



SOCHUM

**PROTECTING THE YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED AND ETHNIC MINORITIES  
FROM THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC.**

**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**SAIMUN 2021**

**Letter from the Chair**

Greetings Delegates!

We are very excited to welcome you to the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the Sub Saharan International Model United Nations Conference 2021. Welcome to the third committee of the General Assembly; on Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Issues. My name is Jackline Birir. I will be your chair during this conference. I am a law graduate from Kenyatta University. I am extremely passionate about international and global issues.

The essence of this study guide is to assist the delegates to discuss effectively the core issues of the topic as well as the focus of this committee. In a time where we need young people to assist in combating as well as protecting the community from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is paramount that we call upon every individual to assess the mechanisms and tools we can rely on to ensure that there is a society to revert to and drive sustainability which, requires the input of not only the youth but the minorities and the elderly.

Our topic has been carefully selected in as much as I relate to the current state of the world as well as the theme for the 5<sup>th</sup> Session “Impactful youth engagement towards the fulfillment of the SDGs in the COVID 19 pandemic time”. It is our goal that the background guide will provide relevant information and guidance as you research and prepare for the conference. I look forward to an engaging, fun, and great conference week.

Best wishes and see you at the Conference!

SOCHUM Chair.

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## Committee Overview

Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Issues (SOCHUM) is the third committee of the General Assembly. H.E. Katalin Bogyay of Hungary chairs the Committee. The Committee has the mandate to deal with a vast category of social, humanitarian, and human rights-related factors in the world.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the committee discusses matters of the advancement of women, children, aging persons, refugees, and other special interest groups. The committee focuses its analysis and discussions on social aspects such as drug control, justice, prevention of crime, protection of children's rights, prevention of racism, and promoting the rights to self-determination.<sup>2</sup>

The theme of the conference being “Impactful youth engagement towards the fulfillment of the SDGs in the COVID 19 pandemic time” is in line with SDGs 3 and 15 on good health and well-being and life on land respectively. In the coming conference, the committee will discuss the place of the youth in ensuring the adoption of these goals as well as protecting the aged, persons with disabilities, women, children, and refugees amidst this pandemic.



## Statement of the problem

Despite the short period for action against the deadliest viral pandemic, the international community has made significant steps towards curbing and combatting the effects of this disease. Unlike many problems that weigh more on developing states, this pandemic has not been as selective as other issues debated by the committee. The disease has proven that there is indeed a need for global partnerships. The most affected states go from the big giant states such as Russia,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/index.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/ga/third/index.shtml>

Italy to sub-Saharan countries such as Kenya and South Africa. The pandemic does not discriminate as the numbers indicate that numerous people have died and continue to die from prominent people of power to children and women in the society.

Strides have been made towards the achievement of a vaccine that assists in curbing the spread and adverse effects of the virus. However, there are states, including developed countries that are incapable of acquiring the vaccines for all their citizens. Reports indicate that those most affected by the pandemic include health workers, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions. This does not imply however that all other people are safe as studies and cases indicate that even healthy children, women, men, persons with disabilities and indigenous people have been affected by the virus directly or indirectly.



### **UN Actions and initiatives.**

The United Nations and other organizations such as Red Cross have taken many steps to ensure that the pandemic is curbed. Since the identification of the inevitable pandemic, the UN has taken a three-point response towards its steps to fight the pandemic:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Report on United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving lives, protecting Societies, Recovering Better (2020) <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/UN-response>

- a. Health response strategies through the assistance of the World Health Organization by funding various research of acquiring a vaccine to the partnerships with the aim of funding and donating vaccines to developing countries with special attention to those at great risk of being affected by the pandemic.
- b. Offering humanitarian assistance<sup>4</sup> which include but are not limited to the assistance of keeping businesses running, placing human rights observance at its highest as well as ensuring comprehensive policies are in place to address vulnerable groups, women, aging, children, and those earning low wages.
- c. Recovering procedures<sup>5</sup> that consist of rebuilding as well as ensuring a resilient and sustainable international community with health and well-being. This ensures that SDG 15 is achieved through the attainment of the good health of everyone.

