**Economic and Social Committee**

**Global Poverty**

***Introduction***

Chapter 3 of the United Nations Agenda 21 describes poverty as “a complex multidimensional problem with origins in both the national and international domains"[[1]](#footnote-1). The United Nations (UN) has made a strong stance on the eradication of poverty and how it’s an issue that requires both the participation at the local/national level along with international cooperation amongst member states.The United Nations defines poverty as “a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services”[[2]](#footnote-2). The United Nations also separates poverty into absolute and relative. Absolute poverty is the common example that simply focuses on income, while relative focuses on issues such as access to society which are harder to track[[3]](#footnote-3).

What is at stake for the world is the livelihood of nearly 800 million people who currently live on less than $2.00 a day, according to the United Nations poverty line, which measures international Purchasing Power Parity to set the poverty line[[4]](#footnote-4). Poverty goes beyond lack of income it also includes hunger, social discrimination, malnutrition and limited access to other basic services like education and lack of individual autonomy. Poverty stunts economic growth which promotes sustainable jobs and equality. Poverty also hurts member states both at the national and regional level in terms of: leading to inter-communal violence, religious fundamentalism, corruption and lack of productivity[[5]](#footnote-5). All of these factors limit the potential of the individuals or communities within member states; leaving them unable to contribute to society and hurts the future generations.

The main areas of extreme poverty in the world lie in the regions of Sub Saharan Africa and South Asia, where the lack of effective institutions and infrastructure are the leading factors that created the current conditions of extreme poverty. A majority of these people live in rural areas and because of it do not see the benefits and resources given to urban populations[[6]](#footnote-6). Therefore, to establish a new base of aid between donor and receiving member states would be to include in the discussion those member states who are in these deeply affected regions as well as those member states that contribute money and resources toward the eradication of poverty. The United Nations seeks to establish a peaceful future that is centered on the better of the quality of life of all those who inhabit this planet. Poverty stands as a major obstacle to that goal and this committee must institute new criteria in order to create this desired future.

***History***

It was not until the arrival of the 20th century and the beginning of international cooperation that poverty has become an issue that all member states have unanimously agreed needs to be eradicated when they signed the UN Charter. The UN began its fight on poverty dealing with the devastation of many countries around the globe during the aftermath of the Second World War and further continued its effort with the decolonization of Africa and Asia in the 1950’s and 60’s. It was not until 1983 that the UN began making more aggressive efforts toward the eradication of poverty. In that year the General Assembly session was labeled the “International Year for the Eradication of Poverty[[7]](#footnote-7)”, showing the beginning of the United Nations concern for the eradication of global poverty. From that assembly and forward the UN has emphasized the eradication of poverty and has made significant efforts to end poverty in all of its forms.

Organizations and funds from groups such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), and World Food Programme (WFP) were created to target the multi dimensional aspects of poverty and the ripple effects it creates. For example, UNICEF believes that to begin reducing global poverty that the world needs to focus on children first. More than 30% of children, or about 600 million children, in developing countries are living below the international poverty line[[8]](#footnote-8). UNICEF attempted to target this issue by building national capacities for giving children access to primary health care. They also used tactics like getting girls into school, creating a protective child environment as well as, supporting good nutrition.

Poverty in 1992 became the centerpiece of the United Nations at the Agenda 21 summit in Rio de Janeiro where the document that was published at this summit, “The Future We Want”, was signed by over 100 member states. Since then, this document has become a staple of the UN looks at the pressing issue of global poverty and the best course of action to take to eradicate the growing global issue. The implementation piece of Agenda 21’s goals came at the World Summit for Sustainable development and the so called “Johannesburg Plan” which was an undertaking of member states and NGOs to implement solutions to the key target areas of extreme poverty addressed in Agenda 21: food, water, healthcare and shelter.

In 1998 the UN General Assembly devised a new set of goals that focused on improving the well being of the global community through different goals established by this assembly. These goals were referred to as the Millenium Development Goals set forth at the General Assembly that was known as the “The Millenium Assembly of the United Nations[[9]](#footnote-9)”. At this General Assembly leaders created the The Millenium Declaration, which ensured member states commitment to their citizens by working toward with a set of specific goals in order to eradicate poverty in all its forms by the year 2015[[10]](#footnote-10). These were referred to as the Millenium Development Goals were created to tackle a broad range of issues, but at the top of the list was the goal to eradicate those living in extreme poverty. While the MDGs have reduced the number of those living in extreme poverty, the UN wanted to strengthen the goals that were already out forth, and referred to these new goals as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the SDGs included a variety of more topics, the eradication of poverty in all its forms was still at the forefront. The UN hopes to become even closer to the eradication of poverty in all its form through the SDGs by the year 2030.

***Current Situation/Challenges/Actions take by UN***

The situation of international poverty is still worthy of a large concern, and requires attention from all member states. The United Nations says that there are currently 800 million people who live under $ 2.00 a day[[11]](#footnote-11). Women and children face an increasingly greater amount of struggles of global poverty than adult males. According to the UN, 122 women between 25-34 living in extreme poverty for every 100 men of the same age group[[12]](#footnote-12). Most of these statistics come from data in rural and developing countries, places where global poverty has taken the biggest toll on the citizens within its borders.

