

**YMCA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2025**

*Topic Descriptions*

Committee: Middle Eastern and North African Summit

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## Topic #1: Malnutrition Rates

### Introduction & Background

**Malnutrition** is defined as a condition/deficiency caused by the lack of necessary nutrients in one's diet, such as vitamins, minerals, proteins, and carbohydrates, needed for proper health and growth. Malnutrition mainly consists of both **undernutrition** (wasting, stunting, underweight, and micronutrient deficiencies) and **obesity**.

**Gender inequalities** in access to resources, education, and healthcare have impacted nutritional outcomes, particularly for women and children. Limited access to maternal and child healthcare services has contributed to issues like **maternal malnutrition** and **child stunting**.

Throughout history, parts of the MENA region have experienced food insecurity due to factors such as droughts, conflicts, and economic challenges. Food shortages and limited access to nutritious foods have contributed to malnutrition, especially among vulnerable populations.

### Current Status

According to UNICEF, nearly 6.3 million children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition in the MENA region including both acute malnutrition, which can lead to severe health complications and even death, and chronic malnutrition, which stunts physical and cognitive development. From a humanitarian perspective, addressing malnutrition in the MENA region requires a multi-faceted approach that encompasses emergency food aid, long-term development initiatives, and efforts to promote sustainable agricultural practices. The contribution of international organizations, governments, NGOs, and local communities is needed to address the root causes of malnutrition.

### Themes to Consider

While progress has been made in certain areas, such as reducing child mortality rates and improving access to healthcare in some parts of the MENA region, malnutrition remains a persistent challenge. Efforts to address specific nutritional deficiencies and promote healthy lifestyles have shown some success but **require sustained attention and resources**.

Malnutrition disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, including children, women, and marginalized communities. Addressing malnutrition requires a focus on **social equity**, ensuring access to nutritious food, healthcare services, and education for all. Additionally, many nations face challenges in prioritizing malnutrition amidst competing priorities and limited resources. **Political will** and commitment are essential to drive meaningful change and **allocate resources** effectively.

Malnutrition is intricately linked to food production, distribution, and consumption patterns. Transforming food systems to ensure nutritional adequacy while promoting environmental sustainability requires coordinated efforts across sectors.

Implementing comprehensive malnutrition interventions often requires significant investments in healthcare infrastructure, agricultural practices, and social programs. Resource constraints can hinder the scalability and sustainability of these interventions.

With **urbanization**, globalization, and changes in lifestyle, there has been a **nutritional transition** in the region. Traditional diets have been replaced to some extent by processed foods high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats, contributing to diet-related health problems.

### Discussion Questions

1. How will nations delegate the order in which they provide help to malnourished countries? What prevents governments from helping every person in their nation all at once?
2. How can the allocation of resources belonging to other countries and international collaboration be encouraged?
3. What strategies can be implemented to address the malnourished situation of areas affected by underlying socio-economic factors, such as poverty, lack of access to education, and limited healthcare infrastructure, in order to create sustainable solutions for improving nutritional outcomes in the MENA region?

### Resources

1. Ammar, Ammar. "Malnutrition in mothers soars by 25 percent in crisis-hit countries, putting women and newborn babies at risk – UNICEF." *UNICEF*, March 7th, 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/mena/press-releases/malnutrition-mothers-soars-25-cent-crisis-hit-countries-putting-women-and-newborn>. Accessed 13 May 2024.

Description: Anecdotes, statistics, and development ideas involving the government.

2. "Malnutrition" *World Health Organization*. [https://www.who.int/health-topics/malnutrition#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/malnutrition#tab=tab_1). Accessed 13 May 2024.

**(Highly Recommend)** Description: Full overview of Malnutrition worldwide with tabs that go into specifics such as facts, databases, resolutions, etc.

3. Popkin, Barry. "Urbanization, Lifestyle Changes and the Nutrition Transition." *Science Direct*. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0305750X99000947>. Accessed 13 May 2024.

Description: Urbanization's effect on malnutrition and diet changes.

4. Soreq, Lilach. "Persistent Disparities between Affluent and Marginalized Populations in Malnutrition." *Journal of Clinical Nutrition & Dietetics*, July 2023. <https://clinical-nutrition.imedpub.com/persistent-disparities-between-affluent-and-marginalized-populations-in-malnutrition.php?aid=51478>. Accessed 13 May 2024.

Description: Descriptions and in-depth analysis of marginalized populations vs. the wealthy regarding malnutrition.

5. "Undernourished and Overlooked." *Unicef*, March 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/undernourished-overlooked-nutrition-crisis>. Accessed 13 May 2024.

