

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Southern Regional Model United Nations Conference XVI and to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). My name is Ana West, and it is my privilege to serve as the Director of UNDP this year. This is my fourth year at SRMUN and my second on staff. I served as the Assistant Director for UNAIDS for SRMUN XV. Currently I am attending graduate school, pursuing a master's degree in International Relations/Diplomacy with concentrations in International Organizations and Global Health at the John C. Whitehead School of Diplomacy at Seton Hall University. The Assistant Director for the UNDP is Debra Orock. Debra is originally from Cameroon in West Africa and is currently attending Queens University in Charlotte, North Carolina, pursuing her bachelor's degree with a major in International Relations and Political Science and a minor in International Business. This is Debra's first year with the SRMUN staff.

For SRMUN XVI, the UNDP will be discussing the following topics:

- I. The Effect of HIV/AIDS on Development
- II. The Importance of the Participation of Women in Politics to Ensure Democratic Governance
- III. Rural Poverty Knowledgebase

The UNDP is the UN's global development network. Its purpose is to advocate for changes in developing nations by connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. The UNDP is present in 166 countries, working with states to ensure solutions to global and national development challenges. Furthermore, the UNDP helps developing countries attract and use aid effectively. In all its activities, the UNDP encourages the protection of human rights and the empowerment of women.

This background guide provides an introduction to the topics to be discussed. Please keep in mind, however, that the background does not provide a comprehensive examination of the topic or of the work of the UNDP, but is merely an introduction; further research is needed to fully comprehend the work of this committee. The background guide is a tool to facilitate further research.

Each delegation is required to submit a position paper. It should be no longer than two pages in length (single spaced, Times New Roman font—please see www.srmun.org for format specifics) and should convey your country's policies and recommendations for all three topics. **A copy should be sent to Laura Merrell (ddg@srmun.org) no later than 11:59 pm on October 29th, 2005.** Please refer often to the website (www.srmun.org) for updates and announcements.

Debra and I look forward to working with all of you in your preparations for the conference and meeting you in November. If you have any questions and/or concerns, please feel free to contact either Debra or me. We wish you the best in your preparations for SRMUN XVI. Good luck and we will see you in November.

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History of the United Nations Development Programme

"The new century is not going to be new at all if we offer only charity, that palliative to satisfy the conscience and keep the same old system of haves and have-nots quietly contained."¹

Following the end of World War II, there was a tremendous emphasis on assisting nations to fully develop. The recently created United Nations responded to requests for assistance by developing nations by sending experts to provide technological assistance. At the first session of the General Assembly in 1946, authorization was given to continue the work of the League of Nations on non-political functions such as in economic and social areas.² The General Assembly in 1948 created a special technical assistance program to serve in an advisory capacity for social welfare services.³ It was called the "regular technical assistance programme" to indicate the United Nations level of commitment towards development.⁴ The program's effectiveness was limited due to its small budget.⁵ Developing nations requested the creation of a program that would provide financial assistance towards development despite opposition by developed nations to such a program.⁶ Following United States President Harry Truman's inaugural address that supported a program of technical assistance to underdeveloped nations, there was a shift in support by developed nations.⁷

Once the United States agreed to become a donor, other nations joined in providing financial support allowing the creation of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA). Created by ECOSOC⁸ and the General Assembly,⁹ EPTA became fully operational in July 1950. EPTA coordination was assigned to a Technical Assistance Board (TAB). Even with its relatively small budget, EPTA was a significant step toward promoting development world wide.¹⁰ Furthermore, it was the first multilateral development program completely financed by voluntary assistance.¹¹ The EPTA mandate covered a larger range of activities than the former Technical Assistance Programme, including economic planning; public administration; education and training; agriculture including fisheries, forestry and livestock; public health; transport and communications; and civil aviation.¹²

To facilitate coordination between both agencies, a merger was proposed. Since both TAB/EPTA and the United Nations Special Fund (which focused on investments) goals were very similar, a merger was unavoidable, especially considering their close relationship and the fact that they shared common facilities.¹³ In January 1, 1966 following the adoption of resolution 2029 by the General Assembly the United Development Programme (UNDP) was created to continue with the goal of promoting development to allow people to improve their quality of life.¹⁴

The UNDP's global development network is deployed in 166 countries, supporting each nation in their own development challenges, providing expertise, experience and resources in a varied number of areas with the aid of strategic partners. In 2000, UNDP formed the Bureau for Resources and Strategic Partnership to manage and foster

¹ Nadine Gordimer. "Global Ambassadors." The United Nations Development Programme.

<http://www.undp.org/dpa/goodwill/nadine.html>

² Ruben P. Mendez. "United Nations Development Programme." United Nations Studies at Yale.

www.yale.edu/unsy/UNDPHist.htm

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ 1949/222. *Economic Development of Under Developed Countries.* United Nations Economic and Social Council.

⁹ A/RES/49/304. *Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance for Economic Development of Under- Developed Countries.* United Nations General Assembly.

¹⁰ Ruben P. Mendez. "United Nations Development Programme." United Nations Studies at Yale.

www.yale.edu/unsy/UNDPHist.htm

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ A/RES/65/2029. *Consolidation of the Special Fund and the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance in a United Nations Development Programme.* United Nations General Assembly.

the relationship with donors, civil societies, international financial organizations, regional development banks, private sector, and the UN system.¹⁵

The UNDP is the United Nations largest provider of grants for sustainable human development throughout the world and is actively involved in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). World leaders adopted the Millennium Development Goals at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. The objective of the MDGs are to “eliminate extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; and ensuring environmental sustainability,” utilizing a set of objectives that must be met by the year 2015. Some of these objectives are to decrease by 50% the number of individuals that are paid less than a dollar a day, implement basic primary education, eradicate education gender discrimination and considerably reduce child mortality rates while increasing maternal health.¹⁶

One of the most important and often mentioned works of the UNDP is the Human Development Reports (HDRs). These reports which were initiated in 1990 include crucial data on development indicators on a nation by nation basis. It ranks nations on issues such as literacy, life expectancy, women’s rights and per capita income. The HDRs is an independent report that is commissioned by the UNDP and is created by a team of experts, the report is translated into more than twelve languages and used in more than one hundred nations every year.¹⁷ HDRs are used by every body of the UN to determine the needs, progress or regress of every nation in the defined areas of the report.

The UNDP’s main goals are to facilitate global and national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, especially the world aspiration to reduce current poverty levels by 2015. The UNDP helps nations on five focus areas: Democratic Governance, Poverty Reduction, Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Energy and Environment and HIV/AIDS.¹⁸

Thirty-six member states form the UNDP Executive Board. These representatives from developed and developing nations serve on a revolving basis, and five regional groups are represented through the Bureau. The objective of the Executive Board is to ensure that the organization is receptive to the developing needs of programme countries.¹⁹

The current member states of the UNDP Executive Board are: AUSTRALIA, BELARUS, BOTSWANA, CAMEROON, CAPE VERDE, CHINA, REPUBLIC of the CONGO, CUBA, DENMARK, EL SALVADOR, ERITREA, GAMBIA, GERMANY, GUATEMALA, GUYANA, INDIA, INDONESIA, IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF), ITALY, JAPAN, KAZAKHSTAN, NETHERLANDS, NEPAL, NORWAY, POLAND, PORTUGAL, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND, TUNISIA, TURKEY, UGANDA, UKRAINE, UNITED STATES and URUGUAY.²⁰

¹⁵ “Strategic Partnerships.” The United Nations Development Programme. <http://www.undp.org/partnerships/>

¹⁶ “What the UN does for Development.” The United Nations. <http://www.un.org/Overview/brief5.html>

¹⁷ “About HDRO.” The United Nations Development Programme. <http://hdr.undp.org/aboutus/>

¹⁸ “Focus Areas.” The United Nations Development Programme. <http://www.undp.org/focusareas/>

¹⁹ “Executive Board Secretariat” The United Nations Development Programme. <http://www.undp.org/execbrd/>

²⁰ “Members of the Bureau in the year 2005” The United Nations Development Programme. <http://www.undp.org/execbrd/memberseng.htm>

