



JNAMUN 2026

**THE UNITED NATIONS
CHILDREN'S FUND**

UNICEF

AGENDA ITEM:

**Ending child labour and protecting
children living in areas affected
by disasters**

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Letter from the Secretary General

Most honourable participants of Junior Nesibe Aydın Model United Nations 2026 (JNAMUN'26),

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to JNAMUN'26, which is organized by the hardworking and talented middle school students of Nesibe Aydın Gölbaşı Campus. I extend my sincere thanks to our academic team, who have researched every detail with great care to ensure that you enjoy such a prestigious and diplomatic conference. I also offer my appreciation to our organisation team for planning activities that will allow you to build friendships and collaborate with fellow delegates while having an enjoyable and memorable experience.

As the JNAMUN'26 team, our mission is to support our delegates in every respect, to help you gain insight into diplomacy, to develop your public speaking abilities, and to strengthen your language skills. Another valued aspect of attending JNAMUN'26 is the opportunity to form lasting friendships and create memories that will stay with you. Both our academic and organisation teams have worked with dedication to offer you the most enriching Model United Nations experience possible.

*This year in JNAMUN'26 we are hosting nine committees which are **UNHCR** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), **FAO** (Food and Agriculture Organization), **WHO** (World Health Organization), **UNESCO** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), **CSW** (The Commission on the Status of Women), **UNICEF** (The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund), **DISEC** (Disarmament & International Security Committee), **ECOSOC** (Economic and Social Council), and **SPECPOL** (Special Political and Decolonization Committee). The agenda items for each committee have been selected in line with the policies of their respective United Nations bodies.*

We wish you an exceptional Junior Nesibe Aydın Model United Nations experience. As the JNAMUN'26 team, we look forward to meeting you and supporting you as you achieve your goals to the very best of your ability.

Best of luck,

Mustafa COŞKUN

Secretary General of JNAMUN'26



1. Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is the UN’s lead agency for children, created by the UN General Assembly in 1946 and later made a permanent part of the UN system as its mission expanded from postwar relief into long term child development and protection worldwide. UNICEF’s mandate is grounded in child rights principles and focuses on ensuring that every child survives, learns, is protected from harm, and has a fair chance to thrive, with particular attention to the most disadvantaged children. Unlike a political body that mainly debates norms, UNICEF is an operational organization: it supports governments and partners to deliver services, strengthen systems, and respond in emergencies, while also shaping standards and advocating for laws and budgets that protect children.





UNICEF operates at the intersection of service delivery, system reform, and rights based accountability. It works through country programs with governments, local civil society, and communities, and it coordinates across the wider humanitarian and development architecture when crises hit. In emergencies, UNICEF’s work is guided by the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, its central humanitarian policy framework, which sets baseline expectations for preparedness, response, and accountability across sectors such as child protection, health, nutrition, education, and water and sanitation. That matters for MUN delegates because UNICEF’s leverage is practical: it can mobilize rapid response capacity, convene partners, set minimum standards, and push governments and donors to fund child focused interventions that reduce both immediate harm and long term developmental loss.





2. Introduction to the Agenda Item

“Ending child labour and protecting children living in areas affected by disasters (SDG 1)” focuses on the pathways that turn poverty shocks into long term child harm. Child labour is not only a “bad choice by families.” It is often a survival strategy when households lose income, assets, housing, or access to services, and when adults’ work becomes unstable or unsafe. Disasters intensify that pressure fast: they destroy livelihoods, disrupt markets, close schools, separate families, and weaken local protection systems exactly when exploitation risks rise. The outcome is a predictable pattern: more dropout, more hazardous work, more trafficking risk, more early and forced marriage pressures, and more children pushed into informal economies where oversight is weak and abuse is easy to hide.



This agenda, “Ending child labour and protecting children living in areas affected by disasters (SDG 1),” fits UNICEF because poverty and vulnerability are not background conditions for child harm, they are drivers. SDG 1 targets ending poverty in all its forms, and child labour and disaster exposure are two pathways through which poverty becomes self reinforcing across generations. When households lose income or assets because of conflict, floods, earthquakes, drought, or displacement, children are more likely to be pulled out of school, pushed into hazardous work, trafficked, or exposed to exploitation and violence. UNICEF’s mandate and operational model place it directly in the policy space where



prevention and response meet: social protection that stabilizes household income, education continuity that reduces dropout, child protection systems that detect and respond to exploitation, and humanitarian action that keeps services running when normal institutions fail. In this committee, delegates should treat child labour and disaster affected childhood as a governance challenge as much as a humanitarian one: systems that prevent poverty shocks from turning into child exploitation, and crisis responses that protect children without creating dependency or leaving gaps that criminal actors can exploit.



