

My experience as a delegate to Harvard Model United Nations, India, 2023



It was my first experience as a delegate to the 13th edition of Harvard Model United Nations India, conducted from August 12th to 15th, 2023, in Bengaluru. Every year, HMUN India sees hundreds of delegates from across India and worldwide unite to debate and develop solutions for some of the most pressing issues. Our conference theme –***Exploring New Horizons*** - recognizes the bold actions that our generation needs to take in the coming years and how we can adopt this constantly changing world by pushing our boundaries to accomplish the goals that we have set for ourselves. I applied for this conference by answering the questions mentioned below. However, I didn't get the country of my choice, I worked hard to understand the problems faced by Nicaragua in today's time to achieve the target of ***universal education*** for all.

Question 1. Please describe your previous experiences with HMUN India and Model UN in general. If you do not have Model UN experience, please describe relevant experiences such as debate, public speaking, or mock trial. Please add dashes to the end of your response if you feel your answer is sufficient (to hit the 150 minimum character count.)

Answer: *Unfortunately, I did not have the pleasure of participating in a prior HMUN. Nevertheless, I have participated in a youth parliament before, and - it was glorious (perhaps partly because I acquired a shiny new medal). I was in the National Security Council as the Head Of the Navy, an officer responsible for protecting my country's citizens from the waves and working with the other ministers to ensure the same -working with the Prime Minister and having meetings to counter China's tactics on the South China Sea was so much fun!*

Along with that, I have also participated in countless public speaking competitions such as declamations about various national leaders and Shakespearean monologues (all of which I have been fortunate enough to be mentioned) and debates. Besides making me ardor them, they have also made me the person I am today. The amalgamation of working together as a team and liaison while inspiring and getting

inspired by the dynamism is truly addictive. All that aside, the ecstatic anticipation and adrenaline rush of coming onto a stage is something I could never willingly give up

Question 2. Is there a country or region of the world in which you are particularly interested? Please add dashes to the end of your response if you feel your answer is sufficient (to hit the 150 minimum character count.)

Answer: *I am exceptionally interested in the USA and China. The dynamic between these two countries and their inner peculiarities are something you could debate incessantly about, which perhaps would go a long way toward understanding these countries from a true delegate's perspective.*

Question 3. Do you have a preference for or against double delegations? Please add dashes to the end of your response if you feel your answer is sufficient (to hit the 150 minimum character count.)

Answer: *Yes, I am inclined to work in double delegations, as working together is efficient and an esprit de corps in a debate is essential. Besides that, meeting new people, understanding them, and getting introduced to a myriad of ideas, perspectives, contentions, and opinions is one of the main reasons I would love to work in a double delegation.*

My experience:



I was nominated as a delegate from Nicaragua under Director Shameel Aubeelauck for the Committee “the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) with the Agenda of ‘Universal Education,’ and I was supposed to write a position paper for my country before going to the conference.

Country: Nicaragua

Committee: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

Topic: *Position Paper on Universal Education*



Background History of Nicaragua

1. My country has a rich history of literacy, almost as colorful as its colonial past. It does, however, have its darker periods, i.e., referring to before the Sandinista era. When the Sandinistas came to power in 1979, they inherited an education system that was one of the worst maintained and set about in all of Latin America. Under the Somoza's, due to the increase in poverty, many of the adolescents were forced into the labor market, consequently leaving schools, and this collectively constricted educational opportunities for Nicaraguans. “In the late 1970s, only 65% of primary school-age children were enrolled in school; of those who entered first grade only 22% completed the full six years of the primary school curriculum. Most rural schools offered only one or two years of schooling, and three-quarters of the rural population was illiterate”.[1]. During this time, achieving secondary education became too expensive for the average family, and rich families sent their children abroad. Only 8% of the country's populous achieved education in its universities (quite a high estimate for that time). By 1984, a few reforms by the

government almost doubled the amount of GNP going into educational institutions, thus bringing about a massive change in the literacy scenes of the country and doubling the number of educators, institutions, and students alike. This was followed by a literacy campaign in 1980 using secondary school students as volunteer teachers -“ reduced the illiteracy rate from 50% to 23% of the population. After the 1990 election, the Chamorro government placed education in the hands of critics of Sandinista policy, who imposed more conservative values on the curriculum. A new set of textbooks was produced with support from the United States Agency for International Development (AID), which had provided similar help during the Somoza era”[2,1].

2. Despite the government's best efforts to increase the literacy of the country in the 1980s, most of the country remained illiterate. Going before even the Contra War (the Nicaragua Revolution that saw the rise of a dictatorship during the 1970's and 1980s), the country was straining to keep the education system running and was not able to bear on with the rapidly increasing numbers of students. At the end of the Sandinista era, the literacy rate had fallen, and the rise in literacy brought by the campaign fell back. Overall, school enrollments were larger than in the 1970s. “Especially in the countryside, access to education had broadened dramatically. However, a substantial minority of primary school-age children and three-quarters of secondary school-age students were not in school, and the proportion of students who completed their primary education had not advanced beyond the 1979 level. ***Even by Central American standards, the Nicaraguan education system was performing poorly***”[2].
3. The country boasts many commercial schools and eight universities the oldest which being the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Nicaragua founded in 1812 during the Spanish colonisation. Admission to higher education is based on the Bachillerato (a secondary school qualification). “Students are also subject to an entrance examination. The Licenciado, the main undergraduate degree, is a four- or five-year course of study. A professional title may be awarded depending on the subject. Following the Licenciado, the first postgraduate degree is the Maestria, which lasts two years and culminates with the submission of a thesis. Institutions of higher learning can offer two- or three-year courses in technical and vocational education. The main qualification studied for is the Tecnico Superior”[1].

