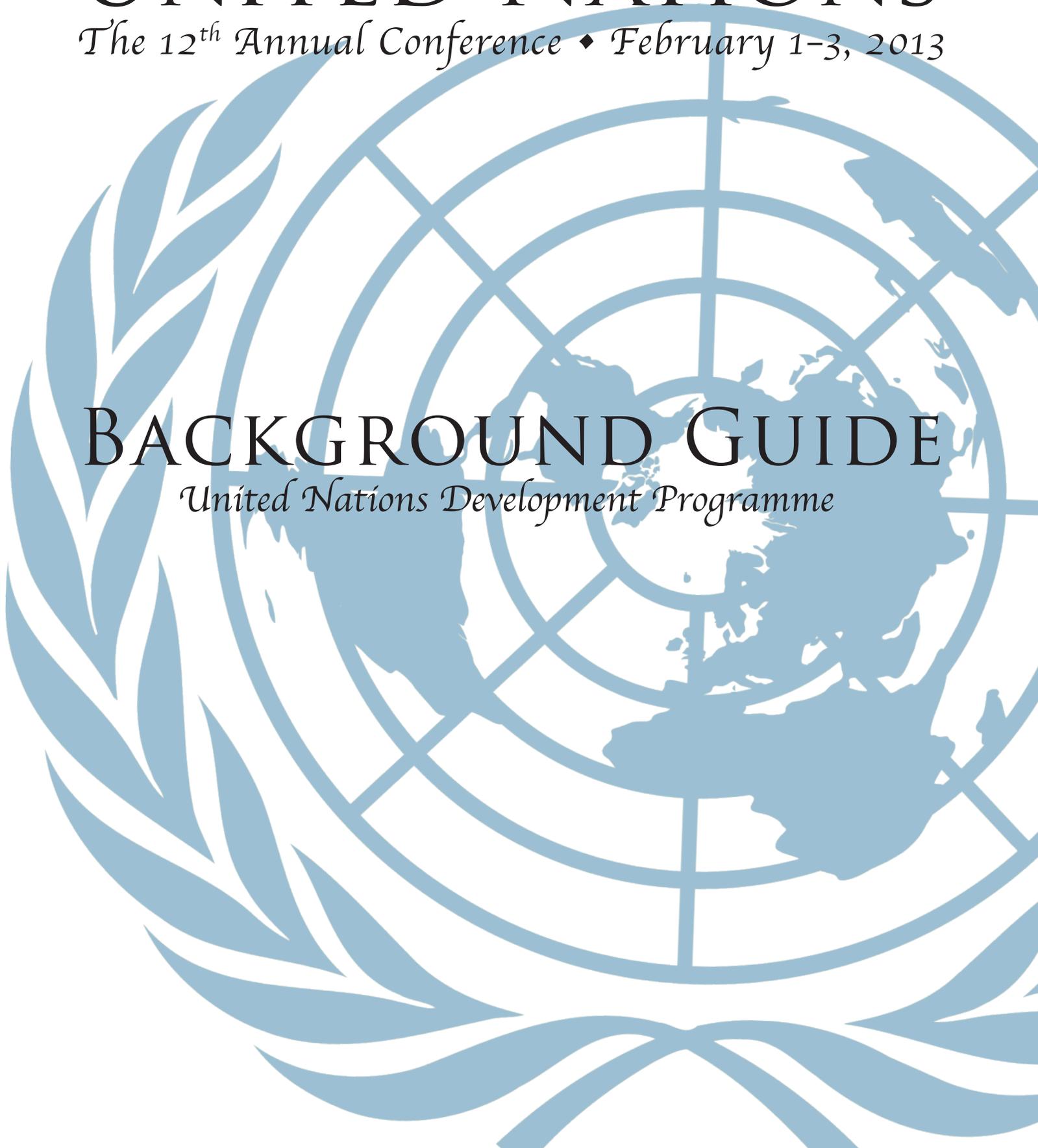


VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The 12th Annual Conference • February 1-3, 2013

BACKGROUND GUIDE

United Nations Development Programme





VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The 12th Annual Conference ♦ February 1-3, 2013

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Molly Donohue, and I am the Director for the United Nations Development Programme at VMUN 2012. A senior (Grade 12) at Woodinville High School, a suburb of Seattle, I was very excited to be selected to lead the UNDP committee, as I feel the issues they address are at the heart of humanitarian matters. I have been involved with Model UN since I began high school, and I firmly believe it was among the greatest choices I've made as far as extracurricular activities go. I serve as the head delegate and President of the MUN club at my school. High-level debate, impromptu speaking, and collaborative resolution-forming are all very important skills you can hone today and use for the rest of your life.

The two topics that have been selected are among the top priorities of the United Nations and address some of the Millennium Development Goals. The first — crisis prevention, relief and recovery — was a theme that was heavily stressed at the Rio+20 conference in the summer of 2012. With this, delegates must decide an appropriate balance between receiving aid and relying on self-dependency, an issue many countries face in reality. I hope you find many current-day crises to study while researching this topic, as it is interesting to compare and contrast the different ways that problems can be solved. I would like delegates to take a special interest in the role of women while they are debating this topic. The second topic addresses poverty alleviation and eradication, with an emphasis on sustainable solutions. I am interested in hearing the ideas that will inevitably arise through debate in regards to this topic.

I look forward to this conference, and with these broad issues there will be much to debate. Please do not hesitate to email me or any of the Development Programme staff if you have any questions.

Regards,

Molly Donohue
Director, United Nations Development Programme

Position Paper Policy

What is a Position Paper?

A *position paper* is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of the positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page, and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For the United Nations Development Programme, position papers are *mandatory*.

Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, his/her country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

Due Dates and Submission Procedure

All position papers must be submitted by midnight on Friday, January 18, 2013, two weeks prior to the conference.

Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email, to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as your last name, your first name — Position Paper. Please do not add any other attachments to the email or write anything else in the body.

Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Position Paper award.

