

United Nations Development Programme

Directed By: Colleen Angela Beichner

TSMUN XXIV BACKGROUND GUIDE 2020

**Topic I: Women’s Participation in Regional Economies**

**Topic II: Sustainable Development of Public Infrastructure in Rural Areas**

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2020 Tallahassee Southern Model United Nations! My name is Colleen Beichner and I am the director for the TSMUN 2020 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). I am currently a student at Tallahassee Community College and plan to transfer to Florida State University to study sociology. This is my second year participating in Model United Nations at the collegiate level and the third TSMUN conference I have attended as staff.

The topics under discussion for this year’s Development Programme are:

1. Women’s Participation in Regional Economies
2. Sustainable Development of Public Infrastructure in Rural Areas

The United Nations Development Programme works under both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The UNDP is known for its ability to enact more specific actions in order to accomplish the resolutions passed by both the United Nations Economic and Social Council as well as the General Assembly. Any resolutions passed by this committee are non – binding recommendations and are intended to set a standard for sustainable development. The mandate of this committee is this committee is to empower lives and build resilient nations.

I hope that this background guide is a helpful starting point and a reference when researching information about your respective Member States. This background guide is intended to be an introduction into the committee’s responsibilities and mandate as well as the topics that will be discussed during committee. Delegates are strongly urged to research the perspectives, views, opinions, and positions of their Member State and region. They are also recommended to research the international position of the topics given as well as the past positions, resolutions, actions, and history of these positions by both the Member State and this committee.

Each delegation is required to submit a paper for this committee. This paper is known as a position paper and will be submitted before the start of the first committee session. Papers can be emailed to [positionpapers@tsmun.org](mailto:positionpapers@tsmun.org) or submitted by USB drive or hard copy. For position paper guides as well as examples, please visit <http://www.tsmun.org/position-papers.html>. Papers that are not in the correct format will not be eligible for awards. For conference information, resources for preparation, scholarships, and other helpful information visit <http://www.tsmun.org/>. If you have any questions leading up to the conference do not hesitate to email me. Our Secretary-General for this year’s TSMUN will be Mónica García Vega, and she is also available via email at [sg@tsmun.org](mailto:sg@tsmun.org). I look forward to seeing the hard work and preparation in committee.

Sincerely,

Colleen Angela Beichner,

UN Development Programme Director

[undp@tsmun.org](mailto:undp@tsmun.org)

**Committee Overview**

***Introduction***

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was created in 1966 after being approved by the United Nations General Assembly.[[1]](#footnote-1) The UNDP is responsible for assisting the development of countries to eradicate poverty, promote infrastructure development, and respond to areas impacted by disaster, as detailed in the UNDP Strategic Plan (2018 – 2020).[[2]](#footnote-2) The UNDP works in 170 Member States and cooperates with them to develop and implement solutions to issues such as those stated above.[[3]](#footnote-3) As of recently, the UNDP has achieved substantial progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This includes the creation of around 3 million new jobs, almost half of which were for women.[[4]](#footnote-4) Furthermore, progress is currently being made to encourage new voters, improve energy access, and provide antiretroviral treatment.[[5]](#footnote-5) The UNDP’s headquarters is located in New York and has representative offices in Brussels, Washington DC, Tokyo, and Geneva among others.[[6]](#footnote-6) The UNDP works with both local and international staff at these offices.[[7]](#footnote-7)

***Mandate***

The United Nations Development Programme is tasked with establishing resources for Member States in order for them to achieve the SDGs and implement the Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) at a national level.[[8]](#footnote-8) The official mandate, or objective, of this committee is to empower lives and build resilient nations.[[9]](#footnote-9) The UNDP works under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and thus reflects its values of promoting respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.[[10]](#footnote-10) The Executive Board approves projects designed by the General Assembly and ECOSOC.[[11]](#footnote-11) The UNDP is known as an assistant program and may assist

developing nations by supporting and supplementing their efforts in solving the most important problems regarding their economic development, including industrial development.[[12]](#footnote-12)