I. The Effect of HIV/AIDS on Development

*“The spread of HIV/AIDS can be partly attributed to the failure of development; and it will increasingly contribute to that failure.”*²¹

History

It has been more than twenty-five years since the first case of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) was discovered. It is estimated that 39.4 million people are currently living with the virus.²² Since HIV/AIDS was first recognized, more than 20 million people have died.²³ On average 90% of these infections take place in less developed countries, where the disease has contributed to a decrease in life expectancy.²⁴ According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, life expectancy in some Sub-Saharan countries has been cut in half over the last twenty-five years.²⁵ Average life expectancy has declined by more than 20 years in some of the worst-affected countries.²⁶ By the year 2010, it is expected that in some countries such as Swaziland and Zimbabwe life expectancy will hover around 30 years old.²⁷ According to the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), “AIDS is the worst catastrophe to ever hit the world.”²⁸ The disease damages the ability of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to prosper. Any advances that have been made in the past due to the work of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and regional organizations are being reversed by a dangerous combination of HIV/AIDS, conflict and poverty. The economic growth rate of Sub-Saharan Africa has decreased approximately 4% due to AIDS; and the productivity of its work force has decreased by 50% in countries with the highest levels of infection.²⁹

The spread of HIV/AIDS itself is a sign of the inability of nations to promote a more equal and prosperous society for everyone. The contribution of developed nations to this problem has often been attributed to low levels of aid, unequal trade opportunities and high interests in loans; while less developed countries contribution to the failure is often attributed to high levels of corruption and the inability of promoting and sustaining good governance.³⁰ HIV/AIDS has a destructive impact on the lives and the livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. Most of the initiatives to combat the disease have focused on finding a medical solution while failing to address the additional social and political problems that exacerbate HIV/AIDS. The socio-economic and political consequences of the disease are growing. It is safe to state that HIV/AIDS compounded with poverty and conflict is the driving forces behind the lack or destruction of basic services, creating a situation where development is impossible to achieve or maintain.³¹

HIV/AIDS affects social stability by undermining political leadership and depleting institutional memory which is wisdom, expertise and intellectual knowledge passed from one generation to the next.³² HIV/AIDS has the potential

²¹ “Not just another health issue: the impact of HIV/AIDS on development.” Canadian International Development Agency. April 9, 2000. http://www.acdi-ccida.gc.ca/cida_ind.nsf/0/83179058f8cd194e852568fc00552618?OpenDocument

²² “AIDS Epidemic Update.” Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. December 2004. http://www.unaids.org/html/pub/publications/irc-pub06/epiupdate04_en.html.htm

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ “AIDS Data.” The World Bank. July 2004. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTHEALTHNUTRITIONANDPOPULATION/EXTHIVAIDS/html>

²⁵ “HIV/AIDS Drives Down Life Expectancy.” Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. <http://unaids.org/html/pub/topics/epidemiology/html>

²⁶ Markus Haacker. *The Macroeconomics of HIV/AIDS*. November 2004. <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/AIDS/eng/index.htm>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Carol Bellamy. Speech in Johannesburg South Africa. November, 2003. http://www.unicef.org/media/media_16664.html

²⁹ “The hidden costs of the DRB.” PeaceWomen. June 7, 2005. http://www.peacewomen.org/news/Uganda/June05/CostsofDRB.html?t=women_press

³⁰ “Not just another health issue: the impact of HIV/AIDS on development” Canadian International Development Agency. April 9, 2000. http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cida_ind.nsf/0/83179058f8cd194e852568fc00552618?OpenDocument

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

to affect a person's ability to pursue a stable life which in turn may lead to a lack of confidence in the state's ability to protect its citizens, causing an impact on state economy, discouraging social order and ultimately leading to government instability. Governments have a mandate to promote economic stability and provide its citizens with basic needs, which HIV/AIDS undermines, causing political instability. Once the government is unable to provide its citizens with basic needs the effect is a complete disintegration of its infrastructure that ultimately may lead to the collapse of the government; such was the case in Russia in 1917.³³

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) primary goal is to create and promote solutions to address global and national developmental issues. They have identified AIDS as the most serious developmental barrier in the world.³⁴ To address the issue UNDP advocates developing nations to identify and place HIV/AIDS at the center of national policies and fiscal planning.³⁵ Further, HIV/AIDS is a global problem; national efforts alone are not sufficient to address the issue.³⁶ UNDP promotes cooperation at the global level to offer resources, technical knowledge and practices that have been successful in other nations.³⁷

The UNDP is represented in each county by a Resident Representative that serves as the coordinator of development activities for the United Nations system to ensure the effective use of all the UN resources in the region. These regional representatives have the task of promoting programs necessary to their region and also to ensure the adequate delivery of aid and technology. The regional representative is an expert of the needs and infrastructure of their region assisting in the formulation of programs that are adequate and sustainable.³⁸

Impact on the Labor Market and Economies

The impact of HIV/AIDS on the labor market and economics is far reaching. The HIV/AIDS pandemic interacts with sustainable human development in three ways: it negates the gains from development; patterns of development can contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS and aggravate its consequences; and lessons from what works in sustainable human development can facilitate the creation of responses to the pandemic.³⁹

HIV/AIDS has a negative impact on household income and levels of expenditure, production and savings. In Asia and Africa, in some estimates, 75% of family income may be lost due to AIDS.⁴⁰ According to estimates when the prevalence of HIV/AIDS reaches 8 percent, where it is today for 13 African countries, the cost in terms of economic growth is estimated at about 1 percent per year.⁴¹ This loss affects the ability and motivation to keep children in school, care for the elderly and severely threatens food security.⁴² Therefore, an AIDS bottleneck effect on labor supply affects productivity and optimization of capital engagement. Production is then reduced absolutely due to the fall in the amount of workers and relatively due to diminishing returns to capital.

The impact of HIV/AIDS is predominant in developing nations that were already experiencing a shortage of skilled labor; furthermore it has reduced productivity at the national level. The high death rate in some nations has created a delay in the pace at which new skilled labors can be trained to replace those who have died. The consequence in the short term is that the loss of skilled and non-skilled labor is devastating training programs, morale on the job, relationship between management and workers and has raised questions relating to the rights of workers to be treated fairly regardless of their health status.

³³ Terence Bell and Richard Bellamy. *Cambridge history of twentieth-century political thought*. London; New York: Cambridge University Press. 2003.

³⁴ "HIV/AIDS in Africa." United Nations Development Programme. <http://www.undp.org/rba/hiv.html>

³⁵ "HIV/AIDS." United Nations Development Programme. www.undp.org/hiv/

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "Who We Are and What We Do." United Nations Development Programme. <http://www.undp.org/about/>

³⁹ *Guide to HIV/AIDS and Development*. The Commonwealth of Australia Overseas Aid Program. October 1999.

<http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/HIVAIDS.pdf>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *Briefing Summary: Disability and Development and The World Bank*. The World Bank. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank. 2005. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DISABILITY/Resources/Overview/DD_and_WB_Briefing_Summary.pdf

⁴² *Guide to HIV/AIDS and Development*. The Commonwealth of Australia Overseas Aid Program. October 1999.