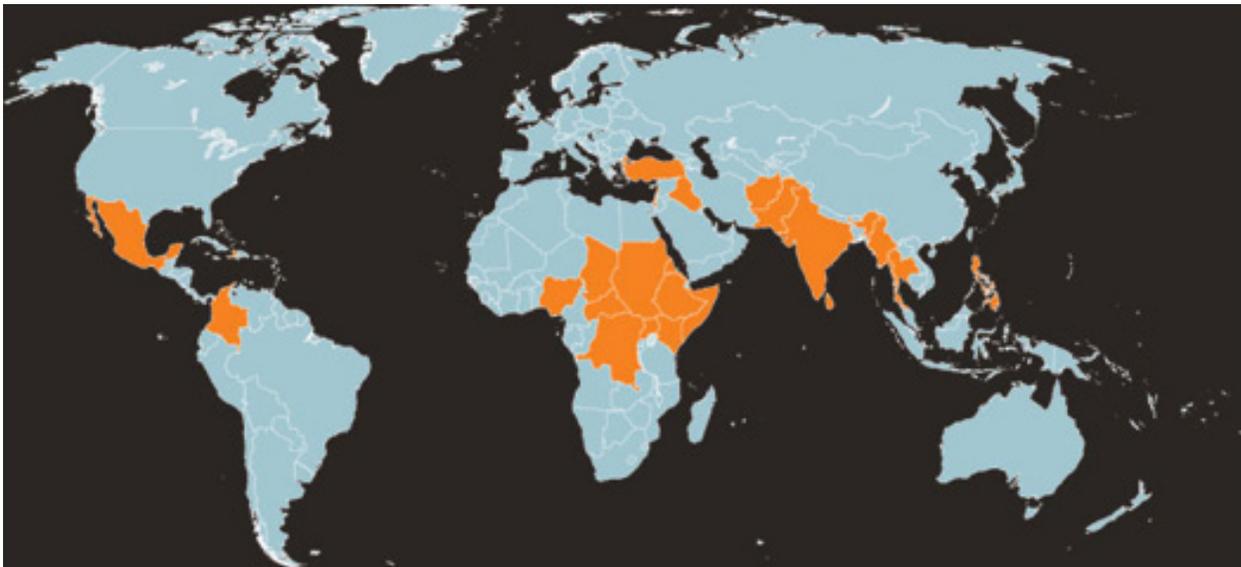
The email address for this committee is undp@vmun.com.

Topic A: Crisis Prevention and Recovery

Introduction

Since the year 2000, natural disasters have killed more than a million people and affected over a quarter of the global population. These crises also cost an exorbitant amount of money to clean up, often at least a trillion dollars. Initial programs and efforts are crucial in determining the long-term success of recovery: in addition to physical reconstruction, crises zones provide a brief but valuable opportunity to rebuild a society without traditional stereotypes and barriers. Specifically, in certain areas of the world where the majority of the population continues to hold on to conservative values, women are often limited in their opportunities. In times of crisis however, the role of women can be reevaluated, making it an opportune time to give women more power.

This topic will address development aid in crisis-prone and other devastated areas, the role of women in these places, and how the goals of the United Nations can be achieved by intertwining these two focus areas.



Map showing areas of conflict around the globe

Timeline

1881	The Red Cross is established. It seeks to impartially provide humanitarian care to victims of war and to help those afflicted by natural disasters.
1944	The International Monetary Fund is established.
1948	The United States launches the modern movement towards international development aid with the European Recovery Plan.
1949	The United Nations Expanded Program of Technical Assistance is created.
1958	The United Nations Special Fund is established.

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1975	The General Assembly merges the two aforementioned bodies to create the UNDP.
1970	The world's most developed countries commit to annually giving 0.7% of their Gross National Product (GNP) to Official Development Assistance.
1990	The <i>Human Development Report</i> , an annual publication detailing how economic growth translates to development, is launched.
2002	The first United Nations-sponsored summit-level meeting to address key financial and other issues pertaining to global development is held.
2006	The Warwick International Development Society holds its first ever conference for students interested in development issues.
2007	The UNDP launches the <i>Eight Point Agenda for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in Crisis Prevention and Recovery</i> .
2009	The UNDP launches a campaign to further the <i>Women, Peace and Security Agenda</i> by focusing on ten conflict- or disaster-affected countries.
2010	The General Assembly creates UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.
2012	The Rio+20 Conference is held to address, among other issues, the role of women.

Historical Analysis

Aid can come in three forms — monetary assistance, military support, and advice — and is primarily given to countries stricken by poverty or recently emerging from conflict.

The forerunner of modern aid programs was the European Recovery Program, or the Marshall Plan, which aimed to restore the economies of Europe in the post-World War II era and to develop a viable pattern of trade so that additional loans would be unnecessary in the future. After the Marshall Plan, foreign aid became a significant part of US foreign policy. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States used developmental assistance as a way to induce countries to respectively become, or refrain from becoming, communist. Foreign aid became not only a way to reduce levels of poverty and to support humanitarian efforts, but also a way to advance a particular political agenda.

At the 2002 International Conference for Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico, developed nations made the commitment to provide more and better aid to developing countries. This decision was made with the Millennium Development Goals in mind, and represented the first major change in the way that aid was viewed — not merely as a domestic undertaking, but as a collaborative effort. Multinational agencies were increasingly used after this event, and measures were taken to increase aid harmonization.

Since the Enlightenment period of the mid-eighteenth century, women at all levels of government have challenged gender inequalities by demanding political representation, suffrage, and equal treatment. While some gains have been made in the past decades, much remains to be done: women have comprised only 2% of negotiating delegations in UN-mediated peace processes since 1992, and only 2% of signatories to peace agreements.

Current Situation

Women make up half of the world's population yet disproportionately suffer from poverty and illiteracy, and are frequently underrepresented in community processes and decision-making. Nearly a third of the world's countries have parliaments that are 10% or less female; overall, women hold only 19.25% of parliamentary positions.¹ As such, current leaders of the world are looking to involve more women in politics.

