

World Health Organization (WHO)

Background Guide Topic:

Securing Access to Healthcare in Conflict Areas



Director's Note

Dear delegates,

Welcome to the World Health Organization of Japan Metropolitan Model United Nations 2023! I would like to thank you on behalf of the chairs for your participation, and we vow to do our very best to make this conference a valuable and memorable experience for all of you.

My name is Aisha Kitazume and I will serve as the director of Beginner II for the duration of the conference. I am currently a second-year student at Sensoku Gakuen Senior High School. Although I joined the MUN club in my first year of Junior High, I wasn't an active member of the club until my second-year in school. Everything about MUN was outside of my comfort zone, which led to me withdrawing from meetings. That was until my friend who was experienced in MUN offered to participate in an in-school simulation with me. Working with her taught me that preparation leads to confidence, and confidence leads to more active participation in discussions during the conference. It was this experience that led to me becoming a more active and confident participant. Now, I'm chairing JMMUN for the second time.

With a quarter of the world's entire population being affected by violent conflicts, it's important now more than ever to consider the well-being of these people. The topic for this year's conference asks you to consider how countries in armed conflicts, often lacking resources, can improve access to healthcare for civilians. It may not be a question you've considered before, but I hope you research and ponder the problem from many angles.

We look forward to seeing you at the conference, and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns!

Sincerely,

Aisha Kitazume

Director of World Health Organization
Senzoku Gakuen Model United Nations
Japan Metropolitan Model United Nations 2023



Introduction of the Committee

The World Health Organization, founded in 1948, is an agency that promotes health for everyone, regardless of where they are, to attain the highest level of health.¹

The world is facing the highest number of conflicts since 1945, with two billion people living in conflict-affected areas. In 2021, 84 million people were displaced due to conflict, violence, and human rights violations. In 2022, it is estimated that 274 million people will be in need of humanitarian assistance. These situations no have been made even more dire in recent years due to things such as COVID-19, and climate change.² With a quarter of the population living in conflict-affected areas, we must consider how even those in conflict areas can attain the highest level of health.

The WHO has supported Ukraine's healthcare system throughout the war by deploying medical teams, delivering specialized medical supplies, as well as working with authorities to prevent the

disruption of healthcare services.³ The WHO has also provided Ukraine with 20 all-terrain ambulances to aid emergency health needs.⁴

Since August 2021, the WHO has released 340,000 US dollars of the Contingency Fund for Emergencies to support healthcare in Afghanistan. The money was used to airlift medical supplies that are in urgent need to Afghanistan, and to address the consequences of a poor healthcare system.⁵

¹ "About WHO - WHO | World Health Organization." <https://www.who.int/about>. Accessed 27 Jul. 2022.

² "'War's Greatest Cost Is Its Human Toll', Secretary-General Reminds" 30 Mar. 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sgsm21216.doc.htm>. Accessed 27 Jul. 2022.

³ "Ukraine emergency - WHO | World Health Organization." <https://www.who.int/emergencies/situations/ukraine-emergency>. Accessed 10 Aug. 2022.

⁴ "WHO delivers 20 ambulances to Ukraine." 8 May. 2022, <https://www.who.int/news/item/08-05-2022-who-delivers-20-ambulances-to-ukraine>. Accessed 10 Aug. 2022.

⁵ "Afghanistan crisis - WHO | World Health Organization." <https://www.who.int/emergencies/situations/afghanistan-crisis>. Accessed 10 Aug. 2022.



Key Terms

Conflict Area⁶

A conflict area is an area that has a high risk of harm to people due to wars, insurgencies or political instability.

Depression⁷

Depression is a serious illness that causes sadness and low interest.

Approximately 280 million people in the world were affected in 2021 and over 700,000 people died due to suicide as a result of depressed mood and hopelessness about the future.⁸

⁶ *Conflict affected and high-risk areas (cahras)*. Responsible Minerals Initiative. (n.d.). Retrieved July 24, 2022, from

<https://www.responsiblemineralsinitiative.org/mineral-s-due-diligence/risk-management/conflict-affected-and-high-risk-areas/#:~:text=OECD%20definition%20of%20conflict-affected%20and%20high-risk%20areas%3A%20Conflict-affected,vio%20or%20other%20risks%20of%20harm%20to%20people>.

