General Assembly 3: Social and Humanitarian (SOCHUM)

**Purview of the simulation:**
Third committee addresses topics that deal with social, humanitarian, and cultural situations. This committee works with the Human Rights Council focusing on human rights issues and humanitarian problems. SOCHUM reports to the General Assembly and works with other UN bodies such as UNHCR and ECOSOC. Other situations this committee talks about are the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the promotion of the right to self-determination. Every country in the General Assembly is represented in SOCHUM.

**Topics:**

1. Rights of children to protection in conflict areas
It has been estimated 20 million children have been forced to flee their homes because of conflict, whether it be international or civil. Over 2 million children have died as a direct result of armed conflict over the last decade. Children all over the world are endangered in conflict zones and the United Nations has had difficulty protecting them. There are United Nation’s organizations like United Nations Children’s Fund and United Nations High Commission for Refugees, along with non-governmental organizations such as, Defense for Children International and Save the Children UK that seek to improve the conditions of children in conflict zones. These conflict areas are not only preventing deaths but also injury to international children; over 6 million children have been permanently disabled or severely injured in the last 10 years.

There are many ways that children are still subjected to conflict violence. A report from The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children it explains the full affect this violence has on children. "Millions of children are caught up in conflicts in which they are not merely bystanders, but targets. Some fall victim to a general onslaught against civilians; others die as part of a calculated genocide. Still other children suffer the effects of sexual violence or the multiple deprivations of armed conflict that expose them to hunger or disease. Just as shocking, thousands of young people are cynically exploited as combatants." Although children’s being innocently slaughtered and used as targets is still a problem, other violent actions have stemmed from conflicts such as rape, child soldiers and child refugees. More than 1 million have been orphaned or separated from
their families due to war torn areas. Those children that manage to survive still seriously lack the life essentials such as healthcare and education that every child deserves.

During armed conflict, girls and women are threatened by rape, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking, sexual humiliation and mutilation. Rape is used as a strategy for war to humiliate woman. Many of these women that are sexually assaulted are teenagers, if they are lucky they will be left alone but if not they will end up in sex slavery. Between 600,000 and 800,000 people are sex trafficked each year, over 50 percent of them are children.

A more current problem that the UN is facing are children being abducted and forced to be soldiers for rebel and militia groups in conflict zones, an example of this is the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda. They are to train and carry guns and sometimes forced to kill their own families. An estimated 300,000 child soldiers - boys and girls under the age of 18 - are involved in more than 30 conflicts worldwide. Child soldiers are used as combatants, messengers, porters, and cooks and to provide sexual services.

With violence around the world increasing, there are a few documents such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child calling for the protection of children. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict outlaws the involvement of children under age 18 in hostilities, while other Resolution 1612 by the Security Council condemns the use of child soldiers.

**Questions to consider from your government’s perspective on this issue include:**

- What conditions can the United Nations improve for children in refugee camps separated from their parents?
- What can the United Nations do to prevent children from being abducted and made into child soldiers?
- How can outside organizations and other states contain and reduce the violence in conflict areas to not affect children as much?

**Documents:**
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict
Protecting the Rights of Children in Conflict with the Law
Resolution 1612, 1539,1460

**Websites:**
2. http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/category,REFERENCE,OMCT,,46c190bb0,0.html
II. The prevention of labor exploitation and domestic violence for women in rural areas

Improving the status of women in rural areas has been a topic on the agenda of the United Nations for over 30 years. Two main problems for these women are labor exploitation and domestic violence. Labor exploitation stems from not being able to financially take care of their families and causes most women to fall in to sex trafficking. Domestic violence is a cultural problem in most countries that it is present. It is difficult to tackle such a problem when some countries cultures believe they are not committing acts of violence. Although violence is condemned almost everywhere it is hard to cut across cultural barriers and norms.

The term labor exploitation refers to the act of using something in an unjust or cruel manner in order to make money; this includes human trafficking and sweatshop workers.

To provide for their families, women often must choose either dangerous, exploitative working conditions or unemployment and worsening hardship. Land is the primary form of wealth and collateral in many areas, which can make it more difficult for women to obtain loans and take advantage of other economic growth opportunities. Additional social barriers prevent many girls from attending school or women from obtaining health care, both perpetuate the cycle of poverty and labor exploitation. Sweatshop exploitation happens in many underdeveloped countries where first world capitalist companies come in and drive their workers to the point of exhaustion, then pay them barely enough to live off of. Forced labor and sex trafficking are two major forms of exploitation, both due to lack of financial opportunities for women. The UN created The Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime to combat women sex trafficking.

Violence against women and girls continues to be a global epidemic that kills and tortures physically, psychologically, and sexually. It is one of the most pervasive of human rights violations, denying women equality, security, dignity, self-worth, and their right to fundamental freedoms. The United Nations in resolution A/RES/48/104 defines violence against women as, “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” Between 20 and 50 percent of women in every country has experienced domestic violence at the hands of an intimate partner or family member. The three major types of abuse are physical, emotional and marital rape. There have been reports that approximately 10 to 15 percent of women report being forced to have sex with
their intimate partner. There are many women’s rights organizations such as National Organization for Women and Violence Against Women, trying to stop the violence but western ideas of what women’s rights are have clashed with other cultures ideas. The UN has passed the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which has defined violence against women and stated their rights.

**Questions to consider from your government’s perspective on this issue include:**

- How do cultural considerations affect programs aimed at the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas?
- What can underdeveloped nations due to decrease violence against women other then reducing just physical violence?
- What restrictions can the United Nations place on companies that have harsh conditions for women workers?

**Documents:**
A/RES/48/104: The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women
Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women.
A/HRC/7/6/Add.2
A/HRC/7/L.22
Convention 182
Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children

**Websites:**
http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/
http://www.who.int/gender/documents/MDGs&VAWSept05.pdf
http://www.mdg-gateway.org/MDG-Blog/?tag=violence-against-women