



United Nations Development
Programme (UNDP)
Chair Letter

DEAR DELEGATES,

Welcome to the United Nations Development Programme at CNYMUN 2025! As we move forward towards the future, skills like diplomacy and cooperation become more and more important, and we are looking forward to a successful conference filled with discussion about some of the most prominent issues facing the world today. Your chairs for the UNDP will be Anthony Dentler and Haris Iqbal.

ABOUT THE CHAIRS:

Anthony Dentler is a junior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School. He is a first-time chair, yet has been a part of MUN since his freshman year. Outside of MUN, Anthony writes for his school's newspaper and participates in F-M's band programs as a saxophonist. Outside of school, he works at an ice cream shop and loves watching sports. Anthony is a die-hard Dodgers fan who stays up every night listening to their games. In his free time, Anthony enjoys walking in nature and hanging out with friends. Anthony looks forward to a great conference and making CNYMUN 2025 an unforgettable weekend.

Haris Iqbal is a junior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School. This is his first time being a chair, however he has participated in multiple MUN conferences since his freshman year. Haris likes to play basketball and watch the NBA. His favorite team is the OKC Thunder. He also enjoys hanging out with friends and family and working out.

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE:

Your topics for the United Nations Development Programme at CNYMUN 2025 will be:

1. Promoting the Wellbeing of Kurdish Peoples
2. Developing Strategies to Prevent Child Labor Practices in Southeast Asia

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established in November of 1965, is a committee dedicated to working with countries around the world in order to erase poverty and inequality, and help every nation achieve sustainable development.¹ The UNDP is central to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG),

¹ "About Us." *UNDP*, www.undp.org/about-us. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

and is headquartered in New York City, but primarily works through its offices in 170 different countries and territories.²

The UNDP sets out to tackle any challenge that may stand in its way and believes that everyone deserves to live with dignity, peace, and safety. The UNDP's work is centered around six development areas: poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy, and gender equality. Marginalized people remain a focal point for the committee as they strive to bring equal opportunity to all. Often being targets of discrimination, the UNDP hopes to build up the lives of marginalized people and create strong connections between the developed nations and the underdeveloped nations.³

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:

Following CNYMUN tradition, the debate will be conducted in Harvard style, meaning delegates will not be allowed to use pre-written clauses and/or resolutions during committee. Doing so will make a delegate ineligible for awards.

To be eligible for awards, delegates must submit a 1-2 page position paper via email that addresses both topics before the start of the conference. Position papers should outline the stance of your delegation, and display an understanding of the topics, demonstrating research and knowledge of your organization's goals. When deciding on awards, the chairs will look favorably upon delegates who have put significant effort towards research/preparation, collaborate with other delegates during committee sessions, stay within their nation's policies, and get their voice heard without being overbearing.

Furthermore, for the first time, CNYMUN is implementing a tiered structure of committees to ensure similar experience levels for all committee members. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is designated as an open committee. In turn, the Best New Delegate Award

²"FAQs." *UNDP*, www.undp.org/about-us/faqs#:~:text=UNDP%20has%20its%20headquarters%20in,available%20on%20our%20home%20page. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

³ "About Us." *UNDP*, www.undp.org/about-us. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

will be offered to a first-time delegate in this committee.

Please share position papers before the conference begins. To contact your chairs about any research, position papers, committee inquiries, or other questions, our emails are listed below. We also encourage you to scan our lengthy delegate preparation resources – and award structure – on www.cnymun.org. We wish you luck, and look forward to what CNYMUN 2025 will bring!

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TOPIC 1: PROMOTING THE WELLBEING OF KURDISH PEOPLES

A stateless nation can be classified as a group of ethnic minorities occupying a particular territory who do not have control over the land they occupy or an independent political unit. As these minorities live in established nations, international law grants them the right to identity in the state they reside in, the right to obtain travel documents, and are required to conform to the laws of the state they reside in.⁴ Furthermore, stateless nations and people often have very little recognition, yet are quite common when discussing political geography and often make global headlines. This lack of recognition tends to lead to resentment from the ethnic minorities, which brings conflict and violence to their regions.⁵ Therefore, as the international community moves forward, it's important to understand how stateless nations live and operate. Especially when a significant amount of today's conflict comes from their regions and the people's health is often pushed off to the side.