⁷ *What is depression?* Psychiatry.org - What Is Depression? (n.d.). Retrieved July 24, 2022, from <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression>

⁸ World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Depression*. World Health Organization. Retrieved July 24, 2022, from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression>

Anxiety Disorder⁹

Anxiety disorder is a mental disorder that results in excessive fear or worry. An anxiety disorder can lead to significant distress and impair functioning.

PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder)¹⁰

PTSD is a mental condition, triggered by experiencing or witnessing terrifying events such as war. Symptoms include flashbacks, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts.

Refugee¹¹

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee from their own country because their home government can not, or will not, protect them due to war or persecution.

⁹ World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Mental disorders*. World Health Organization. Retrieved July 24, 2022, from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders>

¹⁰ Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. (2018, July 6). *Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)*. Mayo Clinic. Retrieved July 24, 2022, from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355967>

¹¹ *Asylum seekers and refugees*. The Australian Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). Retrieved July 24, 2022, from <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freoms/publications/asylum-seekers-and-refugees#:~:text=An%20asylum%20seeker%20is%20a%20person%20who%20has,country%20and%20applied%20for%20protection%20as%20a%20refugee>.



Asylum Seeker¹²

An asylum seeker is someone who is seeking the international protection of being officially admitted as a refugee. Their claim has not been decided yet, and not every asylum seeker will eventually become a refugee.

Current Situation

Currently, there are 27 ongoing conflicts in the world¹³ and at the end of 2021, there were 27.1 million refugees and 4.6 million asylum seekers worldwide.¹⁴



A refugee camp in Za'atari, Jordan¹⁵

People who are affected by conflict are vulnerable to mental illnesses, and have poorer health outcomes, which shows that health-related development has not been achieved. In 2019, the WHO has estimated that one in five people in conflict areas are living with some kind of mental illness. However, mental health of conflict areas is often ignored in many countries.

Moreover, treatment and support of physical healthcare are in need, for people in conflict areas have limited access to healthcare. This is due to attacks on hospitals and financially challenging situations. "Discrimination; poor living, housing, and working conditions; and

¹² *Asylum seekers and refugees*. The Australian Human Rights Commission. (n.d.). Retrieved July 24, 2022, from <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedom/publications/asylum-seekers-and-refugees#:~:text=An%20asylum%20seeker%20is%20a%20person%20who%20has,country%20and%20applied%20for%20protection%20as%20a%20refugee.>

¹³ Council on Foreign Relations. (n.d.). *Global conflict tracker*. Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved July 25, 2022, from

<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/>

¹⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.). *Refugee statistics*. UNHCR. Retrieved July 25, 2022, from <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>

¹⁵ "Jordan's Za'atari refugee camp: 10 facts at 10 years - UNHCR." 29 Jul. 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2022/7/62e2a95d4/jordans-zaatari-refugee-camp-10-facts-10-years.html>. Accessed 25 Dec. 2022.



inadequate access to health services”¹⁶ are also considered as factors of poor health conditions according to the WHO. The report shows that 169 million migrant workers are engaged in dirty and dangerous jobs that have a larger risk of injuries.¹⁷ Additionally, providing adequate healthcare for infectious diseases has been challenging in conflict areas due to structural vulnerabilities such as limited access to clean water and hygiene. According to research, refugees and asylum seekers have an increased risk of certain infectious diseases, such as latent tuberculosis, compared to the indigenous population. This is due to poor living conditions during and after migration.¹⁸ It reveals the need for health reception and reporting of asylum

¹⁶ World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Refugee and migrant health - global*. World Health Organization. Retrieved July 25, 2022, from https://www.who.int/health-topics/refugee-and-migrant-health#tab=tab_1

¹⁷ World Health Organization. (n.d.). *WHO report shows poorer health outcomes for many vulnerable refugees and migrants*. World Health Organization. Retrieved August 31, 2022, from <https://www.who.int/news/item/20-07-2022-who-report-shows-poorer-health-outcomes-for-many-vulnerable-refugees-and-migrants>

¹⁸ C., E. A. H. W. (n.d.). *Review of Infectious Diseases in refugees and asylum seekers-current status and going forward*. Public health reviews. Retrieved July 25, 2022, from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29450094/>

seekers and refugees to the refugee-host countries.