Aid comes in a variety of forms. About a quarter is given through multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank; alternatives are direct bilateral aid, and aid through non-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross. Unsurprisingly, aid does not always have the intended effect, as the multiplicity of donors and type of aid does not easily synthesize with the objectives of the recipient country. The *New Encyclopedia of Africa* describes this relationship as follows:

[The] lack of coherence and coordination among an excessive number of donors is one of the main reasons for aid failure in low-income countries, in particular when the latter display weak institutions and poor governance, such as in sub-Saharan Africa.

One key problem that has gained attention since the 1990s is *aid dependency*. This issue primarily affects poorer countries that run on very limited resources. There are at least sixteen Sub-Saharan African countries whose ratio of aid-to-government expenses exceeds 50%. The *New Encyclopedia* summarizes this problem well, noting:

Aid dependency creates vicious circles, as African governments have difficulties in gaining autonomy and implementing the learning-by-doing processes that are the conditions of sustainable development.

There have been three high-level summits to evaluate and reform aid harmonization procedures (Rome '03, Paris '05, Accra '08). The Paris Declaration cemented the process for giving/receiving aid: first, aid recipients form their own strategies with their parliaments and electorates; then, donors fund these strategies; next, development policies and clear goals are established, and progress towards these goals is monitored; finally, donors and recipients alike are held jointly responsible for achieving these goals.

Case Study: Rwanda

To see the powerful effect of empowering women in post conflict situations, look no further than the East African nation of Rwanda. The Rwandan Civil War began when a Tutsi refugee militia group invaded the country from the north in an attempt to overthrow the Hutu regime. Fighting ended with a ceasefire in 1993 and the subsequent Arusha Accords. However, in 1994, Hutu President Juvénal Habyarimana's plane was shot down, killing him and numerous other officials, turning the uneasy peace into a full-fledged revival of ethnic conflict. Soon after, a genocide was committed against the Tutsis by Hutu extremists, ultimately leaving close to a million people dead in a hundred days. The genocide was supported and coordinated by the national government as well as by local military and civil officials. After months of fighting, the Tutsi Rwanda Patriotic Front restarted their

¹"Media Campaign ." UNDP. n. page. Web. <<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/articles/>>

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offensive, defeating the army and seizing control of the country.

Eighteen years later, Rwanda is one of Africa's fastest growing economies, with an annual GDP growth rate of 8.6%. Rwanda has also made large strides towards achieving the MDGs, and poverty rates, though still severe, have dropped 12% over the last five years. 92% of all Rwandan children are enrolled in primary school. Traditionally, the government was made up of men, and women had a set child-bearing, housewife role. Today, however, women constitute 56% of the parliament, the highest percentage in the world. With this inflated proportion, female members of Parliament are finding it easier to pass legislation relating to gender issues. The UNDP has helped them implement initiatives, such as ways to train new female members of parliament on political processes. They also have the Forum of Rwanda Women Parliamentarians, which helps women run for political office. In 2005 they adopted a five-year Strategic Plan to include equal gender dimensions into policies, laws, programs, and practices. This new policy, together with provisions in the constitution establishing formal structures — such as the National Council of Women — provide means through which women may have a greater say in the formulation of policies that affect their lives.²

The UNDP and Rwandan leaders have worked to fight corruption, implement good governance, involve communities, involve women in the development process, and promote a culture of accountability. Rwanda is on a continuing path to growth and security. Auke Lootsma, UNDP's Country Director in Rwanda, noted, "the transformation from a war-ravaged society into a vibrant and dynamic nation is evident everywhere you go." Rwanda still has a ways to go, but in the meantime, other post-conflict areas can certainly learn from its example.³

UN Involvement

In 2000, the General Assembly produced a resolution to delineate and refocus the goals of the United Nations. Of the eight focus points listed, two are directly related to this topic: Goal 3, the promotion of gender equality, and Goal 8, the establishment of a global partnership for development.

These goals have spawned numerous conferences, resolutions, and efforts to empower women and create a sustainable future. Two examples of such initiatives were the 2002 United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, and the 2008 Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in Doha, Qatar. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have held similar events. As another example, to ensure that aid reinforces, rather than undermines, positive statebuilding practices, the UNDP created the Aid Information Management Systems (AIMS) to align provided assistance with development priorities in poorer countries and to facilitate aid flows.⁴

²"Case study." UNICEF. n. page. Web. 13 Oct. 2012. <http://www.unicef.org/gender/training/content/resources/Case_Study_Rwanda.pdf>.

³"Media Campaign ." UNDP. n. page. Web. <<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/articles/>>

⁴http://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/capacity-development/aid-information-management-systems-in-post-conflict-and-fragile-situations/UNDP_AIMS_in_Post-Conflict_and_Fragile_Situations.pdf

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There have also been various efforts to ensure that resources are used in the most effective way possible. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s mandate is to mobilize and coordinate humanitarian assistance delivered by international and national partners, and has established the Financial Tracking System (FTS) to record all reported international humanitarian aid in a global, real-time database.⁵ While a good idea in theory, the FTS has thus far been underused.

At the widely attended Rio+20 conference in June 2012, leaders, activists, and experts gathered to discuss, among other topics, the future for women and the important roles they play in the community. The former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Michele Bachelet, Executive Director of UN Women, moderated a panel discussion, and presentations were made on new projects that empower women in rural areas by providing them with microfinance and technology. Moving from the Rio+20 conference into the future, it is clear that further progress in this field can only be possible with clear goals and vision, a stronger coalition among the global movement for women's empowerment, and public action, all supported by a base of accountability and responsibility.

Many resolutions have been adopted by the United Nations Security Council on this topic. Underlying these decisions are a basic theory, as described below in an excerpt from the Encyclopedia for Social Sciences:

The liberal political theory that informs the UN's politics embodies the ideas that (1) political systems are undermined and illegitimate when women are underrepresented; (2) the representation of women in politics contributes to an inherently more democratic multiparty system; (3) gender reform lies in legal reform; (4) "special treatment" (e.g., maternity leave) reproduces gender inequality; (5) a "critical mass" of women represented in governments ensures gender equality; (6) states should legally protect women from discrimination in all areas social life; and (7) women have a civil right to representation and their political participation serves as role model behavior and influences the status of women outside the political body.⁶

The first of the resolutions focused on women's rights, a Millennium Development Goal, and was passed in 2000 (Resolution S/RES/1325); it focused particularly on increasing the role of women in politics and community decision-making processes. This was the first time the Security Council required parties in a conflict or crisis situation to respect women's rights and to support their participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. This is especially important because women often have experiences that men do not, and more perspectives can often lead to better policies. Moreover, women account for over 50% of the population of those suffering from poverty, making them key focuses of development and integration efforts. The following resolutions elaborated on the measures contained in Res. 1325:

- Resolution 1820 (2008), demanded the "immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians,"⁷ noting that sexual violence is sometimes used as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, or disperse civilian members of

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶"Case study." UNICEF. n. page. Web. 13 Oct. 2012. <http://www.unicef.org/gender/training/content/resources/Case_Study_Rwanda.pdf>.

