

**Forum:** United Nations Environment Programme

**Issue:** Measures to Assist LEDCs with sustainable development

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## Introduction:

Sustainable development is a crucial part of human development. Due to the massive boom in population growth around the 1950s, resources around the world started being used at a slightly faster speed than those which were being used before. From 1950 to 1980 the population increased from 2.5 to 4.4 billion. As the population continued to grow over such a short time the speed at which the resources were being used increased until people began to realise that humans were using up resources faster than they can be replenished. This is when the idea of sustainable development was introduced. To sustain natural resources on earth, the resources have to be used at a rate at which they can be replenished for further use.

Developing countries face severe issues related to resources and their effective allocation. Developing sustainably requires advanced use of technology, constant social progress and conservation of natural resources. It is critical to note that resources are finite. This issue is of paramount importance to address because of several reasons. First, it improves our ways of living, second, it protects our ecosystem and finally, it ensures safety and resources for future generations.

Although many United Nations treaties, agreements and committees have been created to combat the issue of the lack of sustainable development around the world, many of these overlook the issues that developing countries will have in undertaking solutions outlined in agreements. Many developing countries lack the resources, economic stability and technological progress for sustainable development to be implemented. Nations like Canada and Sweden have implemented many aid programs and sent large sums of money to LEDCs to ensure development.

## Definition of Key Terms:

1. **LEDCs:** “Less Economically Developed Countries”, or countries that exhibit low indicators of socioeconomic development.
2. **MEDCs:** “More Economically Developed Countries”, or countries that have a high quality of life, developed economy and advanced technological infrastructure.
3. **Sustainable development:** A principle for meeting human development goals, while sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the resources on which we depend.
4. **Climate change:** Long term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns around the world, usually attributed to human activities.
5. **Economic Inequality:** The unequal distribution of income and opportunity between different groups in society.
6. **Renewable resources:** Renewable resources are energy sources that cannot be depleted and can supply a continuous source of clean energy
7. **Non-renewable resources:** A natural resource that cannot be readily replaced by natural means at a pace quick enough to keep up with consumption

## Background Information

### The Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, all member states of the United Nations adopted a blueprint for sustainable development worldwide. They agreed that 17 goals should be reached by 2030. The goals contain objectives such as; zero hunger, no poverty and industry, innovation and infrastructure. Although these goals are a good way to encourage sustainable development around the world, the goals do not give a platform or aid for LEDCs to complete these goals

For a country with a good economy and an ability to trade with other developed countries, goals such as ‘clean water and sanitation or ‘zero hunger’ seem reachable and almost effortless. But when it comes to less developed countries or nations that still have not reached the same level of economic, technological and governmental development, these goals are a far stretch to reach by 2030, in only nine years. This is because of the lack of economic and technological development in LEDCs. For example, if an LEDC wanted to switch to clean

energy entirely, they would have to invest lots of money into research and development for clean energy, due to the lack of economic instability, this would be an effortful action.

### **Significant Events**

The first-ever major attempt at reaching a global agreement on environmental matters happened in 1972, this was the UN Conference on Human Environment. Although not much about sustainable development was discussed, it was still the first major step toward the current sustainable development programs we have put in place. In 1980, The World Conservation Strategy helped to coin 'sustainable development'. It argued that sustainable development was not only a matter of climate change but of conservation of resources as a whole to secure our future. In October of this year, the first-ever LEDC Future Forum took place online. As quoted from the United Nations website; "To tackle the unprecedented confluence of the COVID-19, climate, and economic crises, innovative thinking and new solutions based in research is desperately needed."

### **Impact of the lack of development in LEDCs**

The lack of sustainable solutions in LEDCs is not only hindering the individual countries but the world as a whole. Due to our rapidly growing population, in the future, more resources will be needed to sustain that population. Unfortunately, most of the resources we use are either unrenowable or are being used with such frequency that they are unable to renew.

LEDCs export the majority of the primary products needed for our societies to function. Goods like oil, cotton, iron, bananas, coffee and cocoa, while MEDCs tend to take those primary products and manufacture them into secondary products for consumption. Although secondary products do have their share of carbon emissions, the majority are emitted by the extraction of primary resources. Due to the lack of sustainable development in LEDCs, the methods and speed that natural resources are extracted from the earth are highly unsustainable. This means that in the future, there may be a lack of primary resources.

## Current Situation

### COVID-19

In previous years, LEDCs hadve struggled with sustainable development due to a lack of advanced technology and economic stability. From 2020 onwards, LEDCs have been put under much more pressure due to the global pandemic which almost reversed the progress made by LEDCs in terms of sustainable development. Before COVID-19, countries in need were able to receive aid from more developed countries. Trading with other nations was also more feasible to help developing countries stabilize their economies. After the pandemic hit, most countries shut down borders and halted trade to stop the spread of the virus, leaving LEDCs almost stranded. The outbreak also meant that not only were LEDCs less capable of getting aid in terms of sustainable development, but their focus now shifted off sustainability and more toward diminishing COVID within their borders.