Case Studies

Subtopic I: Preventing Infectious Diseases

Emerging Infectious Diseases

The number of infectious diseases has been declining since 2000 but is still a severe problem. Not only does it affect people’s health but also it locks people into poverty and leads the nation into a downward economic slide.¹⁹ The spread of infectious diseases is accelerating not only because of under-resourced healthcare systems but also the growth of population and the degradation of the environment.²⁰

Access to Vaccines

Vaccines are required to have a high efficiency rate of 50 percent or more to be approved. This makes vaccination one of the most effective ways to prevent the infection

¹⁹ “Infectious Diseases,” World Bank, accessed July 29, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/infectiousdiseases>.

²⁰ O’Dowd, Adrian. “Infectious Diseases Are Spreading More Rapidly than Ever before, Who Warns.” *BMJ (Clinical Research Ed.)*, BMJ Publishing Group Ltd., 1 Sept. 2007, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17762021>.



from spreading through society.²¹ However, an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 citizens of the United States die annually from vaccine-preventable infectious diseases such as influenza.²² Moreover, conflict areas struggle to suppress the pandemics of infectious diseases and are being left behind due to the lack of information about how vaccines prevent infections.²³

Case Study 1: Ethiopia

In November 2020, the outbreak of a conflict in the Tigray region, located in the North of Ethiopia, attracted attention. The tension between the Ethiopian government forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) lasted for a year.²⁴ TPLF had governed Ethiopia before the present prime

minister Abiy Ahmed. He was chosen in order to bring change to the country without altering the old political order. However, in November 2020, Abiy accused the TPLF of attacking an army base outside Tigray's regional capital Mekelle and trying to steal its weapons. As a result, Abiy commanded a military assault and succeeded in taking over Mekelle.²⁵

The access to vaccination is being limited because it is difficult to import them in the middle of an armed dispute and the spread of infectious diseases is accelerating, especially COVID-19.²⁶ To improve the situation, The Federal Ministry of Health launched a COVID-19 vaccination campaign to vaccinate people who are over 12 years old in that region. The ministry deployed over 6.2 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to use for the campaign.²⁷

²¹ "Vaccine Efficacy, Effectiveness and Protection." *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/vaccine-efficacy-effectiveness-and-protection>.

²² 2018 Topics: Health & Wellness Influenza Editorial Staff | August 1, "Why Are Vaccines Important?," American Lung Association, accessed July 29, 2022, <https://www.lung.org/blog/why-are-vaccines-important>.

²³ "Covid-19 Vaccine Access in Conflict Areas Remains Critical | UN News," United Nations (United Nations), accessed July 29, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1116032>.

²⁴ Laetitia Bader, "Ethiopia's Other Conflict," Human Rights Watch, July 4, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/04/ethiopia-s-other-conflict>.

²⁵ Eliza Mackintosh, "Ethiopia Is at War with Itself. Here's What You Need to Know," CNN (Cable News Network, November 5, 2021), <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/11/03/africa/ethiopia-tigray-explainer-2-intl/index.html>.

²⁶ "A Closer Look into Vaccination in Ethiopia," A closer look into vaccination in Ethiopia | Launch and Scale Speedometer, accessed July 29, 2022, <https://launchandscalefaster.org/blog/closer-look-vaccination-ethiopia>.

²⁷ "Ethiopia Launches a COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign Targeting the 12 Years and above Population," World Health Organization (World Health Organization), accessed July 29, 2022,





Ethiopia's nationwide ceremony following its launch of the COVID-19 vaccine²⁸

Case Study 2: Thailand

In Thailand, HIV/AIDS has been a concerning problem. There are an estimated number of 500,000 people living with HIV and 12,000 people dying because of AIDS-related causes. The Ministry of Public Health of Thailand has set a goal to reduce the mortality of AIDS to 4,000 deaths per year by 2030.²⁹

<https://www.afro.who.int/news/ethiopia-launches-covid-19-vaccination-campaign-targeting-12-years-and-above-population>.

²⁸ "Ethiopia introduces COVID-19 vaccine in a national launching"

<https://www.afro.who.int/news/ethiopia-introduces-covid-19-vaccine-national-launching-ceremony>. Accessed 25 Dec. 2022.

²⁹ Andy Carstens, "High Mortality of People Living with HIV in Thailand Highlights the Need for Early Diagnosis and Treatment," [aidsmap.com](https://www.aidsmap.com), November 9, 2021,

<https://www.aidsmap.com/news/nov-2021/high-mortality-people-living-hiv-thailand-highlights-need-early-diagnosis-and>.