The Kurdish people are an indigenous group united by culture, race, and religion with the majority being Sunni Muslims. Since the 20th century, they've settled in their homeland of Kurdistan, a territory that runs through Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Following WWI and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the victorious allies, and the Kurds, signed the Treaty of Sevres in 1920. This treaty outlined provisions to create an independent Kurdish state. However, these provisions were trashed three years later with the Treaty of Lausanne which saw the formation of Turkey, and its boundaries that overlapped with Kurdistan. With this second treaty, the Kurds were organized as an ethnic minority who saw any attempt for the creation of a Kurdish state be destroyed over the next 80 years.⁶ Within Iraq, Kurds have waged multiple insurgencies that often saw retaliation from

⁴"Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons." *UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-relating-status-stateless-persons#:~:text=A%20stateless%20person%20shall%20enjoy,Article%2017%20%2D%20Wage%20Deeming%20Employment. Accessed 1 Oct. 2024.

⁵"Stateless Nations: AP® Human Geography Crash Course Review." *Albert*, 1 Mar. 2022, www.albert.io/blog/stateless-nations-ap-human-geography-crash-course-review/. Accessed 10 Aug. 2024.

⁶"Who Are the Kurds?" *BBC*, 21 Oct. 2014, www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440. Accessed 10 Aug. 2024.

Baghdad. This was seen with Iraq's actions, under the rule of Saddam Hussain, in 1988, where thousands of Kurds were gassed to death for upbringing insurgencies. Later, thousands more were killed following the first Gulf War when they tried to organize an independent state. Kurds in Turkey are faced with similar repression due to independence movements with forced resettlement, denied citizenship, and arrests due to the use of the Kurdish language. While Syrian Kurds have also been denied basic rights.⁷ The population was recently given access to citizenship in 2011.⁸ Alongside that, the Kurdish militias of Syria formed the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) as a way for Kurdish expansion. This action has allowed for the creation of a Kurdish-led territory in Syria.⁹

Currently standing at a population of approximately 25-30 million people living in the Kurdistan region, they make up 10% of Syria's population, 19% of Turkey's population, 15-20% of Iraq's population, and 10% of Iran's population.¹⁰ Within the past few decades, the Kurdish population across the Middle East has experienced a roller coaster of issues when it comes to their overall well-being. Economically the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has been faced with a 'resource curse' as their oil-rich territory has created an over-dependence on the commodity. This makes the KRI vulnerable to sudden fluctuations in the price of oil and gas on the international markets. As well as the fact that this resource is finite which means it's not reusable. So once the KRI has used up all their oil reserves, they'll have no more access to a resource their society is so heavily reliant on. It has also been found that the political elites of the KRI have tried to take control of the resource while trying to support the economic development of the oil industry. This means that the KRI's calls for economic development are pointless because as the elites take control of the oil, to safeguard their own financial interests, they actively undermine the effectiveness of economic

diversification policies, and limit the private sectors' room for economic development.¹¹

Although faced with challenges, recent success has been witnessed in the tourism field for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Due to the KRI remaining as the most popular travel destination within Iraq, the UNDP and the USAID created the Reform Roadmap, which aims to provide economic growth to the region through the revitalization of tourism. The Roadmap is funded by the USAID and identifies the parts of the KRI that are most important for the development of sustainable and successful tourism. The roadmap identifies how to strengthen private sector partnerships with public industries for product and tourism development while implementing strategies that focus on tourism legislation and marketing.¹²

