Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

STUDY GUIDE

Table of contents

Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Committee

SOCHUM

The Third Committee of the General Assembly, the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) was created during the first session of the General Assembly in 1948 and consists of all 193 member states of the United Nations. Since its creation, SOCHUM has passed more than 60 Resolutions, which address issues such as the advancement of women, the elimination of racial discrimination, and respect for children's rights - among many others. Thus, the Third Committee's efforts focus continuously on one of the main objectives of the UN: the protection and promotion of human rights. [1]

Human rights are violated in several areas around the world. Violations under police custody and detention are a widespread problem. Deaths during custody and torture cases are reported from every part of the world. SOCHUM will examine the situation worldwide and will try to set global standards in order to protect the human rights. [2]

The Committee discusses questions relating to the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self- determination. The Committee also addresses important social development questions such as issues related to youth, family, ageing, and persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control. [3]

1 http://www.wimun.org/#!third-committee/hsy5f
2 http://muntr.org/Study-Guides/SOCHUM-Study-Guide.pdf
3 http://www.un.org/en/ga/third/

Youth empowerment

Introduction of the topic

Young people are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of those actions[4]

Adolescence is a significant transition period and a unique window of opportunity to shape the healthy and successful development of future generations.

Moreover, with more than 1.8 billion young people in the world today – 90 percent of whom live in developing countries – addressing the diverse needs of youth and adolescents is critical to ending poverty and promoting equality.[5]

Today, youth face a daunting challenge: securing decent employment in an economic context characterized by a lack of job opportunities, especially in rural areas.[6]

In response to the worldwide phenomenon of young men and women calling for meaningful civic, economic, social and political participation, Youth Empowerment recognizes the involvement of young men and women in participatory decision-making and development processes as vital to achieving sustainable human development.[7]

Youth empowerment is focused on creating greater community change that, in its methods, relies on the development of individual capacity. Therefore, organizations operating with a youth development framework are not addressing social inequities, but rather developing the individual within an unjust society and not changing the source of the problem.[8]

Action taken

According to the United Nations statistics, the African population is estimated to be more than a billion people of whom over 60% are young men and women under the age of 35. It is projected that, by 2020, 3 out of 4 people on the continent will have an average age of 20 years old.

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4 http://www.youthdevelopmentindex.org/cms/cms-youth/_images/715005124520452383408.pdf
5 http://www.care.org/work/education/youth
6 http://www.sl.undp.org/content/sierraleone/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/youth-empowerment-and-employment-programme.html
7 http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democratic-governance-and-peacebuilding/youth-empowerment.html
8 http://www.youthempoweredsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Youth_Empowerment_The_Theory_and_Its_Implementation_YES-11-13-13.pdf

The continent's youthful population presents a powerful opportunity for accelerated economic growth and innovation. Yet this demographic also presents economic and social challenges, as well as implications for peace and security. With the highest youth unemployment rate of any region in the world, the World Bank estimates that 11 million youth will enter Africa's labor market every year for the next decade. African youth represent 60% of the continent's unemployed and are frequently hindered by social, economic and political exclusion.

A key Aspiration of Agenda 2063

Agenda 2063, the continent's ambitious 50-year framework for development, peace and security emphasizes the importance of youth for the realization of its aims.

Aspiration 6 of the Agenda calls for an

"Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of its women and youth", with strong emphasis on putting children first and engaging and empowering youth.

The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) continues to support youth empowerment in Africa through its advocacy efforts.

Most recently, in February 2015, the Office organized with the United Nations Development Program and other organizational partners a session of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2015 on the theme, "Youth and Africa: Youth on the Rise: Youth Participation in Africa". The session provided a platform for African youth to raise awareness of the challenges they face, as well as to discuss ways to strengthen African youth participation in global, regional, national and local governance processes.[9]

Possible Solutions

There must be existence of peace for any country to flourish. [10]

Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the directions of others. These enabling conditions fall into four broad categories:

1. An economic and social base;

Engage with the education sector and with the private sector to increase access to education, vocational training and soft skills to meet the needs of the employment market.

Research and develop poverty alleviation and employment programs for marginalized young people including young women, young men in depressed areas, indigenous youth, rural youth and young people at risk.

9 http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/peace/youth.shtml
10   http://hubpages.com/literature/youth-empowerment-and-development-drive

Establish or strengthen national support for young women and men in the areas of youth health issues and reproductive health; emotional health and well-being; the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.[11]

2. Political will, adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks;

Establish achievable targets for young men and women to participate in political leadership at various levels of government, from community level through to national parliaments.