<http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/HIVAIDS.pdf>

Unlike other diseases, HIV/AIDS affects people in their most productive years (15 to 49 years of age) disrupting key sectors of the economy such as mining, transportation, agriculture and education.⁴³ According to the Heidelberg World Bank report “The real economic threat of Aids is its potential to kill young adults, by doing that, it prevents the transfer of human capital from one generation to another.”⁴⁴ Unless the young workers who are becoming infected receive treatment, they are expected to become ill and die within 10 years.⁴⁵ The HIV/AIDS pandemic also has labor and production implications not only in terms of sheer numbers but also in terms of the structure of the working population. The age pyramid will narrow causing a smaller pool of experienced and skilled workers.⁴⁶ Higher mortality will also cause more attrition rates, imposing additional costs on producers through higher medical and death-related benefits and higher training costs associated with the replacement of staff.⁴⁷

The most visible fiscal consequences of HIV/AIDS include increased spending on prevention, care and treatment.⁴⁸ Further, as economic growth declines, the domestic tax base weakens and domestic revenues fall.⁴⁹ HIV/AIDS also erodes public services as mortality rates for civil servants rise, and it drives up government spending even in areas not directly related to combating HIV/AIDS.⁵⁰

Impact on Communities

The growing number of HIV/AIDS orphans that are unsupervised, poorly clothed, underfed, uneducated and are traumatized by the loss of their parents and uncertain about their futures have a tremendously destabilizing effect on local communities and will continue to do so in the future. These orphans demand resources and money to properly clothe and feed, even in the best of circumstances. In the worst, as is reality in many cities, they are left completely abandoned, relying on acts of charity by others or violence to survive. In addition, the psychological repercussions on the individual and community, caused by grief, hopelessness, fear and lack of control have a damaging effect on the individual’s ability to respond to the pandemic.⁵¹

Due to these factors, many communities around the globe are working together with NGOs to support HIV/AIDS victims and their families. Several of these NGOs and community based organizations have created and implemented innovative grass roots programs that are addressing all the factors that have made HIV/AIDS so detrimental not only in the health level but in the socio-economic level as well.

Grass roots campaigns have found that human rights issues, poverty and women’s issues are closely associated with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. These campaigns are therefore advocating changes in inheritance laws so that widows can inherit their husbands’ property to support their families and are implementing programs to generate income opportunities for women who were forced into prostitution due to the lack of employment. In addition, they implement programs to provide basic needs such as health care and education, since all these issues when combined helped reduce the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.⁵²

Actions taken by the UN

In the early years of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic the World Health Organization (WHO) was assigned as the main UN agency responsible for addressing the AIDS problem and was essential in assisting countries in the creation of

⁴³ Markus Haacker. *The Macroeconomics of HIV/AIDS*. November 2004.

<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/AIDS/eng/index.htm>

⁴⁴ Clive Bell and Hans Gersbach. *Thinking About the Long-run Economic Costs of AIDS*. May, 2005.

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAMSTERDAM/Resources/CliveBell.pdf>

⁴⁵ Markus Haacker. *The Macroeconomics of HIV/AIDS*. November 2004.

<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/AIDS/eng/index.htm>

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *Guide to HIV/AIDS and Development*. The Commonwealth of Australia Overseas Aid Program. October 1999.

<http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/HIVAIDS.pdf>

⁵² Ibid.

national AIDS programs.⁵³ However, with the continued spread of the disease and its catastrophic affect worldwide it become clear that a greater UN effort was necessary.⁵⁴

The unique problem of HIV/AIDS lead to the groundbreaking approach for the UN of combining the efforts of six UN agencies, UNICEF, UNDP, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), WHO and the World Bank to create the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in 1996.⁵⁵ In 1999 the United Nations International Drug Programme (UNDCP) also joined the consortium of UN agencies.⁵⁶ UNAIDS emphasized the need for a concentrated and focused effort on the fight against AIDS.⁵⁷ UNAIDS serves as the leading advocate for global action against HIV/AIDS with a mandate to guide, strengthen and support worldwide efforts against HIV/AIDS. The focus is on preventing the spread of HIV; providing care and support for those infected and affected by the disease; reducing the vulnerability of individuals and communities to HIV/AIDS; and easing the socioeconomic and human impact of the epidemic.⁵⁸

Much of UNAIDS work is done at the country level in developing countries functioning through the locally based staff of the seven agencies that were joined to form UNAIDS. Meeting as the host country's United Nations Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, representatives of the cosponsoring organizations share information and plan and monitor coordinated action among themselves and with other partners. They also decide on joint financing of major AIDS activities that can support the country's government and other national partners.⁵⁹

In July, 2000, the United Nations Security Council passed landmark *Resolution 1308*, recognizing the potential threat of AIDS on stability and security. In this important resolution, the Security Council recognized that HIV/AIDS is exacerbated by conditions of violence and instability which increases the risk of exposure to the disease through large movements of people, widespread uncertainty over conditions, and reduced access to medical care.⁶⁰ In 2001, the first UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS was held in which it further recognized that AIDS was a force so devastating that it threatened global security.

Actions taken by the UNDP

On September 8th, 2000, the member states of the United Nations signed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), among which they pledged to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases by the year 2015.⁶¹ UNDP is the leading advocate in helping nations integrate to MDGs into their national developmental policies. The objective is to create policies in a nation by nation approach that will fit the realities of each nation, strengthening the national development strategies and policies, to further facilitate the incorporation of these policies into the national budget and policy makers' agendas.⁶²

Part of the UNDP's efforts to fulfill the MDGs is the implementation of the "Africa 2015" plan which was created in January of 2004. The program's objective is to promote the participation of celebrities, media, writers, intellectuals and religious and political leaders to curtail HIV/AIDS in Africa.⁶³ Similar programs are planned in other regions, such as the Arab States 2015, Asia and the Pacific 2015, Europe and the CIS 2015, and Latin America and the Caribbean 2015.⁶⁴

The UNDP has also created an Early Warning Rapid Response System (EWRRS) program to address the HIV/AIDS situation since experience has shown the importance of responding to HIV/AIDS as soon as it is identified before becoming uncontrollable. In the area of HIV/AIDS, early warnings are mostly conceived within a health model.

⁵³ "What is UNAIDS?" The United Nations. http://www.un.org/ga/aids/ungassfactsheets/html/fsunaids_en.htm

⁵⁴ "What is UNAIDS?" The United Nations. http://www.un.org/ga/aids/ungassfactsheets/html/fsunaids_en.htm

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ S/RES/1308 (2000). *HIV/AIDS, Security and Stability*. The United Nations Security Council.

⁶¹ "The Goals." The United Nations Millennium Developmental Goals. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>

⁶² "Millennium Development Goals." The United Nations Development Programme. <http://www.undp.org/mdg/>

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

The UNDP system explains the identification and analysis of such early warning signals, which can offer much earlier alerts than those found within a health model. Development signals for HIV/AIDS requires crosscutting interpretation, thus EWRRS needs to be set-up with close collaboration between the AIDS authorities and other relevant sectors at a country level.⁶⁵

Conclusion

The UNDP focuses on integrating programs at the country and regional level to assist developing nations in creating programs that will address not only the issue of HIV/AIDS but also the developmental issues that are caused or exacerbated by the disease. The only way to tackle the developmental problems of nations is by attending to all the factors that are contributing to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Without this attention, the developmental and economic damage caused by a full-blown HIV/AIDS epidemic can assume catastrophic proportions over the long run, and threaten the social fabric itself.

Good governance puts citizens first and is indispensable for building peaceful, prosperous, sustainable, and democratic societies. Ultimately, by pursuing innovative systems approaches will put have the affect of putting citizens at the center of policy. Sustainable development combined with HIV/AIDS strategies at international, regional, national and local levels must be fully integrated in the decision making of all involved entities.

Committee Directive

Member states must work together to create programs that will fully address the pressing factors that are having an impact on the spread of HIV/AIDS and development, especially the relationship between the HIV/AIDS pandemic and sustainable human development. In addition, delegates must remember that HIV/AIDS is not only an issue in developing nations and that programs that have been used in developed nations will not always work in developing nations, but also a partnership should be applied to strengthen the global fight against HIV/AIDS and developmental problems. Delegates should focus their energies on the impacts on economies and labor markets. It is essential for delegates to create innovative and original solutions to the issue of HIV/AIDS and development. Solutions can be divided into both short-term and long-term terms.

After careful and detailed research delegates should have full knowledge of their nation's positions, involvement, programs concerning the issue and its regional alliances, trade partners and aid donors. Additionally, delegates should be able to answer the following questions – What has been the impact, if any, of HIV/AIDS on development in their nation and/or region? Has your nation implemented any programs to combat HIV/AIDS and its impact on development? Which programs have been successful or not? Could these programs be implemented in other nations? What is the long term outcome expected of such programs? Who is responsible for supporting these programs? Do developed nations have a moral responsibility to provide assistance to developing nations? What is the global cost of such a pandemic?