Concentrations of extreme poverty are often found in small and rural communities, particularly Sub Saharan Africa and South Asia. However, areas such as Latin America and East Asia have also historically been crippled by poverty. This is where the United Nations has concentrated its efforts by working in parallel with Non Government Organizations (NGO) such as the Hunger Project and Mercy Corps. Poverty can occur from many different factors beyond simply being poor. It can emerge from conflict which takes away many basic components of life including, but not limited to: food security, employment, healthcare, and education. This kind of poverty is seen in member states such as Somalia, Yemen and South Sudan which have seen an increase in poverty due to the prolonged destruction of institutions and infrastructure. Another form of poverty that cripples certain parts of the world emerges from natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes. Like what is seen during conflict, infrastructure and institutions are either damaged or destroyed, increasing poverty amongst the populus of member states. Examples of this can be seen in 2010 with the Haitian earthquake and Puerto Rico in 2017 with Hurricane Irma. The World Banks reports that is type of poverty is increasing, adding 26 million people each year[[13]](#footnote-13).

Economic and political challenges also arise under the umbrella of extreme global poverty. The respect of sovereignty is a key aspect of how the UN works with member states, allowing the respect of their right to rule and govern inside their territory. With sovereignty comes the challenge of balancing UN influence on the political and economic obstacles within each member state, that have a direct effect on impoverished nations. An Example of this challenge was seen in the form of South Sudan with the current civil war. Where government forces and fighters blocked aid being given to the starving/displaced people. The United Nations was bound to respect the sovereignty of the government and not interfere, which in the end, prevented any aid from reaching these people[[14]](#footnote-14). The UN also faces the challenge of combating corruption at both the national and local level when it comes to aid distribution. Making sure the funds are appropriately allocated to the those who live within the borders of these member states can become an issue when a state is lead by a corrupt leader. The aid will stay in the hands of the one who is corrupt and never reach the people who are actually in need of the aid. Poverty aid is seen by some economists, like William Easterly, as a failure, for aside from political problems it not producing any kind of economic growth[[15]](#footnote-15). With no economic growth comes no promise of escaping from poverty or a better quality life. This begs the question, what is the best form of aid that donor member states can provide that will actually improve economic growth and political stability within developing member state?

Poverty as the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) goal took center stage and had a goal of reducing the number in half of those individuals who lived with under a dollar a day and those who live in extreme hunger. By 2013 developing regions saw the proportion of those living under a dollar a day drop from 47 percent in 1990 to 22%[[16]](#footnote-16). Though the Millennium Development Goals were not all completed, the statistics show poverty was actually reduced by half, five years ahead of the deadline. Seeing the number of people in extreme poverty drop from 28% to 14% of those living on less than 2 dollars a day[[17]](#footnote-17). The United Nations considered to the Millenium Development Goals to be a good start towards the creation of a better world and as a result created the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 which is how the United Nations currently measures the rates of global poverty in today’s world, when it comes to extreme poverty.With the creation of the Sustainable Development Goals, goals were created to extend another 15 years into the future, In 2030 the current number of people living in extreme poverty, less than $1.25 a day, will be cut in half from 14% to 7%[[18]](#footnote-18) . While at the same time, boosting those who fall still below the poverty will see an increase in the access to resources, mobilization of the masses towards education, better quality water/food and healthcare.

***Committee Directive/Conclusion***

The question for this committee is how can we tackle extreme poverty in a different manner than what has been done in the past? This committee wants to establish a new foundation for relationships between donor and receiving member states; hoping to end decades of what is perceived as blank checks to a never ending issue. Our committee looks to find new solutions and rethink how we take on extreme poverty and reduce it in a beneficial way for both donor and receiving member states. We, as a committee, should look into expanding or starting new programs that look to target the diverse aspects that come with eradication of poverty. This committee would like to see aspects of aid reform specifically in areas were the United Nations are most deeply concerned, these areas include, but are not limited too, education, infrastructure, gender equality, healthcare and food security. This committee should also look to not simply focus on the eradication of absolute poverty but also the relative poverty that simply the idea of throwing money at the problem doesn’t solve. Seeing an incorporation of these marginalized people back into society and have access to goods and services that were denied to them before, including food, healthcare, education and transportation will create not only a more prosperous state, but a better quality of life for those within it.

1. United Nations. 2018. "Documents". *Un.Org*. Accessed September 8. <http://www.un.org/en/documents/index.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. "Home | United Nations". 2018. *Un.Org*. http://www.un.org/en/index.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. "Goal 1: End Poverty In All Its Forms Everywhere - United Nations Sustainable Development". 2018. *United Nations Sustainable Development*. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. United Nations. 2015. "United Nations Millennium Development Goals". *Un.Org*. http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/poverty.shtml. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Unicef.org. (2018). *UNICEF - Goal: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*. [online] Available at: https://www.unicef.org/mdg/poverty.html [Accessed 9 Sep. 2018]. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. "United Nations Conferences, Meetings And Events". 2018. *Un.Org*. http://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/millennium\_summit.shtml. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. "Goal 1: End Poverty In All Its Forms Everywhere - United Nations Sustainable Development". 2018. *United Nations Sustainable Development*. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. World Bank. 2016. "Natural Disasters Force 26 Million People Into Poverty And Cost $520Bn In Losses Every Year, New World Bank Analysis Finds". *World Bank*. http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/11/14/natural-disasters-force-26-million-people-into-poverty-and-cost-520bn-in-losses-every-year-new-world-bank-analysis-finds. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. UNDP. 2016. "About South Sudan". *UNDP In South Sudan*. http://www.ss.undp.org/content/south\_sudan/en/home/countryinfo.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Swanson, A. (2018). *Does foreign aid always help the poor?*. [online] World Economic Forum. Available at: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/10/does-foreign-aid-always-help-the-poor/ [Accessed 9 Sep. 2018]. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. "Millennium Development Goals And Beyond 2015". 2018. Un.Org. http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Goal\_1\_fs.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Un.org. (2018). *No Poverty: Why it Matters?*. [online] Available at: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/1\_Why-it-Matters\_Poverty\_2p.pdf [Accessed 9 Sep. 2018]. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)