



## **HS General Assembly- "Eradicating Rural Poverty to Implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"**

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The eradication of poverty is the first goal of the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda. Other objectives, such as addressing hunger, promoting good health, ensuring decent work, and achieving peace and justice, all hinge on improving the overall standard of living for the economically disadvantaged. Poverty is a multifaceted issue with many variations and causes in different regions. For this committee specifically, the United Nations focuses on addressing poverty in rural areas, where poverty is the most prevalent. In these areas, poverty goes beyond income to include social exclusion, marginalization, and inequality. A lack of access to basic services, resources, and employment opportunities has caused those living in rural areas to be more susceptible to suffering and deprivation (UNECA, 2019). The United Nations must find ways to support rural communities and implement targeted strategies to eradicate poverty comprehensively, addressing not only income disparities but also the social dimensions of exclusion, marginalization, and inequality in these areas.

Rural poverty is defined through economic, social, and environmental factors. Economically, nearly half of the world's population lives in rural areas, while 79% of

people making less than \$1.90 a day live in rural areas (UNECA, 2019). The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) found that 83.5% of poverty is rural, with the majority (90%) being concentrated in Asia and Africa (Allieu (2019), UNECA (2019)). Despite cultural and regional differences, many factors remain consistent between these rural areas. The first factor is food systems. Most rural economies rely heavily on activities within food systems through agriculture and fisheries. Protection of these rural agrarian markets along with encouraging their diversification could be two ways to stabilize rural economies and alleviate poverty.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) provides a directive for potential policy avenues within sustainable development and agrarian economies. UNDESA suggests that agriculture needs to be intensified to accommodate a growing population. The promotion of agriculture should begin with small and regional farmers, as external inputs and development through larger corporations tend to expand onto marginalized lands and encroach on fragile ecosystems (UNDESA). Support for local farms can branch out local markets and lead to growth that protects local ecosystems and regional lifestyles. As climate change worsens, this directive also looks to provide support for water and water protection of local farms. Sustainable water and farming systems are important to prevent inequalities arising in the future.

In February 2024, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and its 178 member states adopted an ambitious \$2 billion agenda to improve the production, incomes, and food security of more than \$100 million rural people over three years (IFAD, 2024). The fund itself promotes three main ideas; focusing on fragile contexts, scaling-up investments in biodiversity and climate resilience for small-scale farmers,

and further leveraging engagement with the private sector. These policies look to protect local markets from international market shifts and externalities from factors beyond their control.

Another aspect of the economy that is limited within rural regions is that of financing. Spending money to make money is a true phenomenon, but what if whole regions do not have the financial capital for that initial investment? Providing financial services to agriculture and rural areas involves risks, high transaction costs, and historically low returns; making it difficult to attract banks and credit unions to facilitate the money flows for loans (UN Rural Finance and Investment). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) works in value-chain finance that promotes alternative collateral schemes such as inventory credit systems, forward contracts, and product-linked finance. The FAO has also organized major conferences that bring together banks, agribusinesses, governments, and technical agencies to learn from and analyze innovations in value-chain finance. Their work, which the UN could adapt and promote, develops sustainable financial linkages between banks and businesses that were not available with previous infrastructure and financial systems.

For food systems and markets to be successful, the infrastructure of the region must be able to support the movement of goods. Poor infrastructure can raise the transportation and transaction costs of market goods, as well as make trading in rural regions potentially dangerous. Impoverished and isolated communities tend to exist in rural areas limiting their access to basic needs and supplies. Infrastructure does not pertain solely to roads and bridges, but also to electric, internet, and water systems. In developing countries, only 45% of the population has access to the Internet and just over half of the entire world has access (Harry, 2019). In regards to water, UNICEF found

that 1 in 4 or 2 billion people around the world still lack safe drinking water (UNICEF, 2021). Coverage in urban areas was 86 percent while only 60 percent of rural areas had access to clean water, with the primary deficit within sub-Saharan Africa. Alleviating poverty can be done by providing basic needs and eliminating the financial strain of just surviving. But, to build wells, cell towers, markets, stores, or other necessary materials, trucks resources, and supplies must be able to access these rural areas through properly built and maintained roads.

Combining economic and social factors is the variable of education. Sustainable Development Goal 4 is quality education, which stresses that education is the key to development everywhere. Educated people achieve more, and contribute more (ODUMUNC, 2021). Educational opportunities are the easiest to ensure in urban areas, where there is a greater density of wealth, teachers, and students. Rural educational opportunities are hindered by a lack of common schooling grounds, teacher availability, infrastructure issues of getting to school, and school supplies. A lack of education limits social mobility and economic opportunities; creating a never-ending cycle of poverty for families in poor, rural communities.

Being educated is a key step in understanding one's rights and social protections. Those who have low levels of education do not typically have the knowledge or skills to fight for their social protection and can be taken advantage of. In this sense, social protection policies are vital elements of national development strategies to reduce poverty and vulnerability and support inclusive and sustainable growth (Allieu, 2019). Inequalities regarding laws and income are also in need of being addressed socially. Although income inequality between countries is improving, income inequality within countries is getting worse. Inequalities of opportunity (through rural or social factors)

can affect a person's life expectancy and access to basic services such as healthcare, education, water, and sanitation (UN). 2018 saw the 12th consecutive year of decline in global freedom, with 71 countries suffering net declines in political and civil liberties. High levels of inequality of opportunities exist within rural regions. It can discourage or even prevent skills accumulation, human development, and economic growth which all hinder social mobility. In what ways can we not only get resources but also opportunities in rural areas?

The environmental impacts of climate change also have unequal effects on target populations. Climate change is accelerating environmental degradation. Rural regions do not have adequate protection against drought and rising temperatures and will lose competitiveness against corporations and more developed areas. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) Poverty-Environment Action for Sustainable Development Goals plan promotes an integrated approach that brings poverty, environment, and climate objectives into the heart of national plans, policies, and budgets (UNEP). This program looks to align public and private investments with poverty, environment, and climate actions to address potential rising inequalities.

The issue of poverty is very complex with many potential avenues to solutions. This background guide covers some recent working papers, ideas, and variables, but does not include everything that causes poverty or tries to alleviate it. It may be difficult for this committee to construct sweeping legislation that adequately addresses concerns that are brought up by all nations, but different papers could address infrastructure, supply chains, and financing. Questions to consider would be: Who do we expect to pay? How can we promote investments in rural industries? Where does the money come from for rural roads? How can we mitigate the inequalities caused by climate change? How

does social protection from marginalization affect the likelihood of poverty? Are short-term solutions sustainable?

### Works and Further Reading

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