YMCA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2025
Topic Descriptions

Committee: Social, Humanitarian, Cultural
Chair: Isabella Rocha

Topic #1: Censorship

Introduction & Background

      Censorship is defined as a direct offense of a citizen's ability to basic freedoms of expression and information. Freedom of expression and the freedom of information have been declared fundamental human rights by the United Nations in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, both are being obstructed in many ways among those who wield power. There are a number of different forms of censorship across the globe, and it is imperative to underscore the importance of the media and how censorship of all forms can influence international stability.

Current Status

      According to The Pennsylvania State University, censorship is currently known as the primary method of undermining one's right to **freedom of expression and information**. **Media censorship** hinders societal awareness due to its commonality as well as its silencing of all trustworthy information sources. According to The Washington Post and Freedom House, within the last decade, government transparency has been globally declining, interfering with the right of expression for many citizens across the world. UNESCO revealed that currently, a journalist is killed about every four days; ultimately 60-80 total journalists per year, as they often unveil government corruption or provide truthful information about government affairs. A number of freelance and local journalists are being harassed and killed due to a lack of protection provided to them, unlike journalists who work on national levels within a country. The mistreatment of **freelance and local journalists** have been addressed with UNESCO's universally funded projects which protect the rule of law through judicial training and creation of radio stations. Moreover, media and internet regulation/censorship is **commonly enforced by governments** as well as private institutions through censorship campaigns that restrict and control the flow of information, content, and participation in online activities. For example, 90% of U.S. residents in racial and sexual minorities have reported that they feel intentionally censored when discussing political viewpoints.

Themes to Consider

      There are numerous methods of promoting the human right to information that resolutions can tackle. A common technique for combating internet censorship is through the **blocking of IP addresses**, which can be addressed through Virtual Private Networks (VPN) or securing browsers. These solutions mask one's IP address and change their shown location. **Increasing the number of banned book libraries** and widely **adopting the New York Public Library's "Banned Books Week"** can address the censorship of content for citizens, especially within educational settings. targeted through government initiated censorship especially through the banning of books.

      Censorship holds punishments on journalists such as media harassment, imprisonments, and physical attacks which hinders their distribution of information meant for societal understanding of complex issues. Creating **safety funds** for emergency assistance in medical treatment or safe passage. Additionally, **providing protective equipment for**

freelance journalists such as Bulletproofvests, press jackets, and more can allow for their safety in the workforce.

A lack of government transparency can threaten international security and the safety of its citizens. Considering that governmental transparency and censorship are directly correlated, censorship can be addressed through **enhancing communication** between a government and its citizens and **increasing information available** to citizens.

Discussion Questions
1. How can the Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian committee assist individuals living under censorship receive information and overcome the barriers of censorship?
2. How can the United Nations enhance their universal right of the freedom of expression to ensure that all governments abide by it?
3. What can be done to protect the universal right of freedom of expression, while also ensuring safety of journalists and civilians across the world?

Resources
1. Ki-moon, Ban. "Freedom of Expression, a Fundamental Human Right." *United Nations,* May 1, 2013.
   https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/freedom-expression-fundamental-human-right.

   (Highly Recommend) Description: Insight on the right to information and the right to express freely, additionally addressing governmental opposition.

2. Vigderman, Aliza. "Internet Censorship in 2024: The Impact of Internet Restrictions." *Security.org*, Jan 22, 2024. https://www.security.org/vpn/internet-censorship/.

   Description: Internet censorship in 2024 has a crucial impact on nations and there are specific methods to combat forms of media censorship.

3. "Government Transparency" *GovOS*, Feb. 10, 2022.
   https://govos.com/blog/government-transparency/.

   Description: Governments must ensure transparency in communication with their citizens as it is crucial in many ways, however, many go against this rule and it can be addressed in specific ways.

4. *"Censorship Effects on a Society" World Wide Women,* Nov. 18, 2024.
   https://sites.psu.edu/worldwidewomen/censorship-effects-on-society/

   (Highly Recommend) Description: The effects of censorship on society, how it inflicts it, and why it must be addressed.

5. *"Threats to freedom of press: Violence, disinformation & censorship" Unesco,* May 11, 2023.
   https://www.unesco.org/en/threats-freedom-press-violence-disinformation-censorship

Description: Journalists and the press face many threats from censorship–primarily those that are life determining– all due to uncovering the truth, and UNESCO shares their method to improve censorship circumstances.

6. "First Amendment and Censorship." *American Library Association,* Oct. 2021. https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/censorship

Description: The first amendment and censorship within the United States, however, it can be applied to many other countries with their restrictions on books.

