities play a big role in this since religious obligations make families force their children into marriage. Family honour and social mobility are all reasons why forced marriage takes place in these communities. Forced marriage is often used with the intention of gaining something for the girl's guardian, or with the intention of preserving family honour, as seen in countries such as Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and other mostly Islamic nations. This practice is also sometimes found in Islamic communities of non-Muslim countries such as the United Kingdom.

Child marriage is still prevalent to this day, but the main reason for this situation is poor economic conditions, as families struggling to feed and support their children use forced marriage as a solution. By marrying one or all of their daughters, they have fewer mouths to feed and, in some cases, they receive payment in the form of a dowry, with younger girls

receiving a higher price due to their purity. Deeply ingrained cultural norms, in which daughters are considered less valuable than sons (because they are not seen as a potential provider/jobholder) mean that some cultures also see forced marriage as a way to prevent premarital sex, important in cultures that believe brides must be virgins. Last but not least, child marriage is seen as a way to protect women from hostile environments such as rape or other forms of violence. Currently, it is estimated that 28 girls are forced to marry every minute (Nikolau, 2016), and despite the fact that the number of child marriages has decreased over time, this is still a big issue in some parts of the world that remains unresolved.

Although many Islamic communities claim that child marriage is sanctioned within their culture, this practice is still evident today. The problem is notable everywhere, regardless of religion or civilization, but Islam appears to suffer the most in comparison to other cultures. The justification given by this community is that it is cultural in nature, and that a young bride can be forged into a good wife and will give birth to more offspring. These communities have a tradition of child marriage, so that when a girl reaches puberty, she has the possibility of being unified in marriage, which is important for the family's status and well-being in society.

Nowadays, developing countries are the ones that practice young marriages the most, including African countries, South, West, and Southeast Asia, South America, and Oceania. According to a UNICEF study from 2015, the countries with the highest child marriage rates before 18 years of age included Niger (76%), the Central African Republic (68%), Chad (68%) Bangladesh (65%), Mali (55%), and Guinea (52%) among many others. In India, at least 1.5 million girls under the age of 18 are getting married (UNICEF, 2022). This has negatively impacted this nation's economy; due to the lack of education these women possess and their inability to provide their families with financial income. Not only this, but misinformation also leads these women to lack reproductive knowledge, increasing the economic burden on the household as the family increases.

Despite the law against forced marriage and child brides, in Afghanistan**,** more than half of all girls are married at a young age, mostly before they even turn 15 years old. An eight-year-long UNICEF study from 2000 to 2008 described how 43% of women in Afghanistan were

married underage, some of them even before reaching puberty. In 2009, Human Rights Watch, a non-governmental organisation, dedicated to the investigation, defence, and promotion of human rights, along with UNIFEM, a UN agency, classified 57% of the brides as underage (below 16); despite the changes in the state law, it doesn't seem to have changed at all since then. The Taliban, who regained power in 2021, believe that a girl is ready for marriage when she reaches puberty, and as poverty takes over much of the country, more and more girls are being sold into marriage.

According to the late Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, as long as the father of the bride consents to the marriage and is present at the ceremony, as required by religious law, "the marriage is obviously legal." (Blitz, 2021). In Iran, a girl must be 13 years old to be able to legally wed, and at the age of 8 years and 9 months, she is considered an adult.

In Bangladesh, in 2011, Mufti Fazlul Haque Amini, a Bangladeshi politician, threatened to wage jihad (a struggle or fight against the enemies of Islam) in the country if the government passed any law banning child marriage. He said, two hundred thousand Jihadists of his group were ready to 'sacrifice' lives if any such law, which goes against "Qur'an and Sunnah" be passed by the government.

Child marriage in Pakistan is still prevalent to this day, as daughters are sold to other tribesmen by their own fathers as an alternative way of paying off debt, for example, as a result of gambling. A tribal custom called *Vani* takes place in the Punjab province of Pakistan as well as some tribal areas surrounding Afghanistan. This is directly linked to blood feuds, a very long fight between two families or groups in which each group kills members of the other group; girls are married off to the opponent tribe as a peace offering in order to solve these conflicts.

(The Friday Times, 2022)

Although child marriage is illegal in the United Kingdom, many girls end up being married under the age of 18. This is because girls can marry if they are 16 in the UK with parental consent. Often the girls are married to men who are twice their age or older, and if they go against their parents' wishes, they are in danger of being killed by their own family because they have violated the honour of the family.

In the United States, child marriage is legal in 46 states, however, although children in these states aren't entitled to file for a divorce. In 2018, a study was done which found that more than 200,000 minors were married between 2000 and 2016, most of them being girls (Hamilton, 2020). Women who married as child brides also tend to suffer more mental health issues than those who marry as adults.

