



# BACKGROUND GUIDE

## United Nations ECOSOC

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### LETTER FROM THE EB:

Dear Delegates,

It is with immense pleasure that we welcome you to this simulation of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at the SNA MUN 2021. It is our honour and privilege to serve as your Executive Board for this MUN.

We've compiled this study guide to give you an insight into the committee and the agenda. Please note that this Background Guide doesn't serve as an exhaustive means to your research in any way. This guide will give you a point to start your research with, and it is our hope that you go beyond the scope of this by bringing in your individuality and analysis.

Good luck and Godspeed,

The Executive Board.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE**

It was Chapter X of the Charter of the United Nations (1945) which established the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as a founding body along with one of the six principal organs of the United Nations. ECOSOC indirectly oversees the allocation of 70% of UN resources with its oversight over 14 specialized agencies and 13 functional and regional commissions. The mandate of the council is to serve as the primary body for policy dialogue on economic, social, cultural, educational, and health-related topics. Its mandate also includes advising and coordinating the activities of Member States and other UN entities on these matters; and to lead discussion on the implementation of the international development framework.

ECOSOC comprises 54 members, each of which is elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms. The members are elected pertaining to the geographical distribution of UN Member States. This is done to ensure representation from all regions and levels of development: 14 seats are allocated to African States, 11 to Asian States, 6 to Eastern European States, 10 to Latin American and Caribbean States, and 13 to Western European and Other States. Each member has one representative and one vote in ECOSOC. All decisions are made by a simple majority of those members who are present and voting. ECOSOC is governed by a President, Vice-President, and Rapporteur, along with a Bureau consisting of five representatives: the President and four Vice-Presidents.

The Economic and Social Council's mandate is articulated in the Charter of the United Nations as follows: "The Economic and Social Council may make or initiate studies and reports with respect to international economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related matters and may make recommendations with respect to any such matters to the General Assembly to the Members of the United Nations, and to the specialized agencies concerned. It may make recommendations for the purpose of promoting respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all."

### **AGENDA:**

**SUGGESTING MEASURES TO ELIMINATE CHALLENGES TOWARDS UNIVERSAL HEALTH WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS.**

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA:**

We need to understand the meaning of the universal health care system first and how it is different from the private health care system. According to the official definition by the world health organization, universal health care systems provide universal health coverage which means that all individuals and communities receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship. It includes the full spectrum of essential, quality health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care across the life course.

A private health care system is a system in which people have to pay for the services out of their own pockets and they also get preferential treatment. But the grave problem that we need to look at is that even people belonging from middle-class families at times choose to go for private health care systems either because of the lack of quality services or delayed rehabilitation which eventually pushes people into extreme poverty.

Understanding the challenges to an efficient universal care system requires an in-depth study of not only the financing of the health care systems but the understanding the importance of promotion and prevention and also coordinating with other institutions so that the resources do not overlap. Because a lot of countries that especially have mixed systems have an uncoordinated system wherein some people come under public health coverage and some under private health coverage and some people come under no coverage at all. And these problems have heightened due to the pandemic. Following is an elaborated study of the agenda to understand how different aspects play a huge role in contributing to the health care systems.

# UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOOD SECURITY AND HEALTH CARE:

This relationship between food security and health care is certainly important for everybody to have a higher standard of living which of course comes with households being able to afford housing and electricity or insurance but it's also important to fund the infrastructure that works well with respect to the entire supply chain of food so that it reaches everybody and does not just get wasted. World food programme provides country strategic planning with respect to food allocation and the analysis of the world food programme also helps countries to understand the points which do not directly connect to food security but still are vital to achieve zero hunger. Reports show that as the population is growing, food production is also growing. In fact in some nations it is double the population but they still do not cease to face the issue of food insecurity and the problem lies in the supply chain. It is also important to know that a maximum number of long term illnesses happen due to either obesity or malnutrition. Looking at the situation of achieving better health care systems under the light of this pandemic we realise that there are not enough doctors for everybody and the health care infrastructure is also failing and needs to be worked upon. But it is also necessary to keep a balance and work on all the aspects of the angles of the problem. The USA, one of the most powerful countries, still hasn't achieved a universal health care system and still has 68 per cent of the entire population taking services by private insurance and 8 percent of people are not under any of the health care coverage systems whatsoever.