⁷http://wunrn.com/news/2008/06_08/06_16_08/061608_un.htm

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a community or group. The Resolution also affirmed the Council's intention, when establishing and renewing state-specific sanction programs, to consider imposing "targeted and graduated" measures against warring factions that have committed rape and other forms of violence against women and girls. Further, it called for training troops on the categorical prohibition of all forms of sexual violence against civilians, debunking myths that fuel sexual violence, and reforming the selection process for armed and security forces to take into account past sexual violence.

- Resolution 1888 (2009) specifically tasked peacekeeping missions with protecting women and children from rampant sexual violence during armed conflict. Other provisions of the text included the strengthening of systems to monitor and report on sexual violence, the retraining of peacekeepers, national forces and police, and calls to again boost the participation of women in peace building and other post-conflict processes.
- Resolution 1889 (2009) condemned the continuing sexual violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations.
- Resolution 1960 (2010), sponsored by the Human Rights Watch, declared that parties suspected of committing sexual violence during armed conflict had to make available information on their activities.⁸

In 2010 the UNDP put forward an Eight Point Plan to empower women and children in crisis situations. Under this program, individual countries' offices are given the freedom to establish new initiatives to stop violence against women and to advance women as decision makers, with the ultimate goal being to transform societies. With the appointment of Senior Gender Advisors (SGAs) and the provision of seed funding to various crisis zones, the plan has helped to reduce the severity of the situation. To address sexual and gender-based violence in selected countries, UNDP-funded local partners granted over 3,000 victims of sexual and gender-based violence free or subsidized legal aid.

The UN has listed women's rights and equality issues among their top priorities, but whether this will result in tangible results remains to be seen. For all the resolutions, conferences, planning meetings, and more, there still remains a lot of work to be done in this field.

Possible Solutions and Controversies

One of the targets of the UN Millennium project is to have all nations commit 0.7% of their Gross National Income to development aid by 2015, the end date of the Millennium Development Goals. However, with less than three years to go, the only countries to reach this goal thus far are Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, Denmark, and the Netherlands. This committee may therefore wish to consider ways to encourage the remainder of the world to meet this goal, or set alternate objectives.

A successful resolution should also address the misappropriation of funds by finding creative ways to improve accountability and transparency. Ban Ki-Moon noted that nearly 30% of development

⁸http://www.usip.org/gender_peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325#Why_do_women_need_to_be_critical_actors_in_peace_building

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aid is lost to corruption; such high rates clearly hinder progress, reduce the trust among civilians in their governments, and exacerbate the effects of donor fatigue. It is not unusual in fragile areas such as Nigeria, for example, to see a government leader deliberately stealing money allocated to public projects. While it is harder to monitor the activities of non-governmental organizations, this committee may nevertheless declare that these NGOs, too, should follow the same transparency laws that governments are asked to abide by.

Finally, solutions to gender inequality include family planning and access to contraceptives. While both may seem quite simple, the Inter Press Service, a news agency, declared that:

Contraceptive use also leads to more education and greater opportunities for girls, helping to end the cycles of poverty that millions of women and their families are trapped in. Up to a quarter of girls in sub-Saharan Africa drop out of school due to unintended pregnancies.

Politically, striving for greater adoption of the Eight Point Agenda may help strengthen the push for women's equality.

Bloc Positions

African Group

Western Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa are the regions with the highest concentration of aid recipient countries; in 2009, the OECD estimated the amount of aid provided to these areas to be over 28 billion. However, many of these countries remain unstable, and dependency is a problem.

Asia-Pacific Group

Asia received the second largest amount of aid in 2009 at nearly \$25 billion. One important outlier is Japan, which is one the largest donors of development assistance and gives about 10 billion dollars in aid annually.

Middle Eastern Group

In this bloc, there are both wealthy nations — Saudi Arabia is a very generous donor — and less developed countries — the international community recently pledged over 16 billion dollars to neighbouring Afghanistan; Iraq is also among the top 5 recipients of aid.⁹

Eastern European Group

Russia has the smallest aid budget of all nations in the G8, but has been spending more in recent years mostly through multilateral agencies unlike many other countries. Russia is one of the major providers of development aid for other-income countries in the Eastern European Group.¹⁰ Overall, however, donor activity from this region has been fairly stagnant since the end of the Cold War.

Latin American and Caribbean Group

These countries are also generally recipients — about 40% of the population in this region are in poverty — but Brazil made strides recently to increase its amount of foreign aid. The countries of

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2011/may/25/russia-foreign-aid-report-influence-image>

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Latin America receive about 45% of Brazil's foreign aid (largely focused on food aid).¹¹

Western European Group, United States, and Others

These countries are generally the largest donors and have shown a consistent commitment to helping countries in conflict and post-conflict regions. They also lead by example, having a large number of women politicians and passing strong gender-equality laws.

Discussion Questions

1. Is your country generally a bilateral or multinational donor/recipient?
2. Consider the [Eight Point Agenda](#) for Girls and Women in Crisis. How can this be improved?
3. Should the focus be on collecting more aid, or on methods of distribution and reduction of aid dependency?
4. In what ways have women been utilized in peacebuilding or political processes in your country?
5. In what ways can a country be advised to prepare for crises or natural disasters?
6. Is it the responsibility of the international community to intervene in fragile areas? How can this be shifted so that countries are taking more responsibility for their own affairs?
7. How does your country deal with the issue of tracking where aid goes?

