

UNHCR

*Advanced
ECOSOC*



TOPICS: Combating Exploitation within
Refugee Populations, Addressing Climate Change Refugees
in the Vietnamese Mekong River Delta

CHAIRS: Alyssa Finigan, Dash Clark

LAIMUN XXIX

December 2-3

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Letter from the Secretaries-General

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of our entire staff, it is our pleasure to welcome you to Session XXIX of the Los Angeles Invitational Model United Nations (LAIMUN) conference. LAIMUN XXIX will take place on Saturday, December 2 and Sunday, December 3 of 2023 at the Mira Costa High School (MCHS) campus.

Our staff, composed of over 120 MCHS students, has been working tirelessly to make your debate experience the best it can be. You will find your dais members to be knowledgeable about the issues being debated and MUN procedure. We pride ourselves in hosting a conference that is educational and engaging, and we hope you take advantage of that as you prepare and debate.

At LAIMUN, we value thorough research and preparation. We ask that delegates write position papers following [these directions](#). The deadline to submit position papers to be considered for Committee and Research Awards is Friday, November 24 at 11:59 PM PT. The deadline to submit to be considered for Committee Awards is Thursday, November 30 at 11:59 PM PT.

We also encourage all delegates to read the [LAIMUN Rules of Procedure](#) for conference-specific information and as a reminder of points and motions that can be made during committee.

Feel free to reach out to our staff with any questions or concerns you may have. Delegates can find their chairs' contact information next to their committee profile and the Secretariat's email addresses on the staff page. Any member of the LAIMUN staff will be happy to assist you.

We look forward to seeing you in December!

Sincerely,

Akash Mishra and Lily Stern
Secretaries-General, LAIMUN XXIX
secretarygeneral@mchsmun.org



Introduction to the USG

Hi delegates!

My name is Claire Koerber and I am the Under-Secretary General of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for Mira Costa Model UN; I am excited to welcome you all to LAIMUN XXIX.

The advanced and novice ECOSOC committees cover a variety of prevalent international issues that require multifaceted approaches and solutions. Each delegate brings a unique perspective into debate and it is important to use creativity in developing solutions while also paying attention to country policy. Your chairs will hold you to high standards in regards to solutions, speeches, caucusing, and diplomacy, so please be sure to keep this in mind.

To ensure you are adequately prepared for debate, please submit your position papers promptly to your chairs. All work should be your own. This goes for all preparation, speeches, solutions, and resolutions as well. LAIMUN has a strict no pre-written resolution policy, and resolutions should only be worked on at the chair's discretion. Be sure to act respectfully in committee towards fellow delegates and chairs.

I hope LAIMUN XXIX provides you with lasting memories and educational experiences. Our LAIMUN staff do their utmost to give all delegates the best experience possible. We want all delegates to gain knowledge, confidence, speaking skills, and most importantly, a new understanding of international relations and the current events around us that affect the way we live today. Throughout the weekend, make sure to participate and stay engaged during debate. Who knows...if nothing else, you may actually learn a thing or two.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to ecosoc@mchsmun.org or any other secretariat member. Looking forward to seeing you in December and best of luck in your preparation towards success!

All the best,

Lily Stern and Akash Mishra
Secretaries-General

Claire Koerber
Under-Secretary General ECOSOC

Introduction to the Dias

Hi everyone!

My name is Alyssa Finigan and I am a junior here at Mira Costa. I will be your co-chair for LAIMUN 2023 along with Dash and I am very excited for a fun weekend of debate. I have been a part of the Model United Nations program since freshman year and have been lucky enough to travel to Boston, Yale, UC Davis, and Brown. I have always loved public speaking and recently started a MUN club at my old middle school with almost forty students.

Outside of Model United Nations, I have been a member of Girl Scouts since first grade and am currently working on achieving my Gold Award focused on reducing the homeless population of Los Angeles. Some of my hobbies include baking, especially cakes and chocolate chip cookies, which I would love to sell in my own bakery when I am older. I also love watching movies and adore anything horror or a classic rom-com. My favorite activity of all though is definitely traveling and I hope to one day explore the world, mainly Austria, Greece, and Italy.

We picked these topics as they are extremely relevant issues in today's world and feel that you all will be able to create some interesting and unique solutions based on them. We are definitely looking for creativity as well as strong speaking so we encourage you all to branch out of your comfort zones and explore new tactics.

Best,

Alyssa Finigan

ΦΨ LAIMUN XXIX ΦΨ

Hello delegates,

Huzzah! Twas I! The Dashiell Clark, but you can call me anytime. I'm kidding, only call me by Big Dog in and out of committee. I am a senior at Mira Costa and I have been in the MUN program for 4 years. I enjoy Lacrosse, politics, and magnets. Mayhaps if you want to know more about my interests I've been playing lacrosse since my freshman year and have been a lax bro since my junior year. Rival schools be weary; I'm on the field and I don't take prisoners(joke).

Fishing has been in my family blood for generations which is why I enjoy it so much, my great grandfather was the 1934 Arkansas State Champion Fly Fisherman(look it up). I've been fly fishing for about 5 years now, but I don't go very often at home. I have 3 dogs: Trixie, Winston, and Frankie. If you have any dog related questions during committee talk to me. Lastly, I am a huge Ryan Gosling fan and love all of his movies, we are similar in many ways, especially him in Drive(2011).

A question that I am often asked is "why did you choose to chair a UNHCR committee?" to which I simply say that I love the refugees, maybe a little too much...(joke again). Helping those in need has always been important to me which is the true reason why I chose to chair such a prestigious committee. I feel as if my life has been leading up to this moment. I am looking forward to satisfying you by being your wonderful, illustrious, and superb chair for your committee!