There have been procedures identified towards the fight of COVID-19, these steps require funds for their actualization especially in middle and lower-income states. With this regard, the UN came up with a funding response plan. The WHO and the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) as well as various government budgets<sup>6</sup> have been put together as a contribution towards this response-funding plan. As of December 2020, the amount identified by the UN needed to fund these procedures to fight the pandemic was set at \$1.74 billion.<sup>7</sup>

## Current Situation

The United Nations has identified the 63 countries likely to be affected adversely by the pandemic. The UN further emphasizes the importance of providing more support to the most vulnerable and special groups such as refugees, aging, children, and persons with disabilities, migrants, and indigenous communities. Women and men who form part of the essential workers' groups also

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<sup>4</sup>Report on United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving lives, protecting Societies, Recovering Better (2020) <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/UN-response>

<sup>5</sup> Report on United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving lives, protecting Societies, Recovering Better (2020) <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/UN-response>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_report\\_socio-economic\\_impact\\_of\\_covid19.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_report_socio-economic_impact_of_covid19.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Report on United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving lives, protecting Societies, Recovering Better (2020) <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/UN-response>

face the challenge of being at the forefront of being highly at risk of infections either as health workers, teachers or soldiers, or police personnel.

It is estimated that developing countries stand to lose \$220 billion in GDP in 2020. Moreover, approximately \$9 trillion is likely to be lost from the global economy in the year 2020/2021.<sup>8</sup> This resulting from the economic downfall due to loss of jobs, poverty, decrease in trade, and death. It has been observed that several states were put on lockdown, which meant less international or internal travel. States that depend on tourism either domestic or international as the major contribution to their revenue have suffered immense losses.

The Secretary-General on the 23<sup>rd</sup> march called upon the collection and collaboration of all systems, tools, and states' powers to fighting the pandemic. He called on conflicts from different places of the world to cease to create an environment to help and save lives.<sup>9</sup> World Food Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization have also made steps in providing food for over 100 million people in areas whose markets have been affected by COVID-19 to ensure food security amidst the pandemic.<sup>10</sup>

There are a vast number of challenges that have arisen from this pandemic.<sup>11</sup> The committee is tasked with discussing and identifying these humanitarian challenges and how the youth can be involved safely in combating and preventing further losses.

The cost of combating COVID-19 has already surpassed previous pandemics.<sup>12</sup> There being a likelihood of future pandemics, plans for preparation must be placed to avoid similar losses. The youth have played an essential role during this pandemic through sharing preventive methods and WHO health protocols in various social media platforms, advocating for mental health care through sharing of stories and encouraging messages<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Report on United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving lives, protecting Societies, Recovering Better (2020) <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/UN-response>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/fury-virus-illustrates-folly-war>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/covid-19-pandemic>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Global-Humanitarian-Response-Plan-COVID-19.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/global-research-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/covid-19-technology-access-pool>

<sup>13</sup> <https://womendeliver.org/classmember/anna-szczegielniak/>



## Issues arising and challenges

### Impact on work

As of May 2020, the first wave of the pandemic hit globally resulting in at least 300 million people losing their employment. The increased level of unemployment greatly affects the means of livelihood of people as well as the economy of the countries. The pandemic has also affected start-up companies, small and medium enterprises that may not recover. The most vulnerable groups whose form of employment were initially at risk are even more at this moment.<sup>14</sup> The most affected sectors such as employment have been affected since employees are being led off due to the incapability of the employer to pay their salaries, risk of infections, and death of employees. For instance, health workers have been at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic. However, they are the employment group that requires more protection.

Regardless of this challenge, some employers have navigated towards achieving the WHO standards for safe workplaces while others have significantly switched to online jobs. This being a digital era, it has opened the avenue for great innovations. The youth are therefore called upon to create and invent new and efficient tools that will ease working from home.

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<sup>14</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/employment/Informationresources/covid-19/other/WCMS\\_748323?lang=en](https://www.ilo.org/employment/Informationresources/covid-19/other/WCMS_748323?lang=en)

### **Impact on tourism**

This sector has most undoubtedly been the most affected by the pandemic. Millions of people's employment have been placed in jeopardy as well as governments' revenue lost. This has been indicated in African countries, small islands Asia and Latin America. Due to the ban of international travel in various states such as Europe, America, and African states, international tourism has decreased. This calls for encouraging domestic travel as well as policies and actions to support the tourism workers.