The scale of child labour shows why prevention cannot be limited to rescues after the fact. The latest global estimates from ILO and UNICEF report about 160 million children in child labour worldwide, including about 79 million in hazardous work that threatens health, safety, or morals. These numbers matter in a disaster's agenda because shocks do not create vulnerability from zero. They push families that were already near the edge into negative coping, and they make already exploited children harder to identify as records, schools, and social services break down. When the priority becomes daily survival, child protection becomes optional unless systems make it unavoidable.

Disasters also reshape children's risk environments through displacement and service interruption. UNICEF analysis found weather related disasters caused 43.1 million internal displacements of children across 44 countries from 2016 to 2021, roughly 20,000 child displacements per day. Displacement increases exposure to violence and exploitation because



families lose community networks, documentation, stable shelter, and predictable income. Education disruption is a major accelerator. When schooling becomes intermittent or inaccessible, work becomes the default alternative, and the longer children stay out, the less likely they return. UNICEF's 2024 reporting also highlights how large scale displacement driven by conflict and disasters continues to rise, with millions of children newly displaced in a single year.



Effective solutions treat this as a system problem, not a campaign problem. The prevention core sits inside SDG 1 because poverty is the enabling condition that turns risk into exploitation. SDG 1 explicitly emphasizes social protection systems and coverage for the poor and vulnerable, which is the fastest policy lever for stopping crisis coping behaviors that sacrifice children's education and safety. In practice, that means shock responsive cash support linked to child protection and education continuity, rapid restoration of schooling and safe learning spaces, case management for separated and unaccompanied children, child friendly reporting channels, and targeted interventions for the highest risk groups, including children in informal work, displaced children, and children without documentation. UNICEF's humanitarian framework is designed around maintaining essential services and protection in crises rather than waiting for stability to return.



This agenda is therefore about breaking the poverty disaster exploitation loop. Delegates should think in terms of layered defenses that hold under stress: income stabilization so children are not pushed into work, continuous education so dropout does not become permanent, and protection systems that can still identify and respond to abuse during displacement and disruption. The goal is not only fewer children in labour today, it is preventing disasters from permanently lowering children's life chances and locking communities into intergenerational poverty.

3. Keywords & Definitions

1. **Child**

A person under 18 years of age, unless a country's law sets adulthood earlier.

2. **Child Rights**

Legal and moral entitlements children have because of their status as children, including survival, development, protection, and participation rights.

3. **Child Labour**

Work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children, or that interferes with schooling by depriving children of the chance to attend, forcing them to leave school early, or requiring long and heavy work alongside education.

4. **Hazardous Child Labour**

The worst forms of child labour that expose children to serious risk of injury, illness,



abuse, or death, such as work with dangerous machinery, heavy loads, toxic chemicals, underground work, night work, or work in extreme heat.

5. **Worst Forms of Child Labour**

A category that includes slavery and slavery-like practices, trafficking, forced labour, child soldiering, commercial sexual exploitation, and involvement in illicit activities, plus hazardous work.

6. **Minimum Age for Employment**

A legal threshold for starting work, designed to protect education and development. Minimum age varies by country and may differ by type of work.

7. **Light Work**

Work permitted for older children under strict conditions that it is not harmful, does not interfere with schooling, and is limited in hours and intensity.

8. **Forced Labour**

Work performed involuntarily under threat, coercion, or deception, including debt bondage, withholding identity documents, threats of violence, or restriction of movement.

9. **Child Trafficking**

Recruitment, transport, transfer, harboring, or receipt of a child for exploitation. For children, exploitation intent is sufficient; proving force or coercion is not required.

10. **Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children**

Any sexual activity involving a child in exchange for money, goods, or other benefit to the child or another person, including exploitation online.

