



Threats to Children

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On the 30th anniversary of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**, **the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** raised alarms on major growing and future challenges facing children.

UNICEF outlined the following eight growing challenges for the world's children.

Prolonged Conflicts

- **Problem:**
 - One in four children live in countries affected by violent fighting or disaster.
 - Children and young people's **education is disrupted** by conflict and natural disaster.
- **Solution: A digitally inclusive world** that allows young people, no matter their situation, to get access to education.

Pollution and the Climate Crisis

- **Problem:**
 - Climate change is becoming a key force behind the recent continued rise in global hunger, and as escalating droughts and flooding degrade food production, the next generation of children will bear the greatest burden of **hunger and malnutrition**.
 - Air pollution, toxic waste and groundwater pollution is **damaging children's health**.
- **Solution:**
 - Governments and businesses need to work together to tackle the root causes by **reducing greenhouse gas emissions** in line with the **Paris Agreement**.
 - They also need to work hand in hand to **reduce fossil fuel consumption**, develop **cleaner agricultural**, industrial and transport systems and invest in scaling **renewable energy sources**.

A decline in mental health

- **Problem:**
 - **Mental illness among adolescents has been on the rise** in the years since the adoption of the CRC.
 - **Depression** is among the leading causes of disability in the young.
- **Solution:**
 - **Rehabilitation for children and young people affected by mental health issues** need to be prioritized.
 - The **stigma and taboo surrounding mental illness needs to be challenged** so that treatment can be sought and support is provided.

Mass Migration and Population Movements

- **Problem:**
 - When **migration** is driven by desperation, children often take perilous journeys across deserts, oceans and armed borders, encountering **violence, abuse and exploitation** on the way.
 - One of the **greatest migrations** the world has ever seen is happening within borders, with millions migrating internally **from rural to urban areas**.
- **Solution:**
 - It is essential that child migrants have their rights upheld. Governments can protect child migrants by **prioritizing the best interests of children in the application of immigration laws**.
 - Social policies and programmes designed to support child survival and development should pay **greater attention to the poorest and most marginalized urban children**.

Statelessness

- **Problem:** Every child has a right to a legal identity, to birth registration and a nationality. It is expected that, **almost 1,00,000 babies born today, may never have an official birth certificate**, reason being parents are stateless or from a persecuted or marginalized community.
- **Solution: Registering children at birth is the first step** in securing their recognition before the law, safeguarding their rights, and ensuring that any violation of these rights does not go unnoticed.
 - The United Nations has set a goal that every human being on the planet will have a legal identity by 2030.

Future Skills for Future Work

- **Problem:** Too often, it is seen that young people **lack access to an education that will prepare them for contemporary job and business opportunities** i.e. giving them the skills and outlook they need for a twenty-first century economy.
- **Solution:** There is a need to **prepare young people to become productive** and engaged citizens.

Data Rights and Online Privacy

- **Problem:**
 - Too often, **children do not know what rights they have over their own data** and do not understand the implications of their data use, and how vulnerable it can leave them.
 - **Privacy terms and conditions** on social media platforms are often **barely understood** by highly educated adults, let alone children.
 - **Personal information** created during childhood may be shared with third parties, traded for profit or **used to exploit young people** – particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized.
- **Solution:**
 - Such design systems need to be developed that **maximize the positive benefits of big data and artificial intelligence**, while preserving privacy, providing protections from harm and empower people – including children – to exercise their rights.
 - The **Convention on the Rights of the Child makes it clear that children have a specific right to privacy** and there is no reason this should not apply online.
 - Equipping young people with the **knowledge and skills to claim their digital rights** is essential.
 - Private sector internet service providers and **social media must develop transparent, ethical standards** and implement heightened scrutiny and protection for the full range of data concerning children.

Online Misinformation

- **Problem:** Studies indicate that many children and young people today **have a hard time distinguishing fact from fiction online** and as a consequence, the generation is finding it more difficult to know who and what to trust.
- **Solution:**
 - A higher level of **digital and media literacy** can act as a protective filter.
 - The society needs to work harder to **prepare savvy young citizens to resist manipulation** and retain a trusting connection to reliable and verifiable information and institutional knowledge.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

- It is a treaty **adopted** by the United Nations General Assembly in **1989**.
- It recognises a child as every human being under 18 years old.
- It sets out the **civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child**, regardless of their race, religion or abilities.

It includes rights such as Right to Education, Right to Rest and Leisure, Right to Protection from Mental or Physical Abuse including Rape and Sexual Exploitation.

- It is the **world's most widely ratified human rights treaty**.

Source: TH