Additional Resources

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/home>

The United Kingdom's Bureau for Aid page

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home.html>

UNDP Home Page

<http://www.unwomen.org/>

UN Women Site

<http://www.ciaworldfactbook.gov>

The United States's CIA updates this encyclopedia-like site regularly; it is a great resource for reliable statistics on every country in the world

<http://twitter.com/UNDP/>

The UNDP tweets multiple times per day with relevant information, articles, videos, interviews, and other thoughts.

<http://www.oecd.org/>

The homepage of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

¹¹<http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/03/brazil-emerging-south-south-donor/>

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“Women in Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Recovery.” *United Nations Development Program*. UNDP, n.d. Web. 18 July 2012. <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/crisispreventionandrecovery/focus_areas/gender_equality_andwomens empowerment/>.

Topic B: Sustainable Poverty Reduction

Overview

The alleviation of poverty is the ethical, social, political, and economic imperative of humankind, and the United Nations and the United Nations Development Program dearly strive towards this goal. The eradication of poverty is the top priority of the United Nations due to the fact that such efforts form the foundation for addressing other social problems; as an example, building a road not only allows farmers to sell their goods at a market, giving them a reliable source of income, but also increases access for the entire community to fresh produce. It is important that the basic needs of the world's poorest people are addressed in sustainable ways, however, so that future generations can thrive and progress will be permanent.

Timeline

1601	The Elizabethan Poor Law, to be used for the next two centuries, is the first relief program for the poor in England.
1750–1850	The Industrial Revolution leads to reductions in poverty in some cases but also increases in wealth disparity, in England, the United States, and beyond.
1944	The World Bank is created with the primary goal of poverty reduction.
1945	The International Monetary Fund is established.
1958	Mao Zedong launches the “Great Leap Forward” campaign to speed development.
1960	The International Development Association is established to address areas of poverty in the world's poorest nations.
1965	The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is established.
1976	The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh begins microfinance operations.
1988	<i>Pronasol</i> begins, marking Mexico's first poverty alleviation effort.
1997	The United Nations Microcredit Summit is held.
2000	The United Nations Millennium Declaration establishes eight targets for 2015, which serve as the foundation for the Millennium Development Goals.
2001	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers begin to be published.
2003	Football stars from around the world compete in the Match Against Poverty, an example of the many efforts from non-political organizations making efforts to alleviate poverty.
2005	Tajikistan is the first country to complete a National Development Strategy to fulfill the MDGs.
2006	UN Sub-Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, one of the main expert bodies on human rights at the world level, adopted Draft Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.
2010	An eight-point action plan is developed by the UNDP to reduce poverty.

Historical Background

Historically, poverty is most commonly seen in developing nations of the global South, a region stretching from the Tropic of Cancer to the Tropic of Capricorn that encompasses Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This zone excludes some areas of strong growth such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the oil-exporting nations of the Middle East.

The history of poverty in the global South began as individual countries overthrew the imperialistic powers that had dominated them. The leaderships of these newly independent countries were then faced with two critical tasks: firstly, they needed to unify their country and ensure political stability, and secondly, they needed to spark the economy to help make their citizens productive and to improve their living standards. Many countries struggled with the first goal: governments similar to those used by former colonial rulers were established, but such parliamentary systems did not function in Africa as they had in Europe. The success of the second goal, revitalizing the economy, varied greatly: some nations had resources they could exploit to finance progress, while other nations had virtually nothing.¹

Moreover, the national borders that were established by the colonial powers were done so without regard for cultural groups. Consequently, nations often comprised of citizens from diverse backgrounds each with their own language and history, further impeding progress. This domestic disunity, present in African as well as Eastern European nations, ultimately led to ethnic and regional conflict. Quite rapidly, a series of civil wars broke out around the world. Often, particularly in Africa, these wars culminated in the military seizing power: more than half of all African nations endured military coups, which in turn led to more violence.²

The persistence of poverty in nations since then can be largely attributed to geographical, demographic, and political factors. Geographical problems, such as poor weather (e.g. a lack of rainfall) and infertile land, can limit agriculture in developing countries. Demographically, in the 1700s, the world saw a population boom that further hurt developing nations as even more millions of people suddenly needed food, housing, education, jobs, and medical care — all of which were already in short supply. Finally, there remains political unrest in many nations, even in those that are relatively resource-rich.

While poverty-stricken nations generally have similar problems, the story of each nation is unique. It is therefore crucial that delegates of this committee have a deep understanding of the specific problems that plague their country, in order to fully analyze the current situation and propose effective solutions.

Current Situation

The largest non-UN related bodies that work to reduce poverty are the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The WB and the IMF operate on the belief that economic growth is the best answer to poverty and that market-friendly policies are best suited to achiev-

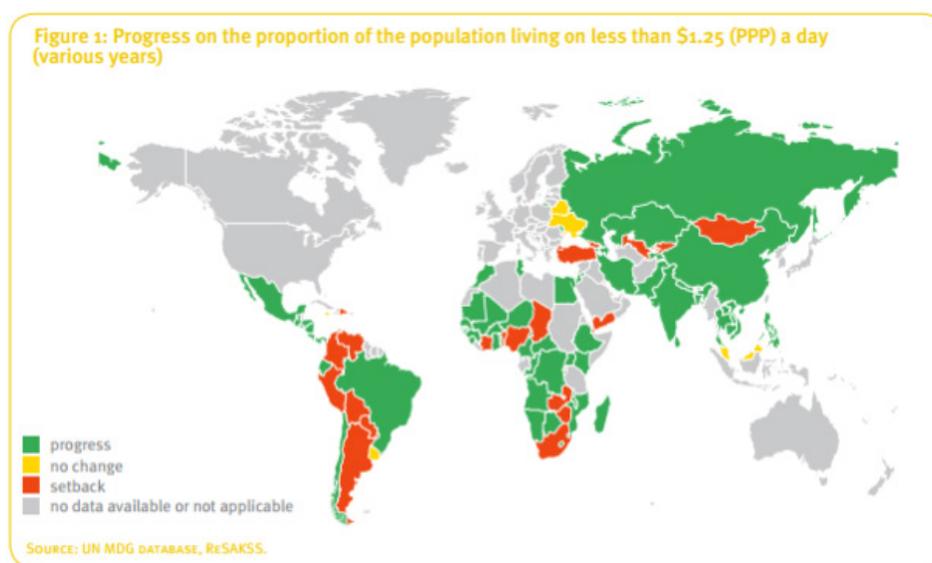
¹Elisabeth Gaynor Ellis and Anthony Esler. *World History*. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), 929.