II. The Importance of the Participation of Women in Politics to Ensure Democratic Governance

History

Since the end of World War II, the United Nations mission has been to spread the ideals of democracy and human rights throughout the world. Democratic governance advances the protection of human rights. Democracy involves three essential rights: The right to take part in government; the right to vote and to be elected; and the right to equal access to public service.⁶⁶ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government.⁶⁷ At the Millennium Summit in September of 2000, the world's leaders

⁶⁵ "A Manual for Early Warning Rapid Response Systems for HIV/AIDS." The United Nations Development Programme. November 2004. http://www.hiv-development.org/publications/ewrrs_manual.htm

⁶⁶ "Promoting Democracy through Reform." United Nations Development Programme. 8/23/2005. <http://www.undp.org/governance/index.htm>

⁶⁷ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. United Nations General Assembly. December 10, 1948.

resolved to “spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.”⁶⁸ The challenge of promoting democratic governance has been to develop institutions and processes that are more responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens, including women.⁶⁹ This has clearly been the center of all women’s struggles. Women are widely underrepresented in governments worldwide, and their voting rights were acquired well after men and the electoral process for of women is still a taboo subject for some cultures. The UNDP helps countries strengthen their electoral and legislative systems, improve access to justice and public administration and develop a greater capacity to deliver basic services to those most in need.⁷⁰

Since ancient time, women in general have had very little participation within political arenas. There are a few notable exceptions, however. In ancient Greece, the birthplace of democracy, some women were openly active in politics.⁷¹ This participation continued in various countries at various times during history. During the age of enlightenment, the discussion of women’s equality coincided with the emergence of rational and idealist thought. During this time Mary Wollstonecraft published *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, arguing in favor of a social order based on reason and free of superstition and prejudice.⁷²

During this period of intellectual enlightenment and the rebirth of democracy in the newly created United States of America, France and Great Britain, there was also a rebirth in the disenfranchisement of women. Women continued to be viewed as second-class citizens whose existence was limited to the interior life of the home and care of the children. They were considered subordinates of either their fathers or their husbands, and after marriage, they did not have the right to own property, maintain their wages, or sign a contract, much less vote.

Around Mid to late 1880s, women’s suffrage movements worldwide were set in motion. Suffrage means the civil right to vote. In 1848, the first Women’s Rights Convention was organized in Seneca Falls, New York in the United States. Using the United State’s Declaration of Independence as their guide, the Convention brought a great deal of attention to the subordinate status of women and led to propositions and recommendations for change.⁷³ Women in many countries during the 19th century were involved in highly organized suffrage movements. These movements resulted in the Wyoming Territory of the United States becoming the first modern polity where suffrage was extended to women in 1869.⁷⁴ This success was followed in 1893 by New Zealand which was the first country to introduce universal suffrage, followed over the years by most of the world’s countries.⁷⁵

A number of other international instruments reflect the principal concerns underlying democratic governance including the right of people to freely determine their political status. The right of all elements of society to participate in the promotion and protection of human rights are complete with guidelines that popular political methodology for ensuring such freedom and their essence is clear. Also, the political process in a country must be an atmosphere characterized by the absence of intimidation to encourage participation. Finally, there must be the presence and respect of a wide range of fundamental human rights. This means that all men and women should have a voice in decision-making whether directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Equal participation of women in political life plays a very important role in the general process of the advancement of women. Their input in the decision-making process is not only a simple demand for justice but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women’s interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.⁷⁶

⁶⁸ “Promoting Democracy through Reform.” United Nations Development Programme. August 23, 2005. <http://www.undp.org/governance/index.htm>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Lina Hamadeh-Banerjee and Paul Oquist. *Overview: Women’s Political Participation and Good Governance: 21st Century Challenges*. UNDP. 2000, p. 1. http://magnet.undp.org/new/pdf/gender/wpp/women_book.pdf

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ “Why a Women’s Rights Convention?” The Susan B. Anthony Center for Women’s Leadership. The University of Rochester. August 23, 2005. <http://www.rochester.edu/SBA/convention.html>

⁷⁴ “Women’s Suffrage.” The Inter-Parliamentary Union. 8/23/2005. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/suffrage.htm>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Azza M. Karam. Women’s Political Participation. *Meeting on Women and Political Participation: 21st Century Challenges*. <http://www.undp-pogar.org/publications/gender/karam1/section1.html>.

The Universal Declaration on Democracy urges governments and parliaments throughout the world to be guided by its contents. The opening section of the Declaration entitled “The Principle of Democracy” that “the achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarities, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences.”⁷⁷ In 1992, in Yaoundé, Cameroon, the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) Council stated: “The concept of democracy will only assume true and dynamic significance when political policies and national legislation are decided upon jointly by men and women with equitable regard for the interests and aptitude of both halves of the population.”⁷⁸

[UNCG1]

Challenges

Although gender equality is a legally recognized right in the constitution of many countries, women are largely underrepresented at most levels of government worldwide. They are particularly underrepresented in ministerial and other executive bodies and have made little progress in attaining political power in the legislative branch. Parents in most societies are willing to invest more in a male than a female child. Other numerous factors such as the heavy burden of household chores for girls, early marriages and early pregnancies conspire to reduce the number of girls who will attain a higher education. Women are underrepresented in the judiciary, corporate boards and state boards. The situation is to a large extent a reflection of the intensity of conflict embodying change between the aspirations of women who take their countries institutions seriously and resistance by men who imagine despite legislation that power is necessarily masculine.⁷⁹

Despite some success, some backlash has emerged as a result of the fight for women’s rights. Female empowerment has been strongly associated with secularism and Western values, which has brought about widespread resistance in certain societies.⁸⁰ Typically women are portrayed as subjects in need of protection from abuse, or as objects to be consumed.⁸¹ Very few, if any, women are presented as able and efficient decision-makers or leaders. Improving the involvement of women in the democratic process will depend on taking measures through constitutional and legislative provisions that guarantee women equal participation and citizenship.⁸² Most constitutions guarantee the right to vote and the right to be elected to all citizens regardless of gender. The problem lies at in the implementation of provision level; such guarantees do not result in outcomes that produce significant women’s participation in the electoral process.⁸³ Women find that they run into major obstacles when they try to exercise constitutional rights to vote and to be elected. At the government levels the problems include the lack of resources and a lack of gender awareness or political will.⁸⁴

Other major problems are to be found at the social level, where the new discourse of gender equality may run counter to existing social norms regarding gender roles.⁸⁵ In some cases, local authorities and male members of the society may discourage or prohibit women from participating in political activities.⁸⁶ Examples of this are evident in the Arab world where most women’s roles are generally are still confined to the home as subordinates to their male counterparts and remain total subordinates to men. Efforts to empower Arab women have created a great cultural gap between the Muslim and the Western worlds[UNCG2].

⁷⁷ “An Approach to Democracy. Gender Partnership: What the IPU is doing.” The International Parliamentary Union. <http://ipu.org/wwmn-e/approach.htm> 4/8/2005.

⁷⁸ Gillier Maylis. *IANWGE: Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. Summary of the Online Discussion Held in Preparation of the 10 Year Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Platform for Action in the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.* <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/news.htm> March 2005.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Noeleen Heyzer. *Peace Women: Women International League for Peace and Freedom: Women’s Participation and Leadership Vital to Democratic Governance.* UN Development Summit on the Americas, Monterrey, Mexico. January 13, 2004.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

The Importance of Women in Governance

The main question usually posed in regarding this issue is why then should women be involved in politics, and how can their presence ensure democratic governance? Though there are countless possible responses to this question, the most obvious is that politics will never reflect women's interests unless women take action or interest in the political process.⁸⁷ Without women taking action or interest in the political arena, they will be continually marginalized. Women bring their experience of reality to the political stage. When this is combined with the experience of men, it brings about a broader, more practical and more realistic viewpoint and outcomes. Women are better equipped to participate in the transformative politics because of the nature of their daily activities both in the home and outside their home.⁸⁸ Women can help to review policies and bring about laws to restructure the system they find oppressive and/or unsupported.⁸⁹ Corrupt practices should be less likely to happen if more women are in power. Women help ensure the interests of marginalized groups.⁹⁰ The involvement of women in public positions as part of decision-making process is not just for the protection of their rights, but also for other vulnerable populations such as children and minorities.⁹¹

The presence of women in the decision-making process over time has proven that women are critical to economic development, active civil society and good governance especially evident in developing countries.⁹² Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen stated that nothing is more important for development today than the economic, political, and social participation of women.⁹³ Increasingly, women who were long treated as passive recipients of aid are now regarded as active promoters of change who can aid society at large.⁹⁴ Women's participation in the political arena has greatly benefited democracy because of its advancement of the ideals of equality and civil rights. The importance of women to economic and political development leaves no doubt that they are most essential to the modernization process around the world.