However, this goal was a difficult one to achieve because people in Thailand were late to start antiretroviral therapy, a treatment which delays the progression of the disease using drugs. In response to this situation, even though the annual new HIV infections dropped by 50 percent in Thailand between 2010 and 2016, the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand launched its new 2017–2030 National AIDS Strategy. This strategy aims to inform the citizens of the antiretroviral therapy and to encourage them to actively use it.³⁰ People in Thailand were unaware of the antiretroviral therapy but this strategy helped in circulating correct information. As a result, people are able to access treatment for free and immediately after diagnosis.³¹ This case shows how spreading awareness about the appropriate treatments of infectious diseases could lead to a dramatic improvement.

Case Study 3: Sudan

³⁰ Unaid.org, "Thailand Launches New National Strategy to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2030," UNAIDS (UNAIDS, September 15, 2017), https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2017/september/20170915_Thailand_NSP.

³¹ Unaid.org, "Turning the Tide of the HIV Epidemic in Thailand," UNAIDS (UNAIDS, January 17, 2020), https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2020/january/20200117_thailand#:~:text=The%20AIDS%20response%20in%20Thailand



Sudan is the only country in WHO's Eastern Mediterranean region that has a risk of yellow fever. There is no treatment to cure this disease and the only measure to prevent it is vaccination. One dose of the yellow fever vaccine offers an effective, lifetime protection.

Sudan has been trying to protect its population from yellow fever by making it easier to access vaccines. They have included refugees and migrants in their vaccination campaign, which started in March 2021, and have successfully reduced the risk of their citizens getting infected.³² This case demonstrates the importance of making vaccinations accessible to citizens.

Subtopic II: Mental Health

22% of conflict-affected populations suffer from depression, anxiety, or PTSD. 9% of these populations suffer from a moderate to severe mental health condition. Study author Dr. Mark van Ommerman states that, "The new estimates... add yet more weight to the argument for immediate and sustained investment, so that mental and psychosocial

³² "Sudan Launches Yellow Fever Vaccination Campaign among Ethiopian Refugees and Host Communities - Sudan," ReliefWeb, April 27, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-launches-yellow-fever-vaccination-campaign-among-ethiopian-refugees-and-host>.

support is made available to all people in need living through conflict and its aftermath."³³

Syria

Syria's Civil War started 11 years ago when protesters demonstrated against the Assad family's four-decade rule. Over the course of 11 years, nearly half of the country's prewar population, 12 million, have been displaced, making it the largest refugee crisis.^{34 35} The UN Human Rights office estimates that, between March 1 2011 and March 31 2021, 306,887 civilians were killed in the Syrian Civil War.³⁶

Children make up half of the refugee population, with children under the age of 12 making up 40% of the refugee population. Almost half of these children

³³ (2019, June 12). One-in-five suffers mental health condition in conflict zones, new UN Retrieved July 28, 2022, from

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/06/1040281>

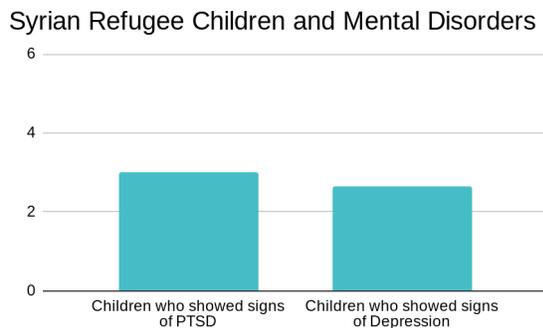
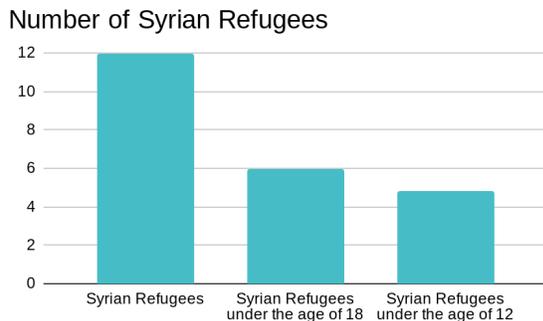
³⁴ "Syria's Civil War: The Descent Into Horror." <https://www.cfr.org/article/syrias-civil-war>. Accessed 28 Jul. 2022.

³⁵ "Syria Refugee Crisis Explained - USA for UNHCR." 8 Jul. 2022, <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/>. Accessed 10 Aug. 2022.