Description: Information on the undernourished being ignored because of their class/status.

6. Wibowo, Yulianti. "Relationship between intra-household food distribution and coexistence of dual forms of malnutrition." *National Library of Medicine*, February 2015. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4388949/#:~:text=IHFD%20is%20defined%20as%20inappropriate%20allocation%20of,of%20food%20distribution%20within%20the%20household%20\[23\]](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4388949/#:~:text=IHFD%20is%20defined%20as%20inappropriate%20allocation%20of,of%20food%20distribution%20within%20the%20household%20[23]). Accessed 13 May 2024.

Description: How malnutrition is connected to food production and distribution.

## Topic #2: Trade Route Blockage of the Suez Canal

### Introduction & Background

The blockage of the Suez Canal in March 2021 by the container ship Ever Given brought global attention to the **vulnerability of major trade routes**. The Suez Canal, a crucial waterway **connecting Europe and Asia**, plays a pivotal role in **international trade** by significantly reducing the time and distance for maritime transportation.

### Current Status

The blockage resulted in significant **disruptions to global trade**, causing delays in the delivery of goods, increased shipping costs, and highlighted the risks associated with over-reliance on key maritime chokepoints. Approximately \$9 billion worth of **goods were delayed** each day during the blockage and over 400 ships were backed up at the canal's entrances, impacting a wide range of industries globally. Following this, trade within the Suez Canal has decreased by 50% compared to before the blockage. The incident underscored the challenges of managing complex supply chains and the need for diversified transportation routes. The incident raised questions about the resilience of trade routes and the need for contingency plans.

### Themes to Consider

Addressing the **resilience of global trade networks** involves examining strategies for mitigating the impact of future blockages or disruptions. This includes exploring how countries and organizations can diversify trade routes, enhance infrastructure, and implement contingency plans to ensure uninterrupted trade flows even during crises.

Delving into the **environmental and economic consequences** of heavy reliance on specific trade routes is crucial. This theme prompts considerations about the sustainability of maritime transportation, the ecological impact of trade activities, and the integration of sustainable practices to minimize environmental harm while maintaining economic viability.

Emphasizing the role of international organizations in **fostering cooperation** among nations during trade route blockages or crises is paramount. This theme revolves around mechanisms for crisis management, **collaborative strategies for resolving disputes or disruptions**, and the facilitation of smooth trade flows through diplomatic and organizational interventions.

Exploring the **potential of technological advancements** in improving trade routes involves assessing innovations such as improved navigation systems, alternative transportation modes, and the integration of smart technologies to enhance efficiency, reliability, and safety in global trade operations.

### Discussion Questions

1. What measures can be implemented to enhance the efficiency and safety of maritime transportation while minimizing environmental impact?
2. How should international organizations coordinate responses to trade route blockages to ensure equitable outcomes for all stakeholders?

3. How can countries collaborate to develop alternative trade routes or improve existing ones to reduce the risk of future blockages?

## Resources

1. Biberstein, John. "The Impact of the Suez Canal Blockage on Global Trade." *Global Trade Magazine*, March 2021.  
<https://globaledge.msu.edu/blog/post/56998/implications-of-suez-canal-blockage-on-g>.

Description: Analysis of the repercussions of the Suez Canal blockage on global trade and supply chains.

2. Russon, Mary-Ann. "The cost of the Suez Canal blockage." *BBC news*, March 2021.  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-56559073>.

**(Recommend)** Description: Statistics and overview of the issue.

3. "Simultaneous Obstructions to the Suez and Panama Canals Threaten the Global Supply Chain." *Foley*, February 2021.  
<https://www.foley.com/insights/publications/2024/02/suez-panama-canals-threaten-global-supply-chain/>.

**(Highly Recommend)** Description: In depth analysis of issue & explanation of stakeholder and attributes.

4. Pace, Madeline. "How Did One Stuck Ship Hamper Global Trade?." *UNC Global Affairs*, April 2021.  
<https://global.unc.edu/news-story/how-did-one-stuck-ship-hamper-global-trade/>.

Description: Explains the significance of suez Canal, etc.

5. Hightower, Mary. "Global trade disrupted as weather, war pinch Panama, Suez canal" *University of Arkansas*, March 2024.  
<https://www.uaex.uada.edu/media-resources/news/2024/march/03-01-2024-ark-waterways-global-trade.aspx>.

Description: Aftermath of the blockage and some stakeholders.

6. "IMO and its role in protecting the world's oceans." *IMO*.  
<https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/oceans-default.aspx>.

Description: More context on maritime transport (scroll through to find the best information).