Alongside tourism, the United States has tried to aid the mental well-being of the Kurds as they receive more refugees from Kurdistan. This has sparked many discussions, and in 2020 a Tennessee study took place that looked at the mental health of older Kurdish refugees. The results showed that approximately 67% had symptoms of depression and approximately 26% had symptoms of severe depression. Once these results were found, the study then interviewed ten other Kurds about the results. The interviews revealed that Kurdish people often reject mental health care because they fear gossip, within their community, about mental health troubles. Because of this, the participants agreed that greater social connection is an important element for alleviating symptoms of mental illness, and should be brought up more in the Kurdish community.¹³

While foreign nations have investigated Kurdish issues, these populations still face numerous obstacles in fields such as health care. Within Iraq, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) runs into

⁷ "Who are the Kurds and why don't they have their own country? | DW News." *YouTube*, uploaded by DW News, 2 Nov. 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IxsYpUCD4M0. Accessed 10 Aug. 2024.

⁸ "Kurdish People Fast Facts." *CNN*, 10 Apr. 2024, www.cnn.com/2014/08/18/world/kurdish-people-fast-facts/index.html.

⁹ "Why Turkey is invading Syria." *YouTube*, uploaded by Vox, 31 Oct. 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUeXaPaKF50&t=178s. Accessed 28 Aug. 2024.

¹⁰ "Kurdish People Fast Facts." *CNN*, 10 Apr. 2024, www.cnn.com/2014/08/18/world/kurdish-people-fast-facts/index.html.

¹¹ Abdullah, Sarwar, and Tim Gray. "Political Constraints on Economic Diversification in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq." *Energy Policy*, vol. 171, Dec. 2022, p. 113274. *Sci*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2022.113274>.

¹² "UNDP Iraq and USAID seek to revitalize tourism in the Kurdistan region." *UNDP*, 1 Aug. 2023, www.undp.org/arab-states/press-releases/undp-iraq-and-usaid-seek-revitalize-tourism-kurdistan-region. Accessed 23 July 2024.

¹³ Branam, Leah S., et al. "Kurdish Refugee Beliefs about Mental Health and Help-Seeking: A Community-Engaged Research Study in Tennessee." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 20, no. 2, 10 Jan. 2023, p. 1224, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20021224>. Accessed 22 July 2024.

the problem of lacking adequately staffed primary health centers (PHCs). The number of PHCs that staff at least 1 physician per capita does not meet international standards. Less than 30% of PHCs, in the region, have at least one physician, and the remaining 70% of all PHCs do not house a physician at all. On top of that, the health care of the region is of varying quality and availability. This leads to issues with proper training and the need for improvement within some areas. The KRG runs into even more issues with the poor distribution of physicians, the overworking of medical personnel, and the underutilization of nurses. General practitioners of the PHCs are not supervised, and health information systems are underutilized due to the lack of standard technology. This causes problems for data collection, which leaves patient record keeping nonexistent as the PHCs lack the right data collection devices.¹⁴

Turkey stands out as one nation that has a difficult relationship with the region. As a nation where Kurdish people make up about 20% of the population, a large portion is organized into the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The PKK and the Turkish government/military historically have been at each other's throats, often fighting in brutal armed conflicts over human rights and independence. This hostility was intensified after Iraqi-Kurds gained some autonomy in the 2000s, which caused Turkey to fear that what happened in Iraq would soon follow into their country. This situation would cause more armed conflict to break out in 2015 after a short ceasefire, which led to the implementation of severe restrictions on the population. The restrictions first began with curfews and limitations on resources like water and electricity. In response, Kurds participated in violent attacks in defiance of the restrictions. However, they only lead to more human rights abuses like torture and murders.¹⁵