### **Impact on education**

**Children** have more specifically been the greatest victims of COVID-19. The socio-economic impact of the pandemic affects their education, health, nutrition, and safety. The majority of the schools have shut down which affected all schools internationally. However, some are conducting online classes. Which begs the question as to how children in developing countries have no access to the internet or digital technology for such classes. Reports indicate that approximately 1.1 billion children are out of school. The closing down of schools has as a result caused several other challenges such as increased pregnancies, diseases and withdrawal from schools as well as domestic violence at home.<sup>15</sup>

The committee must discuss ways in which affected children can be assisted in ensuring that students focus on school as well as maintain healthy activities that boost their mentality, health, and social relationships at their homes.

### **Impact on elderly**

The elderly in the community has been greatly affected by the pandemic which makes them among the first group of people to receive the vaccines. They also face problems such as neglect, discrimination, and difficulty in receiving medical or social assistance.<sup>16</sup> They have equal rights to access to health services just as much as everyone else. However, the lockdown has made such access even more difficult. It is therefore essential that they are given priority when it comes to preventing and fighting the pandemic.

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<sup>15</sup> [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy\\_brief\\_on\\_covid\\_impact\\_on\\_children\\_16\\_april\\_2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy_brief_on_covid_impact_on_children_16_april_2020.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un\\_policy\\_brief\\_on\\_covid-19\\_and\\_older\\_persons\\_1\\_may\\_2020.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_policy_brief_on_covid-19_and_older_persons_1_may_2020.pdf)

### **Impact on persons with disabilities**

This group in particular faces unequal treatment, a majority of the services are unlikely to be provided for them. These services include but are not limited to education, health care, and employment.<sup>17</sup> It is therefore essential that we guarantee equal rights to all amidst the pandemic.

The United Nations has ensured to incorporate its COVID-19 response to persons with disabilities such as incorporating disability-specific measures, ensuring information and services are easily accessible, and including them in policy-making processes which progresses the achievement of SDG 10 on the reduction of inequality.

Despite the pandemic having a grave impact on the health sector, it has led to a rise in mental health issues.<sup>18</sup> Psychological distress has been faced by everyone from medical personnel, family members from losing their loved ones, children, and employees from losing their jobs. Mental health is paramount to the well-being of society. Suicide cases have pivoted thus mental health services need to be issued and incorporated in the governments' COVID-19 response programs.

Stigmatization is one of the effects of the pandemic. Persons who are asymptomatic or in recovery or recovered victims of the pandemic face stigmatization from their society. Other vulnerable communities such as the gay, lesbian and bisexual people have also faced challenges in accessing health care services which call for addressing such inhumane treatment and ensuring they are treated equally.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_policy\\_brief\\_on\\_persons\\_with\\_disabilities\\_final.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_persons_with_disabilities_final.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un\\_policy\\_brief-covid\\_and\\_mental\\_health\\_final.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_policy_brief-covid_and_mental_health_final.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1066262>



**Questions and points the resolution must answer:**

1. In what ways can the youth, aging, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities be protected from the COVID-19 effects?
2. In what ways can SOCHUM ensure that SDGs 3 and 15 are achieved through this pandemic?
3. What are some of the ways that the economy serves the vulnerable groups in ensuring they receive adequate health care services?
4. How can SOCHUM ensure the participation of the youth in the achievement of the SDGs amidst the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Resources**

Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, “COVID-19: Working with and for young people.” (2020) <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COMPACTCOVID19-05.pdf>

United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving Lives, Protecting Societies, Recovering Better. (2020) [http://www.un.org/pga/75/wp-content/uploads/sites/100/2020/10/un\\_comprehensive\\_response\\_to\\_covid.pdf](http://www.un.org/pga/75/wp-content/uploads/sites/100/2020/10/un_comprehensive_response_to_covid.pdf)

<https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/fury-virus-illustrates-folly-war>

<https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/covid-19-pandemic>

<https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Global-Humanitarian-Response-Plan-COVID-19.pdf>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/global-research-on-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov/covid-19-technology-access-pool>