## Topic #3: Domestic Abuse

### Introduction & Background

Domestic abuse encompasses various **forms of violence and control** within intimate relationships or households, including physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse. It includes physical violence, emotional abuse, economic control, and sexual assault. In the MENA region, domestic abuse has **deep-rooted cultural, societal, and legal** complexities that contribute to its prevalence and challenges in addressing it effectively. It is a pervasive issue affecting individuals across different demographics, with long-lasting impacts on victims' physical and mental well-being. Root causes of domestic abuse often stem from power imbalances, societal norms, and cultural factors that perpetuate gender-based violence.

### Current Status

Domestic abuse in the MENA region manifests in **various forms**, affecting individuals across different demographics and social backgrounds. Statistics indicate significant rates of domestic violence, with women and children often being the primary victims. According to a report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), around 37% of women in the MENA region have experienced some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated this issue, leading to increased cases of abuse due to lockdowns and social isolation measures. For example, the UNFPA reported a 20% increase in domestic violence cases in several countries in the region during the pandemic.

### Themes to Consider

Addressing domestic abuse requires examining the **deep-rooted cultural and societal norms** that perpetuate gender-based violence and normalize abusive behaviors. It involves challenging patriarchal structures, promoting gender equality, and fostering respectful relationships. Cultural attitudes that condone violence against women and children need to be addressed through education, awareness campaigns, and community engagement programs. **Enhancing legal frameworks and protection mechanisms** is crucial for combating domestic abuse. This theme explores the role of laws, policies, and law enforcement in providing safety, support, and justice for survivors of abuse. Strengthening legal protections can include implementing comprehensive legislation against domestic violence, establishing specialized courts or units to handle domestic abuse cases, and ensuring adequate training for law enforcement officials. Providing **comprehensive support services**, including shelters, counseling, legal aid, and rehabilitation programs, is essential for survivors of domestic abuse. Essentially, the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of support systems in the MENA region. Consider the importance of community-based initiatives, partnerships with NGOs and civil society organizations, and the involvement of healthcare professionals in addressing the physical and mental health needs of survivors. Preventing domestic abuse requires **proactive measures** focused on education, awareness-raising, and behavior change. This includes emphasizing the role of schools, media, religious institutions, and community leaders in promoting healthy relationships, non-violent conflict resolution, and gender equality. Prevention strategies may include educational campaigns on consent, respectful communication, and

bystander intervention, as well as training programs for professionals working with at-risk populations.

### Discussion Questions

1. How can legal systems be strengthened to ensure swift and effective justice for domestic abuse survivors while prioritizing their safety and well-being?
2. What strategies can be implemented to promote healthy relationship dynamics, consent education, and gender equality from an early age, both within educational institutions and at the societal level?
3. How can governments collaborate with civil society organizations and communities to improve access to support services for domestic abuse survivors, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic?

### Resources

1. BelHaj, Ferid. "MENA must take bold action against Gender-Based Violence (GBV)" *World Bank*, December 10, 2021.  
<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/arabvoices/mena-must-take-bold-action-against-gender-based-violence-gbv>.

Description: This source informs with details that the MENA region urgently needs to take bold and comprehensive action against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) due to its widespread impact on individuals and society.

2. "Deep wounds: In the Arab Region, survivors of gender-based violence wonder where to turn." *UNSDG*, December 2021.  
<https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/deep-wounds-arab-region-survivors-gender-based-violence-wonder-where-turn>.

Description: Personal experiences with statistics, quotes, details, etc.

3. "Family Laws In MENA Fail To Protect Women And Girls." *Equality Now*, May 2022.  
[https://equalitynow.org/news\\_and\\_insights/family-laws-in-mena-fail-to-protect-women-and-girls](https://equalitynow.org/news_and_insights/family-laws-in-mena-fail-to-protect-women-and-girls).

Description: Background on past laws relating to gender-based domestic violence in MENA.

4. "What Is Domestic Abuse?" *United Nations*,  
<https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/what-is-domestic-abuse>.

**(Highly Recommend)** Description: Information on domestic abuse with definitions and examples.

5. "Federal Domestic Violence Laws." *United States Attorneys Office*.  
<https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdtn/victim-witness-program/federal-domestic-violence-laws>.



Description: How domestic abuse is tackled in Western countries.

6. “Enhancing women’s rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).” *WFD*, <https://www.wfd.org/where-we-work/enhancing-womens-rights-middle-east-and-north-africa-mena#:~:text=Context,of%20violence%20in%20their%20lifetime.>

Description: Current projects taking place, statistics, and context.