Best,

Daishell Clark (Big Dog)

Committee Description

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is an agency that was created in 1950 and was utilized for the first time to aid thousands of Europeans who lost their homes or fled during World War II. The organization was given a three year mandate in order to complete their goal in Europe, and accomplished just that. This led to a Nobel Peace Prize in 1954¹, that solidified the importance and significance of the UNHCR within the international community. Almost seventy years later the UNHCR continues to provide humanitarian aid as well as protection to refugees, stateless people and forcibly displaced communities globally.

Furthermore, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has worked in a total of 135 countries, and has successfully aided over 50 million refugees to restart their lives². The UNHCR provides a multitude of emergency assistance in the form of healthcare, sanitation, shelter and occasionally food and water. In addition, the organization advocates for transformative policies that protect and serve displaced peoples. They also provide countries in conflict templates that guide governments on proper actions that will help resolve and diminish

¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "History of UNHCR." *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/en-us/history-of-unhcr.html.

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "What We Do." *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/what-we-do.html

the refugee and humanitarian crisis in their own borders. Lastly, through the utilization of volunteers and donations, the UNHCR continues to provide aid and assistance to refugees throughout the international community.

Topic A: Combating Exploitation within Refugee Populations

I. Background:

As our world becomes more tumultuous and conflict-ridden, the number of total refugees will continue to rise. International organizations such as the World Bank and European Union estimate that by 2050 the total will exceed 1.2 billion. Refugees are prone to the most exploitation globally, ranging from sex trafficking, forced labor, modern slavery, etc. Refugee exploitation isn't a local problem by any means; most states in the world suffer from the burden of refugees, and where there are refugees, there's refugee exploitation. It's the responsibility of the international community to prevent these ill fates and prepare for a refugee-ridden future.

Refugees refer to people who were forced to leave their country to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. Refugees escaping these conditions have always been common throughout history dating back to the Jewish people's exodus from Egypt thousands of years ago.

³ However, a more modern refugee crisis such as the second world war could better contextualize the exploitation of refugees. 60 million people were displaced due to the Second World War and many were looking to escape the war by any means necessary which made them susceptible to exploitation. For instance, Polish refugees fleeing to the Soviet Union were branded as "socially dangerous" and "anti-Soviet" where they would then be deported to Siberia to do forced labor.⁴ From unspeakable acts such as those committed during the Second World War and other forms

³ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (1998, July 20). Exodus. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Exodus-Old-Testament>

⁴ *Polish refugees in Iran during World War II*. (n.d.). Holocaust Encyclopedia. Retrieved June 15, 2023, from <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/polish-refugees-in-iran-during-world-war-ii>

of refugee exploitation, states began to implement rights to protect them. One such act implemented in the United States was the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 which was created in direct response to the aftermath of the Second World War.⁵

Conflict zones are currently the greatest outlets for refugees and also lead to the most problems relating to their exploitation. Globally as of 2022, there were 27.1 million refugees escaping conflict zones across five continents.⁶ One of the largest conflict-driven refugee crises has its epicenter in Syria. Syria alone has 6.8 million of its citizens abroad and many of them have faced exploitation in countless forms. Much of this exploitation stems from a lack of opportunity and necessities in host countries that don't have the infrastructure to handle the great influx of people. The lack of opportunity leads to exploitation by criminal groups and locals of the refugees.⁷ Children and men are the most common victims of forced labor schemes, otherwise known as modern-day slavery. The states where many refugees have fled to - those bordering Syria - don't allow refugees to get jobs which have steered them into taking any opportunities available. For example in Lebanon, many business owners have been hiring

⁵ *Refugee timeline*. (2023, February 7). USCIS. <https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/our-history/history-office-and-library/featured-stories-from-the-uscis-history-office-and-library/refugee-timeline>

⁶ *Refugee statistics*. (n.d.). USA for UNHCR. Retrieved June 15, 2023, from <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/statistics/>

⁷ *The least bad option: For many Syrians, exploitation is the only way to survive*. (n.d.). ICMPD. Retrieved June 15, 2023, from <https://www.icmpd.org/news/press-releases/the-least-bad-option-for-many-syrians-exploitation-is-the-only-way-to-survive>

children to do work for little to no pay.⁸ Additionally, the hosts of some refugee camps in Lebanon are farmers who have been forcing the refugees to work to keep their tents and continue to receive food. Refugees lack a choice not to do such labor due to the circumstances that brought them to the camps. On the other hand; those providing the refugees don't have a choice either when it comes to housing these people. At the same time, many women and girls face a different kind of exploitation than men do. Countless women have been forced into sex trafficking for commercial motives or sold into "temporary marriages".⁹ This exploitation is common in refugee camps and surrounding areas in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and some Iraqi cities near the border of Syria. Women and girls make up almost all of the victims of this form of exploitation in addition to the other forms discussed above.

