

Forum: The Conference of the Parties (COP-29)

Issue: Addressing Sustainable Development in Less Economically Developed Nations

Name: Raghav Sarin, Sophia Kahol Carbajo

Position: Deputy Chairs

Introduction

Sustainable development is crucial for ensuring that countries can meet their needs without compromising future generations. However, the road to sustainability is much more complicated for countries that have yet to establish their global presence. In a world that is increasingly focusing on sustainable development, LEDCs (Less Economically Developed Countries) are being increasingly left behind.

LEDCs are a general term to describe countries with a low GDP, little access to basic services, and a heavy reliance on primary industries such as farming or mining. These nations face multifaceted issues that create barriers to addressing sustainability. For example, extreme poverty and a clear lack of infrastructure mean that these countries often don't have the means to implement new sustainable technologies. Achieving sustainable development in LEDCs encompasses promoting economic growth, developing infrastructure, and strengthening governance while ensuring environmental sustainability and equity.

LEDCs encounter dilemmas such as how to balance immediate needs with long-term sustainability, as increased development has historically gotten in the way of social and environmental good. They also tend to rely heavily on international aid, which can lead to a lack of autonomy or innovation. LEDCs' immense reliance on natural resources provides an additional complication to diversifying their economies and achieving independent economic growth. Furthermore, LEDCs face weak governance and institutions, which gets in the way of sustainability. The UN has found links between corruption and a lack of progress in every sustainable development goal. Organisational inefficiencies can divert funds from legitimate causes and create a heavy reliance on foreign aid, hindering these countries' internal development.

This committee will focus on methods that member countries can implement to promote sustainable development in LEDCs in an efficient, responsible manner.

Definition of Key Terms

1. **Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs):** Less Economically Developed Countries are low-income countries with limited resources and significant poverty.
2. **Least Developed Countries (LDCs):** The UN recognizes the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) as the “poorest and weakest segment” of the international community. They face many issues related to sustainable development.
3. **Foreign aid:** Foreign aid is any type of assistance that one country voluntarily transfers to another, typically in the form of financial resources. Aid is usually transferred to less wealthy countries to support various forms of development. Also known as development aid or Official Development Assistance (ODA).
4. **Primary Sector:** The sector of an economy that involves the extraction of raw materials from the earth. Industries in the primary sector include farming, logging, fishing, and mining. More developed countries tend to have a smaller percentage of their GDP coming from the primary sector.
5. **Sustainable Development:** Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
6. **Renewable Energy:** Renewable energy (or green energy) refers to energy sources that can be replenished on a human timescale.
7. **Sustainable Resources:** Natural resources that can be replenished at the same rate, or faster than they are being consumed
8. **UN SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals):** A set of goals addressing global sustainable development, set by the United Nations to be solved by 2030.
9. **Human Development Index (HDI):** A statistical index using life expectancy, education and per capita indicators to rank countries into levels of development.

Background Information

Sustainable development is defined by the UN as meeting present needs without impeding the success of future generations. It is divided into three pillars: economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection. In hope of achieving these three aims for a better future, the UN created the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. It consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve by 2030, addressing the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Less Economically Developed Countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

LEDCs share characteristics such as high poverty rates, dependence on agricultural or resource-based economies, limited infrastructure, low levels of industrialisation, high birth rates, and a disproportionate exposure to climate risks, all of which impede sustainable development.

In a more specific lens, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs has categorised 45 countries onto a list of LDCs (Least Developed Countries), which are low-income countries facing serious barriers to sustainable development. 1.1 billion people live in LDCs, but these countries only share 1.3% of the world's GDP. LDCs are considered highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks. Organisations such as UNESCO and UNCTAD have put in extensive work and drafted plans to support the development of these countries.

Both recent and long-running issues have affected the situations of these less developed nations, and must be considered in order to improve their current circumstances.

Dependence on foreign aid and debt

LEDCs have relied heavily on foreign aid for decades, in the form of loans or grants. Aid can help address immediate needs, but it can also create dependency, which impedes local economic growth and self-sufficiency. Additionally, an inability to repay loans means that LEDCs are experiencing mounting debt, threatening progress toward the SDGs. This is due to some LEDCs borrowing money excessively, depending on loans for economic growth. Moreover, most loans to developing countries have to be paid back in the currencies of the lender, which usually don't change much in value, e.g. the Euro and the US Dollar. However, the currencies of poorer countries can fluctuate much more, meaning that debt can soar when LEDCs' currencies are down.