### 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference

During the 2021 United Nations Climate Change conference, or COP26, many steps were taken to help the situation of LEDCs. A new Programme of Action was released to aid LEDCs with sustainable development in ways such as implementing programmes to aid with clean water and safe food sources, and systematic collection of data from LEDCs to specify the aid needed. An important conclusion that was made was that to include younger generations in the fight against climate change since more than half the people living in LEDCs are under the age of 25.

A Multilateral Assessment and Facilitative Sharing of Views was also participated in during the COP26 event. Out of the 17 nations that participated, 7 were LEDCs, giving a fairly equal view on the topic as a whole. These nations pointed out common factors faced by LEDCs in attempts for sustainable development. An example of this is how the major market in many of the LEDCs is the agricultural sector which is a high producer of carbon emissions yet still crucial to the nation's development. The nations also highlighted the financial and technical support they were receiving from more developed countries, supporting their mitigation efforts.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### Canada

They have provided multiple LEDCs with access to clean water and tackled climate change, such as donating \$40 million to the African Water Facility from 2005-2017. They also carry out an environmental integration process to ensure the environmental sustainability of their development initiatives, such as making sure development does not pollute or degrade the environment, considering environmental risks when making decisions, and capitalising on environmental opportunities.

### Nepal

In 2021, they transitioned into a Green, Resilient and Inclusive Development (GRID) approach to address the current global crisis of COVID-19, as well as their challenges, such as low rates of inclusion, large infrastructure gaps, slow domestic job creation, and a high vulnerability to climate change and environmental degradation. The SDGs have been mainstreamed into the frameworks for their development, and they have developed the SDGs Status and Roadmap 2016-2030, SDGs Needs Assessment, Costing and Financing Strategy, and SDGs Localization Guidelines that spell out baselines, targets and implementation and financing strategies for each SDG.

### Sweden

They strongly believe in the value of SDGs and were one of the first countries to begin talking about implementing sustainable development into their own country. They are a strong voice for the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda and are very generous with their aid, with the government committed to allocating 1 per cent of Sweden's GNI to Official Development Assistance (ODA).

### The central African Republic

With a population of 4.3 million people, roughly 71% of their population lives below the international poverty line. Poor governance, insecurity, high inequality, the management of their abundant natural resources, and social marginalization are only some of the issues that they

face, and as one of the least economically developed countries in the world, it is very hard for them to be able to change at all.

## Afghanistan

With the recent upheaval and turnover of the government to the Taliban Organization, new rules and regulations have been added to Afghanistan that goes against certain aspects of the SDGs, an integral part of implementing Sustainable development in LEDCs, such rules and regulations include making women and girls be shut out of schools, the workplace, and government, unable to leave their homes without a male family member, and the scarcity of clean food and water in Afghanistan, causing severe malnutrition to occur.

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 21 October 2015 (**A/RES/70/1**)
  - helped to implement the sustainable development goals, which seek to end poverty and hunger, realise the human rights of all, achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources.
- Adoption of the Paris agreement, 12 December 2015 (**FPCCC/CP/2015/L.9/Rev.1**)
  - it aims to strengthen countries' ability to deal with the impacts of climate change and support them in their efforts and also sets out frameworks to avoid climate change by limiting global warming to below 2°C and trying to limit it to 1.5°C.
- The future we want, 27 July 2012 (**A/RES/66/288**)
  - it is a declaration on sustainable development and a green economy, and it aims to help solve issues like poverty, food security, lack of clean energy, sustainable cities, sustainable transport and more.

## Possible Solutions

1. Improve the literacy of citizens of LEDCs, on the topic of climate change. This would help individuals be more aware of steps they can take to reduce their carbon footprint.

This can be done by implementing United Nations teaching programmes with possible financial assistance from MEDCs.

2. Implementation of a possible United Nations task force in order to monitor and care for the citizens and governments of countries struggling with sustainable development. This can also help to prevent corruption in LEDCs if possibly corrupt governments use funding and aid for means other than to develop sustainably
3. Encouraging more developed countries to send funding and aid to nations that may not be able to afford more advanced technology. This can also help LEDCs invest in more ways to protect their infrastructure from possible natural disasters or unprecedented situations like the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Bibliography

### Useful Links

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- <https://unfccc.int/news/process-launched-to-boost-support-for-least-developed-countries>
- <https://unfccc.int/news/cop26-sees-significant-progress-on-issues-related-to-agriculture>
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- <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/07/5-issues-affecting-trade-in-the-worlds-least-developed-countries/>

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