Welcome Delegates!

My name is Brianne Garrett, and I am honored to be one of your assistant Directors for the Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee (SOCHUM). I am currently a freshman at Boston University studying Journalism with a minor in Spanish. Model UN, NHSMUN in particular, was a huge activity for me in high school, and I could not be more excited to continue with this amazing conference in college. My experience as a delegate has helped me develop public speaking and interacting skills that are applicable to other areas of my life, and I hope that you will have a similar experience.

I am eager to hear all of your engaging ideas regarding our two topics in SOCHUM: The Humans Rights of Prisoners and Socio-cultural Influences on Women's Health in the Developing World. These topics are two prevalent issues to the global community today and will create the opportunity for intriguing debate. The concerns surrounding these two topics encompass what SOCHUM is all about: protecting the basic rights of the groups of people who are often underrepresented or being violated.

I hope you are as excited as I am to participate in NHSMUN 2015. You will soon be able to share all of your interesting ideas with delegates from all over the world, who will eventually become your partners in creating the best solutions possible to these global issues. I am confident that your experience at NSHMUN will be a successful one and I look forward to seeing you in committee!

Sincerely,

Brianne Garrett
Assistant Director, SOCHUM Committee
@NHSMUN_SOCHUM
Hello Delegates!

My name is Jerry Li and I have the pleasure of serving as one of your Assistant Directors for the Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee (SOCHUM) at NHSMUN 2015. Hailing from the Pacific Northwest of Canada, I am currently a freshman at Claremont McKenna College studying Economics and Government.

Model UN has been an essential part of my life since freshman year of high school; not only has it exposed me to the intricacies and peculiarities of international affairs, it has also introduced me to a network of delegates through countless committee sessions at conferences around the world. Whether this is your first conference or your twenty-first, each committee session will teach you new knowledge on international affairs and new interpersonal communication skills. I hope that you will find this experience challenging, rewarding, and most importantly, fun!

SOCHUM is a committee in which delegates analyze the abstract socioeconomic factors that influence the everyday lives of ordinary people to in turn create concrete resolutions. I am particularly excited about the two topics that our committee will tackle — The Human Rights of Prisoners as well as Socio-Cultural Influences on Women’s Health in the Development World. These two topics highlight the importance of focusing our attention on groups of people whose rights and wellbeing are often neglected by the global community. Through examining the sociocultural influences pertinent to these issues, delegates are given the platform in this committee to combine knowledge with analysis, and discussion with compromise.

March is right around the corner, so I wish you best of luck on the remainder of your research and preparation! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the Dias. I look forward to meeting you very soon!

Cheers,

Jerry Li
Assistant Director, SOCHUM Committee
@NHSMUN_SOCHUM
TOPIC A: HUMAN RIGHTS OF PRISONERS

UPDATE PAPER

In recent months, the issue surrounding the human rights of prisoners has seen both progression and stagnation around the world. Though this issue is worldwide, recent news has focused mainly on countries such as the United States, North Korea and Israel, with both praises and criticisms directed at their practices in prisons. Beyond the activity of single countries, factors such as lack of resources and global health complications have contributed to the demise of millions of detainees around the world. According to the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, who spoke at the 2014 Conference of the International Corrections and Prisons Association:

“One observation I have made again and again in our contacts with penitentiary services across the world is that for most politicians and institutional politics, prisons are never a priority. Resources, in particular financial resources, are scarce for present needs as well as for planning and conceptual work. As a consequence, many of the challenges in detention can be traced back to a simple, yet fundamental failure to keep prisons and corrections in step with the modern world. This is reflected in outdated legislation, practices and buildings, which then result in anything from food shortage to overcrowding.”

At the conference held this past October, Maurer stresses that overcrowding is a prevalent problem among the world’s prisons today. He predicts that overcrowding will soon reach dramatic magnitudes, which in turn can lead to extreme security and health risks for both the detainees and the staff. Much of the overcrowding can be attributed to the increase in people being accused of crimes, which also contributes to the overwhelming of court systems. UN speakers at the conference argued that, due to the increased push towards incarcerating the convicted and less of a push towards offering them fair trial, the ability to accommodate this influx of prisoners is becoming increasingly difficult for many of the world's prisons.

Health among prisons should be a focus for delegates of SOCHUM, especially with the recent Ebola outbreak that emerged in West Africa and has since spread to portions of the world. As a social and humanitarian committee, SOCHUM should help to promote the equal treatment of prisoners, seeing as the need for health care is a detainee’s fundamental human right. Yet, according to Maurer at the October conference, “The lack of primary healthcare and access to medicines and treatment, combined with low levels of hygiene, lack of water and extreme weather can lead to conditions that simply violate the dignity of detainees.” This suggests that in order to prevent detainees from continuing to face risks, increasing both short and long-term healthcare access is

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
vital. Working to improving the living conditions of prisons is just one way to alleviate this pressing problem.