³⁶ "UN Human Rights Office estimates more than 306,000 civilians were" 28 Jun. 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/un-human-rights-office-estimates-more-306000-civilians-were-killed-over-10>. Accessed 28 Jul. 2022.



displayed symptoms of PTSD, and 44% showed signs of depression.³⁷



Prior to the crisis, mental healthcare services were only available in 2 cities, with 70 psychiatrists for a population of 22 million. Through humanitarian aid, mental health services are now available at more than 150 health centers across 11 governorates. Governorates refer to an area ruled by a

³⁷ "The Educational and Mental Health Needs of Syrian Refugee Children." <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/educational-and-mental-health-needs-syrian-refugee-children>. Accessed 28 Jul. 2022.

governor.³⁸ These services are provided by non-specialist practitioners who were trained through the WHO National Mental Health Gap Programme. The mhGAP, implemented in over 100 countries since 2008 aims to enhance service for mental, neurological and substance use disorders, especially in low and middle income countries.³⁹ Additionally, the International Psychosocial Organization, an organization that provides counseling both in-person and online,⁴⁰ has provided online counseling to Syrians, as well as Syrian refugees.⁴¹

Despite these efforts, Syria is still suffering from a shortage of mental health professionals and psychiatrists. According to aid workers, there is only one professional psychiatrist for more than one million people in some areas of Syria,⁴² making it

³⁸ "GOVERNORATE | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." 11, Aug. 2022, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/governorate>

³⁹ "Scaling up care for mental, neurological, and substance use disorders: mhGAP." 11, Aug. 2022, <https://www.who.int/activities/scaling-up-mental-health-care>

⁴⁰ "Rethinking Mental Health." 11, Aug. 2022, <https://ipsocontext.org/about-us/>

⁴¹ "Online counseling provided by Syrian counselors based in Germany." https://ipsocontext.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/DOKU_LIBANON_FINAL.pdf. Accessed 28 Jul. 2022.

⁴² "Mind the Gap: Why Mental Health Care Matters for Rebuilding Syria."



difficult for civilians to access proper mental healthcare.

This case informs us of the lack of professionals in Syria and the damage it is causing in terms of mental healthcare. Medical training and aiding is urgently needed in conflict areas.

Ukraine

In February 2022, a military offense against Ukraine was launched by the Russian Federation. The security climate of Ukraine has worsened ever since.⁴³ As of July 2022, the OHCHR has recorded 11,152 civilian casualties, with 4,889 killed and 6,263 injured.⁴⁴



*People evacuating Irpin, Ukraine during a bombing on March 3, 2022*⁴⁵

Amongst displaced families in Ukraine, a report showed that the biggest concern of parents is the mental health of their children.⁴⁶ Moreover, 26% of parents claimed that they had no knowledge of mental health services that are available to their children.⁴⁷

In 2021, Ukraine launched the Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs). The CMHTs serve to provide care for people

<https://www.csis.org/npfp/mind-gap-why-mental-health-care-matters-rebuilding-syria>. Accessed 28 Jul. 2022.

⁴³ "Ukraine - UN News - the United Nations." 30 Jun. 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/focus/ukraine>. Accessed 24 Jul. 2022.

⁴⁴ "Ukraine: civilian casualty update 4 July 2022 - OHCHR." 4 Jul. 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2022/07/ukraine-civilian-casualty-update-4-july-2022>. Accessed 25 Jul. 2022.

⁴⁵ "100 Days Into Ukraine War, It's Time to End the Age of Impunity." 3 Jun. 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/03/russia-war-ukraine-100-days-impunity-international-law-g7-summit/>. Accessed 25 Dec. 2022.

⁴⁶ "No Peace of Mind | Ukraine - World Vision International." 5 Jul. 2022, <https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/ukraine/no-peace-mind>. Accessed 25 Jul. 2022.

⁴⁷ "No Peace of Mind: The looming mental health crisis for the children" 5 Jul. 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/no-peace-mind-looming-mental-health-crisis-children-ukraine>. Accessed 25 Jul. 2022.



with severe mental disorders. By February 2022, 65 CMHTs were formed throughout Ukraine. The CMHTs continued to provide care during the conflict through remote consultations. However, CMHTs are suffering from a lack of resources including psychotropic medicines, limited food supply, clean water, heating, and sanitation.⁴⁸

This case shows that medical supplies, alongside secure infrastructure and supply chains are just as necessary as Human Resources. Countries supporting conflict-affected countries should strive to provide both resources.