Refugee exploitation is not only carried out by criminal organizations and business owners, but also by governments of countries. Recently governments have been using refugees as bargaining tools and weapons against other states. From 2021-2022 Belarus imported thousands of refugees from Turkish refugee camps under the promise that they could get into the EU through their border. In reality, Belarus was using pressure on the migrants to agitate against Poland and the EU due to the sanctions they passed on Belarus in 2020.¹⁰ Refugees when they arrived were faced with freezing conditions and no prepared facilities or infrastructure to house

⁸ Syrian refugees in Lebanon at growing risk of forced labour: Anti-slavery activists. (2016, April 12). *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-lebanon-refugees/syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-at-growing-risk-of-forced-labour-anti-slavery-activists-idUSKCN0X9009>

⁹ *Syria*. (2022, May 25). United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/syria/>

¹⁰ Santora, M., Pronczuk, M., & Higgins, A. (2021, November 10). E.U. sides with Poland over migrants at Belarus border. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/10/world/poland-belarus-border-migrants>

them, they were essentially stranded at the Polish and Lithuanian borders. This state-sanctioned exploitation of refugees was greatly condemned globally but the model used by the Belarusians would be replicated across other parts of the globe. One such example is in the United States where migrants coming from Hispanic countries are also being used as pawns in interstate politics. For example in 2022, the movement of 60,000 migrants from Texas to New York via bus transport was initiated by Texas Governor Gregg Abbott for the express purpose of antagonizing the state of New York and achieving a political agenda.¹¹ Around the same time, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis is exploiting migrants to test the limits of states with opposing politics such as Massachusetts and California by moving migrants via private jets.¹² Actions such as these set dangerous precedents that endangers the lives of migrants and refugees.

Discrimination is another very common form of exploitation among refugees and can lead to detrimental consequences. Discrimination against refugees can make it easier for criminals and others to take advantage of them and could continue to make refugees feel marginalized. Refugees have less access to legal rights, education, healthcare, and work prospects when they face discrimination based on their country of origin, their ethnicity, or refugee status. At refugee camps, this unequal treatment as a result of discrimination could lead to unfair handling of refugees; this has been seen in some Turkish refugee camps against Kurdish

¹¹ Rubinstein, D., & Maag, C. (2023, May 11). New York City starts busing migrants north. Counties are fighting it. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/11/nyregion/title-42-nyc-migrants-orange-rockland.html>

¹² Nguyễn, T. (2023, June 6). Florida official says migrants flown to California went willingly, disputes claims of coercion. *Associated Press*. <https://apnews.com/article/migrants-dropped-off-california-texas-florida-f385800064d2acec8c94f65f1242d4e0>

refugees.¹³ This pushes refugees to the margins where individuals are more likely to take advantage of their situation due to the absence of government assistance and social connection. This would also force refugees to accept unstable, low-paying jobs in the informal economy that are usually dangerous since they have few options and little leverage with employers. Discrimination also fosters an atmosphere of disdain, which leaves refugees more susceptible to hate crimes and ostracism by parts of society. Discrimination against refugees if challenged could help reduce exploitation and integrate refugees into the states that they are migrating to.

As the refugee population continues to grow globally and the world is becoming more attuned to conflict and disaster, the issue of refugee exploitation becomes increasingly important. Many countries already are unable to handle current refugee incursions which makes it imperative that the world prepare ahead of time for the estimated 1.2 billion refugees globally by 2050. Without proper infrastructure and means to integrate these refugees into the societies they will be migrating to, the risk of refugee exploitation only becomes more extreme. Forbye, providing refugees with the resources they need to maintain themselves and move back to their countries of origin. Ensuring that refugees aren't exploited now ensures that refugees won't be exploited in the future. It's the responsibility of the governments of the world to solve the impending crisis now before it is too late.

II. UN Involvement:

¹³ *Insecure future: Deportations and lack of legal work for refugees in Turkey.* (2019, September 19). Refugees International. <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2019/9/18/insecure-future-deportations-and-lack-of-legal-work-for-refugees-in-turkey>

One of the founding tenets of the United Nations (UN) was to keep and maintain peace globally and reduce the abuses of war; refugee exploitation falls directly into both of those categories. In 1950, the United Nations General Assembly established the UNHCR¹⁴ to protect and help Europeans who were displaced after the Second World War. The following year during the 1951 Refugee Convention, 145 state delegations convened and created a protocol that laid the foundation for all future decisions made on refugees. One of the main proclamations it made was that no refugee should be returned to a country where they face threats.¹⁵ Additionally, it set the precedent on how refugees should be treated which comprises the right to housing, education, work, etc.¹⁶ Building off of the principles established in 1951, the 1967 Refugee Convention helped create a universal system that would work for all parties involved.¹⁷ To accomplish this the convention amended the previous geographical and temporal restrictions that were added to the protocol before then. Additionally, the convention applied legal status to refugees that all states signing onto the convention would agree to. The universal refugee legal status helped protect refugees and aid in the prevention of many forms of abuse.

¹⁴ *History of UNHCR*. (n.d.). UNHCR US -. Retrieved June 15, 2023, from <https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/who-we-are/history-unhcr>

¹⁵ *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*. (n.d.). OHCHR. Retrieved June 15, 2023, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-relating-status-refugees>

¹⁶ *What is the difference between the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol?* (n.d.-a). UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. Retrieved June 15, 2023, from <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention>

¹⁷ *Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*. (n.d.). OHCHR. Retrieved June 15, 2023, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-relating-status-refugees>

Even with refugees holding legal status and being guaranteed their human rights, it doesn't mean that they are immune from exploitation. This pushed the UN to pass more resolutions on the prevention of specific forms of refugee exploitation. One of the most widely known examples of this is Sustainable Development Goal 10 titled "Reduce inequality within and among countries"; the UNHCR has taken this initiative and used it to help advocate for refugees and decrease the struggles they face which include exploitation.¹⁸ Another UN action that reflects this same attitude toward ending refugee exploitation is General Assembly resolution 55/25 which is titled "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime".¹⁹ This resolution targets women and children refugees affected by human trafficking schemes and crimes. The goal was to make a universal structure that governments could use to confront all angles of human trafficking. The process provided to states and their legislation has helped reduce trafficking crimes, aided in criminal punishment, and helped protect and aid victims of trafficking crimes. The resolution was seen as a triumph for human rights and the rights of refugees globally. While significant progress has been made through UN resolutions and initiatives, the fight against refugee exploitation remains an ongoing challenge that requires continued efforts from the UN and other international organizations.