Establish, strengthen and support national and regional youth councils.[12]

3. A stable environment of equality, peace and democracy;

Support civil society organizations that practice participatory democracy.[13]

4. Access to knowledge, information and skills, and a positive value system [14]

Increasing investment in young people is key. This includes promoting quality education that prepares them for future opportunities[15]

Promote young people's awareness of international human rights agreements, including the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.[16]

Skill Development: the process of strengthening skills and knowledge to improve effective decision-making, positive peer interactions, and strategic community advocacy [17]

The role of an organization in youth empowerment can serve a dual purpose – one of empowering and one of being empowered. Some organizations provide opportunities for people to gain control of their lives, i.e. empowering organizations, while others may develop policies, influence policy decisions, or offer effective alternatives for service provision, i.e. empowered organizations.[18]

Aspects to think about

1. In your opinion, what do you think are the three main problems for young people in your country?
2. Does your country have a Youth Parliament?
3. Is there universal access to basic education in your country?
4. How easy is it for youths to get employed?

11   http://www.youthdevelopmentindex.org/cms/cms-youth/_images/715005124520452238340 8.pdf
12   http://www.youthdevelopmentindex.org/cms/cms-youth/_images/7150051245204522383408.pdf
13   http://www.youthdevelopmentindex.org/cms/cms-youth/_images/7150051245204522383408.pdf
14   http://www.byc.org.uk/media/226841/2006_commonwealth_paye_eng.pdf
15   http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2015/06/youth-empowerment-education-employment-key-future-development/
16   http://www.youthdevelopmentindex.org/cms/cms-youth/_images/7150051245204522383408.pdf
17   http://www.youthempoweredsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Youth_Empowerment_The_Theory_and_Its_Implementation_YES-11-13-13.pdf
18 http://www.youthempoweredsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Youth_Empowerment_The_Theory_and_Its_Implementation_YES-11-13-13.pdf

5. What is the greatest obstacle to youth-led sustainable development in your country?
6. What are the basic reasons for youth exclusion from decision-making organs?
7. What kind of steps can improve the situation with youth empowerment?

Further reading

http://www.youthdevelopmentindex.org/cms/cms-youth/_images/7150051245204522383408.pdf

http://www.youthempoweredsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Youth_Empowerment_The_Theory_and_Its_Implementation_YES-11-13-13.pdf

http://www.joe.org/joe/1998december/a1.php

http://hubpages.com/politics/importance-of-youth-empowerment

http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2015/06/youth-empowerment-education-employment-key-future-development/

Responsibility to protect

Introduction of the topic

The responsibility to protect is a principle, which seeks to ensure that the international community never again fails to act in the face of genocide and other gross forms of human rights abuse. "R2P," as it is commonly abbreviated, was adopted by heads of state and government at the World Summit in 2005 sitting as the United Nations General Assembly. The principle stipulates, first, that states have an obligation to protect their citizens from mass atrocities; second, that the international community should assist them in doing so; and, third, that, if the state in question fails to act appropriately, the responsibility to do so falls to that larger community of states. R2P should be understood as a solemn promise made by leaders of every country to all men and women endangered by mass atrocities.

The UN's 2005 World Summit Outcome Document explicitly limits the application of the norm to four types of mass atrocities: genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Save for ethnic cleansing, an abuse only recently understood as an atrocity crime, these terms have been clearly and comprehensively defined in a range of documents, including the founding statute of the International Criminal Court. R2P does not apply to many grave threats to human security, whether from climate change or disease, or from many harmful or even ruinous state policies, such as the suspension of civil liberties, mass corruption, or coups d'état. Other human rights instruments, legal frameworks and institutions are better suited to address these pressing issues.[19]

Action taken

The three pillars of the responsibility to protect, as stipulated in the Outcome Document of the 2005 United Nations World Summit *(A/RES/60/1, para. 138-140)*[20] and formulated in the *Secretary-General's 2009 Report (A/63/677) on Implementing the Responsibility to Protect* [21] are:

1. The State carries the primary responsibility for protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, and their incitement;
2. The international community has a responsibility to encourage and assist States in fulfilling this responsibility;

19   http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/unga08/s1.pdf
20   http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/World%20Summit%20Outcome%20Document.pdf#page=30
21   http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/63/677