***Governance, Structure, and Membership***

The UNDP leadership consists of an Administrator and Executive Board.[[13]](#footnote-13)The Administrator is appointed by the Secretary General and confirmed for a four–year term by the General Assembly (with the exception of the Western European States which have an independent term limit).[[14]](#footnote-14) The Executive Board is comprised of 36 rotating members elected from five geographical areas; 8 from African States, four from Eastern European States, five from Latin America and Caribbean States, seven from Asian and Pacific States, and 12 from the group representing Western Europe and other States.[[15]](#footnote-15) The Administrator is responsible for overseeing the numerous entities that the UNDP coordinates.[[16]](#footnote-16) The Executive Board possesses the responsibility of approving measures and designing strategies for carrying them out on the national level.[[17]](#footnote-17)

One major entity that works under the UNDP is the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) which functions in 165 countries and coordinates 40 UN funds, agencies, and programmes.[[18]](#footnote-18) The UNSDG is important due to its ability to carry out and provide guidance to those implementing the programs designed by the UNDP.[[19]](#footnote-19) These solutions take into account the various policies, programs, and challenges that are already present in the respective area.16 The UNSDG meets twice a year to gather the UNSDG Chair, Secretary General, and chairs representing the UNSDG and UNDP.[[20]](#footnote-20) The UNSDG also convenes the UNSDG Core Group, or a group of various entities which assemble to discuss the coordination of operations in 165 countries and territories. [[21]](#footnote-21)

***Conclusion***

The responsibilities of the UNDP are vast with its wide-ranging objectives including promoting education, reducing inequalities, addressing disaster prevention and relief, and coordinating international development. The network of agencies that the UNDP works with reflects its prioritization of cooperation and the separation of responsibilities requires advance coordination. In order to achieve these objectives, the UNDP works with Member States, the UNSDG, and various other agencies in order to gain progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Topic I: Women's Participation in Regional Economies**

***Introduction***

The issue of gender inequality in economic participation is not a new issue, nor is it one that only affects women. In 2018, The UNDP found that there is currently a 23% gap globally of gender pay[[22]](#footnote-22) and a 27% gap between labor force participation of men and women.[[23]](#footnote-23) This reflects the consequences of some of the systematic disadvantages that women face including unpaid labor, child care, reproductive rights, unequal pay, discrimination, and lack of adequate education, among others.[[24]](#footnote-24) Other obstacles for many women include the inability to gain access to training and to participate in the workforce.[[25]](#footnote-25) This issue results in a systematic oppression of women that results in generations of damage for almost half the population.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Currently, the vast majority of women who are employed are in underpaid, temporary, or part – time positions.[[27]](#footnote-27) This is due to a lack of education or employment opportunities which leads to a reduction of human capital that limits the overall labor force and slows economic development.[[28]](#footnote-28) Indirectly, this leads to a restriction of new ideas and diversity of experiences which restricts innovation and entrepreneurship.[[29]](#footnote-29) For example, placing female executives at the top management levels has been shown to improve financial returns.[[30]](#footnote-30) A study in 2015 found that among 366 companies in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and countries in Latin America, countries in the top quartile in gender diversity expected to see a 15% increase in the likelihood of financial gains.[[31]](#footnote-31) This has been found to be attributed to the reduction in discrimination and the diversity of skill.[[32]](#footnote-32) Not only does increased economic participation affect women, it also affects their children.[[33]](#footnote-33) The majority of countries where there is a prevalence of income and educational inequality also have more women becoming mothers and remaining at home; there is an increase in births without an increase in household income.[[34]](#footnote-34) This affects children, especially their girls, by not providing them with educational opportunities, adequate nutrition, and other factors associated with a higher income.[[35]](#footnote-35) A study published in 2010 which focused on data from 170 countries found that between 1970 and 2009, every additional year of education for women of reproductive age lead to a decrease in child mortality by 9.5 percent.[[36]](#footnote-36) Not only was this attributed to an increase in income, but also the wellbeing of the mother with lower rates of depression, increased motivation, and productivity.[[37]](#footnote-37) Furthermore, the amount of unpaid labor that women preform is estimated to be three times that of men.[[38]](#footnote-38) An analysis in 2018 of 141 countries showed that a loss of around $160.2 trillion resulted from gender inequality which is roughly two times the global GDP.[[39]](#footnote-39) The average woman spent around 3.2 more hours on unpaid care work than men which is equivalent to 201 working days.[[40]](#footnote-40) Since women on average are also expected to live longer than men, the child care does not end at their own children. They are also expected to take care of their aging spouse, their relative’s children and their grandchildren.[[41]](#footnote-41) It is estimated that by 2030, around 2.3 billion people will require care which is expected to disproportionally impact women.[[42]](#footnote-42) Since these forms of unpaid care are informal, the result is lack of social protections.[[43]](#footnote-43) One of the main solutions to these forms of inequality focus on equal distribution of unpaid household and care labor as well as increasing the participation of women within regional workforces.[[44]](#footnote-44) The focus on increasing regional workforce gender diversity stems from a need to incorporate those who are most impacted by the burden of caring for children into a system that allows them to provide an income for children and themselves.[[45]](#footnote-45)