11. **Child Marriage**

A formal marriage or informal union where at least one party is under 18. Often linked to poverty, displacement, and protection failures.

12. **Negative Coping Strategies**

Short-term survival actions taken by households under stress that increase long-term harm, such as pulling children from school, sending children to work, early marriage, selling productive assets, or reducing food intake.

13. **Social Protection**

Policies and programs that reduce poverty and vulnerability across the life cycle, including cash transfers, child benefits, disability support, pensions, unemployment support, and social assistance.



14. **Shock-Responsive Social Protection**

Social protection designed to scale quickly during crises through expanded coverage, higher benefit levels, or faster delivery, to prevent families from resorting to harmful coping.

15. **Cash Transfer**

Direct payments to households to stabilize income and enable spending on food, rent, healthcare, and schooling. Can be unconditional or linked to specific behaviors.

16. **Conditional Cash Transfer**

Cash support tied to meeting requirements such as school attendance or health checkups. In emergencies, conditions may be adapted to avoid excluding families.

17. **Child Protection System**

The set of laws, policies, institutions, services, and community norms that prevent and respond to violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

18. **Case Management**

A structured process where a trained worker assesses a child's risks and needs, develops a plan, coordinates services, monitors progress, and ensures follow-up.

19. **Best Interests of the Child**

A decision-making principle requiring that children's safety, well-being, and long-term development are the primary consideration in actions affecting them.

20. **Do No Harm**

A principle requiring that interventions reduce risk and avoid unintended consequences, such as exposing children to retaliation or stigmatization.

21. **Disaster**

A serious disruption that exceeds a community's ability to cope using its own resources, caused by hazards and vulnerability interacting.

22. **Natural Hazard**

A potentially damaging event such as floods, earthquakes, storms, droughts, landslides, wildfires, or heatwaves.

23. **Disaster Risk**

The likelihood of disaster losses, shaped by hazard exposure, vulnerability, and the capacity of systems to manage risk.



24. **Vulnerability**

Conditions that increase the likelihood of harm, including poverty, disability, discrimination, weak services, insecure housing, and lack of documentation.

25. **Displacement**

Forced movement from home due to conflict, disaster, or other threats, including internal displacement within a country and cross-border displacement.

26. **Separated Child**

A child separated from both parents or from their previous primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives.

27. **Unaccompanied Child**

A child separated from both parents and without a responsible adult caregiver.

28. **Family Tracing and Reunification**

Processes to identify, locate, and safely reunite children with parents or customary caregivers, with safeguards to prevent trafficking and abuse.

29. **Education in Emergencies**

Delivery of safe, inclusive learning during crises through temporary learning spaces, adapted curricula, and protective school systems.

30. **School Dropout**

Leaving school permanently or for a prolonged period. In crisis contexts, dropout is a major predictor of entry into child labour and early marriage.

31. **Child-Friendly Spaces**

Structured safe environments in emergencies where children can play, learn, and access psychosocial support under supervision.

32. **Psychosocial Support**

Services and activities that strengthen children's emotional well-being, coping skills, and social connections, especially after trauma and displacement.

33. **Gender-Based Violence**

Harmful acts directed at a person based on gender, including sexual violence, forced marriage, and exploitation. Risk often rises during displacement and service breakdown.

34. **Informal Economy**

Work and businesses that are not fully regulated or registered, often lacking contracts, protections, and enforcement, making child labour harder to detect.



35. Birth Registration

Official recording of a child’s birth, enabling legal identity, access to services, and protection. Lack of registration increases exploitation and trafficking risks.

36. Referral Pathway

A mapped system showing how cases are reported and transferred between services such as child protection, health, education, legal aid, and shelters.

37. Child Safeguarding

Organizational policies and practices to prevent and respond to harm caused by staff, volunteers, partners, or program activities, including reporting and accountability.

4. Historical Background

After World War II, the international system began treating children’s survival and protection as a shared responsibility, not only a domestic welfare issue. Over time that humanitarian impulse hardened into rights and obligations. The major legal turning point was the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which framed children as rights holders and required states to protect them from exploitation and harmful work, not merely “assist” them. This shift matters because it changed the problem definition: child labour is not only an economic symptom, it is a rights violation tied to enforceable duties.