Yemen

Yemen's Civil War began in 2015 when the Yemeni government forces clashed with the Houthis. The war has resulted in 4.3 million internally displaced people (IDP), and 73% of the population in need of humanitarian assistance. It is worth noting that 79% of IDPs are women or children.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ "Mental Health in Ukraine: How Community Mental Health Teams are" 13 May. 2022, <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/mental-health-in-ukraine--how-community-mental-health-teams-are-providing-care-amidst-the-ongoing-war>. Accessed 25 Jul. 2022.

⁴⁹ "Yemen Crisis Explained - USA for UNHCR." 14 Jul. 2022, <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/yemen-crisis-explained/>. Accessed 28 Jul. 2022.

In Yemen, the average 25-year-old has suffered through 14 armed conflicts. It is estimated that 19.5% of the population suffer from a mental disorder, with anxiety, depression, trauma, and schizophrenia being the most prevalent. Studies show that 55% of children are sad or depressed, and 79% of school-aged children show signs of PTSD. Additionally, mental disorders are viewed as being connected to a belief in myths, superstitions, witchcraft, and jinns. This unfortunately means that there is serious stigma surrounding mental health, and, by association, psychology and psychiatry. This situation is made worse by a shortage of medication, and the fact that only 51% of health facilities are functional.⁵⁰

A Mental Health Act was drafted in 2004 and 2007, but both were rejected by the Yemeni Parliament, meaning that a clear mental health plan doesn't exist in Yemen. In 2019, the WHO developed a mental health and psychosocial support plan of action for Yemen. The plan identifies the priorities of MHPSS training, service delivery, awareness-raising, and budgetary needs. The lack of funding, lack of mental healthcare professionals, and deep-rooted

⁵⁰ "Mental health in Yemen: obstacles and challenges - PMC - NCBI." 1 Oct. 2008, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6734841/>. Accessed 28 Jul. 2022.



social stigma regarding mental illnesses are also contributors to Yemen's poor mental healthcare.

This case informs us that a lack of resources is not the only thing that can lead to poor mental health. Stigma surrounding mental health can discourage those in need of support to refrain from seeking it, and Yemen's case highlights the importance of raising awareness and educating people about mental health.⁵¹

Subtopic III: Healthcare workers and institutions

In conflict areas, healthcare workers and hospitals are targets for attacks, which has led to healthcare workers escaping from the area. A report by the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition revealed that in 2021, 161 health workers were killed and 320 were injured worldwide. Although medical facilities need to be protected in accordance with international humanitarian law (further explained in *Key Terms*), this is not the case in conflict areas around the world.⁵²

⁵¹ "Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Assessment."
<https://cdn1.internationalmedicalcorps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/IMC-Yemen-2019-MHPSS-Assessment.pdf>. Accessed 28 Jul. 2022.

⁵² At Least 1,335 Attacks and Threats to Health Care Perpetrated in Conflicts in 2021. Marring Health Systems: Report-PHR

Syria

Since the start of the conflict in Syria, many hospitals have been attacked as a part of a war strategy. In between 2011 and 2017, there were 492 attacks on healthcare institutions in Syria, killing 847 medical personnel. As of July 2022, 97 deaths and 165 injuries, which happened as a result of attacks on medical facilities, have been recorded. In addition, according to the WHO, 70% of the total attacks worldwide on healthcare facilities and ambulances have occurred in Syria. This signifies how the number of attacks on healthcare in Syria is alarming.



*The entrance of a destroyed hospital in Syria*⁵³

<https://phr.org/news/at-least-1335-attacks-and-threats-to-health-care-perpetrated-in-conflicts-in-2021-marring-health-systems-report/>. Accessed 30 Jul. 2022

⁵³ "In Syria, Even the Hospitals Are Not Safe - The New York Times." 3 Jun. 2019,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/03/opinion/syria-attacks-hospitals.html>. Accessed 25 Dec. 2022.



In response to this severe situation, some measures have been taken in the country. The symbolic Red Cross or Red Crescent markings were removed from hospitals because the signs became literal targets. Also, many medical facilities were forced to move underground or into caves in order to escape attacks. However, this did not deter attacks on medical facilities. In 2017, the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) lost one of its doctors because of bunker buster bombs which can cut through underground hospitals.

The WHO raised a Surveillance System of Attacks on Healthcare (SSA) in 2016 in order to combat this problem. However, attacks still continued to increase in 2018, making the SSA ineffective.