Elections can provide the best possible opportunity to ensure women's voices are heard, their concerns are addressed, and their potential contribution to peace and democracy are maximized. According to the Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) a 130-country survey conducted in 2004 indicates that women hold an average of only 15.4 per cent of the elected seats.⁹⁵ However, in 1995, reports issued by the UNDP, concluded that 30 percent would be the minimum representation required for women as a group to exercise a meaningful influence in legislative assemblies.⁹⁶ The irony in this is that only 15 countries involved in the IPU survey have achieved this level and interestingly 3 of the 15, Rwanda (48.8%), South Africa (32.8%) and Mozambique (30%), are all post-conflict societies, which proves that electoral measures instituted as part of peace processes can improve women's representation.⁹⁷ This proves the possibility of advancing the role of women in politics in post-conflict situations, indicating that increasing women's roles in government is a question of political will and adequate resources.⁹⁸

UNDP and NGO Actions

The UN and NGOs have worked diligently for decades to support women in all aspects of the electoral process and to develop an agenda for action on how to strengthen support for the full participation of women in the electoral process. The UNDP has provided plenty of prior as well as ongoing assistance in the field of gender and development. The UNDP defines governance as a manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development.⁹⁹ Governance is concerned with how the institutions that

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Isobel Coleman. "The Payoff from Women's Rights." *Foreign Affairs*. May/June 2004. p. 2.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ S/RES/1325 (2000). *Women and Peace and Security*. The United Nations Security Council.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ "Governance, Peace & Security." The United Nations Development Fund for Women.

http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/governance_peace_security .8/30/2005

collect and use power work together within a country. Governance is a complex entity of mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which men and women as a group articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences.¹⁰⁰ Good governance guarantees that political, social and economic priorities are based on a broad consensus of all men and women. This process finds ways to hear the voices of the poorest, marginalized and the most vulnerable when decisions are made on the allocation of country's resources.¹⁰¹

Resolution 1325 of the Security Council urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties in conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse.¹⁰² Those involved in the United Nations have recognized that achieving sustainable and durable peace requires the full involvement and equal participation of women in conflict resolution and subsequent peace building. In *Resolution 1325*, the Security Council advocates the importance of integrating a gender perspective in the formulation and application of agreements aimed at establishing the foundation for a stable peace.¹⁰³

UNDP plays a key role together with The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in ensuring gender issues are being reflected across the United Nation's strategic plans worldwide.¹⁰⁴ The UN and NGOs have worked diligently for decades to support women in all aspects of the electoral process and to develop an agenda for action on how to strengthen support for the full participation of women in the electoral process.

The UN has numerous international instruments that address women's rights in particular. Through numerous international conferences on women, the UN has called for greater support for the participation of women in all aspects of the electoral process and in the power and decision-making position.¹⁰⁵ The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, expresses the conviction that peace is inextricably linked with the equality of women and men.¹⁰⁶ In accordance with the Beijing Platform, the UN has appealed to nations worldwide to ensure that women have the equal right to participate in governance. The UN also notes that the empowerment, autonomy and full citizenship of women are essential for their advancement in other spheres of life and for the most transparent and accountable governance.¹⁰⁷

The UN and NGOs have supported the participation of women in electoral processes from voter registration to running for office in post conflict countries. The UNDP in its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) has consulted with an external gender expert review rules and regulations from gender perspectives to develop new administrative rules and regulations. The UNDP encourages training specifically in the field of human resources to ensure that future laws, public administration and administrative procedures will address gender issues.¹⁰⁸

In the international conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity the UNDP promoted women's public participation, in particular, pointing out main contemporary concerns and directions to take. The main concern was that women are affected by many if not all of the political decisions taken by the governments, particularly those regarding the family, and yet still remain excluded. One of the speakers stated that despite the fact that women are the ones managing the daily life of the family, they are still considered incapable of taking on the same responsibilities for their nations.¹⁰⁹ Recommendations of the conference included equalizing women's

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² S/RES/1325 (2000). *Women and Peace and Security*. The United Nations Security Council.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ UNDP. Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People: Follow up on Beijing Plat Form of Action for Advancement of Women. August 1999. UNDP/PAP. <http://www.papp.undp.org/sustainable/projects/Beijing.htm>

¹⁰⁹ Hon. MS. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaiwah, *Governance and Sustainable Growth and Equity*. UNDP. 1997. p. 161. The Honorable Ms. Nandi-Ndaiwah is the Minister of Women's Affairs for the Office of the President of Namibia.

representation to 50% at all levels of decision-making institutions as well as removing all obstacles that might possibly prevent women from public participation.¹¹⁰

The Millennium Declaration identified gender equality and women empowerment both as a goal in of itself and as essential to achieving all other Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Today, it is widely accepted that the full participation of all citizens, both men and women, is the best way to build and sustain democracies, reduce conflict and achieve human development.¹¹¹ Comprising over half of the world's population, women are essential to addressing the pressing challenges we face today and for achieving the MDGs, of creating more accountable institutions of governance, ensuring equitable resource allocation, combating HIV/AIDS and guaranteeing peace and security.¹¹² The issues affecting women are not only women's issues; they have profound implications for all humanity, yet, everywhere women continue to be underrepresented as leaders, problem solvers, decision makers or elected officials.¹¹³ Many discriminatory laws and practices still prevent women from playing a role in shaping the policies that affect their lives. In addition, many women still do not have full understanding of their rights, knowledge of how to participate in complex economic and political process or how to hold their leaders accountable. Despite their potential to offer innovative solutions, especially in a time of crisis, they are rarely consulted and are usually left out of any real political process.¹¹⁴ It is clear that enhancing women's participation in post-conflict countries is essential to building peace and democracy and advancing the equality of women and men.¹¹⁵

As Nyaradzi Gumbonzvanda, UNIFEM's regional program director of East and Horn of Africa stated that "although women often play a leadership role in their communities during and after conflict, they are too often left out of formal peace negotiations and agreements."¹¹⁶ Women's roles are often undervalued or ignored despite the fact that it is their right to participate on equal terms with men in all governance and decision-making process. To insure this right, women from all over the world have formed coalitions such as the NGO Save Somali Women and Children, which was created in response to the fact that only males were serving as representatives during the Djibouti peace talks in 2000.¹¹⁷ The women mobilized themselves to form a "sixth clan" which was eventually accepted as an equal participant in the high-level peace talks.¹¹⁸ Their presence at the negotiation led to the Federal Charter requiring that a minimum of 12 percent of National Assembly seats go to women.¹¹⁹ This has led to the formation of regional coalitions in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. These "Women for peace" coalitions back women's efforts to build a "culture of peace" in their communities in the absence of a formal peace process.¹²⁰ This has led to the growing role of civil society in the region and the creation of an "enabling environment for peace."¹²¹

Despite the continued activity of women in their various communities, statistics have shown that gender disparities continue to exist at all levels of government, be it local, national, regional or global. In only 16 countries worldwide is women's representation in the national parliament above 25 percent.¹²² On average, they accounted of only 11 percent of parliamentarians worldwide in 1999, compared with 9 percent in 1987.¹²³

¹¹⁰ Azza Karam. "Women's Political Participation." *Meeting on Women and Political Participation: 21st Century Challenges*. <http://www.undp-pogar.org/publications/gender/karam1/section1.html>

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Leigh Pasqual. "UNIFEM calls for stronger international Support for women's participation in Peace processes." The United Nations Development Fund for Women. http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=28

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² "Promoting Democracy Through Reform." The United Nations Development Programme. May 13, 2005. <http://www.undp.org/governance>

¹²³ Ibid.