²*Ibid.*, 830.

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ing growth.³ Both bodies require that countries seeking aid or debt relief publish a regularly updated Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), a report that describe a country's macroeconomic, structural, and social policies and its general plan for stimulating broad-based growth and a reduction of poverty. PRSPs, which are constructed through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders as well as development partners (i.e. the IMF or WB), often offer deep insights into each country's specific needs with regards to poverty reduction.

Considering progress in poverty reduction efforts, there is cause for optimism. Over the last two centuries, the poverty rate has declined from 84% in 1820 to 50% in 1950 and 24% in 1992. The standard of living in the world as a whole has improved significantly: in the same time period, life expectancy has increased from 27 years to 61 years. More recently, in spite of surging food prices and a global economic recession, the number of people living in extreme poverty is on the decline. However, these positive results are relative and there are distinct regional differences.⁴ Even by current trends, 1 billion people will still be living off less than \$1.25 per day in 2015.



Measuring Poverty

Currently, poverty exists to some extent in nearly every nation, though it is much more prominent in poorer nations, affecting close to three-quarters of the population of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa for example. There are two standard ways of measuring the wealth of a country and of its inhabitants. The measure used most often is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which considers the size of a country's economy; a related measure, per-capita GDP, is sometimes used to evaluate GDP relative to the country's population. However, it is difficult to use these methods to compare countries since they are measured in terms of each country's currency. For comparison, economists

³http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.kcls.org/ps/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=RELEVANCE&in-PS=true&prodId=GURL&userGroupName=kcls&tabID=T003&searchId=R1&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&contentSegment=&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=8&contentSet=GALE%7CCX3045302016&&-docId=GALE|CX3045302016&docType=GALE

⁴*Ibid.*

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use GDP at purchasing power parity (PPP). GDP PPP compares living standards between nations, accounting for the relative cost of living and inflation rates. A very low GDP PPP, for example, is less than \$1000. Finally, the daily income of individuals can also be used. Specifically, those living on less than \$1.25 per day are said to be below the poverty line; occasionally, the figure is \$2 per day, in which case nearly 3 billion people worldwide are in poverty.

The above indicators, especially GDP, however, are not necessarily correlated to quality of life, however.⁵ Consequently, the UN uses the Human Poverty Index (HPI), in conjunction with the Human Development Index, to evaluate standards of living. HPI values are produced by a mathematical formula that takes into account four pieces of data: the probability of death before age 40, the adult illiteracy rate, the percentage of the population without reliable access to clean water, and the number of malnourished children.

Case Study: Battling India's Corruption in Poverty Reduction Programs

To evaluate the impact of one poverty reduction program, we will examine the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, a program approved in 2005 by the government of India in conjunction with the UN. Ultimately, the act seeks to create 50 million jobs — quite an ambitious goal — at a cost of over 7 billion dollars a year. This program focuses on rural areas, where nearly two-thirds of the country's 1.2 billion people live, and guarantees 100 days of paid work for any unskilled labourer seeking employment. Workers are paid about 120 rupees per day (about CAD \$2.40), assuming there is no theft, which unfortunately remains commonplace in poorer districts.⁶

Rules ban the use of machinery, and most work is done by shovel. Though programs that require machinery are harder to implement, they may prove to be more effective in the long run by allowing workers to learn new and marketable skills in their hundred days, setting them up to find future employment.⁷ As it is, workers are left as unproductive and ill-equipped for employment as before.

Moreover, the roads and ditches that are commissioned are rarely finished, and if they are, are usually poorly constructed and fall apart within months of completion. This not only deprives local communities of beneficial infrastructure upgrades but also leads to questions about whether workers employed by the act are acquiring any real and applicable skills.

The act has also been plagued by bureaucratic issues. Graft is high at the state level, drawing funds away from the program. One estimate states that nearly two-thirds of all funds are stolen, either by unscrupulous officials pocketing wages that are supposed to be distributed to non-existent workers, or forcing workers to pay bribes to officials to even secure their jobs in the first place. The rampancy of these activities could be reduced if independent audit mechanisms were in place.⁸ Also, many of these issues can be avoided if workers choose to have their wages directly deposited into their bank accounts, but the transaction can take nearly two months and most need the money sooner.

⁵http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.kcls.org/ps/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=RELEVANCE&in-PS=true&prodId=GURL&userGroupName=kcls&tabID=T003&searchId=R1&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&contentSegment=&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=10&contentSet=GALE%7CCX3434900515&-docId=GALE|CX3434900515&docType=GALE

⁶<http://www.economist.com/node/21536642>

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704081604576143671902043578.html>

India's further economic success is in part reliant on its ability to increase the size of the middle class, which in turn makes the country more attractive to foreign investors. The government was re-elected in 2009 on a platform of lifting the common man out of poverty. To this end, there are signs that National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is improving the lives of rural citizens, with more land being cultivated, dietary habits improving, and fewer villagers being forced to leave their homes in search of work. However, the program could certainly benefit from some reforms; as it stands currently, it merely creates temporary jobs and is not enough to have a lasting effect.

UN Involvement

One of the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations in 2000 was to reduce the number of people living in poverty (defined as living on less than \$1.25 per day) by half. Today, some report that this goal has been met, but the more skeptical note that the numbers hide the fact that improvements in China have skewed the global average and that people living in the world's poorest countries are in fact worse off than before. Regardless, the UN will continue its efforts to reduce poverty until the year 2015, when it will conduct a formal assessment.