Nowadays, childbirth complications among child brides are the leading cause of death among 15 to 19-year-old girls worldwide. In addition to that, girls before the age of 18 are also more likely to acquire HIV and experience domestic violence (Population Matters, 2021). Younger girls still do not have the knowledge about contraceptive use and their bodies are not yet developed to give birth.

Child marriages and trafficking have been seen to increase in China, caused by the colossal gender imbalance after establishing their one child policy and gender selective abortion. According to Girls not Brides (2022), “China ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, which sets a minimum age of marriage of 18, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1980, which obligates states to ensure free and full consent to marriage.” However, cases have been seen of child brides being trafficked into China from surrounding countries in order to make up for the lack of females of marriageable age.

Even though it is illegal for people under 18 to get married in Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia’s Shura Council has noted the complex correlation between poverty and child marriage, referring to it as a “vicious cycle”. According to reports, some Saudi nationals leave the country to enter into "summer" or "temporary marriages," which include paying for brief sexual access to youngsters. They pay a marriage broker to find a suitable young girl to marry as a second wife, spend the holidays with them and then divorce them to go back to their country and families.

(MENSXP, 2022)

In 2017, there were reports of child marriage and bride kidnapping in the North Caucasus, a region in southwestern Russia. Regardless of the government's efforts and commitments to eliminate child marriage, the U.S. State Department (2019) Trafficking in Persons Report affirmed: "Children from Europe, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central Asia are victims of sex trafficking and forced prostitution in Russia. Russian children are reportedly victims of sex trafficking domestically and abroad." Even though there is a lack of information stating the connection between these trafficking cases and child marriage, a correlation is very likely.

193 countries have already committed to eliminate child, early and forced marriage by 2030 in line with target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Spain and France, for example, have co-sponsored the 2013 Human Rights Council resolution on child, early and forced marriage, as well as many other conventions regarding this topic. However, a pledge to change these practices is not always easy to put into practice, especially when tradition dictates it, and poverty makes it a necessity for many families.

III. Key points of the debate

- Impact of religion on child marriage
- Economic consequences of child marriage (not only to the family itself but also the country).
- How girls' education is affected by child marriage.
- Addressing why some countries haven't completely banned child marriage and the impact of not having these sanctions.
- Girls' lack of knowledge on fertility and contraception.
- UN Sustainable Development Goal 5, "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"

IV. Guiding questions

1. Does your country have any laws regarding child marriage? Have these laws regarding child marriage changed throughout time in your country?
2. How many minors under the age of 18 get married each year in your country?
3. What actions have been taken in your country to support or oppose child marriage?
4. What is the main religion in your country? Does this have any effect on the rate of child marriage?
5. Is there a connection between immigration or certain ethnic groups and child marriage in your country?

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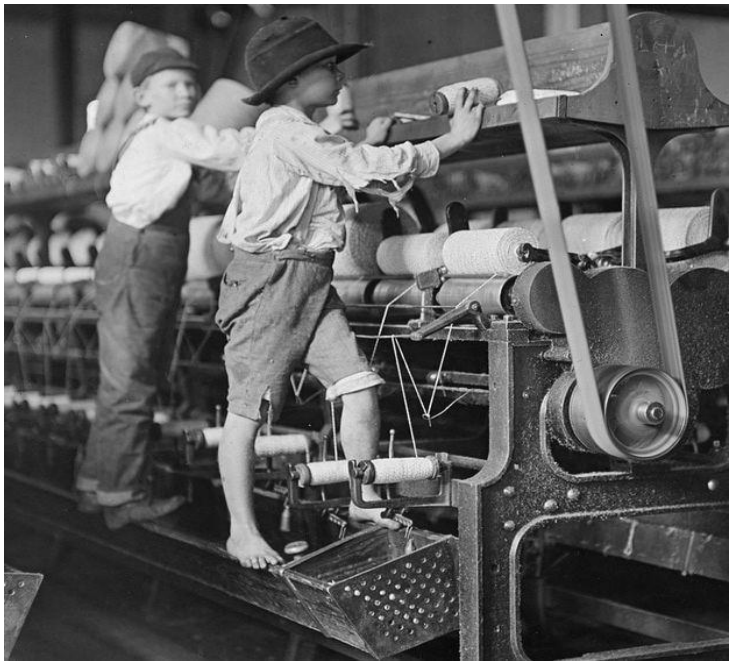
Topic 2: *Child labour in the fashion supply chain*

I. History/Context

In many industrialized countries, there is evidence of child labour, often with government awareness. Child labour has been practiced throughout most of human history, mostly in the form of servants, apprentices, and workers. However, this practice escalated with the Industrial Revolution and the proliferation of factories and mines, opening up more job opportunities for children. In these unclean and crowded factories, children suffered from miserable working conditions for elongated hours. This created a cycle of poverty, as these children were typically unable to attend school and so would never be able to improve their situation in life.