Real problem and Efforts made over the years :

1. The country currently has over 30 public universities and over 75 private institutions. Now, education in Nicaragua is free for all its citizens. Secondary education in the country is free and compulsory (as enforced by the NCE).
2. However, in Nicaragua, education is not equally accessible to all, even though primary education is compulsory. The government has not yet found the necessary tools to

instigate accessible community action and counter the factors that keep students from enrolling in primary or secondary education. The compulsion is not strictly implemented. According to the Human Rights Measurement Initiative (HRMI) – “*Nicaragua is fulfilling only 73.7% of what it should be fulfilling for the right to education based on the country's income level. HRMI breaks down the right to education by looking at the rights to both primary and secondary education*”[1]. “While considering Nicaragua's income level, the nation is achieving 92.3% of what should be possible based on its resources (income) for primary education but only 55.1% for secondary education”. Not only that, other factors such as weather as well as the accessibility and transport also limit the number of students attending schools and most students drop out of school by the time they reach secondary school, a sad picture of reality.

3. ***These problems faced by Nicaragua concerning education are not only native to the country. Still, they are a much-experienced phenomenon worldwide (especially in under-developed and developing countries).*** Most countries, despite putting in efforts to introduce or promote education, are lacking figuratively as well as literally in both funds and efforts. Elementary education is a fundamental right (one that is more often than not overlooked in many cultures and countries). Education not only enriches the minds of the population so that they can make better decisions for themselves, but it also increases the quality of human resources of a country, consequently increasing its economy and GDP and promoting its overall development in all sectors (predominantly the tertiary). This basic right that it is, is, unfortunately, often grossly overlooked in hindsight. About 1/3 of the world's countries do not have proper education systems set in place, and most underdeveloped countries have literacy rates as low as 63%. We, as the population of the world, should come together to improve and increase the quality as well as the accessibility of education for all, thus at least trying to get close to this utopian idea of universal education, i.e., education for all.

The topics that I would like to propose a policy on are as follows in a list formatting:

1. UNICEF sanctioned policy to provide funds to underdeveloped countries to promote and increase the involvement in educational institutions, construction of schools and promoting awareness on education.
2. A worldwide education awareness program that involves surveys of the root problems of underdeveloped countries.
3. Promote and adopt other education policies adopted by other countries that might be impactful if modified or used in another country's context.
4. Promotion of other financial aid policies.
5. Spreading of awareness among the population.

References taken from Wikipedia[2] as well as borgenproject.org[3] and [Education in Nicaragua | K12 Academics](#) [2]

ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL

During my stay, I participated in various conferences and debate sessions to interact with various speakers and past alumni of Harvard who guided us in following our dreams as delegates. After much deliberation and discussion, I prepared a working paper that aims to solve the problem faced by underdeveloped and undeveloped countries in achieving the target of 'Universal Education for All.' In this process, a working paper, 'ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL,' was prepared, highlighting our view and the future course of action agreed by all the signatories' member countries, including mine. The same is reproduced below:

Signatories: Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Brazil, Mozambique, Iceland, Honduras, South Sudan, Korea, Haiti, Ethiopia, South Africa, Czech Republic, Jamaica, Bangladesh, Norway, Thailand, USA, Nigeria, Portugal, Canada, Kenya, Greece, Rwanda, Switzerland, Venezuela, Indonesia, Belize, Bulgaria, Dominican Republic, Cuba, **Nicaragua**, Peru, Angola, Australia, Cuba, Oman, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, New Zealand, Nepal, Argentina, Philippines, Mexico, Afghanistan, Morocco, Tunisia, Denmark, Georgia, Lebanon, Chile, Chad, Algeria, Poland, CAR, Mauritius, Rwanda, Colombia

Sponsors: Lebanon, Belize, Syria, Iran, Congo, Angola, Burundi, Chile

Aim of the Ongoing Session of the UNICEF:

1. Take note of the need for accountability of funds given with the purpose of education, regardless of the source;
2. Recommend the prioritization of rebuilding education systems in post-conflict regions and potential integration in the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping forces;
3. Recommend the implementation of an early recovery framework within each Member state's educational systems;
4. Recommend the creation of a temporary task force mandated to assist nations in integrating early recovery framework within their educational systems to prevent future shocks in the educational system;
5. Recommends the need to increase national investment into information and technology services (ITC) Technology technology-efficient learning tools(TELL), and online resources advancement;
6. Urges countries to provide equitable distribution of broadband
 - i) Use local and national data to determine the areas most in need
 - ii) Increase public-private partnerships for broadband access
 - iii) Reduce government taxation for given areas
 - iv) Making use of IXPs to reduce the cost of broadband per country
7. Urges member LICs to design a new funding allotment system that ensures the educational sector receives at least 6% of the nation's GDP and 15% of the public spending, as required by the UN.
8. Emphasises the importance of modern infrastructure and curriculums that embrace multiculturalism in education and asks nations to start developing them.