***Regional Analysis***

Regionally, this issue is influenced by the collective issues that different countries may face since their proximity allows them to possess similar cultures. Consequently, it is crucial that the issue is addressed on a regional level since collective action is more effective. In certain regions, the issue of gender inequality persists at a more dire levels than others. Beginning in Africa, currently around 80% of agricultural production is undertaken by women in rural areas.[[46]](#footnote-46) This is due to the limited employment opportunities from lower educational attainment.[[47]](#footnote-47) These women do not possess the land they work on and do not have access to the resources it produces as only 15% of women are landholders.[[48]](#footnote-48) These divides between the amount of work produced and the opportunity for advancement is reflected by attitudes present in different regions of the continent. In Eastern Africa only around 74% of people believe in equality for women with this number dropping down to 73% in West Africa and only 50% in Northern African.[[49]](#footnote-49)

In the Americas, there is a large gap seen in education. Specifically, as men remain in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) positions while women remain in arts and social sciences.[[50]](#footnote-50) Despite the preference that women study social sciences, there is a significant gap of women in political positions. As of 2017, in the United States of America women make up only 24% of the Executive Branch.[[51]](#footnote-51) In the region as a whole, women consist of only 12.3% of mayors and in Latin America, only 29.1% of the judiciary is female.[[52]](#footnote-52)

In the Middle East and North Africa in 2010, it was found that only 69% of women over the age of 15 were literate.[[53]](#footnote-53) Women were found to be twice as likely to be illiterate compared to men.[[54]](#footnote-54) This inability to access primary and higher education has been found to be a high indicator of unemployment.[[55]](#footnote-55) In the Mashreq or Northeastern part of the region, the employment rate of women is found at only 24.4%, and in the Maghreb or Northwestern region, employment of women was found to be 28.1%.[[56]](#footnote-56)

In the region of Asia and the Pacific, the challenge of employment and economic opportunity has been incorporating women into paid work.[[57]](#footnote-57) Men outnumber women in regard to participation in the field of paid agriculture work, and it was found that between 1998 and 2018, the participation of women in the labor force declined in Eastern Asia. [[58]](#footnote-58) [[59]](#footnote-59) This decline is estimated to cost the Asian Pacific region around 42 to 46 billion dollars annually.[[60]](#footnote-60) Even in regard to informal employment, or employment not protected or recognized by the state, men were more likely to participate in these forms of employment than women.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Finally, in the European region there have been significant accomplishments, yet there is difficulty implementing purposed solutions.[[62]](#footnote-62) For example, there remains a gap between men and women in regards to positions in corporate employment and literacy rates as women in European Union Member States were around 50% less likely to be employed in positions of corporate employment and literate.[[63]](#footnote-63) A purposed solution to this involved providing benefits to grant recipients and providing knowledge and tools to help EU Member States resolve this disparity.[[64]](#footnote-64) In addition, Eastern European nations were found to have a decline in labor force participation rates along with Eastern Asia.[[65]](#footnote-65)

