

HMDC Presents... UNICEF: Video 1 Transcripts

These are the words spoken in the two Video 1 films for UNICEF (The Topic). We read along while we watch, pause at each time mark, and circle any word we do not know so we can look it up together.

VIDEO 1 (EXPLAINER)

[0:00] Welcome, Model UN delegates. We are so excited to share this explainer with you as you get ready for Harvard MUN Online, coming up on December 5th and 6th, 2026. You have got a massive task ahead of you, so we are going to jump right into the facts to help you prepare. So this topic actually brings together three big problems that people usually debate totally separately. Hungry children, wasted food, and damaged farmland. But here's the catch, and this is absolutely crucial. We are following the UNICEF rule. Because UNICEF is a children's agency, every single idea you propose absolutely must end in a child outcome. If you have a farming idea, it has to clearly help a child. That is the core rule to keep in mind for your entire debate. Here is how we will break things down today. Section 1. The harms of hunger. Section 2. Solution 1. Cold chains. Section 3. Solution 2. Food recovery. Section 4. Solution 3. School meals. And finally, Section 5. Solution 4.

[0:59] Restoring farmland. Let's start right off with Section 1. The harms of hunger. Who exactly is hurt, how many, and how severely? Hunger harms children in two specific ways, and you really need to understand the difference between them. First up is stunting, which is when a child is too short for their age, which can permanently harm their brain development. The second harm is wasting, which is when a child is dangerously thin and may die without treatment. So just how many people are hurting? Well, the numbers are pretty staggering. According to UNICEF Canada on July 21, 2026, there were 645 million people chronically hungry in the year 2025. Just imagine that. It's nearly 10% of everyone on Earth [Our report says: 7.8%]. When we look specifically at children, the data is really tough to hear. According to the World Health Organization on July 21, 2025, exactly 150.2 million children were stunted, and 42.8 million children were wasted in the year 2024. And according to UNICEF on June 5, 2024, there are 181 million young children living in severe child food poverty. That is literally one in four young children. But you know, the face of hunger is actually changing in ways you might not expect. According to UNICEF, on September 9, 2025, for the very first time, more school-aged children are obese than underweight. This happens because kids might be getting enough calories, but only from really cheap food that lacks any real nutrition. It creates a highly undesirable double burden, where malnutrition shows up in multiple ways all at once. Now, at the exact same time all those kids are going hungry, a massive amount of food is just being thrown away. According to the United Nations Environment Programme on March 27, 2024, the world wasted exactly 1.05 billion tons of food in the year 2022. This contrast between severe hunger and massive waste is going to be central to your debate. And the earth itself is hurting too, which directly harms children. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization on November 3, 2025, damaged land is directly linked to 47 million stunted children. The soil simply cannot grow enough nutritious food to help those kids thrive.

[3:11] That brings us to section two. Solution one, cold chains, which means cutting food loss on farms and in transit. Building cold chains, like refrigerated trucks and storage, is highly desirable. According to the United Nations Environment Programme on November 12, 2022, building these cold chains could avoid 144 million tons of food loss in developing countries. Plus, it raises incomes for small farmers, so they have more resources to help their own children. And hey, it doesn't always take expensive, high-tech gear. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization on September 27, 2024, just simple training cut losses by 38% for tomato farmers. But you do need to weigh a potential objection here. Does cheaper food cause an undesirable rebound effect? According to the University of California, Irvine on July 24, 2023, making food cheaper actually leads people to just consume more. That rebound effect ends up canceling up to 71% of the expected environmental benefits. It's a tricky balance you'll have to navigate.

[4:12] Moving on to section three. Solution two, food recovery, redistributing surplus food to those in need. This idea is actually already happening on a huge scale. According to the Global FoodBanking Network on July 9, 2025, food banks served exactly 38 million people in the year 2024. That is a lot of recovered food making its way to people who need it. However, there are some pretty big roadblocks standing in the way of this highly desirable action. According to the Harvard Law School Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation on June 10, 2020, there are six main legal barriers you should write down. They are unclear safety rules, confusing date labels, weak liability protection for donors, tax rules, a lack of grants, and finally, a lack of waste penalties. You will definitely want to think about these barriers when drafting your resolutions.