Measures to protect detainees from Ebola are underway. This is important for the committee to note and expand on as a foundation for future resolutions pertaining to the health of prisoners in general. On 11 December 2014, The UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) issued an external situation report stating possible measures to combat the Ebola issue, specifically regarding its impact on prisons and their detainees. According to the report, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has implemented two prison isolation units in Freetown, Sierra Leone. These units serve as centers for new inmates to help prevent the outbreak from extending to prison populations in the area. In addition to this plan, UNDP is in the process of implementing a “nationwide prison sensitization and equipment campaign to improve conditions and strengthen protection against the spread of EVD inside detention facilities.”

Recent 2014 developments regarding prisoner rights extend to specific countries as well. An article published this past October discussed an update regarding Israel's mistreatment of its prisoners. The “Status of Palestinian Prisoners in International Humanitarian Law” highlights Israel’s refusal to adhere to the Fourth Geneva Convention and furthermore its neglect to provide its detainees with their legal rights, specifically among its Palestinian political prisoners. In October of 2014 alone, 5,447 Palestinian security detainees and prisoners were held in Israeli prisons. The legality of Israel's arrest thousands of Palestinians is being questioned. Events such as this serve as reminders for the need for a more comprehensive international document regarding the treatment of prisoners.

A Washington Post report published in November found that the recent decision of the U.N. General Assembly committee to condemn North Korea for crimes against humanity pertains greatly to the country’s treatment of their prisoners. Former prisoners of North Korea, such as Kwon Hyo Jin, have spoke out about the harsh and inhumane conditions of North Korean political prison camps that have become recently notorious around the world. A report conducted by the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea identified six groups of victims, primarily detainees. According to the report, “the system is modeled on the Soviet Union’s infamous Gulag system, though the United Nations notes that ‘many of the features of the DPRK camps are even harsher than what could be found in the Gulag camps’.” The 2014 commission also highlights the country’s severe policy of “guilt by association” which states that, “generations of families could be locked up for the alleged political crimes of one person”.

6 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
process allows innocent people to be sent to prison and should be addressed as a violation of their basic human rights.

The United States has shown both progress and failure in extending human rights to its prisoners since the summer of 2014. In October 2014, Human Rights Watch released a submission to the United Nations Committee against Torture, revisiting a previous report on the investigations of US abuses against several detainees in US custody in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{14} During the course of the investigation, Human Rights Watch learned that none of the detainees who reported being in CIA custody had been interviewed by the Justice Department or any other US official investigating allegations of torture. Currently, this case is the foundation for the claim that the US lacks legality in its treatment of detainees, and the submission to the Committee against Torture highlights recommendations to combat this issue. The Human Rights Watch recommends that the Committee against Torture urge the US to either release detainees held at the facility or prosecute them in courts that meet international fair trial standards.\textsuperscript{15} It also recommends that the US give detainees and their counsel access to all evidence used to justify their detention.\textsuperscript{16} These recommendations can be useful in helping delegates form solutions to handle countries that illegally treat their prisoners.

On September 2014, the Human Rights Watch also released information pertaining to a US law in California that protects youth in prisons.\textsuperscript{17} The new law, according to Human Rights Watch, “prevents hundreds of young offenders from enduring rape, assault, and gang life in prison.”\textsuperscript{18} This law enables progress in the United States, and provides a solid initiative for other countries to model. Delegates can use this information as a basis for future possible solutions during committee.

This topic is as wide-spread as it is damaging. It is critical for SOCHUM to address this issue as soon as possible, to reverse the damage that has been done to prisoners for centuries.


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
**UPDATE PAPER**

In January 2015, actress Emma Watson spoke as the representative of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Watson unveiled UN Women’s new HeForShe IMPACT 10x10x10 pilot initiative to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. This one-year effort aims to engage governments, corporations, and educational institutions as instruments of change for communities in developing nations that most urgently need to address issues surrounding the wellbeing of women. As part of this new initiative, the developing world will be under scrutiny as nonprofit organizations and governments focus on the topics surrounding women, and more specifically, women’s health. As this new initiative is set in motion, delegates are encouraged to use this opportunity to think about the methods that SOCHUM can also use to influence developing nations. It is important to remember that SOCHUM as a committee can only make suggestions and cannot force any country to adopt new policies. In addition, delegates should condition the following updates on issues discussed in the background guide.

**Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)**

On January 26, 2015, Egypt convicted a doctor of manslaughter as a result of the death of a thirteen-year-old girl on whom he performed FGM/C. The doctor was sentenced to 27 months in prison and fined USD70, while the father who subjected his daughter to the procedure was given a three-month suspended sentence. Although Egypt criminalized FGM/C in 2008, it still has one of the highest rates of FGM in the world and illegal operations remain prevalent. The lawyer of the deceased called this verdict “a triumph for women,” as this is the first time Egypt has prosecuted anyone for FGM/C. Phillipe Duamelle, the UNICEF representative in Egypt, explained that “[t]he verdict is a precedent and sends out a strong signal that FGM, which still affects the lives of so many girls each year, is no longer to be tolerated.” In other words, this verdict can only further discourage families and doctors against the practice. With this potential change in social attitudes, delegates can use this opportunity to continuously influence the populations of developing countries to rethink the practice of FGM/C.