Meanwhile, the UN has faced criticism on its poverty reduction plans. Many argue that it lacks a coherent blueprint to actually achieve the MDGs. Echoing these concerns, Jeffrey Sachs, an economist at Columbia University, claims "there is no plan of action to complement what will be agreed upon [in UN resolutions]" and that "there is a difference between lurching forward on good intentions and a range of unconnected initiatives versus having a high priority plan."⁹

Of the plethora of resolutions published by the United Nations pertaining to poverty reduction, below are a selection of the most relevant:

- General Assembly Resolution 52/194 (1997) focused on the benefit of microloan and microcredit programs and the role microfinancing can play in reducing poverty, "recognizing that people...are innately capable of working their way out of poverty...when an enabling environment and the right opportunities exist...[and] also noting that microcredit programmes have proved to be an effective tool in freeing people from the bondage of poverty."¹⁰ The Microcredit Summit, held that same year in Washington DC, addressed similar issues and recommended strengthening African microcredit institutions as a way of combating poverty.¹¹
- UNHRC Resolution 17/13 (2011) assessed poverty reduction, taking into account human rights. The resolution called for the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights and independent consultants to further evaluate the situation.¹² (Also see Resolution 8/11)
- UN General Assembly Resolution 57/266 reaffirms the UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, and outlines some of the steps the world should take to achieve the goals set by the aforementioned initiative.¹³ (Also see Resolutions 58/222, 59/247, and 61/213)

⁹<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/19/world/19nations.html>

¹⁰<http://www.gdrc.org/icm/iym2005/un-note.html>

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/17session/docs/A-HRC-RES-17-13.pdf>

¹³<http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/UNGARsn/2002/334.pdf>

Often the UNDP works with countries on an individual basis to plan initiatives, first on a small scale, then possibly on a larger scale contingent on the success of the early pilot projects. One example, as described above, is the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, a scheme operated by the Indian government with the UNDP. Another successful initiative is the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange, which brings together farmers, farming co-operatives, domestic traders, agro-industrial processors, commodity exporters and institutional buyers. The Exchange allows all of these parties to meet and trade via a secure, low-cost platform, and now facilitates around 15,000 trades per day with the transactions valued at around CAD 5 to 10 million dollars. In this case, the UNDP provided technical expertise to establish the Exchange.

Possible Solutions

There is no singular plan to reduce poverty, but there are two general approaches that many economists agree on. The first is the *Washington Consensus*, which suggests that poverty reduction is correlated to growth; the IMF and the WB have adopted this paradigm. The second proposes a wider set of reforms for poverty alleviation, including promoting democracy and other means of ensuring the poor get a say in their government, protecting the property rights of the poor, increasing government accountability, and reducing corruption. Consider the following examples, from the Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, which illustrate how sound institutions can help alleviate conditions of poverty:

Property rights over land in urban areas in Peru help the poor gain access to credit, increase labour supply, and be more productive...political representation for women in India results in more funds for public goods they care about...[and] a newspaper campaign concerning government accountability increased the resources reaching public schools in Uganda.¹⁴

This kind of institutional reform can be useful and effective in the long run, but is often slow.

A more recent theory suggests that inefficient service-delivery mechanisms — how the government *delivers* the many public *services* it is responsible for, such as education, health care, or banking services — is at least partially to blame for poverty. Researchers from the UK Department for International Development noted that:

The international community should emphasize service delivery as a key entry point to further development in difficult [poverty-afflicted] environments. MDG targets will not be achieved without increased access to services in these contexts...[and] there is a 'humanitarian imperative' to respond to an emergency situation where people's access to services has been severely reduced or completely diminished. [Moreover] service delivery may...[help trigger] longer-term pro-poor social, economic and political change... [thus helping] to prevent some states from sliding (back) into civil conflict by addressing the structural causes of the conflict.¹⁵

Service-delivery mechanisms can be improved by helping the government directly, or, in cases when the government is incapable or unwilling, can deliver services through non-state providers. It is important to note that international agreements on intellectual property and patent rights, trade and embargo deals, and sustainable policies can be hindrances to poorer countries seeking

¹⁴<http://what-when-how.com/social-sciences/poverty-social-science/>

¹⁵http://www.handicap-international.fr/bibliographie-handicap/4PolitiqueHandicap/thematique/services/Improving_Social_Services_in_Difficult_Environments.pdf

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development; the committee may wish to consider possible reforms on this subject.¹⁶

The general models described above must be adopted and implemented on a country-by-country basis; a cookie-cutter approach will not be successful. With this in mind, solutions should take into account sustainability (i.e., meeting the needs of the people in an environmentally friendly way and allowing for growth in future generations). Successful solutions also generally seek to make the economy more attractive to investors, thereby creating a renewal in overall economic growth. Below are a sampling of methods to alleviate poverty, considering both sustainability and economic growth:

- Microfinancing may be the most effective way to help many poor farmers to leave the vicious cycle of poverty: farmers often cannot buy farm animals, equipment, and land, thus remaining poor and forever unable to gain credit. Microcredit and microloans offer solutions to this catch-22. With access to these extra resources, farmers can expand their operations, increasing their economic livelihood and allowing them to easily repay low-interest loans. Microfinancing is a proven method in agriculture and could serve as model for programs in other sectors.¹⁷ These programs may prove particularly useful for women who do not have any sort of collateral to use for loans. Corroborating the effectiveness of microfinance, Amanda Gardiner, the acting program manager for the Business Call to Action, notes:

Access to financial services enables rural smallholder farmers to take the leap from subsistence farming to market-based farming, thereby increasing their productivity and income for the long term.¹⁸

- Sustainable development in infrastructure plays a strategic role in the growth process. It helps link primary producers to markets, improves the competitiveness of the economy, and provide essential services to the population (access to roads, drinking water, etc.), which ultimately help increase the quality of life. Infrastructure therefore contributes to both economic growth and improvement of the living conditions for populations. This committee may therefore consider including infrastructure projects in plans to reduce poverty, specifically: transportation infrastructure; energy infrastructure; communication and information technologies; water and sanitation infrastructure; and construction and urban planning.
- Trade plays a pivotal role in creating jobs and reducing poverty.¹⁹ Trade also encourages technology transfer, economies of scale, and competition, thereby enhancing productivity and growth. For some of the lowest income countries (LICs), reforms such as free trade and one stop border posts (where people can exit a country and enter another, quickly and

