



## HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Topic 2: Combatting the Rising Trend of Child School Dropouts due to  
Economic Hardship

## Committee overview

The Human Rights Committee (HRC) is a United Nations body responsible for monitoring State Parties' compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The Committee reviews state reports, issues general comments to clarify human rights standards, and adjudicates individual complaints. As part of global governance, the HRC plays a vital role in upholding human rights, including equality, non-discrimination, and the right to education. Addressing school dropout due to economic barriers is central to the Committee's mandate, as education is fundamental to accessing civil, political, economic, and social rights.

## Background on the topic

Child school dropout due to economic reasons has become a significant global issue, affecting not only low and middle-income countries but also increasingly impacting developed nations. Many families are forced to prioritize survival over education because of poverty, unemployment, rising living costs, armed conflict, and the long-term effects of COVID-19. As a result, children often work or care for family members instead of attending school, as parents may be unable to afford transportation and educational materials.

Education as a basic human right for the international society, it has long been accepted that education was and is a universal right. Central to this was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which in article 26 specifically states that everyone has the right to education, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which made it compulsory for those governments who have ratified it to ensure free and compulsory basic education. Despite these pledges, economic disparities remain as barriers to access education.

Today, millions of children are still out of school around the world, and poverty is a major reason why. Those who drop out of school are more likely to end up in child labor, early marriage, exploitation, and chronic poverty. It is essential to tackle this not just because it's better for people themselves, but for sustainable economic growth, stability in society and the safeguarding of human rights.

## Key terms and definitions

**Child School Dropout:** The premature discontinuation of a child's formal education before completion of the required or expected level.

**Economic Hardship:** Severe financial difficulties that limit a family's ability to meet basic needs such as food, housing, healthcare, and education.

**Right to Education:** A fundamental human right ensuring free and compulsory primary education and accessible secondary education for all children.

**Child Labor:** Work that deprives children of their childhood, education, and development, often linked to poverty.

**Social Protection Systems:** Government policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability, such as cash transfers or school subsidies.

**Intergenerational Poverty:** The transmission of poverty from one generation to the next due to lack of access to education and opportunities.

**Universal Primary Education:** The goal of ensuring that all children complete primary schooling.

## Relevant UN bodies and resolutions

### UN Bodies

- **Human Rights Committee (HRC)** - Monitors state compliance with civil and political rights related to equality and non-discrimination.
- **UNICEF** - Works to protect children's rights, including access to education.
- **UNESCO** - Leads global efforts on education, literacy, and inclusive learning systems.
- **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** - Coordinates UN efforts on development and social issues.

### Relevant international frameworks

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) - Article 26 (Right to Education)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) - Articles 28 and 29
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) - Article 13
- UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education

## Major actors and their relevance

### Countries

- **India** - Faces high dropout rates linked to poverty, child labor, and rural inequality, while implementing large-scale education and welfare programs.
- **Nigeria** - Struggles with school dropouts due to poverty, insecurity, and regional inequality, particularly affecting girls.
- **Brazil** - Has implemented social protection programs such as conditional cash transfers to reduce school dropouts, serving as a potential model.

### Non-State Actors

- **NGOs** - Organizations such as Save the Children and Education Cannot Wait provide direct educational support and advocacy.
- **Private Sector** - Can contribute through funding, technology access, and public-private partnerships.
- **Regional Organizations** - Bodies such as the African Union and the European Union support education initiatives and policy coordination.

## Guiding questions

- 1. How does economic hardship directly and indirectly contribute to child school dropouts?
- 2. What obligations do states have under international human rights law to ensure access to education?
- 3. How can social protection programs reduce the financial burden on families?
- 4. What role should the international community play in supporting low-income countries?
- 5. How can education systems be made more inclusive and resilient during economic crises?
- 6. What best practices from existing national programs can be replicated or scaled globally?
- 7. How can child labor be effectively addressed in relation to school dropouts?
- 8. What mechanisms can ensure accountability for states failing to protect the right to education?