***Actions Taken by the U.N.***

The UNDP views the achievement of *Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls* as a high priority.[[66]](#footnote-66) The United Nations as a whole believes the achievement of equal opportunity and participation in the labor force as a necessary step towards gender equality and the advancement of women.[[67]](#footnote-67) The commitment of the United Nations to achieving gender equality dates back 1946 with the creation of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the creation of the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.[[68]](#footnote-68) The first conference to recognize the need for increased women’s participation in the economic and labor force took place in Mexico City in 1975.[[69]](#footnote-69) This was followed by several conferences after, including the second conference in Copenhagen in 1980 and the third in Nairobi in 1985.[[70]](#footnote-70) Such conferences are crucial for their ability to influence Member States, provide information and to collect data.[[71]](#footnote-71) One of the primary ways that the UNDP and the United Nations have worked to advancing women’s participation has been through the cooperation with U.N. Member States.[[72]](#footnote-72) For example, the African Union notably credited U.N. frameworks and tools for helping with the advancement of women’s rights and gender equality in the region.[[73]](#footnote-73) Furthermore, in 2013, the Bureau of the Chair of the African Union Commission and the UN Development Programme designed the initiative known as Building an Enabling Environment for Women’s Economic Empowerment and Political Participation in Africa.[[74]](#footnote-74)

***Regional Frameworks***

Certain programs currently in place, such as those endorsed by the World Bank including the *Susu* collectors of Ghana[[75]](#footnote-75), simply fall short of addressing institutional inequalities.[[76]](#footnote-76) For example, some programs have been installed to provide monetary donations or “conditional cash transfers” only provided temporary relieve and did not guarantee a steady form of income.[[77]](#footnote-77) Such programs focused on a culture of temporary poverty reduction rather than systemic oppression and inequality.[[78]](#footnote-78) As a result, women’s issues are viewed as separate from more deeply engrained issues including forms of oppression, environmental hazards, democratic reform, and peace and security.[[79]](#footnote-79) This highlights the need for reform within social and economic institutions in order to establish a more permanent solution.[[80]](#footnote-80)

Within the African region, the organization known as The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) works to promote the economic development of women.[[81]](#footnote-81) This organization was established in 2001 and works with other organizations such as the Spanish Fund for African Women’s Empowerment in order to provide funding for the integration of women into economic, social and political systems.[[82]](#footnote-82) Another notable organization in the region is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).[[83]](#footnote-83) This organization was established in 1975 and works on economic development in the region by tailoring specific programs in order to address problems.[[84]](#footnote-84) Notably, in 2004 ECOWAS adopted a Gender Policy which required more frequent communication between ECOWAS programs and national bodies in the region which have the authority to carry out development.[[85]](#footnote-85) This has successfully led to the contributions of financial and/or technical support being lent to other Member States for both the development and implementation of their respective gender development policies.[[86]](#footnote-86)

Within the Americas, the main challenge of addressing issues related to women’s economic empowerment involve the diversity of the women that make up the region.[[87]](#footnote-87) This means that women cannot be treated as a single group, but rather there must be the consideration of class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, geographical location, and religion of different women.[[88]](#footnote-88) In this region, the Organization of the American States brings together nations throughout the region with its 35 current members and works to address the inequality between men and women while considering the various challenges that different women face.[[89]](#footnote-89) Multiple resolutions have been adopted by this organization including the “Human Rights, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity and Expression” resolution of 2014.[[90]](#footnote-90)

In the North Eastern African and Middle Eastern region there is still recovery from the events of the Arab Spring in 2011.[[91]](#footnote-91) This event, in short, led to major political changes as the result of revolution and protests throughout the region.[[92]](#footnote-92) Such changes include the overthrow of political leaders and those present within political institutions and require the inclusion within the discussion of how further economic empowerment of women is to be established.[[93]](#footnote-93) The League of Arab States (LAS) is an institution which attempts to incorporate these changes, along with the individual needs of its member states and citizens, into the dialogue of reform.[[94]](#footnote-94) This organization has also been aware of the need of the UN in advancing women’s rights as in 2014 LAS held a meeting in Cairo to discuss the implementation of UN objectives in advancing women’s rights.[[95]](#footnote-95) This meeting led to the adoption of the 2015 Cairo Declaration for Arab Women: The Post-2015 Agenda, an outline for meeting these goals.[[96]](#footnote-96)