In parallel, the labour governance architecture tightened. The ILO's Minimum Age Convention (C138, 1973) committed states to a national policy aimed at abolishing child labour by progressively raising minimum ages for work. Later, the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C182, 1999) created a zero-tolerance floor for the most extreme forms, including slavery-like practices, trafficking, forced labour, commercial sexual exploitation, and hazardous work. The enforcement logic evolved from “reduce gradually” to “eliminate immediately” for the worst harms. A symbolic milestone came in 2020 when C182 achieved universal ratification across ILO member states, showing near-total formal agreement on what should never be acceptable, even if implementation remains uneven.





From the 1990s onward, the global strategy moved beyond law into capacity building and programming. The ILO created the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) in 1992 to strengthen national systems and build a worldwide movement against child labour, reflecting a recognition that treaties without institutions do not change household survival choices. Over time, measurement also improved: the world became able to track trends, identify sectors and regions, and quantify “hazardous” work rather than treating the issue as invisible informal activity. The 2021 ILO and UNICEF global estimates highlighted the scale still involved: about 160 million children in child labour worldwide, including about 79 million in hazardous work.





Disasters reshaped the agenda by revealing how quickly rights collapse when systems collapse. Large-scale crises repeatedly showed the same mechanics: livelihood loss pushes families into negative coping, school disruption increases dropouts, displacement weakens community oversight, and protection services lose reach exactly when exploitation incentives rise. UNICEF institutionalized the idea that child protection cannot wait for stability by introducing the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action in 1998 and revising them over time, including an update in 2020, to set operational benchmarks for predictable child-focused humanitarian response. The wider humanitarian community also moved toward shared standards, including the Child Protection Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Action, first launched in 2012, to make prevention and response less ad hoc across emergencies.

At the same time, disaster risk reduction frameworks reframed disasters as governance failures, not unavoidable “acts of nature.” The Hyogo Framework for Action (2005 to 2015) positioned risk reduction as a development priority, emphasizing prevention, preparedness, and resilience so hazards do not erase decades of social progress. The Sendai Framework (2015 to 2030) extended that logic globally, making disaster risk governance and “build back better” central to development planning, which is directly relevant to children because schooling, social protection, and child protection systems are part of what resilience actually means on the ground. UNICEF explicitly ties its disaster risk reduction work to the Sendai framework as part of building child resilience.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015 made the poverty link unavoidable. The SDGs treat poverty reduction as the foundation goal, and SDG 1’s emphasis on social protection systems fits this agenda because cash and service continuity are often the fastest way to stop crisis-driven child labour and exploitation from becoming “normal.” In recent years, the climate and conflict context has made the disaster side more persistent rather than occasional, with UNICEF repeatedly warning that prolonged school disruptions increase risks including child labour, especially in fragile settings. The historical lesson is consistent: child labour declines when systems reduce household vulnerability and keep children learning, and it resurges when shocks overwhelm weak institutions. This agenda therefore sits on decades of evolution from charity to rights, from laws to capacity, and from emergency relief to resilience, all aimed at stopping poverty and disaster exposure from converting childhood into labor, exploitation, and lifelong disadvantage.



5. Examples of the Topic

States and institutions use different approaches to cut child labour and protect children in disaster zones, combining income stabilization, schooling continuity, child protection case management, anti-trafficking safeguards, and labor enforcement so crises do not convert poverty into exploitation.

Through large-scale cash transfer programs, governments reduce the pressure that drives households to send children to work. UNICEF Innocenti reviews show cash transfers can affect child work and schooling outcomes and are used as a policy lever to reduce harmful coping when household budgets collapse. The lesson is that “child labour prevention” often starts as an income problem, not a policing problem.

In conflict settings, UNICEF-supported emergency cash has been explicitly used to help families avoid negative coping such as child labour and early marriage, as seen in Yemen where emergency cash transfers were framed as preventing those risks while meeting basic needs. The lesson is that in humanitarian contexts, cash is a child protection tool when designed around vulnerability, not only a welfare payment.





In Ghana, the national social protection program LEAP added a dedicated focus on child labour in later evaluation rounds, reflecting a move from general poverty support to targeted child protection outcomes, backed by UNICEF Innocenti evaluation work. The lesson is that social protection reduces child labour more reliably when programs measure child time use and risk directly, not only household consumption.