In Syria, as the civil war rages on, the Kurdish minority continues to occupy parts of the North that border Turkey as the SDF. Seeing the SDF as a threat,

the Turkish government began to diplomatically propose a "safe zone" with them as a way to create a peace corridor between the two bodies. However, the SDF would reject this plan, causing Turkey to take forceful action. Throughout all of this, the United States had been present in the SDF territory, acting as a blockade for further Turkish advancement. However, in 2019, President Donald Trump withdrew all U.S. presence in Northern Syria, saying, "We never agreed to protect the Kurds for the rest of their lives." Once this happened, Turkey began to invade the rest of Northern Syria. This action has resulted in the displacement and deaths of thousands of Kurds. In the end, the U.S. withdrawal created a power vacuum in Northern Syria that Russia, Turkey, and Syria are eager to fill.¹⁶

Kurdistan's political situation takes a large toll on its people's well-being and is often forgotten by the media, as they focus more on the conflict around the Kurdistan region. This overshadowing allows the individual nations of the Middle East to discriminate against the Kurds, and prevent any steps towards their own country. Although other world powers have attempted to aid the Kurds, it's often not enough and is set in one part of the region. In order to make advancements in creating better lives for the Kurds, nations that include Kurdish populations should work towards inclusion and provide medical aid to the population, while nations that don't include Kurdish populations should provide outside assistance in order to promote positive development and long-term stability. Bearing this in mind, proper inclusion of Kurdish people is a long and difficult process. However, organizations like the United Nations can lay the stepping stones for cooperation and success.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What effects will increased Kurdish representation have on the international community and the Kurds' own lives?
2. How can international cooperation promote positive development in Kurdish populations?
3. In what ways can Middle East nations begin to support the Kurds' wellbeing and promote

¹⁴"The Future of Health Care in the Kurdistan Region — Iraq." *RAND*, 2014, www.rand.org/pubs/periodicals/health-quarterly/issues/v4/n2/01.html. Accessed 26 Aug. 2024.

¹⁵James L. Crawford, "The Continued Persecution of the Kurdish People in Turkey", 45 AM. INDIAN L. REV. 327 (2021), <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/ailr/vol45/iss2/4>

¹⁶"Why Turkey is invading Syria." *YouTube*, uploaded by Vox, 31 Oct. 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUeXaPaKF50&t=178s. Accessed 28 Aug. 2024.

regional stability?

4. How can Kurdish peoples themselves improve their wellbeing within their community in the face of external restrictions?
5. In what ways can international bodies aid and promote the development of the Kurdistan region?

HELPFUL SOURCES:

“The Future of Health Care in the Kurdistan Region— Iraq”

<https://www.rand.org/pubs/periodicals/health-quarterly/issues/v4/n2/01.html>

“Kurdish People Fast Facts.”

<https://www.cnn.com/2014/08/18/world/kurdish-people-fast-facts/index.html>

“Why Turkey is invading Syria”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUeXaPaKF50&t=178>

“The Continued Persecution of the Kurdish People in Turkey”

<https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/ailr/vol45/iss2>

TOPIC 2: DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO PREVENT CHILD LABOR PRACTICES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Throughout history, child labor and exploitation have been a continuous problem in South Asia. This issue is widespread, with an estimated 15.3 million children in child labor in Southeast Asia, which is approximately 6.2% of the children in the region.¹⁷ About 40% of the children in child labor were involved in hazardous work, which is work that harms their safety, health, and moral development. These estimates predate the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused great financial instability, meaning these numbers should be taken as a baseline.¹⁸ As the world continues to advance, it is imperative that the globe as a whole puts an end to the cycle of child labor, especially in areas such as Southeast Asia where the issue is prominent.