Whereas in Asia and the Pacific there has been significant progress in the area of establishing networks for collecting data on the issue of women’s economic empowerment and implementing solutions.[[97]](#footnote-97) Crucial organizations in the area include the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). These organizations work to create corporation between regional organizations, the United Nations and civil society organizations.[[98]](#footnote-98) ASEAN is known to meet twice a year to discuss plans to implement solutions and how to coordinate the implementation.[[99]](#footnote-99) In addition, both organizations provide reports on the progress that these regions have made toward gender equality and inclusion and explain the details of these reports in educational programs they participate in.[[100]](#footnote-100) In the Pacific Island region there is notable progress being made in organizing women’s participation in economic inclusion through organizations like the Pacific Island Forum (PIF).[[101]](#footnote-101) This forum is most notably known for its publication of the Pacific Leaders’ Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED), a document committed to the progression of gender equality and inclusion.[[102]](#footnote-102)

Since the founding of the European Union (EU) as the European Economic Commission in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome, named for its origin location, the laws passed by the EU have been tailored to include aspects which advance gender equality.[[103]](#footnote-103) This is because the Treaty of Rome itself contains a section on gender equality in Article 119 stating: “Each Member State shall . . . ensure and subsequently maintain the application of the principle of equal remuneration for equal work as between men and women workers.”[[104]](#footnote-104) The section goes on to define gender discrimination in the workplace.[[105]](#footnote-105) Since each member of the EU must forfeit part of their sovereignty to the EU or face legal action by EU institutions and lose the benefits of membership within the EU, the EU is the most powerful force overseeing the protection of human rights and gender equality in the Region.[[106]](#footnote-106)

***Conclusion***

The impacts of inequality of opportunity for women in economies has lasting impacts on the area and their families. There are numerous institutional and cultural factors which prevent them from gaining access to the same opportunities as men. These obstacles lead to their children being impacted as well as the economy of the Member State. Since the benefits to both the population and the economy provide plenty of incentive, Member States should welcome change in order to include women in economic settings. On a regional level, there can be change by having a single Member State influence the behavior of the others which surround it. This would allow a cultural shift in the way that women are viewed in the workforce. Such changes can then impact the local population, easing the burden currently placed on women.

**Sustainable Development of Public Infrastructure in Rural Areas**

***Introduction***

The historical developments of rural areas into urban areas leads many to believe that focus should be placed on urban areas. This is understandable since as of 2016, almost half the world’s population resides in an urban area.[[107]](#footnote-107) However, many remain in rural areas due to the affordability of housing, services and the income that the agricultural industries provide.[[108]](#footnote-108) For example, rural areas are known to include a variety of different land types from wetlands to islands and these different areas contribute to the industries of fishing, logging, and mining.[[109]](#footnote-109) All of these industries make substantial contributions to their nations GDPs and provide jobs for locals with one estimate stating that around 47 and 89% of rural areas depend on ecosystems.[[110]](#footnote-110) However, since these forms of GDP provide a lower income at a greater risk, they are known as the “GDP of the poor”.[[111]](#footnote-111) These jobs are also not secure since there is a constant risk of automation or the resources which they depend on may simply run out.[[112]](#footnote-112) In addition to job relocation and automation risk, these forms of employment are environmentally damaging and unsustainable in the long term.[[113]](#footnote-113)

Since rural areas have a smaller population, they are notably less represented than urban areas which translates to less political power and thus less development.[[114]](#footnote-114) Political power is considered a significant factor in the decisions that each Member State makes in relation to sustainable development since the officials which hold power predominantly make the majority of decisions.[[115]](#footnote-115) If those in rural areas lack access to or knowledge of the officials which hold this power, they may not be able to participate in elections which determine who will be making decisions on their behalf. [[116]](#footnote-116) This lack of political power especially affects women since the lack of development means fewer employment and educational opportunities for them and their children.[[117]](#footnote-117) Better access to comprehensive education, voting systems, and transportation to these locations can greatly improve the lives of those in rural areas through political action.[[118]](#footnote-118)