¹⁸ *Sustainable Development Goals*. (n.d.). UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. Retrieved June 15, 2023, from <https://www.unhcr.org/sustainable-development-goals>

¹⁹ *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. (n.d.). OHCHR. Retrieved June 15, 2023, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>

III. Topics to Consider:

A. Human Trafficking

Without proper documentation, refugees are especially vulnerable to the dangers of human trafficking and sexual assault. With the fear of others calling the authorities on them, refugees are exploited and their perpetrators often face no crimes for their appalling crimes. Refugees often are taken advantage of and become easy targets as they are often desperate for resources and assistance. Human trafficking leads to mental unwellness, medical complications, and disorders such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which is often impossible to treat without the proper care. This creates a plethora of issues for those undocumented as they face deportation if caught yet also need these resources when trafficked.

Almost 70% of all reported sexual assault cases happen to those who are seventeen and younger yet most organizations gear their programs towards adults.²⁰ Nevertheless, programs such as the The Hague Domestic Violence Project works with lawyers, families, and others with legal status to use domestic child abuse as a legal defense to help ensure that a child does not get deported back to their home country if they would be in harms way.²¹ They are a no questions asked organization which solely prioritizes the immediate needs of the child as well as protects them from any future harm.

B. Technological Risks

²⁰ Child abuse statistics. Indiana Center for the Prevention of Youth Abuse & Suicide. (n.d.). <https://www.indianaprevention.org/child-abuse-statistics#:~:text=Nearly%2070%25%20of%20all%20reported,victims%20never%20report%20their%20abuse>

²¹ Americanbar.org. (n.d.). https://www.americanbar.org/groups/domestic_violence/our-projects/hague-dvproject/

The rise of social media has made it even more easy for refugees, especially minors, to be targeted and taken advantage of. In 2000, the United Nations General Assembly passed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women, and Children in hopes of reducing trafficking around the world as well as providing stricter punishments for those who commit said crime. Yet despite this, according to global databases around the world, sexual assault has risen from 10% in 2014 to over 60% in 2017.²² With the rise of technology, new innovations such as tracking, surveillance, and spying traffickers can lure their victims in with the promise of humanitarian support. Traffickers online pretend to have "safe houses" when instead they are trying to get refugees to come inside of their home so they can assault them or take advantage of their needs. Blackmail also has shown an increase as the trafficker will threaten to inform the government of the refugees illegal status if they try to leave or report their perpetrator. Once again, the refugees are caught in a situation where they lack resources and any good option to escape.

C. Child Marriage

Child marriage has often been used by families in an attempt to receive a green card from the United States of America or other forms of citizenship. When threatened with deportation, guardians often faked their child's birth certificate in order to allow them to get legally married in the country that they are residing in. Even if they themselves will still get deported, many believe that having their child stay in the country is worth possibly not seeing them again. While many

²² *Human trafficking*. Migration data portal. (n.d.). <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/human-trafficking>

countries have worked to place restrictions on this rule, it does not stop parents from abandoning their child in hopes of them having a safer and more prosperous life.

Even so, many parents do not understand the risks that come with having their child marry for the sole purpose of receiving citizenship. The child is often exploited and lacks the education, resources, and skills to stand up for themselves. If their parents are deported, they lack the proper documentation and schooling in order to get a job and move up in the social hierarchy meaning that they are completely reliant on their new spouse to live. Most countries require the marriage to last a certain number of years for them to become permanent citizens such as in the United States which requires two years of marriage in order to obtain a permanent green card. This leaves the child with no other option but to stay with their spouse even if they are abusive as otherwise they risk the chance of deportation.

D. Financial and Medical Exploitation

Debt bondage, prostitution, and forced labor are frequently seen in the refugee population as they are desperate for work and fear the risk of deportation back to their home country. Those in debt bondage often are forced to provide all their legal documents such as their birth certificate, passport, and identification card to their employer which gives them no other option but to continue working as they lack the resources to escape and find other employment.²³ These refugees are often given incredibly high and unreasonable debts but they are unable to argue with their employers' demands since their life is completely reliant on their employer. While

²³ What is bonded labour?: Anti-slavery International. Anti. (2023, February 7). <https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/bonded-labour/>

attempting to pay off their debt, refugees are rarely able to find proper education and employment with fair pay leaving them in a cycle of working, and working to continue paying off countless loans that just keep adding up as the refugee needs more and more resources.

IV. Case Study: Human Trafficking in Ukraine

Human trafficking has always been a crisis within Ukraine but since the Russo-Ukrainian War started in 2014, the rates of refugees being trafficked has skyrocketed an astronomical amount. Prior to the 2022 invasion into Ukraine, an estimated 300,000 people had been trafficked since the early 1990s.²⁴ The main issue with trafficking in Ukraine is the lack of proper persecution for those who commit crimes. Sex and labor trafficking as well as rape often only cause one to face three to eight years in imprisonment, if they are caught at all. Only five percent of overall traffickers faced prison time in 2019 and seventeen percent in 2020.²⁵ Even though these percentages are rising, it has still left thousands of perpetrators to get away with zero consequences.