The UNCTAD's 2019 Trade and Development Report, reported that in 2017, global debt stocks expanded to their highest levels ever – even beyond the levels experienced during the global financial crisis of 2008. Soaring debt can make LEDCs more vulnerable to financial stresses and environmental disasters as it saps the public funds needed to fight poverty and invest in essential infrastructure, such as roads and hospitals.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the entire world, but LEDCs were hit especially hard as they had additional vulnerability to external shocks and setbacks. This was commonly due to poor medical infrastructure and unstable local economies. The global loss in GDP and recession caused by the pandemic significantly set back progress in developing countries. In 2021, 77 million more people were cast back into extreme poverty. According to the World Bank, sub-Saharan Africa experienced its first economic recession in 25 years due to the pandemic. Additionally, the uneven distribution of vaccines globally made economic recovery even more difficult.

The extensive resources required for pandemic recovery, combined with inadequate infrastructure in many LEDCs, have made sustainable development significantly more challenging for these countries than it was in the years preceding the pandemic.

Current Situation

Although there are just over 5 years to go until the SDGs are agreed upon to be met in the year 2030, progress is incredibly slow, including for LEDCs. The present day is a more dire time than ever to meet the SDGs and achieve positive growth for all countries.

Economic Development

Currently, 60% of LDCs and Low Income Countries are either in debt distress (unable to make payments on their debts) or at high risk of debt distress, a number that has doubled since 2015. This is due to increased borrowing and increased interest rates. Recently, ODA (Official Development Assistance) grants to LDCs have been decreasing. ODA spending on LDCs was 3% lower in 2022 than in 2021. In addition, in recent years, grants for LDCs were being replaced by loans with increasing interest rates and shorter maturity periods. Therefore, LDCs are spending three times more on interest repayments than developed countries while receiving less direct aid.

Additionally, the economies of LDCs remain disconnected and volatile. LDCs share only 1% of global merchandise exports, and their main exports are commodities. LDCs rely on agricultural and mining industries, which are very volatile. Prices can crash causing exports, jobs and government revenue to decrease. Additionally LDCs' land-dependent economies are vulnerable to extreme weather and natural disasters, making economic growth slow and challenging.

Environmental protection and climate change

2020 registered as the warmest year on record and the year with the most named storms. As the risk of climate disaster grows every day, so does the risk of major social, environmental and economic crises in LEDCs. In a phenomenon called the 'climate apartheid', LDCs, although contributing the least to carbon emissions globally, bear the brunt of the climate crisis. Over the last 50 years, 69% of worldwide deaths caused by climate-related disasters were in LDCs, despite being hit by only 18% of disasters. LDCs account for only 3.3% of global emissions, but are consistently being affected by climate due to lack of infrastructure and insufficient capacity to prevent, mitigate, and recover from these shocks.

Climate disasters such as flash floods have been causing widespread suffering in LDCs. Hundreds of people have died and thousands more displaced. Additionally, nature, infrastructure and cultural sites have been damaged, significantly setting back progress. However, LDCs have been stepping up to cutting emissions and adapting to climate impacts. They have a strong ambition to address climate change and build resilience to it, but need adequate assistance to truly exit such a vulnerable climate position.

Urbanisation

LEDCs that are experiencing rapid growth can experience various issues due to a lack of infrastructure and institutional strength. In these countries, large numbers of people migrate to towns and cities for better quality of life. While urbanisation can offer numerous benefits that contribute to the development of societies, serious struggles can occur when countries are ill-equipped to manage urbanisation. In many LEDCs, cities are developing at a rate that local governments cannot keep up with. Due to a lack of funding, planning, or intuitive practices, rapidly developing cities do not build the infrastructure or implement the systems they need to accommodate so many people. The squatter settlements in Nairobi, the social disparities of Cape Town, and Mexico City's crime rates are just some current examples of the problems facing rapidly urbanising LEDCs. These problems can accumulate as more people migrate to urban areas, hindering sustainable development.