Child labor has been a long-standing problem in Southeast Asia. Social, cultural, and economic factors all contribute to this issue. As the globe has developed, laws and organizations have combated child labor in order to promise children a better future. The problem has gotten better over the years as countries have developed, leading to a steady decline in child labor rates. However, certain areas such as Vietnam and the Philippines have addressed this problem better than others, leading to many countries in Southeast Asia still having this issue today.¹⁹ Historically, inequality has contributed to child labor as certain groups are more pressured to partake in it. An example of this is girls being expected to do extensive domestic work in many Southeast Asian countries, with this practice starting

¹⁷ *Child labour statistical profile: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific Islands*. International Labour Organization, www.ilo.org/media/378686/

download#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20children%20in,million%20children%20in%20child%20labour,peoples. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

¹⁸ *Child labour statistical profile: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific Islands*. International Labour Organization, www.ilo.org/media/378686/

download#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20children%20in,million%20children%20in%20child%20labour,peoples. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

¹⁹

<https://theaseanmagazine.asean.org/article/asean-continues-to-fight-against-child-labour/>

from childhood for many of them.²⁰ The long term effects of child labor result in a cycle of child poverty and labor, as certain communities remain stuck in this cycle, leading to negative economic effects for the communities and countries affected by this issue as a whole.

The colonial past of many Southeast Asian countries has also contributed to the child labor and exploitation issue. Countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Laos, and the Philippines all experienced colonization. Plantations were set up in many of these countries by colonial powers in order to excavate natural resources. Child labor was used as a cheap way to work on these plantations. Industrialization led to the need for many children to work in factories. Early factories often had hazardous and unsuitable conditions, especially for children. While many colonizing countries such as the British and French officially “banned” slavery, many forms of coerced labor still existed which meant the issue would continue to harm inhabitants of a country, including children.²¹

After decolonization and independence, many Southeast Asian countries experienced great growth, especially economically. However, one issue that took longer to be recognized was children’s rights. For example, Thailand ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992.²² Laos ratified this same treaty in 1991.²³ Many newly independent countries were focused on other aspects of growth such as economic development, stunting the growth of other areas such as basic rights. Focusing on education may have not been a possibility for many of these countries due to a lack of infrastructure and a need for a large labor force in order to help stabilize the new country.

²⁰“Child labour and exploitation.” *UNICEF*, www.unicef.org/rosa/what-we-do/child-protection/child-labour-and-exploitation. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

²¹Tappe, Oliver. “Variants of Bonded Labour in Precolonial and Colonial Southeast Asia.” www.transcript-open.de/pdf_chapter/bis%203999/9783839437339/9783839437339-006.pdf. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

²²*Thailand*. 2019. www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2019/thailand.pdf. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

²³“Rural Poverty Drives Child Labor in Laos Despite State Laws Prohibiting The Practice.” *Radio Free Asia*, 2 June 2021, www.rfa.org/english/news/laos/child-labor-06022021165734.html#:~:text=Laos%20celebrated%20Children's%20Day%20on,in%20English%20by%20Roseanne%20Gerin. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

Today, child labor is still a prominent issue in Southeast Asia. However, it has decreased significantly in recent years. Asia-Pacific’s child labor rate decreased from 7.3% to 5.6% from 2016 to 2020.²⁴ While the child labor issue has gotten better over the years, it is not completely gone. There are multiple factors that still contribute to it, including poverty, inequality, lack of education, and lack of decent work opportunities among many others. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened many of these factors. Many countries were unable to support proper online schooling which affected the education of children. The pandemic also led to the disruption of many working industries and many people lost jobs, which increased poverty, therefore increasing the amount of child labor going on in many Southeast Asian countries. For example, trade costs increased by nearly 50% during the pandemic which hurt many export-based industries. Countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Singapore were especially affected due to their dependency on trade.²⁵

Poverty is one of the many causes of child labor. Many countries in Southeast Asia are still in poverty and have not developed as well as other countries. For example, in 2017, Myanmar had 24.8% of the population living below the national poverty line.²⁶ In 2019, 17.8% of the Cambodian population lived below the national poverty line.²⁷ These are just a few examples of the extreme poverty in Southeast Asia. Higher poverty rates mean more children are forced to work at young ages in order to provide for themselves and their family.