3. The international community has a responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other means to protect populations from these crimes. If a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take collective action to protect populations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.[22]

The 2015 Secretary-General's report on the responsibility to protect (A/69/981)
A vital and enduring commitment: implementing the responsibility to protect, 2015
The report concludes with six core priorities for the responsibility to protect over the next decade, namely:
1. Signaling political commitment at the national, regional and global levels to protect populations from atrocity crimes;
2. Elevating prevention as a core aspect of the responsibility to protect;
3. Clarifying and expanding options for timely and decisive response;
4. Addressing the risk of recurrence;
5. Enhancing regional action to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes; and
6. Strengthening international networks dedicated to genocide prevention and the responsibility to protect.[23]

In Ghana, the National Peace Council, which was established in 2011, has taken steps to mediate local tensions and develop a policy framework for conflict resolution. The Council has been instrumental in managing political tensions, particularly those arising from closely contested elections.
Singapore has a variety of institutional arrangements that bring together religious leaders to build interfaith trust and strengthen community interaction to address interreligious tensions before they escalate.[24]

Possible solutions

The first is conceptual – to ensure that the scope and limits of the norm as it has evolved are well understood in all parts of the world, so that misunderstandings (for example that R2P is only about military intervention) do not persist, and that as new situations arise requiring preventive or reactive action by the international community, there will be broad consensus about what to do.
The second is institutional, to ensure that governments and intergovernmental organizations have available all the diplomatic, civilian and, as necessary, military capability needed to ensure effective early warning and early action, to provide essential assistance to those countries who need and want it—and most importantly, to people desperately in need of protection.

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22   http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/responsibility.shtml
23   http://www.globalr2p.org/resources/789
24   http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/929

The third, as always, is political: to ensure that when mass atrocities next occur, the necessary commitment will be there from the decision-makers that matter. This means having arrangements in place for effective mobilization by both governments and civil society[25]

Education can promote tolerance and an understanding of the value of diversity. Changing the behavior, attitudes and perceptions of young people can contribute to creating a society that is resilient to atrocity crimes. Education systems should reflect the ethnic, national and cultural diversity of societies, set an example of inclusiveness in their policies, and prescribe textbooks that promote inclusiveness and acceptance.[26]

Aspects to think about

1. How can R2P be expected to prevent genocide and other massive crimes that are the result of deeply rooted problems in a society?
2. Under what circumstances would military action be considered effective?
3. Who should have the responsibility to protect?
4. Which cases, issues should be surveyed by R2P?
5. What should be the standing of R2P in international law?

Further reading

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/947&referer=/english/&Lang=E

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/181

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/929

http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/files/FAQ.pdf

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25   http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/unga08/s1.pdf
26   http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/929

The military use of children

Introduction of the topic

Most child casualties are civilians. Nevertheless, one of the most deplorable developments in recent years has been the increasing use of young children as soldiers. In one sense, this is not new. For centuries, children have been involved in military campaigns—as child ratings on warships, or as drummer boys on the battlefields of Europe. Indeed the word 'infantry', for foot soldiers, can also mean a group of young people. What is frightening nowadays is the escalation in the use of children as fighters. Recently, in 25 countries, thousands of children under the age of 16 have fought in wars. In 1988 alone, they numbered as many as 200,000.[27] Every conflict forces children to live through some terrible experiences. Indeed, millions of children have been present at events far beyond the worst nightmares of most adults. In Sarajevo, where almost one child in four has been wounded in the conflict, UNICEF conducted a survey of 1,505 children in the summer of 1993. It found that 97 per cent of the children had experienced shelling nearby, 29 per cent felt 'unbearable sorrow', and 20 per cent had terrifying dreams, 55 per cent had been shot at by snipers, and 66 per cent had been in a situation where they thought they would die.

Another survey in 1995 in Angola found that 66 per cent of children had seen people being murdered, 91 per cent had seen dead bodies, and 67 per cent had seen people being tortured, beaten or hurt. In all, more than two thirds of children had lived through events in which they had defied death.[28]

Action taken

The world should, in theory, be in a stronger position to shield children since the principles of protection for children in wartime have been established in a number of international conventions.