Political barriers

Political corruption and ineffectiveness have been major factors in hindering development in LEDCs. In many LEDCs, immediate economic development and poverty

reduction are often prioritised over long-term environmental goals. In the last sixty years, foreign aid has more than quadrupled, from US\$38 billion in 1960 to US\$223.7 billion in 2023. Aid can assist in various development projects, but embezzlement and the diversion of resources for private benefit seriously hinders the effectiveness of aid and impedes long term development. Projects that could otherwise help people in need are underfunded and institutions are less effective in carrying out their roles. Furthermore, when officials are motivated by short-term benefits and personal wealth, they may continuously rely on help rather than invest in programs that aim for independent development, increasing debts and aid dependency.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

South Sudan

South Sudan was the lowest ranked nation on the UN's Sustainable Development Report in 2024. South Sudan has faced critical issues in terms of its development due to a serious ongoing human rights and humanitarian crisis in the country that has prevailed for several years. Despite many years passing and billions of dollars in aid, South Sudan has continued to rank poorly on major indicators such as GDP, education, life expectancy, stability, freedom, infrastructure, and essential services for its citizens. Primary issues that impact this are its ongoing civil war, its extreme dependence on oil for economic stability, and major climate vulnerability to natural disaster. South Sudan is in need of extensive foreign funding for solutions that can develop resilience toward future challenges and work toward sustainable development.

Somalia

Somalia has consistently ranked 164th out of the total 167 nations on the Sustainable Development Report in 2024, due to its status as an extremely underdeveloped nation, especially in the context of sustainable development. Somalia faces issues such as decades of armed conflict after the collapse of all state institutions in 1991. This has led to severely weak governance as a whole and significantly hindered development in the nation. Somalia also relies excessively on humanitarian aid. These factors have impacted most SDG indicators in the country in a negative way, and Somalia needs strong solutions and support to combat the issues it is facing.

Finland

Finland has been incredibly successful in implementing sustainable development in an effective manner. Ranked 1st out of 166 countries on the Sustainable Development Report, Finland has established clear and actionable national plans that align with the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Various policy changes and strong governance since the mid-1990s has allowed them to look at a long-term perspective on these issues and demonstrates their sustained efforts. Finland has been known to contribute to the development of LEDCs, with its allocation of 0.11% of its Gross National Income to LEDCs, exceeding an average of 0.08% estimated by the OECD Development Assistance Committee, and they contribute heavily to these nations.

Sweden

Sweden is another incredibly successful country in sustainable development globally, while also supporting the development of other nations. Sweden set goals to become a Fossil-Free welfare state by 2045, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions significantly, and to have 50% of all energy come from renewable sources by 2020, one that has since been passed. Sweden also contributes around 1% of GNI (Gross National INcome) to LEDCs, significantly higher than the average of 0.08%, and its emphasis on global partnerships and environmental issues in these nations is another indicator towards its consistent support of LEDCs. Furthermore, Sweden is one of the world's most generous donors of international climate finance, donating substantially to the Green Climate Fund in 2022.

United States

The United States has been regarded as one of the highest contributors to LEDC assistance in the past few years, particularly in relation to LEDC development in general. While it is the largest donor in absolute terms, contributing around \$66 billion to foreign aid in 2023 and accounting for 30% of global contribution, its contributions as a percentage of GNI are among the lowest for developed nations. In 2022, the U.S. allocated only 0.06% of its GNI to ODA directed towards LEDCs. Foreign aid from the USA has helped greatly with education, food security and infrastructure development, but its low resource contribution in comparison with its economic capabilities has been criticised in the past.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations has been focused on achieving Sustainable Development for decades, a goal accompanying its main focus of maintaining international security and peace. The UN created the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, and these have been monumental in working towards Sustainable Development. UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), is a specific organisation within the UN that focuses on developing countries. It has published various reports on global development and held events such as the Global Leaders Forum to address development issues. The United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries is also held every decade or so to determine the state of development in these nations. The Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was held from 2022-2023, where the Doha Programme of Action was created. The programme reaffirmed the need to scale up global support to LDCs and achieve the SDGs in this decade. Additionally, UNDP Capacity Development Initiatives help to address sustainable development issues faced by LDCs as a whole. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is also held every year to address sustainable development globally. Key resolutions and treaties worked on by the UN to address the topic include:

- Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, 21 July 2011 ([A/RES/65/280](#))
- Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 21 October 2015 ([A/RES/70/1](#))
- Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, 23 January 2020 ([A/RES/74/232](#))
- Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, 1 April 2022 ([A/RES/76/258](#))

Possible Solutions

Promoting sustainable development in LDCs is an essential step to ensuring sustainability worldwide. Additionally, as LDCs are much less industrialised than developed countries, cooperatively planning the development of these countries can serve as a step in reimagining how countries can grow and prosper sustainably. Delegates can discuss a wide range of solutions to address sustainable development in LDCs.