The United Nations has been working to create environments for refugees that make them feel comfortable enough to report incidents of sexual violence that they have faced. Refugees are often scared to report their perpetrator due to fear of being caught or being sent back into Ukraine. In addition, steps are being taken to help screen organizations that are taking in refugees to further ensure that those who are supposed to be helping them are not the ones

²⁴ Trafficking in persons: Ukraine. U.S. Agency for International Development. (2023, June 12). <https://www.usaid.gov/ukraine/fact-sheet/dec-16-2022-trafficking-persons#:~:text=Prior%20to%20Russia's%20invasion%20in,abroad%20and%2017%2C000%20in%20Ukraine>

²⁵ U.S. Department of State. (2022, October 20). 2022 trafficking in persons report - united states department of state. U.S. Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

who are committing sexual crimes. New registering as well as background checking citizens have been suggested for all major areas that have been accepting refugees which would help to make sure that the refugees are kept safe and if an incident does happen, it would be recorded and properly taken care of under the law.

Ukrainian citizens especially women and children are being exploited as they attempt to flee into surrounding countries for protection. Many of these people desperately need resources, money, and medical aid but often left their home without time to grab proper documentation such as a birth certificate or insurance coverage needed for them to get assistance. Ukrainians that are still stuck within the country have faced rape by Russian troops if they dare to disobey their orders.²⁶ There have been over 80,000 cases of war crimes in the country and a high percentage of them are sexual based violence. Women have been seen getting pregnant by such rape and despite abortion being legal in the country for the first twelve weeks of pregnancy, the effects of the war have made it difficult to find an open abortion clinic. Healthcare in general has been extremely hard to find in Ukraine since so many people have fled the country leaving a heavy shortage of workers. Over twelve million people are in need of urgent health care within the country yet are unable to be treated due to lack of medical supplies, staff, and infrastructure. The World Health Organization (WHO) said that one of the major problems with healthcare in Ukraine is the lack of transportation to and from medical facilities. Even if transportation is to be found, ensuring the safety of the medical vehicle is of utmost priority but due to Russian

²⁶Russia's war has created a human trafficking crisis, says U.N. envoy. United States Institute of Peace. (2022, June 7). <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/06/russias-war-has-created-human-trafficking-crisis-says-un-envoy>

bombing and surprise attacks, every visit to and from medical centers is a risk to safety. Even if you are able to make it to a hospital, a lack of medical staff often makes getting an abortion appointment take months meaning by the time the appointment rolls around, many women have passed the time limit of when it is legal to get one.

Labor trafficking has also been a major issue for those fleeing Ukraine as many refugees are desperate for work and often sign contracts forcing them into years of harsh labor under unfair pay. Recommendations have been made to help reduce said trafficking such as getting rid of recruitment fees for workers and instead having employers pay them²⁷. In addition, laws have been suggested to provide more frequent check-ins with companies and require certain documentation to be given which would prove that their employees are being given fair pay, time off, and the opportunity to leave if they choose to do so. Overall, the trafficking of refugees within Ukraine is not a new issue, but with the recent invasions of the country by Russia, it is getting worse..

V. Guiding Questions:

1. How can countries provide mental support and assistance to refugees that have faced traumatic experiences?
2. What steps can be taken to hold individuals accountable for assault crimes despite proper documentation and legal papers?
3. How has technology played both a negative and positive role in the human trafficking crisis around the world?

²⁷ U.S. Department of State. (2022a, October 20). 2022 trafficking in persons report - united states department of state. U.S. Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

4. How can Member States further help victims who have been exploited financially start a new life and ensure the protection of their family?
5. What can be done to reduce medical exploitation within refugees including non consensual surgeries, high prices, and a lack of proper sanitation?

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Topic B: Addressing Climate Change Refugees in the Vietnamese Mekong River Delta

I. Background:

Climate change refugees are defined as people forced to leave their homes due to global warming and other environmental problems. Unfortunately, many countries fail to recognize the importance of these refugees which often leaves them without hope, resources, nor assistance. Climate change is a major issue, and without properly addressing the situation, the resulting consequences will continue to worsen. The Earth's overall temperature has risen about two degrees Fahrenheit since 1980 and continues to rise at about 0.14 degrees each decade²⁸. Climate change and global temperature increase is a human caused problem, so many wonder how we can reverse it and help those affected.

The river delta in Mekong is in the south of Vietnam and is home to a variety of floating markets and small villages. The rate of refugees in the area has been increasing each year as more and more people are attempting to flee Vietnam. 6.6 million out of the total 85 million population migrating out of the country between 2004 and 2009 are from the Mekong river delta²⁹. Migration has happened for a variety of reasons, some of which include economic struggles.

²⁸ Dahlman, R. L. A. L. (n.d.). Climate change: Global temperature. NOAA Climate.gov. <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-global-temperature#:~:text=Highlights,2%C2%B0F%20in%20total>.

²⁹ VietNamNet News. (n.d.). "environmental refugees" in Mekong River Delta expected in future, experts say. VietNamNet News. <https://vietnamnet.vn/en/environmental-refugees-in-mekong-river-delta-expected-in-future-experts-say-E166283.html>

Many farmers have found it difficult to keep up with the rising rates of commercialization and the competition of global market products. It has become far too expensive and difficult to produce crops without the proper infrastructure that many large corporations have. Another cause of migration has been climate-related issues such as constant flooding of crops as well as hydropower plant effects. These hydropower plants release discharge which disrupts the flow of the rivers causing irregular water spillage and currents. In addition, landslides have become more frequent which leads to a greater risk in civilian safety and destruction of crops. It is predicted that by the end of the twenty-first century, water levels will have risen by around seventy three centimeters on the coast of Vietnam while the delta itself may see rises of up to one hundred and five centimeters³⁰. To this day, over one million have migrated out of the area and it is essential to help provide protection for those who stay.