²⁴Irena, Mega. “ASEAN Continues to Fight Against Child Labour.” *The ASEAN Magazine*, 23 Aug. 2022, theaseanmagazine.asean.org/article/asean-continues-to-fight-against-child-labour/#:~:text=While%20this%20is%20a%20substantial,trillion%20US%20dollars%20in%202020. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

²⁵https://pcasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/20240306-Economic-Impacts-of-COVID-19-in-Southeast-Asia_Dr.-Kem-Sothorn.pdf

²⁶“Poverty Data: Myanmar.” *Asian Development Bank*, www.adb.org/where-we-work/myanmar/poverty#:~:text=Poverty%20Data%203A%20Myanmar&text=In%20Myanmar%2C%2024.8%25%20of%20the,died%20before%20their%205th%20birthday. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

²⁷“Poverty Data: Cambodia.” *Asian Development Bank*, www.adb.org/where-we-work/cambodia/poverty#:~:text=In%20Cambodia%2C%2017.8%25%20of%20the,died%20before%20their%205th%20birthday. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

Inequality is another big factor in the issue of child labor. Gender inequality exists among children in Southeast Asia, with boys being more likely to participate in child labor. Among the 5-17 year old age group, there were 3 girls for every 5 boys in child labor. This is one example of how inequality can affect children. Boys are generally expected to work more and the consequence of this is seen in how more boys are participating in child labor than girls. Another example of gender inequality surrounding child labor is that girls are more often made to work in their own households while boys more often work for employers. Additionally, girls more often work in services while boys work in industry.²⁸ It is evident that gender inequality greatly contributes to child labor and this is one of the many causes of child labor that must be resolved. Income inequality also contributes to child labor. Many countries in Southeast Asia experience varying degrees of income equality. In Thailand, the top 10% earn over half of the national income. In Indonesia and Vietnam, the top 10% earn 40-50% of the national income.²⁹ Such large income inequality causes poverty in many of these countries, incentivizing child labor as a way for many poor families to make ends meet.

Lack of education is another major effect of child labor. The lack of education is extremely pronounced in Southeast Asia. Over 167 million children in Southeast Asia lack access to quality education. This weakness has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as many schools lacked the means necessary to provide an education while remaining safe.³⁰ Children who are forced to partake in child labor from a young age often fail to receive a quality education, therefore limiting their opportunities as adults. This leaves them more likely to do low-paying work and stay in the cycle of poverty, limiting their ability to become contributing

²⁸Child labour statistical profile: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific Islands. International Labour Organization, www.ilo.org/media/378686/download#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20children%20in,million%20children%20in%20child%20labour,peoples. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

²⁹"WHAT'S NEW ABOUT INEQUALITY IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA IN 2023?" *World Inequality Database*, Nov. 2023, wid.world/news-article/2023-wid-update-south-and-southeast-asia/#:~:text=The%202023%20update%20of%20the,50%25%20of%20the%20national%20income. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

³⁰"Addressing Backwardness of Education in the Southeast region." *SOLVE*, solve.mit.edu/challenges/octava-social-innovation-challenge/solutions/52264#:~:text=The%20school%20children%20across%20Vietnam,education%20across%20the%20Southeast%20countries. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

members of society. This hurts the country as a whole, as there is a smaller skilled workforce. It also limits these individuals' ability to raise their own children adequately, therefore risking that their children will also fall into the practice of child labor.

In Southeast Asia, agriculture is one of the main industries involved with child labor. 57% of children who participate in child labor in the 5-17 age group are involved in the agriculture industry. This type of work includes mostly family subsistence and smallholder farming. 27% of children work in services and 16% work in industry.³¹ This affects children negatively in many ways. Children participating in work are less likely to attend school than their peers who don't work. In Myanmar, child laborers are more likely to drop out of school. They all are more likely to suffer from physical health issues, and they also stall the growth of a skilled labor force.³² Children without a proper education are unlikely to work in areas that require skill as they never received the proper schooling to join these fields. This contributes to a smaller skilled labor force in many Southeast Asian countries. It is evident that child labor has negative effects on children and the country itself.

