

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

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General Assembly

Committee Background:

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) addresses trade, investment, and development issues for the United Nations (UN). In order to manage the growing disparity between developed and developing countries, UNCTAD focuses on aiding underdeveloped countries access the global economy without facing a power or trade imbalance. Today, UNCTAD utilizes the aid of its 195 global members to compose policies relating to trade, aid, transport, finance, and technology especially to address concerns of developing countries. Hosting quadrennial conferences for all of its members in Geneva, Switzerland, UNCTAD continues to help billions globally escape poverty.

The Trade and Development Board (TDB) is in place to ensure the daily operations of UNCTAD are carried out without problems. Tasked with overseeing, managing, and executing the wishes of UNCTAD during the time between conferences, the TDB meets up to three times annually for a variety of reasons: addressing urgent policy issues, reviewing the various reports produced by UNCTAD's other administrative bodies, etc. The TDB consists of 155 members selected from UNCTAD's body. The Board consists of 5 groups each of whom is allotted a specific number of spots which are filled by chosen countries from UNCTAD. Additionally, the majority of the work done by UNCTAD is carried out by 5 divisions each encapsulating numerous ongoing projects. Any new ratified policies have their action plans placed in one of the divisions in order to ensure smooth execution. The Nairobi Maafikiano is the latest agreement and it reaffirms UNCTAD's motives to promote sustainable development and trade, with climate change at the core of its actions in order to follow The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ultimately bring prosperity to all.