The delta has been known to be an area of futile farming land with rich soil and predictable weather which has led many farmers to move their families to the area in order to help increase their farming productivity. The area itself produces almost half of Vietnam's total rice consumption which is futile as rice is considered a staple food in the country often being consumed at every meal³¹. In 2016, there was a drought in the area which was the longest and most harmful El-Niño drought to the date. It led to a major shortage of rice, coffee, pepper, fruits

³⁰ VietNamNet News. (n.d.). "environmental refugees" in Mekong River Delta expected in future, experts say. VietNamNet News.
<https://vietnamnet.vn/en/environmental-refugees-in-mekong-river-delta-expected-in-future-experts-say-E166283.html>

³¹ Nutrition and fasting in Vietnamese culture. EthnoMed. (2021, May 3).
<https://ethnomed.org/resource/nutrition-and-fasting-in-vietnamese-culture/#:~:text=The%20Vietnamese%20Diet,form%20in%20almost%20every%20meal.>

and aquaculture causing farmers to lose their jobs and often go into poverty³². While the drought was considered to be over by June of that year, the effects can still be felt across the country today. Another drought fell over the delta in 2019 leading to the Prime Minister of Vietnam to hold several conferences with the leaders of the delta to help find possible solutions to the problems caused by the drought. The main takeaway of these conferences was to help find more self-sustainable crops and increase production as well as overall population awareness³³.

It is equally important to focus on the refugees that have already decided to leave the Vietnamese Mekong River Delta and help provide them with the support they need. This includes proper resources, medical attention, as well as relocation assistance. Many who are migrating are attempting to go to more urban areas yet often lack the skills to find work once they arrive. In addition, another challenge is the lack of documentation and identification that many of these refugees have on them. Without the proper papers, most businesses will not accept them for work which therefore makes it nearly impossible for them to start to build their resume and advance their financial situation.

It is essential to help educate farmers and others whose jobs are vulnerable to climate change on how they can adapt to the changing environment. Whether it's diversifying their crops, adopting new technologies, or creating natural protection, it is crucial that these people are given education on how they can protect themselves and their families from needing to flee. In

³² Viet Nam drought and saltwater intrusion: United Nations Development Programme. UNDP. (n.d). <https://www.undp.org/vietnam/publications/viet-nam-drought-and-saltwater-intrusion#:~:text=October%207%2C%202016&text=Viet%20Nam%20experienced%20the%20longest,%2C%20pepper%2C%20fruits%20and%20aquaculture>.

³³ A year with historical drought - viet nam. ReliefWeb. (2021, January 8). <https://reliefweb.int/report/viet-nam/year-historical-drought>

addition, families can be encouraged to diversify their means of income so that they are not solely reliant on agriculture³⁴. This would help ensure that if something were to happen, they would have a backup plan ready as well as the skills to work another job.

Thailand has been shown to be the major location for migrants leaving the Mekong delta which takes in about five million each year³⁵. Fortunately, a 1996 policy allowed for undocumented migrants to still be able to seek work which is a major pull factor for the Vietnamese refugees. Starting in 2003, the government in Thailand has even started to monitor the migration routes which creates a much safer environment for those fleeing the country helping to reduce the casualties by a great percentage.

In 2009, the Climate Change Adaptation Initiative (CCAI) assessed the possible causes, effects, and solutions of climate change on the delta which lead them to encourage training locals as well as create framework for different possible emergency situations³⁶. The CCAI also created the Mekong Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan (MASAP) which found urgent points of development needed to be made in regards to adaptation and increasing the overall strength of those in the agriculture sector. It was discovered that the flooding of the delta as well as the unpredictability of its waters could create a cross-border problem meaning that this issue is not

³⁴ Wolfe, D. (2022, November 2). Who are climate refugees – and how can we help them?. World Vision Canada. <https://www.worldvision.ca/stories/climate-change/who-are-climate-refugees-and-how-can-we-help>

³⁵ General background > mekong migration network. Mekong Migration Network. (2021, April 1). http://mekongmigration.org/?page_id=130#:~:text=Thailand%20is%20the%20major%20receiving,%2C%20Myanmar%2C%20and%20Lao%20PDR.

³⁶ (MRC), M. R. C. (n.d.). Climate change. Mekong River Commission (MRC). <https://www.mrcmekong.org/our-work/topics/climate-change/#:~:text=Rising%20temperatures%20and%20changes%20in,food%20shortages%20and%20diminished%20livelihoods.>

just national, but also international. Overall, it is essential to both provide resources for those who remain in the delta to help decrease the number of migrants as well as provide assistance to those who are already leaving.

II. UN Involvement:

The United Nations has worked hard to help provide support to those migrating from the river delta. In April of 2016, the United Nations created the Joint UN-Viet Nam Emergency Response Plan which worked to provide assistance after the El-Niño drought as well as with other climate change related issues. Representatives from eighteen districts in Vietnam met together to discuss and collaborate in the workshops provided and actively committed to working to strengthen resilience within the region³⁷. The district representatives shared their experiences, data regarding migration, as well as any ideas that they had on reducing overall damage and loss of lives. The Red Cross was also sent in to provide medical attention to these refugees under observance of the United Nations Development Corporation (UNDC) as well as a multitude of nongovernmental organizations (NGO) partnerships. They distributed food, increased sanitation, and provided hygiene products during the 2011 September floods when many houses were destroyed. In addition, the Red Cross created two cash-transfer programs to help provide immediate support for those who lost everything from the floods³⁸.