Under these circumstances, patients refrain from going to medical facilities because of the risk of being involved in attacks. Only patients in need of a treatment that would cost their life go to hospitals. Hospitals are supposed to be a safe place for healthcare workers to treat patients, and should not be treated as collateral damage. The SAMS is working to make quality healthcare accessible through “financial support of

facilities and staff, medical education, and procurement and logistics management.”⁵⁴

Ukraine

As of June 2, 2022, there have been 269 verified attacks on healthcare facilities, resulting in 76 health workers killed and 59 injured in Ukraine. Though only a small percentage of the roughly 2,500 hospitals have been destroyed, the attacks on health infrastructure are concentrated on the cities: places where medical care is in desperate need.⁵⁵

In order to reconstruct the health systems in Ukraine, the WHO has launched an updated appeal that consists of using 145 billion US dollars for supporting the worsening humanitarian need in Ukraine and providing immediate medical delivery.⁵⁶

⁵⁴“Impacts of attacks on healthcare in Syria - Syrian Arab Republic | Relief Web”
<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/impacts-attacks-healthcare-syria>. Accessed 29 Jul.2022

⁵⁵ “Attacks on Ukraine’s Hospitals Will Cause Long-Term Harm to Health”
<https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/attacks-ukraine-s-hospitals-will-cause-long-term-harm-health>. Accessed 31 Jul. 2022

⁵⁶ “One hundred days of war has put Ukraine’s health system under severe pressure”
<https://www.who.int/news/item/03-06-2022-one-hundred-days-of-war-has-put-ukraine-s-health-system-under-severe-pressure>. Accessed 31 Jul. 2022



Ethiopia

Since November 4, 2021, the Tigray region of Ethiopia has gone through a devastating armed conflict. According to an investigation, out of the 106 health facilities the Doctors Without Borders teams visited, one in five had been or was occupied by armed soldiers. Also, out of the 106 health facilities, nearly 70% of them had been looted and 30% of them were damaged by March 21, 2021.⁵⁷

Due to this, six months into the war, only 27.5% of hospitals, 17.5% of health centers, 11% of ambulances and none of the 712 health posts were functional. Also, the population in need of emergency food assistance in the Tigray region increased from less than a million to 5.2 million, which is 91% of the population. This data indicates that the conflict in the Tigray region has caused a severe lack of food and healthcare services.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Health facilities targeted in Tigray region, Ethiopia | MSF”

“<https://www.msf.org/health-facilities-targeted-tigray-region-ethiopia> Accessed 31 Jul.2022

⁵⁸ “The impact of war on the health system of the Tigray region in Ethiopia: an assessment | BMJ Global Health”
<https://gh.bmj.com/content/6/11/e007328>. Accessed 31 Jul. 2022

Past Actions

The 1949 Geneva Conventions

The Geneva Convention is an agreement which became the foundation of international humanitarian law. It comprises 429 articles of law, also known as the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, which aim to protect people in times of conflict.⁵⁹



⁶⁰

Article 24 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions states that “medical personnel exclusively engaged in the search for, or the collection, transport or treatment of the wounded or sick, or in the prevention of disease, staff exclusively engaged in the administration of

⁵⁹ "Summary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional"

https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/PDF_s/International_Services/International_Humanitarian_Law/IHL_SummaryGenevaConv.pdf. Accessed 11 Aug. 2022.

⁶⁰ "Revisiting the history of the Geneva Conventions." 17 Feb. 2022,
<https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2022/02/17/history-geneva-conventions/>. Accessed 25 Dec. 2022.



medical units and establishments ... shall be respected and protected in all circumstances.” Article 25 states that the same protection is extended to the staff of the National Red Cross, as well as those of other Voluntary Aid Societies.⁶¹

The Geneva Convention of 1949 has been ratified by all UN member states,⁶² meaning that all member states are required to act in a manner that does not render the treaty meaningless. However, the Geneva Convention does not have the authority to bind its members.⁶³

International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

Also called the “Law of War”, International Humanitarian Law is a set of rules set out to limit the damage caused by armed conflicts. The IHL serves to protect those who are not taking part in the hostilities. These people include civilians, medical and religious military staff, those who are wounded and or shipwrecked, and prisoners of war. The law also bans the use of exploding bullets,

chemical weapons, and other weapons which can cause harm to those who aren’t partaking in the fight.