In addition, those in the farming industry have become more and more susceptible to the effects of climate change with rising temperatures leading to greater crop failure, flooding, and drought.[[119]](#footnote-119) Not only do these disasters impact those working in the agriculture sector, but also anyone who is

impoverished, relies on fresh food, or lives in an area susceptible to natural disaster.[[120]](#footnote-120) Around 40% of the world is occupied by dryland, which is inhabited by around 2 billion people and supports half the world’s livestock.[[121]](#footnote-121) It is estimated that if current systems are not upgraded to become sustainable, around 100 million people could be in poverty by 2030.[[122]](#footnote-122) This would impact primarily indigenous people who depend more heavily upon natural resources and agriculture.[[123]](#footnote-123)

Rural areas have also been found the be more susceptible to the outbreak of conflict and epidemics due to an increase in tension along with the lack of infrastructure.[[124]](#footnote-124) In 2016, it was reported that 49% of those in 24 countries with conflict live in multidimensional poverty, meaning that they are deprived of living standards, health, and education.[[125]](#footnote-125) In addition, another 16% were at risk of poverty in these areas.[[126]](#footnote-126) Those in rural areas are around 18% more likely to live in multidimensional poverty than urban dwellers.[[127]](#footnote-127) In addition to conflict, those in rural areas face the threat of outbreaks and epidemics due to lack of public health facilities.[[128]](#footnote-128) This is reflected by the lack of funding for public health programs in developing nations versus more developed ones.[[129]](#footnote-129) In more developed nations funding for healthcare and insurance averaged around 7.7% of those countries GDP while developing nations only allocated 1.8% of their GDP on average towards public health programs.[[130]](#footnote-130) This leads to more diseases, outbreaks, and preventable deaths in rural areas.[[131]](#footnote-131) Furthermore, the continued cost of preventable services and healthcare for rural inhabitants means that upwards mobility is less likely or impossible leading to a cycle of poverty.[[132]](#footnote-132)

***Current Situation***

As of 2015, rural areas continue to be disproportionately affected by underdevelopment and underfunding.[[133]](#footnote-133) Forms of underfunding which uniquely affects rural areas include access to education, healthcare facilities, law enforcement, housing, employment, utilities and social programs.[[134]](#footnote-134) In addition, those living in rural areas are more likely to experience poverty than those in urban areas.[[135]](#footnote-135) Such examples include areas like South – Western Ethiopia, where in 2014 it was found that forest coffee, honey and spices accounted for 47 percent of rural household income.[[136]](#footnote-136) Other cases include Vietnam where a minimum of 25 million people are dependent on forests in the area with around 20 percent of their income originating from resources found in forests.[[137]](#footnote-137) Within Vietnam, ethnic and linguistic minorities are greatly impacted by underdevelopment and are around 40% more likely to be in multidimensional poverty than the Kihn – Hoa majority.[[138]](#footnote-138) Similar trends are found in Cambodia where the indigenous groups were more likely to be disadvantages and have greater poverty rates in addition to lack of access to healthcare, education , and fair representation in government. Ethnic minorities have a higher risk of poverty since they tend to be in more isolated regions which leads to greater exposure to the elements and greater reliance on environmental resources.[[139]](#footnote-139)

These forms of income inequality and lack of opportunity are significantly more likely to impact women and especially mothers due to the intersection of gender inequality and the motherhood penalty which reduces a women’s income once she has a child.[[140]](#footnote-140) This is due to the stigma surrounding working mothers which persists even in developed nations.[[141]](#footnote-141) Discrimination that leads to the motherhood penalty involve the circumstances in which mothers will not be as available during or after their pregnancy and additional accommodations will be required.[[142]](#footnote-142) Many corporations and employers do not want to provide these and will let go the employee or demand that she not request any of these, despite trends showing that mothers are valuable workers can contribute to the growth of the economy and population.[[143]](#footnote-143) Furthermore, twice as many children are out of school in rural areas compared to urban areas.[[144]](#footnote-144) The cycle of inequality of access to education remains an issue in rural areas since it perpetrates cycles of oppression as well and leads to conflict. A common belief in rural areas in developing nations is that it is more beneficial to send men to school while women remain at home to support children.[[145]](#footnote-145) One example of this is found in South East Asia where patriarchal standards have changed attitudes on gender roles leading to restriction of what women are able to do in the area compared to men.[[146]](#footnote-146) This leads to women being excluded from decision making, employment opportunities, and education most times from threat of violence by a male relatives.[[147]](#footnote-147) Such violence is viewed as a cycle even if education and labor laws and institutions are put into place, officials within other institutions must enforce them or else these actions will not be effective.[[148]](#footnote-148) For example, women are restricted from healthcare decisions during pregnancy leading to greater risk to the woman, discrimination laws are put into place to prevent this yet, women who fear violence at home and are not aware of protections will not speak out.[[149]](#footnote-149) These issues are believed to have resulted from the correlation between lack of infrastructure, schools and lack of effective education.[[150]](#footnote-150) In 2016, it was found that around half of those living in rural areas globally lacked access to adequate sanitation in contrast to one out of six of those living in urban areas.[[151]](#footnote-151) This leads to deaths from preventable conditions that are no longer present in developed nations such as cholera, typhoid, and dysentery, conditions which impair cognitive development and are contagious.[[152]](#footnote-152) In Sudan during the mid-2000’s it was found that those in rural areas were half as likely to receive prenatal or healthcare during a pregnancy than urban residents.[[153]](#footnote-153) The health effects of lack of infrastructure continue to startle the world and damage societies.[[154]](#footnote-154)