Committee Directive

Have nations with women central to the decision-making process been successful in building key institutions of democratic governance?

Do nations with women included in the decision making process have expanded capabilities for girls and women such as education, to enable them to play a more effective role in politics, hence, fostering the development of civil society group and other informal institutions to help democratic institutions better represent the people?

Have more women been encouraged to become members of various political parties, trade unions and other traditional vehicles for collective action?

Are political institutions set in place to promote the protection of women's rights to elements of social development such as education used to safeguard their freedom and dignity?

Have states with women in the political sphere fully captured the essence of democratic governance? If so, has their political freedom empowered them to push for policies that expand social and economic opportunities for women?

III. Rural Poverty Knowledgebase

“Well-fed people have many problems, hungry people have only one.”¹²⁴

History

The reality that the world produces enough food to feed everyone is astonishing when also presented with the fact that nearly 850 million people are malnourished.¹²⁵ There are several reasons for this disparity. However chief among them is that many people from developing nations do not have the land to grow food or enough income to purchase enough food.¹²⁶

In Least Developed Countries (LDCs) the agricultural sector still employs 75% of the work forces in rural areas and is the primary source of employment for women.¹²⁷ However, over the past four decades the prices of most of the major agricultural goods have declined. The prices of agricultural raw materials and food and beverages in 2003 show a drop of 60% and 73% correspondingly from 1980 prices.¹²⁸ Coffee prices in 2003 were a mere 17% of its 1980 value, and cotton prices were 33.5% of the same year.¹²⁹ Currently, 1.9 billion hectares of land worldwide are affected by land degradation, which is the human induced or natural process which negatively affects the capacity of land to function effectively within an ecosystem.¹³⁰ This year about 21 million hectares of land will become so degraded they will be non-viable for agricultural production.¹³¹

At the same time developing countries populations have doubled to 5.1 billion.¹³² Currently, 70% of the world's poor resides in rural areas and depend either directly or indirectly on agriculture.¹³³ Over the next thirty years the

¹²⁴ Lennart Bage. “The Well Fed Have Many Problems, The Hungry Only One.” *United Nations Chronicle*. November 2001.

¹²⁵ “Nutrition.” The World Health Organization. <http://www.who.int/nut/index.htm>

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ *Reaching the Rural Poor: A Renewed Strategy for Rural Development*. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Washington: World Bank. 2003. http://www.wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2003/10/03/000094946_03092504152762/Rendred/PDF/multi0page.pdf

¹²⁸ “Current conditions and recent developments on agricultural commodity markets.” The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/docrep/007/y5419e/y5419e02.htm

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ El-Beltagy. *Land Degredation: A Global and Regional Problem*. On The Threshold: The United Nations and Global Governance in the New Millennium Conference. January 2000. <http://www.unu.edu/millennium/el-beltagy.pdf>

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² “Farming Systems and Poverty.” The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=////DOCREP/004/ac349e/ac349e03.htm

¹³³ Ibid.

population will continue to grow, albeit at a slower rate.¹³⁴ Due to urban migration and HIV/AIDS mortality rates in certain parts of Africa and Asia, rural population is projected to decline after 2020.¹³⁵ Therefore, it is imperative that both individual countries and the international community be able to support rural areas in poverty alleviation while promoting sustainable agricultural practices through the use of Rural Poverty Knowledgebase.

Rural Poverty Knowledgebase is a product of The Green Revolution, the process of technological development of agricultural techniques that began in Mexico in 1944 as a cooperative effort between the Rockefeller Foundation and the Mexican government to improve the agricultural output of the country's farms.¹³⁶ The goal of the Green Revolution was to increase the efficiency of agricultural processes so that the productivity of the crops was increased to help developing countries face their growing populations' needs.¹³⁷ Green Revolutionists were committed to achieving these goals through breeding new plant varieties and applying modern agricultural techniques in new areas.¹³⁸ This led to surprising results, Mexico went from importing half of the wheat it consumed to being completely self-sufficient by 1956.¹³⁹ By 1964 Mexico was exporting half a million tons of wheat.¹⁴⁰ The program was expanded to India and Pakistan where it is credited with saving over one billion people from starvation. Consequently, Rural Poverty Knowledgebase promotes programs that will enable the rural poor to overcome poverty thru agricultural productivity.¹⁴¹ The overall goal is to create an adequate infrastructure that will allow small farms to prosper and preserve rural areas, limiting urban migration.

Current Situation

The high numbers of rural households that are fully dependent on farming and the reality that poverty and food insecurity are more prevalent in these households increase the odds that the international goal to decrease hunger and poverty by 2015 will fail. Rural areas must be placed in the forefront of the fight against poverty. In order to do so, programs that will maintain minimum nutritional and livelihood standards and that take a pro-poor economic approach must be considered.¹⁴²

There are five main areas of improvement that must be considered at the regional level to increase the odds of meeting the goals of halving poverty and hunger by 2015. These areas for consideration are: the intensification of existing patterns of farm production; diversification of production; development of market-oriented production; increased value added post-harvest activities such as processing; and increased operated farm or herd size.¹⁴³ Also included is consolidation of existing holdings or the extension of farming onto new agricultural land, increased off-farm income to supplement farming activities; and exit from agriculture, often involving migration to urban areas.¹⁴⁴

At the global level, three priorities have been identified to address the issue of rural hunger and poverty: the necessity of creating sustainable systems for proceeding generations through the dissemination of agricultural information; the introduction of broad, systems-oriented agricultural training; and the need to support vocational training for off-farm and urban employment.¹⁴⁵ Because of the costs of information networks and the inability of farmers to fund such networks, the involvement of the private sector to maintain the information flow between farmers and agricultural specialists is fundamental to ensuring the dissemination of rural base knowledge.¹⁴⁶ Adequate training of those involved in farming will allow participants to identify their strengths and weaknesses in order to generate and implement solutions to improve their futures. When providing educational and training

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ "The Green Revolution Revisited." The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/V6640E/V6640E00.htm>

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ "Rural Poverty Knowledgebase." International Fund for Agriculture Development. <http://www.ifad.org/rural/index.htm>

¹⁴² "Farming Systems and Poverty." The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=////DOCREP/004/ac349e/ac349e10.htm

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

programs in rural areas it is important to take into consideration that while the goal is to retain the younger generation, many will choose to leave, therefore it is necessary to teach vocational skills that will allow them to obtain skilled employment in both rural and urban areas.¹⁴⁷

To fully attain the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing poverty it is necessary to address issues affecting rural residents.¹⁴⁸ There is strong evidence that broad based growth in agriculture leads to a reduction in poverty level.¹⁴⁹ However, overall international support to agriculture has been on the decline since the late 1980s.¹⁵⁰ The disadvantages related to geographic nature, inability to achieve equivalent economies of scale and specialized division of labor, individualized structural natures, migration from rural communities, help to explain the underperformance of rural agriculture based economies relative to urban economies.

Rural Challenges

The biggest challenges rural communities face is the loss of cooperation among its residents, erosion of the community and its infrastructures as a result of migration to urban areas, lack of sustainable and long-term employment, lack of knowledge of federal programs that may help farmers and their communities, lack of access to technology and training and access to basic needs, such as health care.¹⁵¹ Individuals are finding it harder and harder to resist what urban centers have to offer in terms of employment and greater access to material possessions. Rural areas dependent on farming and mining have been consistently losing younger working age persons and experiencing declining populations. The urban share of the world's population has grown from 30% in 1950 to 47% in 2000.¹⁵² By 2015, the number of individuals living in urban areas will account for an estimated 53% of the world's total population.¹⁵³ Rapid urbanization can overwhelm environmental resources and spawn huge urban slums plagued by a lack of infrastructure and social services and an increase in violence, crime and diseases such as HIV/AIDS.¹⁵⁴

Because of these trends, rural areas generally have a higher proportion of older persons in their total population than urban areas. Furthermore, elderly in rural areas are more likely to be poor than are those in urban areas.¹⁵⁵ This remaining older population has put increasing demands for medical and social services and long-term care upon states.¹⁵⁶ The urban area offers an elusive promise of jobs, and consequently the unemployed youth in the rural areas go in search of jobs in government offices and in the promising manufacturing sector, leaving behind the older generation that are unable to work the land. Consequently, it diminishes the transfer of knowledge and skills from the older generation to the younger generation.