Topic 1: Reducing Energy Poverty in Underdeveloped Nations

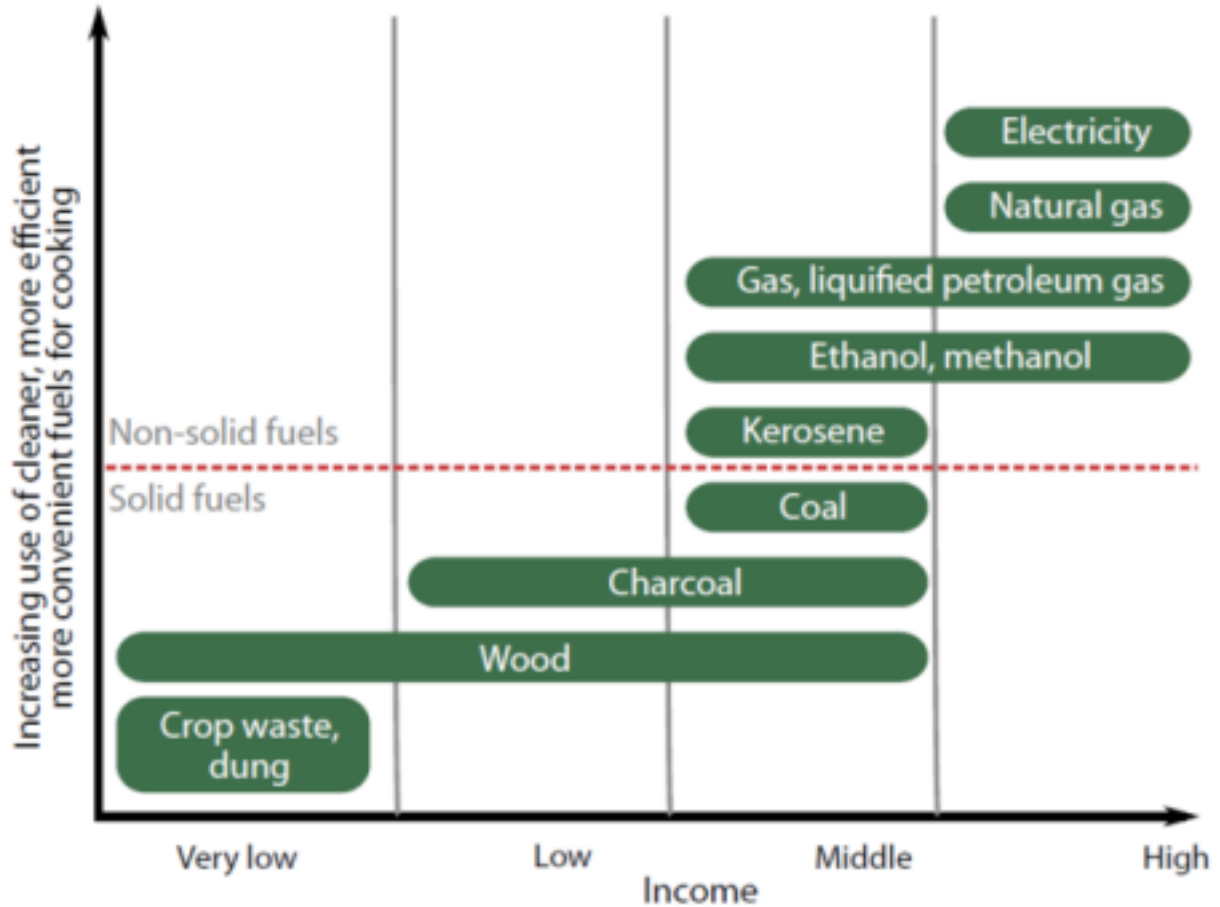
Introduction

The European Commission defines Energy Poverty as a situation where “energy bills represent a high percentage of consumers’ income” or when individuals “must reduce their household’s energy consumption to a degree that negatively impacts their health and well-being”. Given that electricity has become a vital facet of modern society, countries and people who cannot efficiently access energy are left with a disabling disadvantage. Unfortunately, this problem largely affects poor individuals, with 1.6 billion people having no access to electricity and another 3 billion forced to rely on inefficient and outdated energy systems such as kerosene, wood, etc. Underdeveloped countries are at the forefront of this issue, since energy poverty is intertwined with economic disparity, technological systems, etc., underdeveloped countries are left in a perpetuating cycle of despair. Without the proper resources to obtain energy efficiently and sustainably, these countries are unable to further develop themselves leaving them underdeveloped.

Although energy poverty remains an issue to be addressed in developed countries as well, energy poverty in these countries is considered to only affect remote regions which do not have the sufficient technological infrastructure to access the energy available to the rest of the country. On the other hand, developing countries face a more extensive issue, with most countries facing energy poverty throughout the entire country. Perhaps the most pervasive aspect of the problem lies in the inherent correlation between poverty and energy poverty. Many poor countries are unable to afford clean and efficient energy sources, and thus, they turn to raising taxes on their residents in order to make up for that gap. Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have consumers pay 20-50 cents for every kilowatt per hour, whereas the global average lies at 10 cents. This ends up creating a negative loop with countries charging more for sub-standard energy, which leads to citizens only able to buy a limited amount of it, thus reducing their quality of life. Unfortunately however, resolving energy poverty in underdeveloped countries goes beyond simply addressing the economic divide. The chart below shows the global energy ladder, and it depicts the income of households as it relates to the type of energy they utilize.

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Contrary to what most believe, an increase of income does not directly relate to better energy provided. If this multifaceted problem is not addressed, billions globally will continue to fall further behind the developed world, as without energy to propel underdeveloped countries forward, they will be unable to properly educate their citizens, provide them with necessary resources, and continue to remain unprosperous.

Current Events

As global warming and the concern of climate change has become included in nearly every debate, it has finally made its way into the realm of solving energy poverty in underdeveloped nations. With the forming of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), countries are now encouraged to work towards “zero-carbon emission sectors” which reveals a new facet to the energy poverty crisis in



developing nations. Any solutions to address the issue must extend beyond simply providing more energy to these nations, and must be long-lasting and environment-friendly.

Furthermore, more recent events have reduced the amount of accessible renewable energy in the global energy mix. Global economic recession caused by the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with the surge in energy prices because of the Russo-Ukrainian War have caused even developed nations to suffer. In the European Union, the number of individuals who are unable to adequately warm their homes has grown from 6.9% in 2021 to 9.3% in 2022. These factors have unfortunately only increased the energy gap between the wealthy and the poor. As unemployment rates increased and many faced income reductions, the governments of more developed nations were able to provide their citizens with stimulus checks helping them pay off the rising energy costs; however, underdeveloped nations did not possess the resources to aid their citizens and this only furthered the energy divide, leaving the poor in underdeveloped nations to suffer further. Recent events have caused the energy poverty crisis in underdeveloped nations to become multi-faceted and in dire need of a solution in order to aid those suffering.

Relevant UN Action

In 2015, the UN launched the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, laying out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that needed to be addressed in the next two decades. Of these, the Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7) highlighted the UN's ambition to provide "access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030" and extended the Paris Agreement. To particularly address the least developed countries (LDCs) of the world, UNCTAD worked with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to aid policy makers in various LDC governments work towards becoming carbon-neutral. Additionally, the Secretary-General outlined 5 critical actions in order to transition the world to renewable energy sources. Some of the actions include tripling the global investments in the renewable energy sector, improving global access to necessary components and resources, etc. The plan calls for increasing the share of renewables in



global electricity to 60%, investing \$4 trillion dollars into the sector annually until 2030, among other things to create a course of action for a more renewable global energy system.

Questions to Consider

1. What measures can be taken to provide developing nations with the adequate resources to address their energy poverty crisis?
2. How can the perpetuating cycle of raising energy prices to better the economy which leads to more people unable to afford energy be terminated in developing nations?
3. In what ways can the amount of energy supplied across underdeveloped nations increase while maintaining climate change goals and working towards a more renewable-energy-driven world?
4. What specific policies can aid the improvement of the infrastructure in underdeveloped nations to support greater access to energy?