Topic #2: Water Scarcity

Introduction & Background:
      Known as the most significant global issue on the minds of government authorities, the global water crisis impacts many people's access to the quantity and quality of water necessary to perform even the most basic of tasks, such as drinking and food growth. **Water crises** are defined by the United Nations as reduced water availability and supplies. Rich and poor nations face these unfortunate conditions due to the constantly-changing climate and higher demands for water, thus impacting both global industries and international economy, as well as global health.

Current Status
      As the global human population and resource-intensive economic development expands, numerous nations' water resources and infrastructure are failing to meet accelerating demands. Nearly 4 billion people lack a sufficient supply of water at least one month each year. Water availability has become unpredictable with the impacts of a changing climate and an exponential increase in the human population.
      Agriculture has a large role in the world's use of water, as it accounts for 70% of freshwater withdrawals. **Agriculture causes a positive feedback loop** in the availability of water, as it primarily drives water pollution and global warming, therefore causing more water loss due to this added change in climate. Many countries are depleting their water resources by over-extracting as well as polluting natural land groundwater and aquifer systems. About 30% of the earth's freshwater is sourced from the ground.
      Improvement of **groundwater recharge systems** and soil health restoration are currently being implemented in various regions. For example, Pakistan's Indus Basin Irrigation System has worked to become the largest artificial groundwater recharge system in the world. Changes to the overharvesting of food are also seen as effective, but have not been yet managed.
      Moreover, infrastructure determines the status of freshwater quantities for society. Aging infrastructure–defined as infrastructure over 75 years old and containing leaky pipes, deteriorating water systems, and lackluster maintenance–has led to a decline in water availability. Some nations have already taken action to combat this issue.

Themes to Consider
      Members of the Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian committee can create resolutions that **form education programs** which teach the impact of agriculture on the global water crisis and spread awareness on human's use of water. **Environmental science classes** can provide younger generations an understanding of the crisis**,** which can spur the creation of **new inventions** that enable a shift towards sustainable agricultural practices.
      Water accessibility is threatened by the increase in natural disasters in addition to the world's changing climate; this includes droughts, heat waves, and floods. Resolutions for the global water crisis can utilize nature's ecosystem services to combat the effects of natural disasters including droughts, heat waves, and floods. With **integration of regulating ecosystems** and **improvement of groundwater recharge systems,** maintaining the

availability of water has been proved to be effective. In specific, **implementation of green infrastructure** in replacement for aging infrastructure reduces flood effects and improves water quality and quantity.

The global water crisis would benefit from **increased regulations and management of rivers and streams** as aquatic ecosystems are facing threats due to the human activity of immense water extraction. **Restoration of aquatic ecosystems** could allow Earth's overall water supply to flourish.

Discussion Questions

1. How can the United Nations encourage sustainable, regulatory water management approaches to improve the qualities of freshwater available for the human population?
2. How can advancements in technology sustainably address the global water crisis and manage water quantities?
3. How can improved water quality address the global water crisis concerning the quantities of water?

Resources

1. Sadoff, Claudia. "Coming to Grips with Water Security in the Face of Climate Change." *United Nations*, March, 2018. https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/coming-grips-water-security-face-climate-change.

   (Highly Recommend) Description: The heightened concern of water scarcity is caused by many different factors and is seen as a mass challenge, thus making it imperative to be addressed in specific ways.

2. "5 ways to avert a global water crisis." Siwi, August 17, 2021. https://siwi.org/latest/5-ways-to-avert-a-global-water-crisis/.

   (Highly Recommend) Description: The global water crisis is impacted mainly by nature use and can be averted in 5 listed ways.

3. Covitt, Beth. "Earth's Fresh Water." *National Geographic*, January 26, 2024. https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/earths-fresh-water/#.

   Description: Earth's total water is found in different locations and is made up of different percentages of water types and locations, and humans can become better consumers by manageably understanding their utilization of the resource.

4. "Johannesburg's Water Crisis: Causes, Effects, and Solutions." *Gauteng News*, March 12, 2024. https://gauteng.net/news/johannesburgs-water-crisis/#.

   Description: The Johannesburg water crisis was affected by certain factors, however, although it is specific to a local water crisis, it can be applicable to the global water crisis as well.

5. *"*Benefits of Green Infrastructure*" Environmental Protection Agency,* February 21. https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/benefits-green-infrastructure.

Description: Green infrastructure is beneficial towards the quantity and quality of water on Earth, and it is an excellent replacement of aged infrastructure.

6. Reichardt, Klaus. "The Relationship Between Water Scarcity & Economy." *WorldWater*, May 31, 2021 https://www.waterworld.com/residential-commercial/article/14306892/the-relationship-between-water-scarcity-economy.

Description: Water scarcity determines the success of an economy, discussing the relation of GDP and water scarcity.

Topic #3: Women's Right to Healthcare

Introduction & Background

Gender inequality is known as the greatest human rights challenge and pins many effects, which disproportionately affect women's rights and their wellbeing. The healthcare industry has some of the most extreme gender disparities that impact women, as they are not always being properly cared for. According to the United Nations, these disparities can impact the aggregate population health of women. Women often suffer poorer health conditions as opposed to men due to a global mistreatment in medical attention.

