

Greetings Delegates,

My name is Ariana Tuchman, and I'm looking forward to being your director for the UNHCR committee at FMUN this October! The UNHCR operates worldwide to assist refugees and internally displaced people (IDP) who have been forced from their homes due to conflict or natural disaster. This past summer, I worked in Kenya at an IDP camp for those displaced by the post-election violence of 2007. Though there was no direct UN presence at the camp (an issue I'd be happy to explain later), the UNHCR had provided many of the tents and supplies for the 16,000-plus individuals residing at what had been deemed "Shalom City." The issues we'll be debating at FMUN weren't chosen randomly; they are problems I noticed during my first weeks at Shalom City.

The topics for the UNHCR at FMUN 2009 are:

1. Improving Long-Term Living Conditions in IDP and Refugee Camps
2. Education of Refugees and IDP's

Though the IDP's I worked with had only been at Shalom City for a year or so, the initial "emergency response" was complete and the residents were settling in, not knowing how long they'd remain away from their homes. Worldwide, refugee and IDP camps often become semi-permanent settlements. Many become synonymous with slums as their residents remain helpless within the confines of the camp.

Regarding education, I chose to focus on secondary and continuing education for a few reasons. Firstly, UNICEF mainly focuses on primary education, and, if you've been a MUN-er for a while, you probably have debated that issue countless times. Furthermore, in my experiences at Shalom City I saw that the secondary school students were all but left out of the educational equation. The younger children attended school in UNICEF tents, with local professional teachers for each grade-level. The local secondary school, which was an hour's hike away (up a mountain!) was practically empty. There were probably about 1000 secondary school-aged youth at Shalom City, but very few were able to attend the school, especially when it started charging "teacher motivation" fees from its students. For those students that did attend, no meal was served, and the teachers were underqualified. As you'll see in the background guide, continuing education and vocational training could also benefit the economic and psychological situations of IDP's and refugees.

I hope you're excited to be in UNHCR for FMUN 2009! Keep in mind the committee writes a report instead of resolutions; an explanation can be found on the webpage. If you're new to MUN, don't worry too much because FMUN is a great experience for first-timers. We'll make sure to get everyone quickly caught up on parliamentary procedure as the weekend progresses so that you all will be ready for the big conferences later this year! If you have any questions, feel free to email me. Best of luck with your research, and I'll see you in October!

Sincerely,
Ariana Tuchman
Director UNHCR

Florida Model United Nations