



UNDP

**UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS
ON VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

BACKGROUND GUIDE

SAIMUN 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE DAIS

Dear Distinguished delegates,

A warm welcome to the 2021 Sub-Saharan Model United Nations Annual Conference.

The United Nations Development Programme committee dais is looking forward to meeting you and hearing your ideas for solving international problems. In line with this, the committee's topic will be dealing with understanding the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on vulnerable populations. The pandemic has affected us, some more than others, changing the way we interact and conduct our daily affairs. It is important to understand the impact of the pandemic to be able to provide sustainable solutions to mitigate the situation at hand.

This guide will, therefore, help give you an overview as well as an understanding of the topic at hand. This guide is aimed at helping you with the preparations for the conference. However, is an outline of what you will be debating during the conference meaning you will be expected to do more extensive research to be well prepared for the deliberations.

By participating in SAIMUN 2021, you are taking the first step in bringing forth solutions to world problems.

Regards,

UNDP Dais

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UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The United Nations Development Programme was created in 1965 to help countries eliminate poverty and pursue sustainable development with the hope of reducing inequalities and exclusion. Headquartered in New York, UNDP helps countries to develop policies, leadership skills, institutional skills and build resilience to promote sustainable development. To add on, UNDP seeks to support countries' efforts in the pursuit of the SDGs or Agenda 2030 through providing solutions and promoting partnerships.

UNDP's development work focuses on three main areas;

1. Eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions
2. Accelerate structural transformations
3. Build resilience to shocks and crises

To respond to the issues mentioned above, UNDP has identified approaches that ensure better management of its resources and expertise to deliver the 2030 Agenda

1. Keeping people out of **POVERTY**
2. **GOVERNANCE** for peaceful, just, inclusive societies
3. Crisis prevention and increased **RESILIENCE**
4. **ENVIRONMENT**: nature-based solutions for development
5. Clean, affordable **ENERGY**
6. Women's empowerment and **GENDER** equality

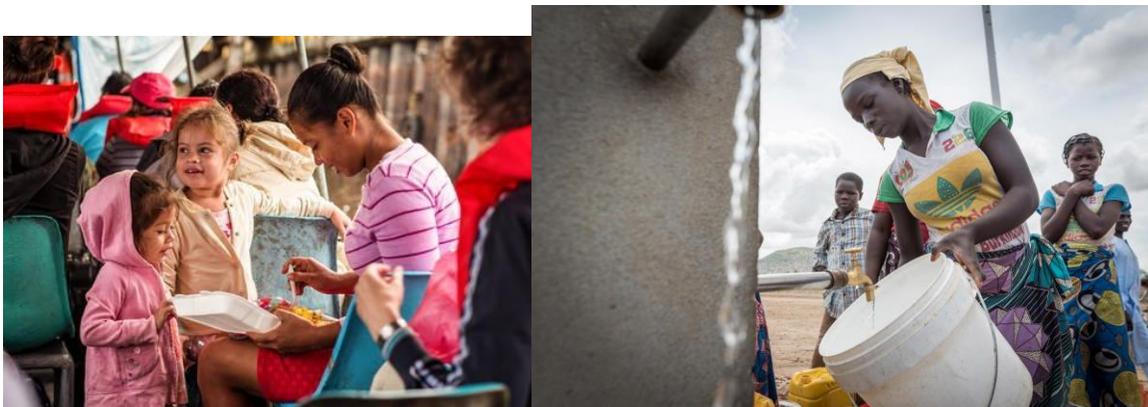


Statement of the Problem

“Women, children, people with disabilities, the marginalized and the displaced, all pay the highest price in conflicts and are also most at risk of suffering devastating losses from COVID-19”, said Secretary-General António Guterres in 2020 during his appeal for a global ceasefire during the global pandemic. The COVID-19 is a common enemy that attacks, all the same, however vulnerable groups are at higher risk of suffering from the devastating consequences of the pandemic. Vulnerable populations lack the ability and means to protect themselves from the detrimental effects of the pandemic in the short and long run. It is imperative to understand the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups to be able to provide sustainable solutions that will mitigate the crisis.

Vulnerable Populations

Vulnerable Populations are the various groups and communities in society who are disadvantaged due to several social, economic, and health reasons. These vulnerable populations are at a high risk given their situations and their inability to help themselves at times. The vulnerability of a population can take shape in various forms and can manifest itself differently among populations. These vulnerable populations can include those living in poverty without proper access to safe housing, water, sanitation and nutrition. These are the people in the population who are stigmatized, discriminated against and marginalized by society. They live in environments where they are unable to thrive, feel safe, and actively participate in all aspects of society. The vulnerability of a certain group or community increases in societies where there is inequality, exclusion, and the lack of basic human rights.