In developing countries where the public health care systems are not up to the mark, and doctors neither provide equal treatment nor proper rehabilitation people choose the private healthcare systems even if they have to take loans for it and get into a debt trap for people with long term illnesses especially. In a country that has more or maximum number of people living below the poverty line it is extremely important to incentivize the providers and public providers especially. According to the world health organization, one of the top causes of death is ischemic health diseases which again, happen because of poor diet. Another thing that we have to understand closely is that due to the low income of public providers people move to provide services in the private healthcare system which becomes very difficult for people to afford.

## **BRAIN DRAIN:**

The brain drain is the emigration of highly skilled people or people with high potential to the developed countries in search of better prospects in life with respect to housing, services, education etc... Brain drain is especially negative when it comes to health care systems. A lot of highly skilled providers leave the country where their requirement is the most. Many countries do incentivize the providers but it also economically harms the country. There is a need for a new strategy in order to incentivize the providers without causing much damage to the economy of the country. Brain drain disturbs the country very gravely because all the work put into the achievement of SDGs and promoting education goes to waste.

The international organization of migration (IOM) set up the reintegration of qualified african nations in 1995. It did help in the reduction of the problem but according to the changing economies and situations there is a need to come up with something new which also includes the recognition of brain drain as a major problem.

Another aspect to look at is that the emigration of women and people from the LGBTQ+ community is relatively more. The migration of these people is more because of the social backwardness in their home countries and also how they don't get equal pay as other people even if they are better at what they do.

## **TAX EVASION:**

Tax evasion is known as the illegal non-payment or underpayment of tax. Tax evasion can be highly seen in developing and underdeveloped countries. The developing nations are unable to manage the taxes properly and provide services properly to a person which makes people not want to pay tax in return for poor services. It is vital to establish a culture of paying taxes but it cannot happen if people have no faith in their own government. The trust of a government only comes when there's transparency and accountability. A lot of developing nations continually stay in a debt trap because of tax evasion but then due to corruption residents and citizens stay unwilling to pay taxes and it creates a vicious cycle. It is extremely important for the government to encourage and incentivize people to pay taxes, but that would also require a genuine and transparent investment in the health care system and education system as well. And there's another reason behind tax evasion and that is continuous changes in tax systems which makes it difficult for people to comply with those changes until and unless there's an incentive.

## **PREGNANT WOMEN IN CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT AREAS:**

Armed conflicts have a devastating impact on the general public which are wide-ranging. One of the systems most impacted by it is the public healthcare system. During conflicts, the healthcare systems collapse and the infrastructure is destroyed. Post-conflict areas, due to the sensitivity of their situation, take time for the reconstruction and development of their nation. Amidst this health crisis, it is important to look at the condition of pregnant women especially, as they demographically represent one of the most vulnerable groups in conflict and post-conflict areas.

Maternal and reproductive health is one sector that faces the biggest hit in such situations. Access to healthcare during and post-pregnancy is denied to many women. Numerous conflict regions report an increase in the number of home deliveries, induced deliveries, and deliveries at military checkpoints. There is a decline in maternity care and as a result, many women face complications during pregnancy and childbirth, often leading to death.

In the conflict of Herzegovina and Bosnia, conflict led to an increase in perinatal and maternal mortality. The major factor behind maternal deaths was associated with uterine ruptures, sepsis and bleeding due to shell injury of pregnant women.

## **PEOPLE WITH ADDICTIONS:**

People dealing with mental health disorders and substance abuse do not have the appropriate access to universal health care systems. One major issue is the stigma related to mental health disorders which prevents people from accessing help. When they do, the issue of insufficient facilities to cater to their needs takes the forefront.

However, the issue that requires our utmost attention in this regard is building the bridge between mental health disorders and substance abuse or addiction. Only when we understand how the two are related, can we come up with effective mechanisms that'll ensure treatment of people with addictions, and hence, their access to universal health care.