9. Calls upon member HIC's to provide financial aid to countries so that they can fund education effectively.
10. Urges nations to open necessary services such as transportation so that children can be transported to schools and back without any obstacles.
11. Requests LICs to make education mandatory until at least the age of 15 and make primary education completely free, resulting in higher accessibility to education and rising literacy rates.
12. Recommend countries increase the testing for identification of dyslexia and other related special needs in students and integrate the needs of these students in their holistic education;
13. Request governments to increase accountability of their education systems and parental involvement;
14. Recommend nations include digital literacy and digital skills as a requirement in the achievement levels of students and ensure accountability and implementation of these skills across public and private schools;
15. Strongly recommend governments to take action to reduce gender barriers and improve education access for girls by
 - i) Conducting large-scale awareness campaigns, mainly through social media platforms, to combat gender stereotypes,
 - ii) Add various policies making the participation of female children a compulsion or benefit and having reserved seats,
 - iii) Ensuring safer ways of commuting for the children as well as increasing awareness about education - especially in the rural areas,
 - iv) Taking measures to prevent child marriages, which impacts female children from rural areas in particular,
 - v) Opening remedial learning centres to help young mothers and pregnant girls catch up and continue learning, including the provision of career counselling services,
 - vi) Strengthen initiatives already taken by the UNICEF and other UN bodies in the aspect of gender equality;
16. Recognize the need for a more refined definition of 'education equity' in education systems,
 - i) Notes that socioeconomic conditions outside of schooling as factors that impede equity, including but not limited to; socioeconomic status, race, geographical location, etc,
 - ii) Recognises that education equity should also be determined by a basic achievement level for each student which includes:
 - a) Reading Literacy,
 - b) Basic mathematical skills,
 - c) Digital Literacy skills;
 - iii) Emphasises for the above definition to be adopted by the respective education ministries and institutions and regulated in private schools;
17. Emphasise the need of training programs for the most efficient use of technologically enabled learning programs,

- i) Such programs should provide training to teachers to ensure they are confident with the material,
- ii) Training programs for students to ensure that they are able to make efficient use of said materials;

18. Combat urban and rural disparities by:

- providing targeted assistance and creating customised programmes to students by collaborating with the local communities to cater to their needs and challenges.
- offering scholarships to economically disadvantaged families, ensuring a fair distribution of educational resources.
- developing a curriculum that reflects local cultures, traditions and languages
- Granting easy access to digital libraries and online resources that can be used by rural students easily.
- Unity learning spaces for students in rural areas a group studies for better quality of understanding.

19. Recommends countries work with UN-SPIDER in the collection of data regarding natural disasters, and formulate an efficient system of communication with schools;

20. Emphasises on the need for rehabilitation of students affected by the pandemic in terms of education;

21. Countries can set up a committee to monitor the expenditures of the funds provided by them. The committee can collaborate with the UN and monitor how these funds are being utilised and conduct periodic inspections to check the developments made by the country using their funds.

22. Urges countries to encourage Private Public Partnerships, through measures such as, but not limited to:

- a) Reducing barriers to entry such as permit restrictions, tax concessions and the cost of registration for companies that agree to provide internet access to one remote rural area.
- b) Mandating the conduction of digital literacy programmes for locals in the rural area.
- c) Find alternatives to zero-rating educational content, keeping in mind laws on net neutrality, such as by allowing telecom operators to charge a minimum price on their educational services to prevent the existence of a competitive advantage.
- d) Facilitating agreements with technology providers to initiate a ‘student package’, where they provide subsidised laptops and tablets for students.

23. Calls upon High Income countries such as Denmark, Oman and Chile to create funding plans to assist developing countries address educational disparities, which will be used for purposes such as, but not limited to:

- a) Teacher training programs for teachers in the developing nations, including on how to utilise digital learning platforms.
- b) Cash-based assistance to low-income families to assist them in purchasing technological devices.

- c) Curation of Open Educational resources, which will have lesson plans and videos suited to the national curriculum of the developing country, by leveraging existing platforms developed by the HICs.
- d) Helping infrastructure development and vocational education opportunities in public schools.

Few pictures that capture the event:



VIDEO-2023-09-12-15-36-08.mp4

Me speaking as a delegate on behalf of my country



VIDEO-2023-09-12-15-34-29 (1).mp4

Musical night



Apart from these serious discussions, there were ample opportunities to participate in HMUN's Got Talent and the impact initiative, which helped participants break the ice.

I got to showcase my singing talent and participate in various challenges organized during the conference. Overall, it was a very enriching experience for me. This place not only gave me new friends but also memories of a lifetime that will help me shape my personality both intellectually and emotionally.