Here are some examples of vulnerable populations that can be found in a society include but are not limited to,

1. Racial, ethnic and sexual minorities
2. Refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers
3. Persons with disabilities
4. Elderly persons and the homeless
5. Women and Children
6. Populations in conflict-stricken regions

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a defining global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge that the world has had to face ever since World War II. Ever since the first recorded case of coronavirus in Wuhan, China in 2019, it has spread to every continent except Antarctica claiming over 3 million lives to date. With social distancing and lockdowns becoming the norm, countries are taking strict measures to curb the spread of the virus. There seems to be hope with the development of various vaccines that are being distributed across the globe. However, the virus persists, and not all countries have the same access to vaccines among other essential equipment needed to flatten the curve. To add on, the pandemic is not only a health crisis but also a socio-economic crisis. The pandemic can create devastating social, economic and political effects that will profoundly affect the future.



IMPACT OF COVID-19

COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating impacts across the globe, leaving no man behind. There has been a dramatic loss of human life worldwide which has challenged the current health systems. With the containment measures such as lockdowns, border closures and social isolation, people's livelihoods have been greatly affected, and world economies have felt the burden. Tens of millions of people are at risk of falling into extreme poverty while the number of undernourished people is estimated to increase to 132 million if the pandemic persists. The food security and nutrition of families are at risk as breadwinners are losing jobs, becoming financially unstable with some falling ill and dying. To add on, nearly half of the world's 3.3 billion global workforce are at risk of losing their livelihoods as a majority of them lack social protection and access to quality health care.



Additionally, the global market and the supply chain has been affected by border closures, trade restrictions and COVID-19 confinement measures. There are employment and labour issues since adhering to workplace safety and health practices might be challenging for some institutions to uphold. It is imperative to pay attention to the situation of women who are over-represented in low-paid jobs, care roles and make up a majority of frontline workers. States must put in place sustainable measures to support the various groups in society that are unable to support themselves during the pandemic. Lastly, countries that are already dealing with existing humanitarian crises or emergencies are more prone to feel the detrimental impacts of the pandemic.

Impact of COVID-19 on Various Vulnerable Populations

The Homeless

Homeless people are quite vulnerable as the COVID-19 pandemic has massively impacted them. Michael Burgos, the Director of Family with Children Shelters for Queens and Brooklyn in the United States, said that people in these shelters are showing anxiety, stress and fear about the COVID-19 virus. These homeless people are worried about food, where to live, financial stability and the health conditions of their family members. To add on, overcrowded living conditions or unsuitable living conditions make homeless people vulnerable to COVID-19 transmission. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Leilani Farha, urged governments to take measures to prevent anyone from falling into homelessness and ensure access to adequate housing for those without.



Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities are another vulnerable population that has felt the impact of the pandemic. Catalina Devandas, The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, emphasized that there is little that has been done to support and protect persons with disabilities making them feel like they have been left behind. She mentioned that “containment measures, such as social distancing and self-isolation, may be impossible for those who rely on the support of others to eat, dress and bathe.” For some, it is essential to their survival that they receive this support therefore, States should take additional measures to ensure the continuity of the support in a safe manner.

Children

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has warned that millions of children globally face increasing threats to their wellbeing - including mistreatment, gender-based violence, exploitation, social exclusion and separation from caregivers - due to the COVID-19 containment measures. States must ensure the safety of children with the growing socio-economic impact of the pandemic. According to the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), in Latin America and the Caribbean, over 154 million children are temporarily out of school due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This increases the chances of permanent school dropouts especially for the most vulnerable children in terrible conditions.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARAMS)

1. What key vulnerable populations are in need of help during the COVID-19 Crisis?
2. What sustainable measures can be put in place to ensure that vulnerable populations are protected during the pandemic?
3. What are the limitations with the current COVID-19 responses and how can they be improved?
4. In what ways can Post-COVID-19 national response plans demonstrate equality and inclusion of vulnerable populations?
5. How can pre-COVID-19 support mechanisms for vulnerable populations be sustained during the pandemic?
6. How can we ensure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals among vulnerable populations despite COVID-19 crisis?

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