In Mexico, PROGRESA, later Oportunidades, became a reference model for conditional cash transfers linked to schooling, with research examining how transfers interact with child labor and school attendance, including among indigenous households. The lesson is that keeping children in school is one of the most scalable anti-child-labour mechanisms, but impacts differ across groups and require targeting plus service access.

In Indonesia, evaluations of the conditional cash transfer program PKH have examined whether transfers reduce children's work participation and hours. The lesson is that cash alone is not a magic switch: effects depend on benefit adequacy, school availability, enforcement against hazardous work, and whether households still need children's earnings to survive.



Across humanitarian operations, the Child Protection Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Action provide a common operational blueprint for preventing and responding to abuse, exploitation, neglect, and violence during crises, including systems for case management, family tracing, alternative care, and community-based protection. The lesson is that protection becomes repeatable only when agencies share minimum standards and coordination expectations, not improvised checklists.



After the 2015 Nepal earthquake, UNICEF's response emphasized getting children back to school and providing psychosocial support as part of recovery, with child protection also addressing heightened exploitation and trafficking risks in the post-disaster environment. The lesson is that disaster protection is not only about food and shelter; it is also about restoring schooling and protective services fast enough to close the exploitation window.

At the global level, UNICEF and ILO messaging around World Day Against Child Labour has explicitly highlighted “times of crisis” as a risk multiplier and called for action that connects child labour prevention with social protection, education, and resilience. The lesson is that the policy framing has shifted: crises are no longer treated as exceptions, they are treated as predictable drivers that programs must be built to absorb.



Measurement and targeting strategies increasingly rely on global estimates to focus resources where the risk is highest. ILO and UNICEF reported 160 million children in child labour and 79 million in hazardous work in the 2020 global estimates release, clarifying that hazard, not only participation, is the critical protection threshold. The lesson is that “ending child labour” must prioritize pulling children out of the worst and most dangerous work first, while building prevention systems for the rest.

Recent reporting shows both progress and fragility: a 2025 joint ILO-UNICEF report indicated the world missed the 2025 elimination target and warned that funding cuts threaten education and social support programs that keep children out of work. The lesson is that gains reverse when social spending drops, because child labour is a pressure valve for household poverty.





6. Questions to be Addressed

1. How can UNICEF and member states link child labour reduction to SDG 1 by expanding social protection coverage for the poorest households?
2. What design choices make cash transfers reduce child labour in practice, including targeting, benefit adequacy, payment reliability, and delivery during emergencies?
3. How can shock-responsive social protection scale within days after a disaster without excluding undocumented, displaced, or informal-settlement families?
4. Which approaches best keep children in school during disasters, including temporary learning spaces, fee waivers, accelerated learning, and safe transport?
5. How can education systems prevent “temporary dropout” from becoming permanent child labour, especially for adolescents who start earning?
6. What minimum child protection services must remain operational during disasters, including case management, referral pathways, and family tracing?
7. How can states protect separated and unaccompanied children from trafficking and exploitation during displacement, including registration and safe alternative care?
8. How should humanitarian actors identify child labour quickly in camps and host communities without increasing stigma or retaliation against children?
9. What legal and enforcement measures best prevent hazardous child labour during recovery periods when informal work expands and inspections weaken?
10. How can labor inspection and child protection agencies coordinate so child labour cases lead to protection and services, not only punishment?
11. How can states address child labour in the informal economy, including home-based work, street work, and family enterprises, without pushing it further underground?
12. What strategies reduce demand for child labour in high-risk sectors common after disasters, such as agriculture, construction, mining, waste picking, and domestic work?
13. How should psychosocial support be integrated into anti-child-labour strategies for disaster-affected children experiencing trauma and loss?
14. What role should birth registration and identity documentation play in prevention, and how can registration be restored quickly after disasters?
15. How can supply-chain and procurement policies be used in recovery and reconstruction to prevent child labour in contractors and local suppliers?
16. How should funding be prioritized between immediate protection actions and long-term poverty reduction so child labour does not rebound after the emergency phase?
17. How can cross-border and regional cooperation reduce trafficking and exploitative recruitment of children when disasters drive migration flows?



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