Useful Links

1. Habitat For Humanity: “Energy poverty: effects on development, society, and environment”
 - a. <https://www.habitat.org/emea/about/what-we-do/residential-energy-efficiency-house-holds/energy-poverty>
2. Office of Scientific and Technical Information: “Understanding Energy Poverty - Case Study: Tajikistan”
 - a. <https://www.osti.gov/etdeweb/servlets/purl/21390276#:~:text=There%20are%20about%201.5%20billion,are%20living%20in%20energy%20poverty.>
3. The World Bank: “Report: Universal Access to Sustainable Energy Will Remain Elusive Without Addressing Inequalities”
 - a. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/06/07/report-universal-access-to-sustainable-energy-will-remain-elusive-without-addressing-inequalities>



Topic 2: Empowering Women Entrepreneurship Among Refugees

Introduction

As defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “refugees are persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection”. In 2022, over 108 million individuals worldwide became refugees as they fled to other countries seeking refuge. Even more abysmal is the number of people forcefully displaced by May, 2023: over 110 million. Fleeing their homes and entering a foreign land, refugees find themselves to be a burden on their host countries, requiring an ample amount of funding and resources to stay alive. Not only do refugees suffer under terrible living conditions due to a lack of funding from their host nations, but they are also alienated and removed from society with no job and no means of providing for themselves. The majority of refugees find themselves unemployed, with over 65% of refugees left without jobs in one of the most economically prosperous nations: the United States. In order for refugees to successfully enter the socioeconomic realms of their new homes, they must be given the opportunity and resources to become a vital part of the country’s economy. Refugees have the ability to become crucial assets for host countries, with the UNHCR’s Director for the Division of Resilience and Solutions dubbing their potential as “boundless”. Unfortunately, many host countries face their own economic issues, whether they have a lack of jobs for any new individuals, or they are struggling with unemployment problems, most countries do not possess the capabilities to assimilate up to hundreds of thousands of refugees into their economies. In order for refugees to get jobs and become self-reliant in their new homes, they must turn towards entrepreneurship. In the past, many male refugees have turned towards entrepreneurship and have aided their families and communities through their businesses. However, they have also contributed to the growing disproportion that is the number of male entrepreneurs compared to females: 2 to 1. Aiding more refugee women to enter the entrepreneurial space will help not only refugee families by giving them another source of income, but it will also be another necessary step towards achieving the

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humanitarian-development goals urged at the World Humanitarian Summit in May, 2016.

Unfortunately, most women refugees who do attempt to start their own businesses and become entrepreneurs in order to provide themselves with more flexibility in their schedule—to balance work and domestic roles—end up deterred for a variety of reasons. Two dominant problems prevent this issue from being solved. One lies in the lack of education that refugees receive upon fleeing to another country. Without the proper knowledge about their new homes, they are left to the aid of those around them to discover how to enter and be successful in the economics of their host nations. Nearly half of all refugee children are not enrolled in schools, leaving them at a severe disadvantage. This statistic extends further onto a gap in education between genders with a large and unfortunate difference between the number of girls vs boys enrolled in school. Another reason holding more women back from entering the entrepreneurial realms of their new countries is the animosity their families hold for women in money-earning positions, especially ones where they are self-employed. Much of this resentment stems from cultural ideas that remain with refugees and prevent them from doing what benefits them. In order to uphold the goals of the UN, refugees—particularly the women—need aid to become entrepreneurs in their new homes.