[5:03] But here is a common objection you'll hear. According to Ulster University on January 26, 2017, giving surplus food to charities offers short-term relief, but there is no evidence it actually solves household food insecurity. The argument here is that charity alone just isn't enough to help fix the deep systemic causes of poverty. Okay, section four. Solution three, school meals. This is all about feeding children right where they learn. Giving kids nutritious food at school is a wonderfully smart move. According to the World Food Programme on March 21, 2023, every one US dollar invested in school meals returns nine US dollars. It also creates highly desirable enrollment gains, meaning more kids actually want to show up to school because they know they'll get a meal. The big hurdle here? Money. According to the Brookings Institution on February 3, 2025, expanding school meals to 150 million more children requires 10.8 billion US dollars a year in brand new money. Right now, the program relies heavily on just a few donors, which makes it a really vulnerable solution. And our final section, section five, solution four, restoring farmland, repairing the soil to grow more food. Restoring damaged land has the potential to help a massive amount of people. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization on November 3, 2025, reversing just 10% of human-caused damage on existing cropland could grow enough extra food to feed 154 million more people every single year.

[6:32] That means far more reliable food for vulnerable families. But what is the actual financial return on fixing that land? Well, it totally depends on who you ask. According to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification on April 26, 2022, restoration returns between 7 and 30 US dollars for every single dollar spent. However, according to Nature Sustainability on November 15, 2021, a more careful, peer-reviewed estimate found that each one US dollar spent returns only about \$1.20. So it might be a much slower, more methodical process than some hope. So we've looked at the massive scale of the problem, and we've explored four very different solutions. But here is the reality. No single solution is enough on its own. So my question to you is, how will your resolution link waste, recovery, and farmland together to directly help children, and ultimately reduce the number of kids who are stunted and wasted? Good luck with your preparation, delegates. You are going to do great.

VIDEO 1 (CINEMATIC)

[0:00] Welcome to the UNICEF committee. Your mandate requires navigating the complex intersections of childhood hunger and global food systems. This world map establishes the baseline of the crisis. In 2025, 645 million people experienced chronic hunger. Zooming in on Africa reveals the heaviest regional concentration, with 309 million individuals facing severe food insecurity. This growth chart tracks the developmental toll. 150.2 million children under five are stunted, a condition caused by chronic malnutrition that permanently impairs physical and brain development. This measurement illustrates an even more immediate threat. 42.8 million children suffer from wasting, meaning they are dangerously thin and face an acute risk of death without immediate treatment.

[0:48] The international community is failing to protect hundreds of millions of children from both immediate starvation and permanent developmental damage. While millions starve, this rubbish bin represents the 1.05 billion tons of usable food the world threw away in 2022 alone. This pie chart breaks down exactly where that waste occurs. Households are responsible for 60%, followed by food services at 28% and retail shops at 12%. Looking at this cracked soil, we see the environmental cost. Human-caused land degradation lowers crop yields, and this damaged land is directly linked to 47 million stunted children. Childhood hunger is not a problem of scarcity. It is a massive logistical failure to utilize existing abundance and preserve agricultural ecosystems.

[1:36] Our first intervention, cutting food loss. 526 million tons rot before reaching shops due to lacking cold chain refrigeration. But expanding refrigeration has limits. Lower prices lead people to consume more. This rebound effect cancels up to 71% of expected benefits. These hands represent the second solution, recovering surplus food. Distribution networks already collect safe, unsold food from farms and shops, serving 38 million people across 46 countries. This gavel and label outline the hurdles preventing wider donation. Confusing best-before labels and weak liability protection for donors are among six distinct legal barriers that discourage businesses from giving their surplus away.

[2:21] Supply chain interventions can theoretically capture vast amounts of wasted food, but they are severely bottlenecked by unintended economic side effects and outdated legal frameworks. This lunch graphic introduces our third solution, school meals. The economic return is incredibly high, with every dollar invested yielding about \$9 in benefits. Yet this single coin stack exposes a deep structural vulnerability. 69% of all international school meal aid comes from just one donor country. Our fourth solution, restoring degraded farmland. Repairing just 10% of damaged cropland yields enough food to feed 154 million more people yearly. But planting trees and repairing soil takes about 10 years to pay for itself.

[3:10] Localized programs like school feeding and soil restoration offer immense yields, but they cannot succeed without diversifying their funding and surviving long payback periods. Here are the four tools available to this committee. Cold chains, food recovery, school meals, and farmland restoration. For UNICEF, no matter the logistical or environmental complexity of the intervention, the only valid metric of success is the direct improvement of a child's life. We look forward to evaluating your policy directives in committee. We must redirect global abundance and overhaul failing systems to guarantee the survival and development of the next generation.