The economic boom in the United Kingdom was due to the creation of large machines to make fabrics. It was found that small children were better able to get under the machines and do delicate work with their small hands. Child labour was essential for the economic success of many Western countries.

In the USA, children's employment was a crucial part of the agricultural and handicraft American economy in the first half of the 1800s. Before the Civil War, women and children were exceptionally important in American manufacturing, and as its techniques advanced after the war, job openings increased, as well as child labourers. In fact, in 1900, 18% of all American workers were under the age of 16 (History.com Editors, 2022). During the Industrial Revolution, immigration towards the United States escalated, and a new source of employment (child employment as well) surged: low-level factory jobs. These spots were mostly taken by incoming immigrants, a clear example being Irish immigrants occupying these places in the U.S. as they fled the Irish Potato Famine in the 1840s. Southern and Eastern European immigrants arrived later in the 1880s, bringing a new child labour force.



Child Labour in the Industrial Revolution. Spinning machines in textile mills, as shown above, were mostly left unprotected, the use of these turning into a risky activity.

(History.com)

During the 19th century, reformers and labour organizers worked to restrict child labour and its poor working conditions. Educational reformers worked in favour of primary school education by convincing society it was a necessity in order to advance. Many countries started establishing minimum wages and requiring school attendance. In the USA during the Great Depression, child labour lessened as adults were desperate for employment. However, as companies looked for cheap labour, they still found a way to slip out of these rules and to employ children. Over time, child labour was almost completely abolished in developed countries.

Although developed countries were mainly successful in combating child labour, the same cannot be said for developing countries. As the developed world demanded cheaper "fast fashion", the wages and working conditions of people in developing countries decreased. Clothing companies turned a blind eye to the working practices of their suppliers abroad, leading to an increase in the number of children working in the textile industry. Children work in all aspects of the supply chair, for example, in cotton harvesting and in clothes manufacturing.

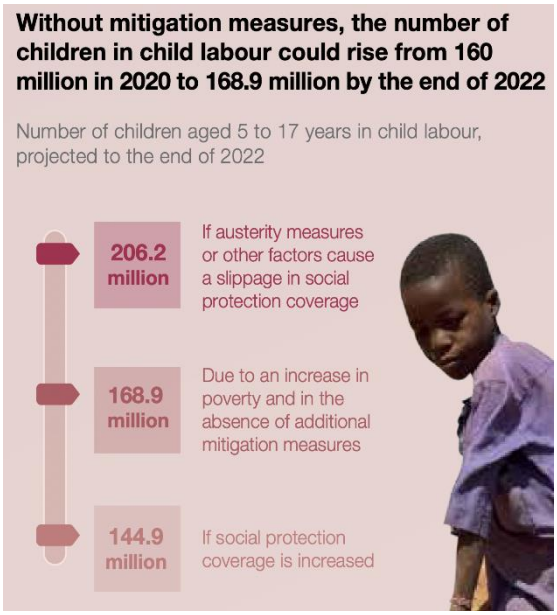
II. Current Situation

Companies decide to employ children within their industries because of their vulnerability and their lack of voice in society. As children lack freedom of expression, the world does not hear their perspective or take into consideration the exploitation they are going through, since there is no supervision or social control mechanisms to help them call upon better working conditions. In fact, child labour is directly linked with adult unemployment as companies will prefer the employment of cheap child labour. Some may argue that child labour will give them the skills to get better jobs later on as adults, however, they are not considering the unsanitary and unsafe conditions children work in. Within the fashion industry, children work in factories for an abusive number of hours and for a very low salary.

Currently, approximately 170 million working children fall into the category of child labour, and many of these work in the fashion supply chain. Child labour in the fashion supply chain is an issue that is a significant problem despite countless efforts by governments and organizations to stop it. This is often because of all the power and popularity clothing companies hold. Often companies have no idea where the textiles they buy come from, and they do not try to find out if child labour has been involved in the process.