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20 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
25 El Deeb, "Egyptian Appeals Court Convicts and Sentences Doctor."
In West Africa, the recent outbreak of Ebola has curbed FGM/C. Because Ebola can be easily spread through bodily fluids, doctors in countries like Sierra Leone have stopped the practice of FGM/C due to the fear of transmission. This halt has given way for human rights activists to permanently eradicate the practice. For example, organizations such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) have engaged local secret society leaders in the hopes of changing social attitudes toward circumcision. Although Sierra Leone has set a fine of 500,000 Leones (about USD118) for performing FGM/C, secret societies such as the Sande Society that practice this procedure are still widespread. Delegates should take advantage of this temporary halt to find ways FGM/C can be permanently eradicated.

**Widows in India**

In October 2014, a group of 58 Indian widows wearing traditional white saris returned to their hometown of Calcutta to attend the festival of Durga Puja. These widows were shunned by their families when their husbands died and were forced to leave Calcutta to live in the countryside. Without a proper source of income, they now resort to singing Hindu hymns and begging for food, and without contact with society and their families, many women have lost the will to live. For these Indian women, coming back to Calcutta means defying convention and taking control of their own lives by denying the belief that their lives ended when their husbands died. Older widows, however, still have the belief that they had to leave their families as they became a burden, or that they did not have any sons to sustain the family. Their return seemed to create a change in the public perception of widows. Sulabh International, an organization devoted to creating social transformation of Indian society, amongst other goals such as eradicating social discrimination against scavengers, brought these women back to Calcutta. The organization explained that “[a]s they got off the train at Calcutta’s Howrah station, other passengers stopped and touched their feet (a traditional Indian gesture of respect) as the widows reminded them of their grandmothers.” This case is significant because it signals that social attitudes are changing in India. Delegates should consider the opportunities for employing NGOs and other international institutions like Sulabh International to step in and change the status quo of widows in India and other communities with discriminatory practices.

**Child Marriage**

Regarding the issue of child marriage, the developing world has experienced many recent changes. In January 2015, two people in India were sentenced to a month of imprisonment for arranging the marriage of an underage girl in a rural village. The police responded to an informant but was

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
34 "A Happy Homecoming for India's Widows."
unable to arrest the parents and the bridegroom, who succeeded in escaping.\textsuperscript{36} A few days later, police managed to stop another child marriage of a 16-year-old girl in a village called Rangasamuthiram after dissuading her parents.\textsuperscript{37} Through these cases, it is clear that despite support from local law enforcement, parents are still subjecting their own children to marriages. Delegates are encouraged to consider the sociocultural factors that have influenced the parents to make this choice and discover ways to influence the population in order to eradicate the forced marriage of children.

In Ghana, 174 communities in the Upper River Region publicly announced the eradication of child marriage.\textsuperscript{38} The Gambian government has created adequate policies and programs in the past, and through cooperation with national partners and international organizations such as UNICEF, it has managed to achieve this success.\textsuperscript{39} Some of these programs included awareness campaigns on radio and television. The additional legislation and legal frameworks that the government of the Gambia has created also contributed to the stigmatization of child marriage.\textsuperscript{40} Delegates should consider how a potential resolution would need to include strategies to tackle the issue on a localized level. In other words, delegates should think about how potential solutions need to directly influence individuals and change their perception on the issue of child marriage.

Conclusion

Taking into account these recent developments on women’s health in the developing world, it is evident that now is an opportune and critical time for SOCHUM to fulfill its mandate and protect the wellbeing of women. Delegates should consider how these updates influence peoples’ opinions on these sensitive issues, and how SOCHUM may create comprehensive resolutions to solve the issue of women’s health in the developing world through evaluating the socio-cultural influences.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

**TOPIC A**


An article regarding California’s impending new law to protect prisoners from being victims of rape and assault in prison.


A report highlighting the negative impact that lack of resources is having on prisoners around the world.


A report that condemns the illegality of the Israeli law due to its mistreatment of its Palestinian prisoners.


A report that reviews several US abuses against several detainees in US custody in Afghanistan.


An article about the UN's decision to condemn North Korea's inhumane prison conditions.


A report that discusses possible measures of the UNMEER in combating the Ebola scourge.

**TOPIC B**


A BBC News article reporting on the group of widows that returned to Calcutta to celebrate a festival.


A local Indian news article covering the story of the arrest and sentencing of two men who arranged a child marriage.
Another article covering a second story of the foiling of a child marriage wedding in India.

An article discussing the latest developments in the trial of a doctor who performed a fatal FGM/C procedure on a 13-year-old girl.


http://www.sulabhinternational.org/content/meet-sulabh.  
A section of the organization’s official website explaining its founding and mission.