

BACKGROUND

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State Department Must End Support for the Radical U.N. Children's Fund

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

The State Department has channeled over \$300 million to UNICEF without requiring compliance with executive orders on abortion, gender ideology, DEI, and Israel.

UNICEF has turned lifesaving child programs into platforms for comprehensive sexuality education, LGBTQ advocacy, climate activism, and anti-Israel reporting.

Further funding should be conditioned on new leadership and a return to UNICEF's core mission, or redirected to faith-based groups already doing the work.

During the past year, the U.S. Department of State has channeled more than \$300 million to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to help “children suffering from malnutrition in 13 countries with lifesaving food [and] to deliver life-saving support to children and families affected by humanitarian crises around the world.”¹ This represents a sharp drop from past U.S. funding to UNICEF, which reached more than \$1 billion during the last year of the Biden Administration.²

These grants have been issued despite the fact that UNICEF long ago departed from—and continues to depart from—its original core mission of providing assistance to children threatened by conflict, disaster, hunger, and poverty in favor of using these lifesaving programs as global platforms for the aggressive advancement of such unrelated radical ideologies as the claimed “international right to abortion,” gender

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equality/LGBTQ rights, climate policies, and hostility to Israel. Quixotically, a month after State disbursed its first grant to UNICEF, the U.S. Mission to the United Nations (USUN) informed the U.N. Secretary General that the U.S. government would reject UNICEF's Strategic Plan for 2026–2029 because “the United States strongly opposes the inclusion of harmful gender ideology, including comprehensive sexuality education.” USUN reaffirmed the Trump Administration's position that “there is no international right to abortion,” acknowledging UNICEF's radical character.³

Funding to UNICEF is one of several macro grants from the State Department to global entities espousing radical agendas over the past year. This includes \$3.8 billion to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs⁴ and \$4.6 billion to the Swiss-based Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.⁵ The department's foreign aid disbursements do not require these organizations to abide by established presidential and departmental policies that explicitly prohibit any taxpayer financing of overseas abortions;⁶ gender ideology;⁷ diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies;⁸ the green agenda;⁹ and anti-Israel bigotry.¹⁰

Gender, Sexuality, and Children

USUN's rejection of UNICEF's strategic plan is a result of the latter's out-of-core-mission guiding principles that “Gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women remain at the heart of everything that UNICEF does” and support for “sexual and reproductive health and rights” (abortion), among other policies that have been explicitly rejected by the Trump Administration.¹¹ USUN's opposition to UNICEF's “comprehensive sexuality education” shows its awareness of the sexually explicit materials the U.N. imposes on children.¹² For example, in Malawi, a training manual on comprehensive sexual education for African students sponsored by the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA) teaches about being born “in the wrong body” and defines gender “as socially constructed.”¹³ Children as young as 10 years old are instructed on how to watch pornography and taught how to perform various sex acts that are too graphic to describe here.¹⁴

More revealing is UNICEF's gender policy for 2021 through 2030. It admits to “advancing a more progressive normative framework around gender equality.” In neo-Marxist terms, the policy mandates UNICEF “to remove underlying structural barriers “and “intersecting effects of systems of oppression” in favor of “more equitable systems of power.”¹⁵

UNICEF has anchored its gender policies to abortion ever since the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, which was

held in Beijing, China. It was there that then-First Lady Hillary Clinton for the first time at a global forum posited abortion as an “international human right.”¹⁶ This explains the close partnership that has existed between UNICEF and UNFPA, which provides abortion kits. For example, UNICEF’s Regional HIV/AIDS Advisor for Eastern and Southern Africa has affirmed that “Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) are crucial to our achieving the [UN’s] Sustainable Development Goals.”¹⁷ As of May 2024, UNICEF was partnering with UNPFA to advance “gender-transformative approaches.”¹⁸

During the Administration of President Barack Obama, UNICEF became a major global platform for gender ideology. It issued its first gender policy in 2010,¹⁹ and its position paper on “Eliminating Discrimination Against Children and Parents Based on Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity,” issued in 2014,²⁰ launched what would become a corporate obsession with LGBTQ advocacy for children. Protections for LGBTQ adults are extended to children and are reflected in all of UNICEF’s programs. The paper claims that children’s “vulnerabilities” include “discrimination at school, in hospitals, [and] in sporting teams,” defines transgender rights as human rights, and calls for the repeal of laws and legislation that “entrench...discrimination, and in particular those that criminalize behaviours or ‘promotion’ of homosexuality, or the association of LGBT children and individuals.”²¹ Interestingly, UNICEF’s advocacy for children’s rights based on gender identity and sexual orientation is rooted in international treaties and conventions that do not use these terms.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, UNICEF issued a global note on the illness’s impact on “queer” youth during quarantine, spotlighting LGBTQ youth mental health. The note provided information about LGBTQ identity through a “child friendly video.” It also criticized U.S. state legislatures for “introducing a record number of anti-transgender bills in 2021, many targeting trans youth,” and for allegedly “prohibiting physicians from providing gender-affirming treatment and care to trans youth.”²²