The IHL is widely accepted as customary law. In other words, it is a general law that binds all the states.⁶⁴

Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (UN Security Council)⁶⁵

In May 2016, a resolution demanding the reinforcement of protection regarding healthcare workers, civilians, those who are sick or wounded, as well as hospitals in conflict zones was adopted by the UN’s Security Council.⁶⁶

The resolution reminds states that attacking medical personnel, the sick, and the wounded is a violation of the Geneva Conventions and therefore is a war crime. It also emphasizes the potential devastating effects of attacks against innocent civilians and health-care facilities can have. It urges

⁶¹ "Customary IHL - Practice Relating to Rule 25. Medical Personnel." https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v2_rul_rule25. Accessed 28 Jul. 2022.

⁶² "War Crimes - the United Nations." <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crime-s.shtml>. Accessed 28 Jul. 2022.

⁶³ "Who is bound by the Geneva Conventions? - ICRC." 31 Oct. 2002, <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/misc/5kzjv.htm>. Accessed 28 Jul. 2022.

⁶⁴ "What is International Humanitarian Law?." https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/what_is_ihl.pdf. Accessed 28 Jul. 2022.

⁶⁵ "Resolutions adopted by the Security Council in 2016." <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-adopted-security-council-2016>. Accessed 29 Jul. 2022.

⁶⁶ "Security Council demands protection for hospitals and health" 3 May. 2016, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/05/528322-security-council-demands-protection-hospitals-and-health-workers-conflict-zones>. Accessed 29 Jul. 2022.



States to develop effective measures to prevent further violence against medical staff and share these good practices.⁶⁷

Tips from the Chairs

As stated at the beginning of this background guide, research is key when it comes to MUN. The more a delegation understands the country they are representing, the better. Please bear in mind that you are participating as representatives of your assigned countries, and your ideas should reflect your country's stance, not your own.

Having a general understanding of MUN procedures will make your experience at the conference a more enjoyable one. We are more than happy to answer any questions that should arise during the conference, but having a good grasp on the procedures beforehand will allow you to focus more on what is being discussed. Please attend our chair events to learn about MUN procedures.

We encourage all delegates to submit their Position Papers. It will help you prepare for the conference, and it will help us, the

⁶⁷ "S/RES/2286(2016) - UNdocs.org." [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2286\(2016\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2286(2016)). Accessed 29 Jul. 2022.

chairs, understand what direction the committee will be headed.

When making speeches, whether it be Opening Speeches or for Moderated Caucuses, it is crucial to make your points and solutions clear. Make sure the structure of your speech is easy for other delegates to understand, and speak clearly when presenting them. The more specific your solution is, the easier it will be for you to form blocs with other delegates.

During the conference, don't be apprehensive about raising your placards. Making motions and speeches in front of a room full of people can be nerve wracking, but the speeches you make during this time will lead to note-passing and discussions during Unmoderated Caucuses.

For the duration of the Unmoderated Caucuses, you are free to walk around and talk to whoever you like. Take advantage of this and exchange opinions with many delegations, even those you may not agree with. These discussions will eventually lead to the formation of blocs, where you will write your resolutions.

Finally, keep your discussions civil and friendly. Discussions can get heated at times, but don't forget to show respect to your fellow delegates.



Questions to Consider

- Which does your country prioritize now: physical or mental healthcare?
- What, if any, actions has your country taken to improve the mental health of people in conflict areas?
- Does your country lack financial or human resources when it comes to healthcare?
- Is your country rich enough in resources to aid countries in conflict? If not, are there any other ways in which you can improve the situation?
- What medical resources (actions) has your country given to conflict areas?
- What action has your country taken to protect healthcare workers from violent crimes or attacks?
- What action has your country taken to prevent the spread of infectious diseases?
- How much money does your country spend on humanitarian aid?

Guidelines for Position

Papers

Position papers must clearly articulate the current situation of your country, briefly explain the past actions it has taken, and further denote possible solutions. Papers may also include international resolutions and strategies to combat the issue discussed in your committee; however, the main focus **must** be on your country. When developing your position papers, please focus on information that directly relates to the topic. General information about your country, such as its geographical location, major cities, or major trade exports, should not be included to lengthen your report. Remember that delegates and chairs do not have a lot of time during the conference to read the position papers. If you want to successfully press the case of your country, you want your position papers to get to the point quickly and persuasively.

Closing Remarks

Thank you again for taking interest and participating in JMMUN 2023! Please remember that background guides only serve to provide you with the basic information and a general idea of the conference. Further research is necessary in order to gain a better understanding of the



topic. Good luck, and we're looking forward to seeing you all in March!

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