Many countries in Southeast Asia are making efforts to combat the issue of child labor. ASEAN, which stands for Association of Southeast Asian Nations, helps combat child labor in Southeast Asia. The countries in ASEAN include Singapore, Myanmar, Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Laos, Brunei, Thailand, Vietnam, and Timor-Leste.³³ There are joint initiatives focusing on multiple areas, including prohibiting child labor practices and promoting good governance for the elimination of child labor, prevention of child labor practices, and

³¹Child labour statistical profile: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific Islands. International Labour Organization, www.ilo.org/media/378686/download#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20children%20in,million%20children%20in%20child%20labour,peoples. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

³²Child labour statistical profile: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific Islands. International Labour Organization, www.ilo.org/media/378686/download#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20children%20in,million%20children%20in%20child%20labour,peoples. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

³³"ASEAN Member States." *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, asean.org/member-states/. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

protection of children.³⁴ The ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Education for Out-of-school Children and Youth is an example of one of the many initiatives ongoing in Southeast Asia to benefit children. This initiative is attempting to reaffirm basic rights children deserve in regards to education. One right ensured is every person's right to education, and that all children should have access to a free primary education and accessibility to a secondary education. Technological education and higher education based on merit should also be available. Measures to encourage regular school and attendance and to reduce dropout rates are also included in this initiative. Inclusivity, equity, accessibility, continuity, and flexibility in education are what this initiative is striving to achieve.³⁵ If successful, this initiative will provide children in Southeast Asia with ample opportunities in education, reducing the need for child labor, and allowing many children to escape poverty.

It is evident that child labor is a large issue in Southeast Asia today. There has been a steady decline in rates of child labor in recent years, although recent events such as COVID-19 have harmed some progress. It is important for Southeast Asian countries to continue their efforts in eliminating child labor practices and promoting equal treatment and education for all children. ASEAN has published a roadmap regarding how the worst forms of child labor can be eliminated in the near future. The governments of Southeast Asian countries can contribute to addressing the child labor issue in many ways. They can conduct labor inspections in more remote areas, strengthen good governance for the elimination of child labor, and fortify coordination and collaboration among different sections of the government in order to better confront the child labor issue. NGOs can help address this issue by raising public awareness around child labor in Southeast Asian countries. They can also help with accessibility to education, especially through online resources as

³⁴Irena, Mega. "ASEAN Continues to Fight Against Child Labour." *The ASEAN*, 23 Aug. 2022, theaseanmagazine.asean.org/article/asean-continues-to-fight-against-child-labour/#:~:text=While%20this%20is%20a%20substantial,trillion%20US%20dollars%20in%202020. Accessed 30 Aug. 2024.

³⁵https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ASEAN-Declaration-on-OOS-CY_ADOPTED.pdf

education continues to be more available online.³⁶ If Southeast Asian countries continue their hard work and perseverance in addressing the child labor issue, there is a path to potentially eliminating this issue and providing a better future for the children and countries alike.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What are the main causes of child labor and exploitation in Southeast Asia, and how should they be addressed? Do any causes need more urgent attention than others?
2. What action can governments of Southeast Asian countries take in order to prevent child labor and exploitation?
3. What are other countries that have dealt with similar child labor issues, and how can Southeast Asian nations learn from these countries?
4. How can foreign countries and international organizations help address the issue of child labor in Southeast Asia?

HELPFUL SOURCES:

"Association of Southeast Asian Nations"

<https://asean.org/>

"Child labour statistical profile: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific Islands"

<https://www.ilo.org/media/378686/download#:~:text=15%2D17%20years-.5%2D17%20years.labor%20by%20age%20and%20sex>

"Child labour and exploitation"

<https://www.unicef.org/rosa/what-we-do/child-protection/child-labour-and-exploitation>

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https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/ASEAN-Roadmap-on-the-Elimination-of-the-Worst-Forms-of-Child-Labour-by-2025-_Final_19Feb2021.pdf

