

FORUM: Human Rights

ISSUE: Building a green economy to lift people out of poverty

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Introduction:

“Poverty is a challenge of the developed and developing world.” - UNEP

All around the world, poverty is a terribly concerning issue that is happening continuously and in most cases is left unconcerned or unthought about. Most people do not realize the life-threatening consequences of poverty and don't think about how present poverty is nowadays. More than 3 billion people (nearly half of the world's population) live with less than 2.50 dollars per day and more than 1.3 billion people live in extreme poverty (with less than 1.25 dollars per day). Overall, 600 million children throughout the world live in extreme poverty and thousands of them die each day. Poverty blocks people from having access to food and clean water which therefore causes famine as well as many (normally preventable) diseases such as some concerning pregnancy or childbirth. Such lead to the death of approximately 800 women per day.

Hunger, being the number one cause of death in the world, kills more than HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined.

Of course, major progress has been made throughout the years but, looking ahead, the challenge of overcoming poverty will worsen due to ecosystem degradation, climate change and economic disruption which unjustly impact the poorer. The movement towards a green economy is now receiving an increasing amount of political attention as a favorable path to sustainable development and poverty eradication.



Definition of key terms:

Green economy: a sustainable economy and society with no carbon emissions which reduces pollution and prevents loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. In a green economy, all energy comes from renewable resources and can be naturally restored.

This development should maintain, augment and where needed, rebuild natural capital and a demanding economic aid and source of public benefits which will greatly help poorer people whose living and security depend mainly on nature.

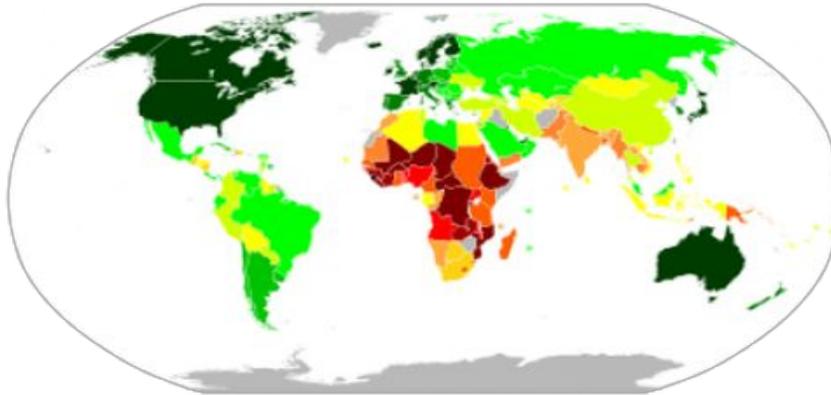
Natural capital: “A reference to the stock of natural resources, such as water and oil.” Most natural resources are nonrenewable. Natural capital includes many resources that humans and other animals ‘depend on to live and function’ which leads to a dilemma as between spending and preserving those resources.

Ecosystem degradation: “an environmental problem that reduces the amount of species left to survive.” This degradation causes a decrease in the richness of the ecosystems as well as their biological diversity, and in the goods and services they provide, which then affects different species.

Sustainable: “able to be used without being completely used up or destroyed” (both in economy and environment.)



Background information and Overview:



The map above shows the current situation of wealth around the world, with the richer nations appearing in green, the medium nations appearing in yellow, and the poorer countries in red.

The countries in green are considered by the World Health Organization (WHO) as being the ones with the best quality of life in the world. Their citizens live long, full lives, with easy access to basic necessities such as food and safe drinking water. Most also have access to technological innovations such as electricity and internet connection.

However, the countries in red are considered to be those living in what the UN considers as 'extreme poverty'. These countries, mainly located in Africa, have an extremely poor quality of life. Their citizens have very short lifespans. They drink unsanitary water, eat very little food and live among litter and insects which easily cause fatal diseases. They have very little education and due to a lack of contraception and knowledge, birth rates are very high. However, their low income is clearly not sufficient for their many children, therefore, food and education cannot be provided for most.

In June 2012, a UN conference debating sustainable development was held in Rio de Janeiro. Rio+20 (short name for the conference) was a historic opportunity to define pathways to a safer, more balanced, cleaner, greener and more comfortable world for everyone. During this conference, the UN brought together governments, international institutions, and leading groups to agree on different matters which could reduce poverty while promoting proper jobs, clean



energy and a more sustainable use of resources. Rio+20 was a chance to act against poverty, address environmental destruction and prepare for the future. Although the conference did not provide any major progress agreements or commitments it did provide an international platform to inform others on serious issues about secure global sustainable development.

Major Countries and Organisations involved:

Every country is concerned and therefore involved in this matter as poverty is everywhere.

China: renewable energy is very much present. In 2005 they passed a 'Renewable Energy Law' which provides the main structure for development of the region. This law offers great financial help, has encouraged major developments both in solar and wind power and has created plenty of jobs (like in 2009 where an estimation of 300,000 jobs were created).

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): "greening social and economic policy measures offers viable options for eradicating poverty while achieving economic development and minimizing environmental risks".

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): promotes inclusive and sustainable human development and works to reduce poverty in all its dimensions.. "UNDP works to make real improvements in people's lives, opening up their choices and opportunities".

Timeline of Events:

- **1966-** UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) was initiated
- **1972-** UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) was initiated
- **1987-** International day for the eradication of poverty was first held on October 17, 1987 in Paris. More than 100,000 people gathered to honor victims of extreme poverty and hunger. Since then, worldwide organizations and individuals view October 17 as a day to continue their commitment towards eradicating poverty.



- **1992-** The “Earth summit” conference took place in Rio de Janeiro. It evoked the message that, “poverty, as well as excessive consumption by affluent populations, place damaging stress on the environment.”
- **2002-** “Graduation model” initiated. The model calls for governments or aid groups to intervene in the lives of poor families.
- **2002-** The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. There, sustainable development was very much discussed. Many targets and solid commitments for action to implement sustainable development objectives were agreed and acknowledged by governments.
- **2012-** The Rio+20 conference (as mentioned previously) was held in Rio de Janeiro.
- **2014-2015-** The World Green Economy Summit (WGES) wishes to find innovative solutions aiming to accelerate the transition into the green economy.

Relevant UN treaties and events:

- The outcome of the *Rio+20* conference ended in a resolution which consists of 283 clauses focusing on 7 areas which need priority attention including decent jobs, energy, sustainable cities, food security and sustainable agriculture, water, oceans and disaster readiness.
- The *Kyoto Protocol* is an international treaty that commits state parties to reduce greenhouse gases emissions. There are currently 192 parties to the protocol **not** including the United States who have not ratified the protocol. The Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period ended in 2012 after which the *Doha commitment* (which acts as an extension the the protocol) was agreed on; and in which 37 (notably Australia and the European Union) countries have binding targets. However, it will not be applied until it has had the acceptance of 144 states (it only has 36 today). Japan, New Zealand and Russia have participated in Kyoto's first-round but have not taken on new targets in the second commitment period and Canada withdrew from the protocol in 2012.



Possible Solutions:

Most countries would like to use the Green Economy system to eradicate poverty in order to maintain a natural capital which will help keep poorer people safe and allow them to have access to basic needs such as drinkable water and enough food to survive. However, certain UN treaties are looking further, as achieving economic development should not destroy the environment which is why all risks should be minimized. Delegates should also understand that in order to build a green economy and lift people out of poverty, education is very important so, poorer people should learn how a green economy can greatly benefit them before using it.

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