In May 2026—a month before receiving a \$218 million grant from the State Department—UNICEF reaffirmed its commitment to “Build[ing] a Safer World for LGBTQ+ Children” and declared that Pride Month “is a time to celebrate LGBTQ+ history, identity, and continued activism.” It also reaffirmed its advocacy of “laws and policies that protect children from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity” in “more than 190 countries and territories.”²³

Climate Action for “More Than 1 Billion Children”

As the State Department issued its second grant disbursement, UNICEF released its 2026 *Children’s Climate Risk Report*. In this report, UNICEF claims that “[m]ore than 1 billion children are exposed to at least three climate hazards” that include riverine and coastal floods, droughts, tropical storms, heatwaves, extreme heat, fires, and sand and dust storms.²⁴ The report asserts that “every child’s right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment requires urgent, coordinated and child-responsive climate policies, action and investment”²⁵ and specifies that achievement of this goal will require “the urgent phasing out of fossil fuels and a just transition towards renewable energy,”²⁶ “inclusive climate adaptation and responses to loss and damage,”²⁷ and “[e]mpower[ing] children and young people to meaningfully participate in climate action and a just transition by investing in climate education, knowledge and skills.”²⁸

Such an ambitious commitment costs money. In response, UNICEF has constructed the requisite funding edifice. In October 2024, UNICEF published a youth’s reflections on “the critical need for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to be not only robust and ambitious but also sensitive to the needs and rights of children.” NDCs determine how much money each country must spend to align with its Paris Agreement commitments. In addition to a Global Child Hazard Database, UNICEF has created a Climate, Environment, Energy and Disaster Risk Reeducation (CEED) Team along with an “NDC for Every Child Data Platform, which features a global dashboard with country profiles and an interactive map,” and has published a “Young Person’s Booklet to Nationally Determined Contributions, which aims to empower children and young people.”²⁹

In 2025, UNICEF added mental health as another climate-induced impact on children, going so far to treat climate change as “a psychological stressor” that can be equated with “child abuse” and an “Adverse Childhood Experience” that “can have lifelong mental health impacts on children.” It references a new ailment, “eco-anxiety,” and claims that “nearly 60% of young people are ‘very’ or ‘extremely worried’ about environmental problems.”³⁰

“From the River to the Sea”

UNICEF takes an openly pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel public stance, referring to the West Bank Gaza region as the “State of Palestine,” which is not internationally recognized but is nevertheless employed by UNICEF’s

education officers working in Gaza.³¹ In its public reporting, it follows the same pattern observed with respect to other U.N. agencies, carefully crafting its reporting and testimonials about Israeli actions in ways that can later be used as “evidence” by the International Criminal Court to pursue charges of genocide against the Jewish state.³²

UNICEF global spokesman James Elder has issued several blogs claiming that he “wasn’t ready for the devastation I saw in the Gaza strip” and that “in my twenty years with UNICEF...I’ve simply never seen such devastation and despair as is happening in Gaza,” accusing Israel of a “man-made nutritional catastrophe that could rapidly be reversed by [Israel’s] opening more road crossings to populations facing imminent famine.” He asserts that the “documented horrors in Gaza are a part of one of the many dark episodes in modern history.”³³

Elder, however, neglects both the depravity of Hamas’s actions against the Jewish victims of October 7, 2023,³⁴ and the terror Hamas has visited upon resident Palestinians, including the execution of children.³⁵ Moreover, the data that UNICEF and other U.N. agencies provide to international bodies and use to accuse Israel of committing war crimes and genocide in Gaza ignore Hamas’s complicity in civilian deaths and recruiting of children into its military ranks. UNICEF also avoids mentioning that Hamas is an internationally designated terrorist organization and controls all information issued by Gaza’s health ministry officials.³⁶