Firstly, delegates can work to improve the climate situation in LDCs by reducing climate vulnerability and promoting environmental sustainability. To combat the 'climate apartheid', delegates can help to establish climate disaster protection and prevention strategies in LDCs.

They can work on strengthening emergency services and disaster response. To ensure that LEDCs are working toward a climate-friendly future, delegates can collaborate to implement renewable energy programs in LEDCs, possibly funded through international aid. Delegates can also work on transforming the economies of LEDCs to adopt sustainable agriculture and green infrastructure projects.

To address economic challenges in these countries, delegates can work to promote responsible and effective provision foreign aid from more developed countries through transparency measures and increased collaboration between donor countries and recipient countries. They can collaborate in implementing debt relief initiatives and strategies to build self-reliant economies. This involves increased debt transparency for public and private lenders as well as sovereign borrowers, along with measures that boost the local economies of LEDCs. These can include diversifying these countries' economies or having state governments support local enterprises.

Finally, solutions that aid the overall sustainable development of LEDCs can be explored. This can be done through international collaboration and by employing strategies that have been seen to be successful in developed countries in LEDCs. For example, technology transfers and capacity-building initiatives provided by wealthier nations and international organisations can help LEDCs develop in a way that benefits all stakeholders. Countries can work together to improve infrastructure in LEDCs to accommodate the needs of their populations, possibly investigating how this can be done in an environmentally sustainable way.

Bibliography

Useful Links

[Home - United Nations Sustainable Development](#) - The official UN site for the SDGs. It provides background information about the SDGs, specific targets, and progress on individual goals. This website can also help you with possible solutions. It also contains this year's progress report: "The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024".

[Sustainable development in the Least Developed Countries. Towards 2030: 2016](#)
- This was UNESCO'S mid-term review of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), reviewing LDCs' progress in meeting the SDGs.

This paper provides information about the situation in LDCs, what must be done, and possible solutions.

[Advancing Sustainable Development in LDCs](#) - This UNOPS (United Nations Office for Project Services) website provides insight in regard to specific sustainable development challenges faced by particular LDCs and this may be useful to gather ideas for resolutions and figure out a correct course of action for your nation and their stance.

Works Cited

- <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/#1b1981a30bd8fde2>
- <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2023/08/what-is-sustainable-development/>
- <https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/less-economically-developed-countries/604088>
- <https://www.ibdeconomics.com/growth-and-development.html>
- <https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/174576/corruption-and-its-impact-on-foreign-aid-effectiveness>
- <https://www.theworldcounts.com/challenges/trade-and-poverty/foreign-aid-pros-and-cons>
- <https://virchowprize.org/vf-road-to-2030-history-of-sdgs/>
- <https://afsa.org/south-sudan-13-reflections-crisis-aid-and-road-recovery>
- <https://sdgtransformationcenter.org/reports/sustainable-development-report-2024>
- <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/aboutmajorgroups.html>
- <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/09/06/world-bank-group-partners-with-afe-south-sudan-to-strengthen-institutional-and-human-resource-capabilities>
- <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/11/30/somalias-afe-economy-resilient-amid-climatic-and-global-shocks>
- <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/10616/finland-publishes-new-sustainable-development-strategy>
- <https://enhancedif.org/en/environmental-sustainability-uncovering-key-lessons-least-developed-countries-ldcs-and-priority>

- <https://sustainabilitymag.com/top10/top-10-sustainable-countries>
- <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n19/437/22/pdf/n1943722.pdf>
- <https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/news/advancing-sustainable-development-in-lDCs>
- <https://unctad.org/news/soaring-debt-burden-threatens-global-goals-experts-warn>
- <https://www.globalissues.org/article/29/causes-of-the-debt-crisis>
- [https://www.un.org/ohrlls/news/debt-affordable-finance-and-future-least-developed-countries#:~:text=Almost%20two%2Dthirds%20\(60%20per.comes%20with%20a%20higher%20price.](https://www.un.org/ohrlls/news/debt-affordable-finance-and-future-least-developed-countries#:~:text=Almost%20two%2Dthirds%20(60%20per.comes%20with%20a%20higher%20price.)
- <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category.html>
- <https://www.iied.org/2020-review-climate-impacts-least-developed-countries>
- <https://unctad.org/news/four-key-challenges-facing-least-developed-countries>
- <https://devinit.org/blog/what-latest-oecd-data-tells-us-about-global-aid-2022/#:~:text=LDCs%20received%20less%20aid%2C%20and,reflects%20a%20longer%20term%20trend.>