When we stop viewing substance abuse as a social or criminal problem, and work on including strategies for its prevention, treatment, and recovery in our health care systems, that's when we move towards our goal. Thus, by expanding the responsibilities of healthcare systems towards people with addictions, we can effectively address the agenda.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON HEALTH:**

The World Health Organization has pointed out that climate change is not just a threat to biological systems and the environment, but also an emerging and rather significant threat to 'Public Health.' This threat becomes more imminent in lower income populations and tropical as well as subtropical countries.

One case study is that of Vietnam. It is one developing country which has been most affected by climate change. About 1 million Vietnamese are annually affected by natural disasters in Vietnam. The impact of climate change on health can depend on a number of factors, from age, gender to economic status.

Delegates are required to understand the complex link between climate change, human health and people's concerns about the matter, in order to engage various communities to tackle this issue and deal with the consequences of climate change.

### **CASE STUDY:**

Even after independence in 2011 South-Sudan had experienced a conflict amongst the ethnic groups of the country. Due to faulty in the decisions made by the authority the income of the entire country has gone down drastically due to which less than 2 percent of government budget is invested in the health care system and more than half of the population does out of pocket spending to seek treatments which are often not adequate. Six months after independence the oil production of the country was shut down this had grave impacts on the economy of the country. There is obviously a shortage of healthcare workers and infrastructure but along with it around 60 percent of population does not have enough calorie intake on a daily basis which also causes a huge impact on the health of the people, which also includes the children, women and child bearing mothers. Integrated rapid response mechanism was launched and since then efforts have been put to solve the crisis in South Sudan but still there is a lack of investment in long term infrastructure and universal health coverage systems.

The boma health initiative was launched in 2017, in order to streamline the efforts put into the healthcare system. And even the health sector strategic plan works towards universal health coverage but significant challenges remain and need not only an input from the government but from private institutions and non-governmental organizations which also should include more transparency and accountability. And in addition to all this the reactivation of working groups has been ongoing for the achievement of sustainable development goals and with respect to health care systems. Another major thing to consider is the post-traumatic stress disorder

(PTSD) people experience because of the protracted conflict and the lack of services adds to the mental health problems. The survey that was taken by African Union to understand the mental health of the population of people in South Sudan showed that around 95 percent of people are dealing with mental health issues.

## **CONCLUSION:**

What has been presented in this background guide are some of the major challenges when it comes to universal health and universal health care systems. It is necessary to understand where exactly the problem lies, study it in depth, and then come up with effective solutions and strategies to overcome these. As established before, this Background Guide is in no way the exhaustive guide for this conference, and hence, the delegates are expected to use it to have a basic understanding of the agenda, and then analyse the situation in their own unique way, to come up with effective strategies to counter these challenges.

## **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. In what ways can a nation incentivize its citizens to not emigrate permanently and become an asset for the nation?
2. How can a system be built internationally that fulfills the needs of the developing and underdeveloped nations on different levels with respect to the healthcare system?
3. How can the information and knowledge sharing be done in an efficient manner to help developing nations understand the ways to better allocate resources?
4. How can governments be encouraged to become transparent and accountable?
5. How can it be made sure that every patient is being treated equally and with dignity?
6. How can the multi stakeholder approach be boosted during the pandemic?

## USEFUL RESOURCES:

1. <http://rybn.org/thegreatoffshore/THE%20GREAT%20OFFSHORE/7.RESOURCES/ACADEMIC%20PAPERS/TAX%20EVASION/Addressing%20tax%20evasion%20and%20tax%20avoidance%20in%20developing%20countries.pdf>
2. [UN Transparency and Accountability Initiative | United States Mission to the United Nations \(usmission.gov\)](#)
3. [Developing a national health financing strategy \(who.int\)](#)
4. [United Nations Official Document](#)
5. [South-Sudan-2019-BHI-Costing-Investment-Case-Analysis.pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)
6. [1471-244X-9-7.fm \(au.int\)](#)
7. [N1718454.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