Most recently, UNICEF headquarters attempted to quash a report by its own team that undermines claims made a year ago of a Gaza famine—claims that were used to justify international accusations that Israel was committing genocide against the Palestinians. “‘Wasting,’ the report said, using a term for extreme thinness, ‘is low across all domains, suggesting no widespread acute malnutrition at population level.’”³⁷ According to another report, “Gaza has one of the lowest rates of acute child malnutrition in the region.”³⁸

UNICEF also appears to be teeing up similarly contrived evidence for future criminal accusations against the United States, cataloguing the number of Iranian children allegedly “killed and maimed in the places where they should be safest—their homes, schools and communities” and claiming that “more than 4,000 children have reportedly been killed or injured across six countries—more than 2,500 of them in Iran, with 386 children reported killed and 2,117 children reported injured.”³⁹ Significantly, such press releases do not clarify either the sources of the data they use or the military practices of the Iranian regime that may be placing civilians in danger.

Personnel Is Policy: Biden's Revenge

UNICEF's woke agenda is spearheaded by Executive Director Catherine Russell, who previously served as a Special Assistant to President Joe Biden and Director of Biden's Office of Presidential Personnel. She also served as President Barack Obama's Senior Advisor on and Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues.⁴⁰ Catherine Russell is a longtime abortion advocate.⁴¹ Another example of the leftwing prevalence of UNICEF leadership is the author of the previously referenced "Queer During Quarantine" article, who serves as UNICEF USA's Director for Governance and Board Engagement and has lobbied the U.S. Congress for more funding for the global organization.⁴²

In addition, a review of U.S. Federal Election Commission political contribution data shows that all of the 285 donations made by U.S. employees of UNICEF from January 3, 2025, through July 7, 2026, were directed to Democratic Party candidates.⁴³ Such a pattern clearly reflects systemic discrimination against conservative applicants for employment with UNICEF.

Given this extreme political slant, it should come as no surprise that on its career page, UNICEF declares that "[e]quity, inclusion and diversity [DEI] are at the heart of what we do." Gender diversity is first among the many characteristics listed in UNICEF's commitment "to include everyone." The organization asserts that it can achieve "better results for children by intentionally focusing on diversity and by amplifying the voices of those who are least heard." In fact, of the five employee resource groups listed, two are dedicated to the advocacy of gender equality and LGBTQI+ issues. This section boasts commitment to "Anti-Racism and Discrimination." Another section is devoted to "welcoming...employees who belong to the LGBTQ+ community" and promotes a videoclip "marking the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT)."⁴⁴

The recent injection of U.S. funds includes money for "staffing and coordination,"⁴⁵ and the overhead charged can be directed to the radical superstructure that is tasked with incorporating all of UNICEF's radical ideologies into its roster of children's programs.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the evidence outlined in the foregoing analysis, it is recommended that the State Department and UNICEF take the following specific actions.

- **Explicitly condition U.S. foreign aid.** The State Department must abide by President Trump's prohibitions against the use of U.S. foreign aid to finance the woke agenda. The White House Office of Management and Budget must take charge of the Administration's off-centered foreign aid apparatus. Further disbursements to UNICEF must be tied to the organization's purge of its radical superstructure and refocus UNICEF's work on its core bipartisan mission of protecting children.
- **Redirect funds to other organizations.** UNICEF's work duplicates the work of other international and local nongovernmental organizations, especially faith-based NGOs whose traditional norms align with those of aid beneficiaries and the American people. The State Department recently signed a multiyear accord with Christian organizations that already manage large-scale humanitarian and children-specific relief operations without misusing them to advance radical social ideologies.⁴⁶ The department should redirect undisbursed funds from UNICEF to these organizations.
- **Seek new leadership.** UNICEF's problems begin at the top. Nothing short of new senior leadership, the revamping of its personnel policies to ensure the recruitment and retention of a more politically balanced staff, and return to its original mission of protecting children can justify further U.S. funding.
- **Dismantle UNICEF.** The organization has departed so far from its original core mission that it may not be reformable, in which case it should be dismantled. Its programs could easily be transferred to other global organizations that have not been corrupted by radical ideology.

Conclusion

Because UNICEF's radical agenda is fully integrated across all of its program areas, funding the organization without specific prohibitive conditions provides the politically slanted foreign aid sector a funding lifeline that it can use to resist the policies of the Trump Administration. The State Department's failure to include such conditions in its arrangement with UNICEF could jeopardize the Administration's efforts to ensure that the allocation of U.S. foreign aid is fully consistent with American interests and values.

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