³⁷ Viet Nam drought and saltwater intrusion: United Nations Development Programme. UNDP. (n.d.-a). <https://www.undp.org/vietnam/publications/viet-nam-drought-and-saltwater-intrusion#:~:text=October%207%2C%202016&text=Viet%20Nam%20experienced%20the%20longest,%2C%20pepper%2C%20fruits%20and%20aquaculture>

³⁸Viet Nam Red Cross Society: Mekong flood programme 2011–2012
During late September 2011, The International Federation of the Red Cross, & Name. (n.d.). *Viet Nam red cross society: Mekong flood programme 2011–2012*. Flood Resilience Portal.
<https://floodresilience.net/resources/item/viet-nam-red-cross-society-mekong-flood-programme-20112012/>

The UNDP eventually created a ‘Viet Nam Drought and Saltwater Intrusion: from Emergency to Recovery Response’ analysis report which outlined what actions must be taken for recovery and can also act as guidelines for any upcoming natural disasters. The UNDP has been working to encourage citizens and lift their spirits by advertising these floods as a time to rebuild better and improve already existing infrastructure.

Finally, with partnerships from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), actions are being taken to help reduce drug trafficking within the region which are known to be traded within the delta³⁹. With such a large number of migrants leaving the area, regulation and documentation of products as well as people coming in and out of Mekong is difficult and often falsely calculated. Whether it’s synthetic drugs like methamphetamine or other types of chemicals, it is essential to increase regulation within the area to help ensure the safety of migrants and other citizens. Overall, the United Nations has and will continue to develop action plans to provide support to the Mekong migrants.

III. Topics to Consider:

A. Protecting Natives

The Mekong River Delta is home to over 21 million people⁴⁰, making up a substantial part of the Vietnamese economy. The Mekong River Delta floods every year which provides farmers in the area with nutrients for their crops to grow; however, unusual flooding events in the delta could displace the population and in turn galvanize a massive refugee crisis. The threat of

³⁹ Mekong Mou on drug control. United Nations : UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific. (n.d.). <https://www.unodc.org/roseap/en/what-we-do/toc/mou.html>

⁴⁰<https://www.refworld.org/docid/584811b1e.html#:~:text=Roughly%20one%2Dfifth%20of%20Vietnam's,to%20eke%20out%20a%20living.>

catastrophic flooding is impending, the delta is only a few feet above sea level and it's predicted that by the end of the century, the entire delta is set to be underwater. This rise in sea level also contributes to the more intense flooding which will continue to displace Vietnamese living in the delta even before it goes underwater.

With over a fifth of the Vietnamese population living in the region, it has serious implications. Many of those living in the area rely on fishing and agriculture and are destitute, in a crisis many would have a hard time escaping the region and creating new lives elsewhere due to their lack of capital. As flooding gets worse the livelihoods of those living in the delta will also continue to be at risk. Saltwater intrusion from the ocean hurts fishing and agriculture as well. Helping native populations adapt and be prepared for flooding and sea level rise will mitigate the damage created by an ensuing refugee crisis.

B. Economic Challenges

The Mekong River Delta makes up a large part of the Vietnamese economy and accounts for up to 18% of their total GDP⁴¹. The major economic sectors that make up the economy of the Mekong River Delta are agriculture and fishing. It is also home to several major import/export hubs. Around 50% of Vietnam's crop production, fisheries, and aquaculture products come from the Mekong River Delta. Drought, sea level rise, and catastrophic flooding events could lead to famine in Vietnam⁴² due to the huge amount of food production that could be affected and destroyed. Additionally, the exports of such crops would have global implications since many

⁴¹[https://www.stimson.org/event/mekong-water-data-hour-how-dams-impact-the-mekong-delta/#:~:text=The%20Vietnamese%20Mekong%20Delta%20\(VMD,for%20around%2017%20million%20people.](https://www.stimson.org/event/mekong-water-data-hour-how-dams-impact-the-mekong-delta/#:~:text=The%20Vietnamese%20Mekong%20Delta%20(VMD,for%20around%2017%20million%20people.)

⁴² https://wwfasia.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/key_findings_mekong_river_in_the_economy.pdf

countries rely on Vietnamese crop exports to meet food quotas. For example, 90% of rice exports from Vietnam are grown in the Mekong River Delta⁴³, a climate-driven disaster would greatly affect this statistic. Countries such as the Philippines which import 45% of their rice from Vietnam would be subject to famine without such imports.

Many of the over 21 million who live in the Mekong River Delta work in the informal sector and base their income on subsistence agriculture. Climate disasters that affect farming and fish populations greatly affect all those living in the Mekong River Delta. Recently however due to ocean acidification and overfishing, fisheries have suffered greatly in the delta⁴⁴. Fish are spawning earlier than usual due to warmer oceans and the number of eggs being hatched has greatly decreased as seen in the fish population.⁴⁵ Drought in recent years has also worked to reduce fish populations and agricultural output. The decrease water levels results in an increase in the concentration of toxins and other harmful substances in the water due to a process called osmosis⁴⁶. Farmers without advanced irrigation systems have suffered the most through past droughts and have struggled to make ends meet and meet production quotas⁴⁷. Many investors that would subsidize industries and projects in the region have been weary about investing in the region due to these problems resulting in economic stagnation.