Current Status

Regardless of the development or affluence of a country, women often receive less medical attention in comparison to men. The WHO reports that 4.5 billion women lack full coverage of essential health services. One in five women have felt their symptoms being dismissed by a doctor, while 17% percent of women report that they face gender discrimination when receiving medical attention. Additionally, there is currently a lack of knowledge and research of conditions commonly impacting women. Fibromyalgia and chronic pain are regular examples of preventable diseases that can now be lethal to women due to fewer treatment plans. There are over 700 diseases in which women typically receive later diagnoses than men because of doctors' lower attentiveness when diagnosing females. Women thereby are at risk of higher death rates and negative health effects.

Moreover, many women in the workforce face gender discrimination, violence, and therefore suffer with negative health effects. According to the World Health Organization, a new report underscores that it is common for women to receive low pay (which causes women to work more and physically drain themselves), Additionally, 30% of women worldwide have experienced some type of violence at some point in their working lives.

Themes to Consider

Gender discrimination and lack of proper working conditions in the workforce are affecting women's physical and mental health, feeding excess gender disparities. **Employee Resource Groups** can assist women experiencing work discrimination or sexual harassment who report ill physical health and higher depression rates–which are twice prevalent among women in the workforce compared to men. These groups foster inclusivity, community engagement, and diversity as they empower employed women. Addressing discrimination through these groups and **providing equal rights** in the workforce can address the resulting gender disparities in women's health.

Resolutions should consider **combating the unfair representation of women's health needs in medical research institutions**. Efforts can be made to **spread awareness against the "one size fits all" mindset** among healthcare workers to defeat the ignorance of female body needs across worldwide health departments. With this, healthcare research can be improved to become fair between genders, causing general treatments to be more effective on women. The difference in bodily functions between males and females can be addressed and no longer negatively impact females.

Maternal health, including pregnancy and postpartum, is a neglected aspect of women's healthcare that can improve from providing **proper education** about it to students, healthcare workers, and more. **Maternal focused healthcare systems** can compensate for the lacking of data and statistics related to maternal and reproductive health in national healthcare systems. These resolutions can spread awareness that maternal healthcare is a critical aspect to a new mother's health, which can determine life or death situations.

Discussion Questions
1. What can the United Nations do to allow women to receive improved mental health outcomes worldwide?
2. How can the United Nations address current gender disparities in healthcare?
3. What can specifically be done to allow for increased prevention of women's diseases and treatments?

Resources
1. "International Women's Day 8 March." *United Nations*, Mar. 8, 2024. https://www.un.org/en/observances/womens-day.

   Description: The united nations celebrates international women's day, highlighting information about women that deems their health important to prioritize.

2. "National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality." *Australian Government*, March 8, 2023. https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/national-strategy-achieve-gender-equality-discussion-paper/current-state/health#:~:text=Women%20live%20longer%20on%20average,or%20exacerbate%20other%20health%20conditions.

   (Highly Recommend) Description: Women's bodies function differently than men's, making them important to prioritize in health research institutions, however since they are currently not prioritized, they are facing negative health and gender disparities including decreased access to services.

3. "The dangers of gender inequality in health care." *Surest*, August 18, 2021. https://www.surest.com/blog/dangers-of-gender-inequality-in-health-care.

   Description: gender inequality in healthcare can cause increased women's health suffrage, making this imperative to be addressed in specific ways.

4. Kubala, Kendra. "Effects of gender discrimination on health." *Medical News Today*, October 25, 2021. https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/effects-of-gender-discrimination#effects-on-mental-health.

   (Highly Recommended) Description: Gender discrimination and disparities in and out of the workforce have negative impacts on women's mental and physical health.

5. Bussi Tel Tzure, Tlalit. "Ignored And Underrepresented: The Impact Of Excluding Women In Healthcare Research." *Forbes*, March 7, 2023.

https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinessdevelopmentcouncil/2023/03/07/ignored-and-underrepresented-the-impact-of-excluding-women-in-healthcare-research/?sh=28405e2f628a.

(Highly Recommend) Description: Women have little-to-no representation in healthcare research, which causes their health to be at danger, as they need healthcare assistance for their specific bodily functions, which differs from men's.

6. Biggers, Alana. "Postpartum Maternal Health Care in the United States: A Critical Review." *Medical News Today*, June 17, 2021. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1595301/#:~:text=Postpartum%20maternal%20health%20care%20is,scope%20of%20routine%20postpartum%20care.

Description: Maternal healthcare is crucial to women's health as it determines the life or death scenario of one, however, it is neglected and must be educated to individuals for improvements in healthcare systems for women.