The Rural Poverty Report 2001 issued by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) emphasized significant issues on the adequacy of current efforts by the international community on behalf of agricultural development.¹⁵⁷ Although eradicating poverty and ending world hunger are often described as overarching priorities in development cooperation, the fact that the majority of the poor are in rural areas is not reflected adequately in either domestic policies or aid allocations.¹⁵⁸ There is little correlation between aid distribution and the location of the rural poor. Approximately 70% of the world's poor people live in rural areas, primarily depending on agriculture

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ *Reaching the Rural Poor: A Renewed Strategy for Rural Development*. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Washington: World Bank. 2003. http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2003/10/03/000094946_03092504152762/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² "Urbanization & Migration." The United Nations Population Fund. <http://www.unfpa.org/sustainable/urbanization.htm>

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ *Agriculture and Rural Development*. The United Nations Development Programme. New York: United Nations. 2000. <http://www.undp.org.vn/projects/vie99002/nongin.pdf>

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ *Rural Poverty Report 2001: The Challenge of Ending Rural Poverty*. The International Fund for Agriculture and Development. Rome: IFAD. 2001. <http://www.ifad.org/poverty/>

¹⁵⁸ Ibid

and related activities for their livelihoods.¹⁵⁹ The proportion of official development assistance for agriculture has fallen from 20% in the late 1980s to 12% currently.¹⁶⁰ The share of aid going to low-income or least developed countries, where over 85% of the world's poor live, stayed around 63%.¹⁶¹

Actions taken by the UN

Programs such as the UNDP, the World Food Programme (WFP), and specialized agencies such as Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Bank recognize the importance of addressing the issues of LDCs, rural regions and agricultural development. The UN also implemented five specialized functional regional commissions to address the unique needs of each region in respect to these issues while at the same time maintaining coordination and cooperation among its various institutions.¹⁶²

The WFP's mission is to use its food, knowledge and personnel to meet emergency needs and support economic and social development. It works to put hunger at the center of the international agenda, promoting policies, strategies and operations that directly benefit the poor and hungry.¹⁶³ The WFP ration program for those afflicted by HIV/AIDS allow individuals to sustain their families longer allowing time for the transfer of vital knowledge and skills to the next generation of farmers.¹⁶⁴ The WFP's Food for Work project supplies food aid to farmers giving time and energy to construct irrigation, terracing and soil and water conservation.¹⁶⁵ This program allows subsistence farmers who cannot afford to risk trying new agricultural methods the ability to do so. It also provides ex-combatants an incentive to abandon their weapons and learn new sustainable skills needed by their communities.¹⁶⁶ In addition, WFP supplies food aid to farmers who practice soil conservation. These farmers are planting trees to prevent the desertification process which is caused by overusing the soil and grazing land. This is an important service because leaving the desertification process unchecked would lead ultimately to increased food shortages.¹⁶⁷

The World Bank Group has created many programs in order to enable agricultural development, financing over US \$400 million dollars in agricultural education and training in the last twenty years alone.¹⁶⁸ Foremost among these was the creation of the World Bank's Agriculture and Rural Development Department (ARD) and its formulation of the corporate rural strategy.¹⁶⁹ Agriculture and rural strategy development is a vibrant process which responds to changes and evolutions in the broader development arena. The current rural strategy of the ARD focuses on the rural poor. It stresses that improvements in the well-being of the poor will only be possible through enhancement of their productive, social and environmental assets, resulting in the increasing productivity and growth of both the farm and non farm economies.¹⁷⁰ One of the initiatives ARD initiated is the Access to Land for Young Farmers Pilot Project in Mexico, which provides training and technical assistance to young farmers without land to enable the purchase or rent of unused and more productive land and to implement sustainable practices that will significantly increase their income and welfare over time.¹⁷¹ At the same time, the project will provide older farmers with increased access to social welfare systems so they can transfer their lands to younger farmers. The World Bank

¹⁵⁹ Lennart Bage. "The Well Fed Have Many Problems, The Hungry Only One." *United Nations Chronicle*. November 2001.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² "Organization Chart of The UN." The United Nations. <http://www.un.org/aboutun/chart.html>

¹⁶³ "The WFP Mission Statement." The World Food Programme.

http://www.wfp.org/aboutwfp/mission/index.asp?section=1&sub_section=6

¹⁶⁴ "Introduction." The World Food Programme.

http://www.wfp.org/aboutwfp/introduction/hunger_stop.asp?section=1&sub_section=1

¹⁶⁵ "Food For Work." The World Food Programme. http://www.wfp.org/food_aid/food_for_work.asp?section=12&sub_section=5

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ "Agricultural Education and Training." The World Bank.

<http://inweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/ardext.nsf/11ByDocName/TopicsAgriculturalEducationandTraining>

¹⁶⁹ "Rural Strategy: Reaching the Rural Poor." The World Bank.

<http://inweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/ardext.nsf/11ByDocName/Strategy>

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ "MX Access to Land for Young Farmers." The World Bank.

<http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=104231&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P088732>

has approved a \$100 million loan that will increase access to land and other productive assets within selected states for young rural farmers through the establishment of a land transactions model.¹⁷²

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) was established in 1958, as the regional arm of the UN in Africa with a mandate to support the economic and social development of its 53 member states, by promoting regional integration, and international cooperation for to support Africa's development.¹⁷³ UNECA held a Regional Forum on Poverty Eradication in Southern Africa in 1997 which addressed poverty issues in the region and established the tools to adopt national poverty reduction action plans at a country level.¹⁷⁴ The Forum adopted a declaration which emphasized the role of governments in involving people, non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, the private sector, the media and other agencies in formulating and implementing programs designed to eradicate poverty in Southern Africa.¹⁷⁵ The Forum urged members to place poverty issues at the center of their development agenda and to facilitate capacity building workshops in the area of poverty reduction.¹⁷⁶ Poverty alleviation is currently a policy goal for all governments in the region. Poverty reduction programs are targeted at women who are the most vulnerable either as heads of households or wives to unemployed men or men in low-paying jobs.¹⁷⁷ The programs have generally been poor-friendly, focusing particularly on employment and income generation, land ownership for agricultural purposes and the provision of social services.¹⁷⁸

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) is the regional arm of the UN in the Asian and Pacific region with a mandate to promote economic and social development through regional and sub-regional cooperation and integration with aims to formulate and promote development assistance activities and projects commensurate with the needs and priorities of the region while acting as an executing agency for relevant operational projects.¹⁷⁹ In 2003, UNESCAP created the Poverty and Development Division to promote greater cooperation between research and operational activities in poverty reduction.¹⁸⁰ Its goals are to strengthen the capacity of UNESCAP members and associate members to identify and analyze opportunities and constraints for poverty eradication and to design and implement policies and programs to reduce poverty in accordance with the relevant millennium development goals.¹⁸¹ One of the focus areas is rural-urban association to gain a better understanding of relationships between urban and rural areas to bring about greater coordination in planning and delivery of services.¹⁸²

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) was established as an international financial institution in 1977 as one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference.¹⁸³ Since its creation, IFAD has focused exclusively on rural poverty reduction, working with the poor rural population in developing countries. IFAD has worked with some of the poorest and most deprived of society, recognizing that vulnerable groups can and do contribute to economic growth.¹⁸⁴ Since its establishment, IFAD has invested in 676 projects and programs that have reached more than 250 million poor rural people.¹⁸⁵

IFAD is dedicated to eradicating rural poverty in developing countries. Working with rural poor people, governments, donors, non-governmental organizations and many other partners, IFAD focuses on country-specific