⁴³<https://en.dangcongsan.vn/daily-hot-news/mekong-delta-rice-farming-contribute-90-of-rice-exports-602704.html>

⁴⁴<https://www.mrcmekong.org/assets/Publications/Events/2nd-CCAI-Forum/3-2-2-Potential-impacts-of-climate-change-on-fisheries-resources-in-the-Lower-Mekong-Basin.pdf>

⁴⁵ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37277043/>

⁴⁶<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/es202576h>

<https://www.mrcmekong.org/assets/Publications/Events/2nd-CCAI-Forum/3-2-2-Potential-impacts-of-climate-change-on-fisheries-resources-in-the-Lower-Mekong-Basin.pdf>

⁴⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8087702/>

C. International Aid & Humanitarian Challenges

The Mekong River Delta in the South of Vietnam has always been subject to natural disasters such as flooding but climate change has increased the intensity of these events. The Lower Mekong River Delta is very familiar with humanitarian aid missions due to previous catastrophic floods and other disasters. One product that came out of this humanitarian aid was the creation of an integrated flood monitoring system along the Mekong River⁴⁸. This program was created by the Mekong Rivers Commission and has been used to monitor water levels since 1995⁴⁹. More recently, humanitarian organizations and NGOs have been working to make the people of the Mekong River Delta more disaster resilient and promote sustainability among those living in the region. One such NGO the Mekong Policy Project works with organizations and all facets of local governments to promote sustainability and biodiversity in the Mekong River Delta⁵⁰. Another climate-driven humanitarian challenge in the Mekong River Delta is that the exit route for many migrants is closing as a result of rising sea levels. Currently, it's estimated that 24,000 migrate from the Mekong River Delta yearly through refugee camps and other exit routes in the region⁵¹. Without these escape routes those leaving instead will become internally displaced people, Vietnam and other Indochinese states have very few resources to spare to aid refugees. Without the Mekong River, other refugee camps and migration routes will become overcrowded due to the lack of capital that those states have. Moving forward, solving these

⁴⁸ <https://www.mrcmekong.org/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.mrcmekong.org/our-work/functions/basin-monitoring/hydrometeorological-monitoring/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.stimson.org/project/mekong-policy-project/>

⁵¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/01/06/archives/exit-routes-closing-for-indochina-refugees-e.html>

problems at their roots would help reduce the desire for people to leave their countries of origin and reduce the threat of larger refugee crises.

IV. Case Study: The Ganges River Delta

Globally, many deltas with similar geographic features to the Mekong River Delta are facing existential crises. One of these deltas is less than 2000 miles away in Bangladesh and parts of India, the Ganges River Delta. The Ganges River Delta boasts a huge population of nearly 200 million people which trumps the population of the Mekong River Delta.⁵² The Ganges River Delta and its population is at constant risk of a variety of ecological disasters. It's estimated that nearly 120 million people are at risk of repeated catastrophic flooding events from severe weather.⁵³ Climate change is only perpetuating the cycle by increasing the amount of violent weather. The Ganges River Delta is facing many impending cataclysmic events that will affect the globe as a whole.

Like many other deltas, the Ganges River Delta is very close to sea level which in turn means that it will be subject to permanent flooding. As many as 9.4 million people live in regions of the delta that don't exceed 2 meters in elevation above sea level.⁵⁴ The rise in sea level is estimated to displace 500,000 of these 9.4 million people by 2050. The only issue isn't the displacement of people however, but the many economic problems that will result in the change in sea level that are specific to the region. The Ganges River Delta is one of the most fertile

⁵² <https://thesciencebreaker.org/breaks/earth-space/rising-water-and-sinking-land-the-ganges-delta>

⁵³ https://climate.nasa.gov/climate_resources/111/ganges-river-delta/

⁵⁴ https://www.ciesin.columbia.edu/documents/clim-migr-report-june09_final.pdf

regions of the world, in which somewhere between 5% to 7% of the world's rice is produced.⁵⁵

As sea level rises salt water will begin to inundate into the fertile delta and kill the crops growing in the areas affected and contaminate groundwater.⁵⁶ This wouldn't only kill the region's economy and destroy countless peoples livelihoods, but it would also create a devastating global food crisis. 3.5 billion people consume rice for their sustenance and destroying this source would create a world wide famine.

A culmination of all of these events will displace thousands if not millions of people from the region. The mass exodus will create problems of its own as the great influx of climate refugees flood already poor areas around the delta. Problems like the ones that the Ganges River Delta and Mekong River Delta face are not unique and the consequences are inevitable. It will take a global effort to divert the path that these regions are going down and prevent catastrophe.

V. Guiding Questions:

1. What are the main effects of climate change on the Mekong River Delta and how do they affect community displacement?
2. What variables make which particular communities in the Mekong River Delta prone to displacement brought by climate change?
3. What laws and regulations are in place both domestically and globally to protect and help refugees from climate change?

⁵⁵ https://ipad.fas.usda.gov/cropexplorer/pecad_stories.aspx?regionid=bg&ftype=prodbriefs

⁵⁶

<https://www.climatehubs.usda.gov/hubs/northeast/topic/saltwater-intrusion-growing-threat-coastal-agriculture#:~:text=As%20sea%20levels%20rise%20along,table%20below%20the%20soil%20surface.>

4. What are some of the main issues with and holes in the laws and policies currently in place for those fleeing climate change in the Mekong River Delta?
5. Which adaptation and resilience-building strategies are most successful in assisting communities in the Mekong River Delta to deal with the effects of climate change and lessen the likelihood of displacement?
6. How can catastrophe prevention and early warning systems work together and be integrated across the Indochina region?
7. How could sustainability be prompted in the Mekong River Delta to help reduce the total number of migrants being created?
8. How can the international community address climate at its root to prevent the appearance of vulnerable climate change refugee communities?

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