***Actions Taken by the U.N.***

The UNDP in coordination with the United Nations Environment Programme, has been working on initiatives to both promote the development of rural infrastructure to improve education as well as promote ‘green’ initiatives which reduce the impacts on the environment by updating infrastructure.[[155]](#footnote-155) In addition, these programs work to increase awareness by encouraging Member States to conduct reviews of the circumstances that their rural populations face.[[156]](#footnote-156) This improved data allows both the U.N. and the Member State to allocate resources in a more efficient manner and allows for information to be discovered that can be used to promote public funding.[[157]](#footnote-157) The way in which these initiatives would be implemented is through five steps at the national level: “stakeholder engagement and coordination to set visions and goals; integrated assessments to understand the environmental, social and economic impacts (positive and negative) of different policy options across different sectors and segments of the population and the linkages (synergies and trade-offs) of policy options; policy design and formulation based on integrated assessments and stakeholder consultations; implementation of policies, plans and strategies (e.g., through investments, provision of incentives or disincentives, regulations and social interventions); and monitoring and evaluation to measure the effects of the interventions against targets and recommend corrective actions if needed”.[[158]](#footnote-158)

One example of how this outline has worked is the Kenyan Green Initiative of 2013.[[159]](#footnote-159) This initiative has worked in collaboration with the UNDP in order to expand on current programs focused on innovation and upgrades of current and future infrastructure. Furthermore, these programs have led to the establishing of a national database for “green initiatives” by the population and manufacturers who have produced eco-friendly products, planted trees, organically produced food, responsibly fished, manufactured systems for producing renewable energy, raised awareness of environmental impacts through eco-labeling, and/or properly handled solid waste.[[160]](#footnote-160)

***National Frameworks***

Individual Member States have taken independent steps to address these issues due to outcry and the desire to improve the development of their populations. [[161]](#footnote-161) One way in which this has been done has been through the establishment of bodies in order to coordinate and integrate planning.[[162]](#footnote-162) One instance includes Kyrgyzstan which has established the National Council for Sustainable Development, a program intended to help coordinate projects between the government, private sector, and the public.[[163]](#footnote-163) However, this program has not been effective yet as there is an issue with sufficient data and real implementation by government bodies. [[164]](#footnote-164) This is not to say there isn’t possibility of reform in the future as initiatives can be revived and put into action.

***Conclusion***

The Bill and Malinda Gates Foundation which has been working to develop rural infrastructure in order to curb the outbreak of various diseases stated that, “Poverty not only deprives people of food, shelter, sanitation, health, income, assets and education, it also deprives them of their fundamental rights, social protections and basic dignity. Poverty also looks different in different places.”[[165]](#footnote-165) This is important to remember since the factors which lead to poverty are especially found in rural areas and are the result of lack of sustainable infrastructure.[[166]](#footnote-166) In order to combat poverty, inequality and climate change, there must be additional support and innovation for those who provide food and resources from the environment. This must be done sustainably, meaning that funding, support, and technology must be incorporated over the long term in order to ensure that human development improves and continues into the future.

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