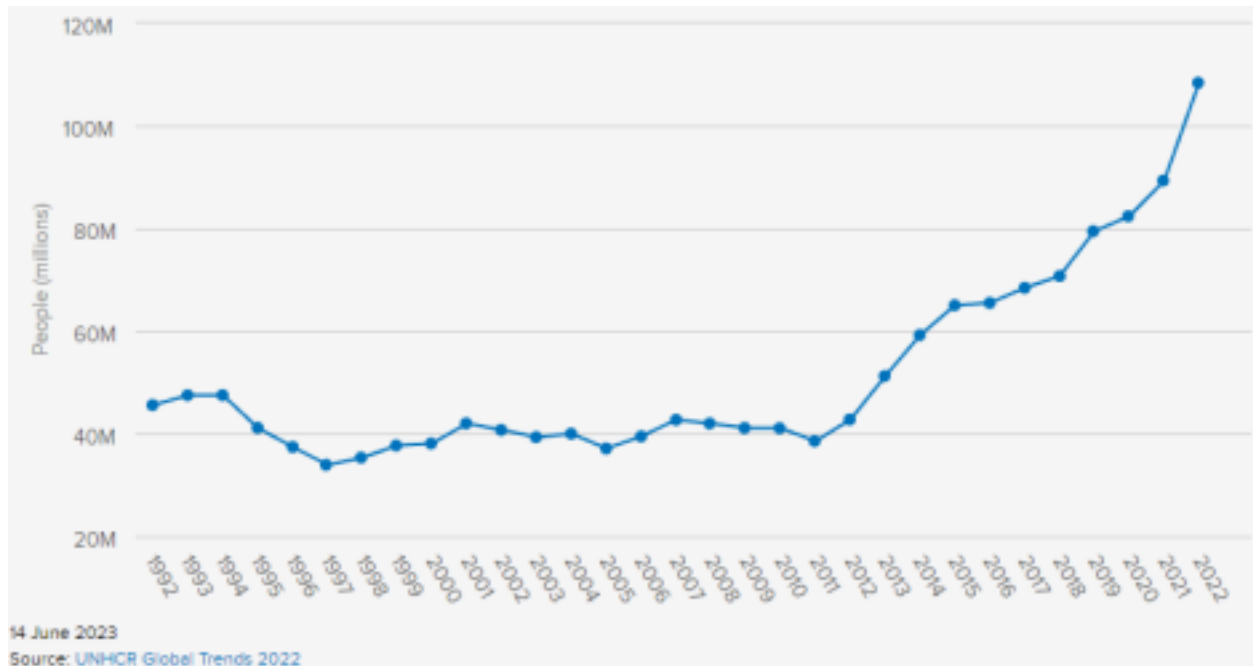
Current Events

Sadly these past 5 years have been the worst in terms of the number of individuals being forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations (as seen in the graph below). Global conflicts such as the civil war in Yemen, the Russo-Ukrainian War, the Syrian civil war, etc., continue to leave people without homes and fully reliant on host countries to support them. Countries including Türkiye, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Colombia (the countries which currently host the most amount of refugees) are faced with economic stress, as they are unable to accommodate the vast amount of people being displaced from their homes. Additionally, those attempting to start their own businesses in their host countries are being faced with backlash from natives regarding refugees as foreign individuals who do not belong. Furthermore, as a result of COVID-19, economies continue to attempt to recover from the recessions they faced, and as such,

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refugees are left with even less job opportunities to take advantage of. These events leave refugees in a more fragile state than ever.



Relevant UN Action

In September 2016 at the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, the UN adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The Declaration aids in helping to achieve all the goals listed in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially “leaving no one behind”, as the Declaration does well to affirm the UN’s ambitions to protect the rights of refugees in host countries. However, UNCTAD recognizes the importance of its own purpose to aid the economies of developing nations, and such, beckons for the implementation of more refugee entrepreneurs into the economies of hosting nations; this will inevitably bolster the socioeconomic climate of underdeveloped countries. As such, the Global Roadmap for Refugee Entrepreneurs which depicts the potential for economies if they utilize refugees is an important document which was created with the help of the UNHCR. This



fundamental document helped create the Global Compact on Refugees, affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018. The four key objectives of the Compact include extensive plans to aid host countries to better help refugees, help refugees become successful citizens of their new countries, etc. Up to this point numerous documents have been created highlighting steps countries need to take to help refugees worldwide, but none has been an all-encompassing plan to empower women entrepreneurs among refugees.

Questions to Consider

1. What steps can be taken to ensure cultural animosity doesn't prevent women refugees from becoming successful entrepreneurs?
2. How can adequate funding be provided to these entrepreneurs in their initial steps when funding is the most vital?
3. What are some distinctive tactics that can be employed to help better assimilate refugees into host countries and their socioeconomic cultures?
4. What measures can be taken to ensure refugees receive the proper education when they enter their host countries?
 - a. In what ways can refugees be taught about the tax, government, and economic systems of their new countries to the point where they can start their own businesses?
5. What measures can be applied to provide refugees with a network they can utilize to build their own business and become entrepreneurs?



Useful Links

1. World Bank Blogs: “Refugees mean business: the role of the private sector in creating economic opportunities for the forcibly displaced”
 - a. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/refugees-mean-business-role-private-sector-creating-economic-opportunities-forcibly>
2. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: “As refugee children grow up, their opportunities recede”
 - a. <https://www.unhcr.org/left-behind/#:~:text=As%20refugee%20children%20grow%20up,there%20is%20progress%20to%20report.>
3. The University of Sheffield: “How do refugee entrepreneurs navigate institutional voids? Insights from Malaysia”
 - a. <https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/166030/1/How%20do%20refugee%20entrepreneurs%20navigate%20institutional%20voids.pdf>



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