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 <u>mental health issues</u>** 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 **<u>migration</u>** 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