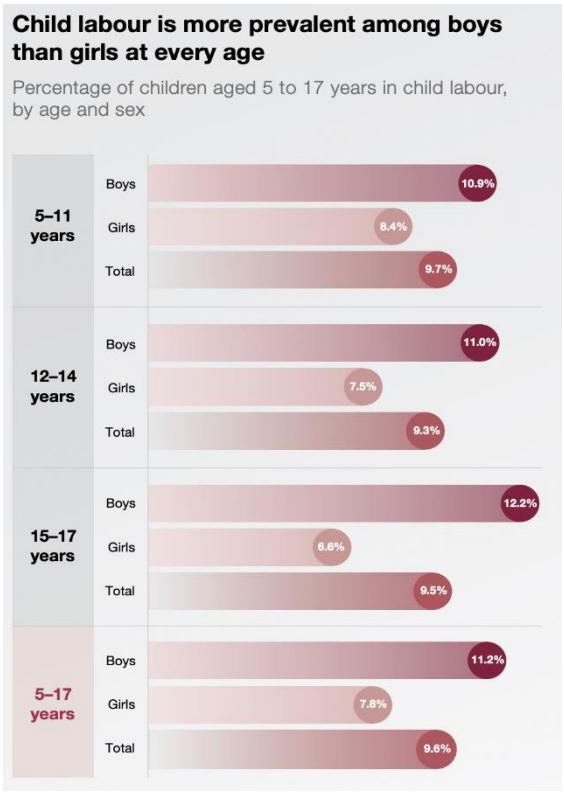
Between the years 2000 and 2016 there was a noticeable decrease in the number of children involved in child labour, by almost 94 million children. However, recently this reduction stopped for the first time in 20 years, and progress to end child labour was paralysed. Additionally, more than 9 million children fell into the risk of child labour due to the impacts of COVID-19. “Without mitigation measures, the number of children in child labour could rise from 160 in 2020 to 168.9 million by the end of 2022.” (UNICEF, 2020). The diagram below shows the number of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, projected to the end of 2022 and some of the possible causes.

Even though both genders are present in this industry, it is more likely for boys to be involved. The reason why girls are not as present is because they’re mostly employed in a way that is hidden or underreported, for example, being responsible for household duties in their own homes, which is not considered as child employment.



(International labour Organization, 2020)

Focusing only on the fashion supply chain, gender percentages are very similar given that, what producers are interested in are the children's small and agile hands. The graph below shows the genders and ages of children employed globally. As seen below, more boys are employed.



(International labour Organization, 2020)

Lately, there have been some policies under revision by UNICEF in order to end child labour. Some of them include extending social protection, ensuring free and quality education, guaranteeing the registration of all births, promoting safe and fair income jobs for young people, promoting adequate rural livelihoods and resilience, ensuring that necessary laws and regulations are in place to protect children, addressing gender norms and discrimination that increase child labour risks, and more. (International labour Organization, 2017)

This problem of child labour in the fashion industry is mostly addressed by the sustainable development goal 8.7, which states “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 2025 end child labour in all its forms.” It also refers to goal number 16.2, “End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children.” (International Labour Organization, 2022)

(Cotton picking in Turkmenistan, ACCA 2022)

In countries like India and Bangladesh, girls are willing to work for low wages and are tricked into these industries by being promised false earnings of decent salaries. Recruiters in southern India convince parents in rural areas to send their daughters to spinning mills, contributing to the fashion industry. They promise excellent salaries for these jobs, as well as

housing, daily meals, and opportunities for acquiring new skills and education. However, in reality, they work under dreadful conditions that can be considered as modern-day slavery.

Countries such as Uzbekistan, Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Thailand, and China have particularly bad records for child labour in the textile and garment industry. This practice is seen throughout the supply chain so, for example, children work in the production of cotton seeds in Benin, harvesting in Uzbekistan, yarn spinning in India, and the putting together of garments in factories in Bangladesh. In India, 60% of workers at the mills investigated were under 18 when they first started working there; the youngest workers were 15 when they joined.

Sofie Ovaa, global campaign coordinator of Stop Child Labour, says “Companies that sell their products in Europe and the US have no clue where the textiles come from. Maybe they know their first supplier and there are codes of conduct in place, but further down the chain in the lower tiers it is very difficult to understand where the cotton comes from.” (Moulds, 2015) This demonstrates how big brands, regardless of the strict guidelines against child labour, still exploit youngsters without realizing it.

In order to help restrict child labour, companies must create supply registers and get to know their manufacturers by visiting them. This will help them to get a sense of where they are getting their supplies from, and they can make sure that child labour is not taking place in the process.

III. Key points of the debate

- Child labour as a violation of human rights.
- Child labour as a result of poverty
- Government responses to child labour
- Child labour going unnoticed in the fashion industry
- Specific cases of child labour within developing countries (cotton industry in Uzbekistan, yarn spinning in India, factory work in Bangladesh, etc.)
- Solutions to tackle child labour in the fashion supply industry.

- Sustainable Development Goals number 8.7 and 16.2

IV. Guiding questions

1. How have the rates of child labour and the laws about it changed over time in your country?
2. In your country, how many employees are underaged, if any, and in what industries do they work?
3. Is your country involved in the fashion supply chain? In what ways?
4. What laws and regulations does your country have at the moment regarding child labour?
5. What has your country done, if anything, to tackle the problem of child labour in the fashion industry supply chain?

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