A series of Geneva Conventions after World War I dealt with different aspects of the conduct of war by combatants. It was not until after the atrocities of World War II that the international community specifically addressed non-combatants and produced in 1949 another series of four Conventions, the last of which called for the protection of civilians in time of war (Fourth Geneva Convention, referred to below as 4GC). In 1977, this was supplemented by two Additional Protocols (referred to below as PI and PII) which provided children with special protection—

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27   http://www.unicef.org/sowc96/2csoldrs.htm
28   http://www.unicef.org/sowc96/7trauma.htm

dealing, for example, for the first time with their participation as soldiers. The issues covered by these treaties include:

- *General protection of civilians*—Civilians are entitled to general protection against the dangers from military operations. They shall not be the object of indiscriminate attack, acts or threats of violence (PI, article 51).
- *Supplies for children and mothers*—[Combatants should] allow the free passage of medical supplies, food and clothing for children, expectant mothers, maternity cases and nursing mothers (4GC, articles 23 and 55).
- *Sexual exploitation*—Children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault (PI, article 77).
- *Unaccompanied children*—The parties to the conflict shall endeavor to ensure that children who have been separated from their families are not left to their own resources (4GC, article 24).

In 1989, a major new human rights instrument was introduced: the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This provides for much more complete protection of the child—defining standards of how children should and should not be treated. Indeed, the principles, the provisions and the procedures of the Convention are particularly relevant at time of war when all the rights of the child are at risk.

Articles of the Convention that are especially important in wartime include all those related to survival and to family support, as well as those concerned with education, health care and adequate nutrition. Other rights that are particularly at risk include rights to:

- *protection against exploitation and violence;*
- *protection against torture, or any other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;*
- *family reunification;*
- *a name and nationality.*

The Convention also makes specific mention of children in war. Article 38 calls on States Parties (i.e. governments) to apply the rules of international humanitarian law that are relevant to the child and to take every feasible measure "to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflict."

Article 38 also urges governments to take all feasible measures to ensure that children under 15 have no direct part in the hostilities. Specifically with respect to child soldiers, it states:

States Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, States Parties shall endeavor to give priority to those who are oldest.

There was some controversy over this article in the drafting process. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in particular, felt that the age limit was set too low. However, this debate has continued, and a United Nations working group

has been established to draft an Optional Protocol to the Convention, which would ban recruiting anyone below the age of 18.

Article 39 of the Convention also covers children in armed conflicts. It refers to the need for physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims.[29]

Possible solutions

Of course, the most effective way to stop the use of child soldiers is to end the conflicts in which they fight. "Child soldiers will be used by [warring] parties for as long as the war continues. There must be a political solution," says the International Crisis Group's Senior Adviser John Prendergast. [30]

Children themselves of course have an important contribution to make—in trying to avoid the mistakes of their parents. Schools can foster these ideals through courses that allow children to explore ways of resolving disputes between individuals and communities that do not rely on violence. 'Education for peace' is often thought of as a form of reconciliation after war is over, but it also has potential for prevention.

Many parts of the world are already in an unstable situation where violence seems a likely outcome. In these circumstances, the international community needs effective early warning systems to permit speedy mediation. A number of international NGOs (non-governmental organizations) notably the human rights organizations perform a valuable service. [31]

Promoting systematic demobilization of child soldiers in all countries and provide support for reintegration, with an emphasis on access to education and vocational training;

Building capacities for appropriate psychosocial support and response to ex-child combatants;

Identifying and promote alternative, non-violent ways for boys and girls to contribute meaningfully to the cause of their people and communities;

Developing prevention strategies to reduce the factors that make children vulnerable to "voluntary" recruitment.[32]

Aspects to think about

1. How do children become soldiers? Why are child soldiers used in military actions?
2. How is society affected by the use of child soldiers?
3. What kind of psychological implications do child soldiers face?
4. Which country or region has the worst record for using child soldiers?

29   http://www.unicef.org/sowc96/11protec.htm
30   http://www.cfr.org/human-rights/child-soldiers-around-world/p9331
31   http://www.unicef.org/sowc96/13prevnt.htm
32   http://www.unicef.org/newsline/02pr58soldiers.htm

5. What is the possible action plan for fighting both legal and illegal recruitment of children under 18 for military conscription?

Further reading

http://www.unicef.org/sowc96/2csoldrs.htm
http://www.cfr.org/human-rights/child-soldiers-around-world/p9331
https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/effects-of-conflict/six-grave-violations/child-soldiers/ http://www.humanium.org/en/child-soldier/
http://www.faqs.org/childhood/So-Th/Soldier-Children-Global-Human-Rights-Issues.html