¹⁶http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.kcls.org/ps/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=RELEVANCE&inPS=true&prodId=GURL&userGroupName=kcls&tabID=T003&searchId=R1&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&contentSegment=&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=8&contentSet=GALE%7CCX3045302016&&docId=GALE|CX3045302016&docType=GALE

¹⁷<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2011/11/11/kenya-based-firm-to-provide-100-000-small-farmers-with-micro-loans.html>

¹⁸<http://microfinanceafrica.net/tag/business-call-to-action/>

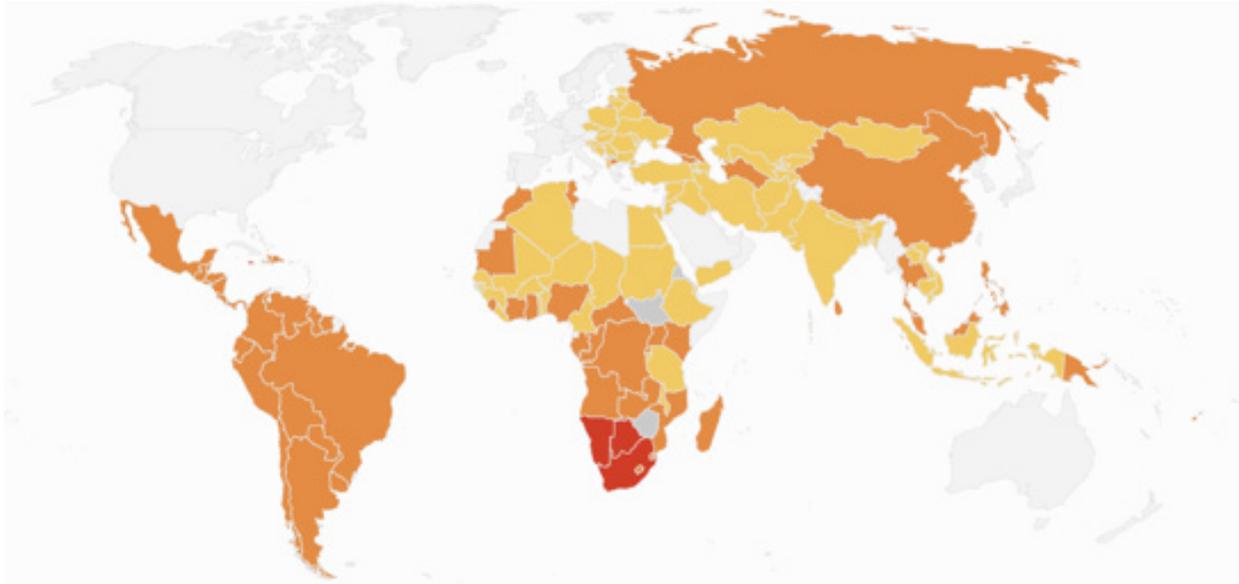
¹⁹<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2012/cr12222.pdf>

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efficiently, at a single border post)²⁰ can encourage and improve both domestic and foreign trade. Reports with market information would be appealing to both investors and domestic companies.

Of course, the plans presented in this solution are not comprehensive, and there may be other approaches that delegates in this committee find more effective.

Bloc Positions



The darker the shade of orange, the higher the percentage of the population living on less than \$1.25 a day²¹

African Group

The percent of the population living in poverty declined from 52% in 1995 to 40% in 2008. While this general trend is positive, progress has not been uniform; while conditions in some countries have improved, in others they have gotten worse. For example, the Overseas Development Institute, a British think tank, reported that “although Ethiopia reduced the proportion of its population living under \$1.25 per day from 60% to 16% in the 18 years from 1990, Nigeria’s poverty increased from 49% to 77% over the same period.”²²

Asia-Pacific Group

Countries in this region are among the top performers and closest to reaching the poverty target, especially China. Currently, the poverty rate is around 14%.

Eastern European Group

While poverty is still an issue for some of these nations, they are generally not considered to be among the most destitute of countries.

²⁰<http://www.gtkp.com/themepage.php&themepgid=252>

²¹<http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/home/>

²²<http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/docs/6172.pdf>

Middle Eastern/Northern African Group

This region has a poverty rate of 2.7% — about 8.6 million people.²³

Latin American and Caribbean Group

This region overall is one of the top performers in regards to reaching poverty reduction targets, though it is less consistent when compared to Asia. Ecuador in particular has shown considerable progress. Also of note, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean are using Poverty and Social Impact Analyses to put in place social protection policies consistent with their development plans.²⁴

Western European/North American Group

Countries in these regions are regarded as being more developed, though still poverty exists.

Discussion Questions

1. How has your country been afflicted by poverty in its history, and how has it attempted to reduce poverty? What efforts has it made to aid other poverty-stricken countries?
2. How do increases in trade affect poverty? What about the relationship between food security and poverty?
3. What role do women have in poverty reduction?
4. Proper social policies go hand-in-hand with economic prosperity and poverty reduction. With this in mind, how can better governance be achieved in developing countries?
5. Since the first Millennium Development Goal, the current benchmark for poverty reduction, has more or less been met, what should be the next target?
6. How can programs like the United States' Aid for Trade be adopted on a larger level?
7. Should a better measure be established or used to assess a nation's wealth, instead of GDP?
8. What is the difference between *relative* and *absolute* poverty?

Additional Resources

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/poverty/papers/paper_gudgeon.pdf

Relevant paper from the United Nations

<http://www.imf.org/external/>

International Monetary Fund

www.odi.org/uk

Overseas Development Institute

www.un.org/news/

²³<http://data.worldbank.org/topic/poverty>

²⁴<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/fast-facts/english/Poverty%20Reduction.pdf>

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UN News Service

<http://www.undemocracy.com/>

Website with easy access to UN publications

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

CIA World Factbook

<http://povertydata.worldbank.org/MAPvisualizer/DVMap.html>

Provides a visualization of the changes in poverty around the world, with data for each country

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