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ "Overview of ECA." The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. <http://www.uneca.org/overview.htm>

¹⁷⁴ "East and Southern Africa Subregional Follow-up Conference to the World Social Summit." The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. March 1999. <http://www.uneca.org/search.htm>

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ "General Description." The United Nation Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. <http://www.unescap.org/about/index.asp>

¹⁸⁰ "Poverty and Development." The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. <http://www.unescap.org/pdd/index.asp>

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ "Strategic Framework for IFAD 2002-2006." The International Fund for Agriculture and Development. <http://www.ifad.org/sf/index.htm#mission>

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ "About IFAD." The International Fund for Agriculture and Development. <http://www.ifad.org/governance/ifad/ifad.htm>

solutions, which can involve increasing rural poor peoples' access to financial services, markets, technology, land and other natural resources.¹⁸⁶ The IFAD's three key objectives are to strengthen the capacity of the rural poor and their organizations, improve equitable access to productive natural resources and technologies and increase access by the poor to financial services and markets.¹⁸⁷

Through low-interest loans and grants, IFAD works with governments to develop and finance programs and projects that enable rural poor people to overcome poverty. Currently there are about 200 IFAD supported rural poverty eradication programs and projects, totaling US\$ 6.5 billion.¹⁸⁸ IFAD has invested almost US\$ 3 billion in these initiatives, with the remaining funds coming from its co-financing partners.¹⁸⁹ When fully developed these programs will assist more than 100 million rural poor women and men to achieve better lives for themselves and their families.

In 2001, the International Fund for Agricultural Development launched the *Rural Poverty Report 2001: The Challenge of Ending Rural Poverty*. The report discusses the particular issues which the international community needs to focus on to assist the rural poor and their different needs.¹⁹⁰ The rural poor disadvantages are a result of distance, lack of education and health care, insecure and unproductive jobs, high fertility and discrimination of women and ethnic minorities. The *Rural Poverty Report* recommends a strategy to overcome these issues that includes providing legally secure entitlements to assets; technology; access to markets; opportunities to participate in decentralized resource management; and access to microfinance.¹⁹¹

Actions taken by the UNDP

Since 1997, in partnership with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the UNDP created MicroStart, a program geared towards developing nations. It facilitates small UNDP grants and technical support to individual operations that are in an early stage of development but clearly moving toward becoming sustainable.¹⁹² UNCDF provides funding in the form of grants and soft loans to help build and integrate sustainable microfinance into the broader financial sector, by offering technical & policy guidance to the UNDP and government partners and by sharing field-based knowledge of sound microfinance principles and practices to UNDP and other key stakeholders through training and information services.¹⁹³ One study found that only 4 percent of poor people in Bangladesh who lack access to credit pulled themselves above the poverty line. With the assistance of microfinance, more than 48% rose above the poverty line.¹⁹⁴ Studies of the impact of microfinance in more than 24 countries found dramatic improvements in household income levels.¹⁹⁵ These improvements took place primarily through growth in the borrower's business, which translated into increased household income. The studies found that access to microfinance allowed the borrower to increase the number of goods or services sold and reduce the costs of supplies and raw materials.¹⁹⁶

Microfinance consists of making small loans, usually less than \$200, to individuals, usually women, to establish or expand a small, self-sustaining business. For example, a woman may borrow \$50 to buy chickens so she can sell eggs. As the chickens begin to produce eggs, the woman will have more products to sell, promoting self-sustainability.¹⁹⁷ Microfinance is often considered one of the most effective strategies in the fight against global

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ "Cofinancing of IFAD Projects. The International Fund for Agriculture and Development.

<http://www.ifad.org/operations/projects/cofinancier/index.htm>

¹⁹⁰ *Rural Poverty Report 2001: The Challenge of Ending Rural Poverty*. The International Fund for Agriculture and Development. Rome: IFAD. 2001. <http://www.ifad.org/poverty/>

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² "UNCDF Microfinance." The United Nations Capital Development Fund.

<http://www.uncdf.org/english/microfinance/index.php>

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ "Microfinance." Grameen Foundation USA. http://www.grameenfoundation.org/about_us/microfinance/

poverty. It is sustainable and can be implemented on the massive scale necessary to respond to the urgent needs of those living on less than \$1 a day,¹⁹⁸

In 2004, UNDP and UNESCAP began phase II of their joint project “Supporting the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific (2001-2003).” The program has the objective of promoting the adoption of policy options that support the achievement of the MDGs, facilitating the understanding of key strategies and options by providing a depository of regional experiences and lessons, which may be adopted by other countries.¹⁹⁹ These depositories of regional experiences and lessons allow for greater transfer of knowledge among regions, increasing the viability of agricultural programs and the cooperation among different sectors. In India, agriculture has improved considerably since the 1960s; however, most farmers have remained poor mainly because of reduced access to customized knowledge and current information about better farming practices.²⁰⁰ With the support of UNESCAP and its partner eChoupal, India has established a system where farmers can access crop specific websites from Internet kiosks in villages allowing farmers to earn higher incomes through increased yields, better quality, and lower transaction costs.²⁰¹

Conclusion

Agricultural production is affected in numerous ways by human-induced degradation of the environment. To negate this, sustainable agricultural and rural growth is essential to promote income growth. The objective of rural poverty knowledgebase programs is to enhance the quality of life in rural communities through agricultural development and to provide rural communities with tools to compete in a global economy. Rural knowledge base programs must form a partnership between government, civil society and the private sector so that the rural poor may be empowered to take responsibility for their own development.

It is estimated that by the year 2030, the world population will reach 8.3 billion.²⁰² However, rural populations will continue to decrease as a result of migration into urban areas. The population growth will increase the demand for vegetables, fruits and animal products. To support such a demand, it will be necessary for small farmers to increase their rural knowledgebase and capacity by developing information and knowledge networks, farmer capacity building, support to entrepreneurship, and providing training to the younger population in vocational skills.²⁰³

Committee Directive

A multi-level approach that will deliver services to rural communities is needed. This should include agricultural job training, education, and incentives to promote population retention for younger people by providing financial assistance to those who do not wish to migrate to urban areas and wish to become farmers.

Governments can provide one of the most important public goods in rural areas – efficient primary and secondary education. Education has the ability to empower rural inhabitants to become involved citizens in developing programs and solutions to their problems. In addition, research indicates that the higher the level of education the more likely farmers are to implement technology in the day to day operation and develop alternative sources of incomes. If they chose to migrate to an urban area, they are also more likely to find adequate employment.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ “Supporting the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific.” The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific <http://www.unescap.org/pdd/mdg/about.asp>

²⁰⁰ “India’s E-choupals: A Private-Sector Approach to Link Farmers to Markets.” The World Bank. <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/reducingpoverty/case-India-EChoupals-FarmersMarket.html>

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² “Farming Systems and Poverty.” The Food and Agriculture Organization. http://www.fao.org/documents/documents/shoe_cdr.asp?url_file=DOCREP/004/ac349e08.htm

²⁰³ “Farming Systems and Poverty.” The Food and Agriculture Organization. http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=DOCREP/004/ac349e/ac349e08.htm

²⁰⁴ “Farming Systems and Poverty.” The Food and Agriculture Organization. http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=DOCREP/004/ac349e/ac349e10.htm

After careful and detailed research delegates should have knowledge of their nation's positions on agricultural development and programs concerning rural issues. Delegates should also be knowledgeable of their current regional alliances, trade partners and aid donors. The focus should be placed on long-term sustainable national solutions. Additionally, delegates should be able to answer the following questions: What are the key differences between rural and urban areas issues and needs? How can these differences be addressed while providing solutions to agricultural development? What are the biggest challenges that rural residents must overcome? How can regional, national or NGOs programs and services better support the needs of agricultural producers? What role does the private sector have in developing agriculture, training farmers and slowing the flow of youth from rural areas to urban? What is the role of the citizen? What educational/training programs need to be implemented? How can microfinance improve agricultural communities? What is the best way for NGOs to continue to work for the interests of agricultural rural individuals?