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UNDP

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General Assembly

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Committee Background:

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established in 1965, is the UN's leading agency for global development. Operating in over 170 countries and territories, UNDP works to eliminate poverty, reduce inequalities, and advance sustainable development. It supports nations in building institutional capacity, improving governance, and promoting resilience in the face of conflict, disaster, and climate change. UNDP plays a pivotal role in helping countries achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those relating to education, urban development, gender equality, and climate resilience.

UNDP functions through a decentralized system with regional hubs and country offices, allowing it to tailor development strategies to local needs. It supports a wide range of programming areas—from infrastructure development and democratic governance to women's empowerment and digital transformation. UNDP often works behind the scenes to build the foundational institutions that allow communities to thrive, including fair electoral systems, transparent budgeting, and disaster response networks.

Despite its wide reach, UNDP faces challenges. Development goals can be derailed by political instability, corruption, underfunding, or competing international agendas. Additionally, many of the communities it serves are affected by multiple overlapping crises: climate displacement, gender-based violence, informal economies, and systemic inequality. Delegates must develop inclusive, data-driven, and future-focused strategies that address these challenges at their root.

In this committee, delegates will be expected to propose holistic development frameworks that prioritize equity, long-term impact, and community empowerment. Every resolution should be grounded in sustainability and designed with the voices of marginalized communities in mind.

Topic A: Combating Urban Slum Growth in Latin America

Latin America is one of the most urbanized regions on the planet, with more than 80% of its population living in urban areas. But rapid urbanization has often occurred without proper planning, leading to the growth of informal settlements—commonly known as slums or "favelas." These communities typically lack basic services like clean water, sanitation, healthcare, electricity, and secure housing. They are often built on unstable land, prone to flooding, landslides, and other climate-related disasters.

The root causes of slum expansion include rural-to-urban migration, inequality in land distribution, inadequate housing policies, and weak enforcement of zoning laws. People move to cities in search of jobs, healthcare, and education—but face skyrocketing housing prices and limited formal employment opportunities. Without affordable housing, many end up in informal settlements, often on the outskirts of cities.

UNDP has partnered with governments, civil society groups, and the private sector to tackle this crisis through inclusive urban planning, infrastructure upgrading, and land regularization. Programs have focused on participatory slum upgrading—where residents are involved in improving their neighborhoods—and promoting access to services like waste management, healthcare, and education. However, many efforts remain localized and are challenged by inconsistent policy support, lack of funding, and political turnover.

Climate change further exacerbates slum vulnerability. Many informal settlements are located in environmentally risky areas, making them susceptible to climate-driven disasters like floods and heatwaves. Urban resilience must be built into development plans to ensure long-term safety and dignity for slum residents.

Delegates must consider strategies that go beyond temporary solutions. Preventing future slum growth requires a combination of inclusive housing policies, improved land rights, social protection

programs, and investment in sustainable infrastructure. In many cities, addressing inequality and fostering economic inclusion are prerequisites to any meaningful change.

Additional Questions to Consider:

1. How can national housing policies be restructured to promote long-term affordability and prevent slum formation?
2. What models of participatory planning can be scaled across Latin America?
3. How can cities integrate climate resilience into housing upgrades?
4. What role should private-public partnerships play in expanding access to urban infrastructure?

Helpful Links

- https://www.undp.org/publications/urbanization-and-sustainable-development
- https://unhabitat.org/topic/slum-upgrading
- https://unhabitat.org/global-action-plan-accelerating-for-transforming-informal-settlements-and-slums-by-2030
- https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview
- https://publications.iadb.org/en/housing-policy-latin-america

Topic B: Supporting Girls' Access to Secondary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

While primary education access has improved significantly across Sub-Saharan Africa in recent decades, millions of girls still face significant barriers to completing secondary education. This educational gap reinforces cycles of poverty, limits employment opportunities, and contributes to gender inequality. Key barriers include early marriage, gender-based violence, inadequate school facilities, high dropout rates, and cultural norms that devalue girls' education.

In some regions, girls are forced to leave school because of pregnancy, domestic responsibilities, or a lack of menstrual hygiene facilities. Poor infrastructure—such as unsafe roads or lack of electricity—also discourages attendance. In conflict-affected areas, school buildings may be destroyed or repurposed, and girls may be targeted for attending school. These issues disproportionately affect girls from rural, low-income, or marginalized ethnic backgrounds.

Education is a powerful tool for empowerment. Girls who complete secondary school are less likely to marry early, more likely to participate in the labor force, and often invest in the well-being of their families and communities. Secondary education also improves maternal and child health outcomes and increases political and civic participation among women.

UNDP supports girls' education through policy advocacy, technical assistance, infrastructure development, and community engagement. Projects may involve training teachers, distributing scholarships, building gender-inclusive facilities, and supporting the enforcement of laws against early marriage. But scaling these efforts requires cooperation across sectors—health, transportation, education, and legal systems.

Delegates must address the structural and societal causes of inequality. Solutions must include both top-down reforms (government policy and funding) and bottom-up engagement (community leadership and parental support). Technology may offer new solutions—such as mobile learning platforms—but must be adapted to local infrastructure and literacy levels.

Additional Questions to Consider:

1. How can governments integrate gender equity into national education budgets and development plans?
2. What cross-sector partnerships can improve girls' school attendance and retention?
3. How can legal frameworks be strengthened to protect girls from early marriage and school-based violence?
4. What innovations in digital education are most viable for rural or low-resource settings?

Helpful Links

- https://www.undp.org/publications/leave-no-girl-behind
- https://www.ungei.org/
- https://www.hrw.org/topic/womens-rights/girls-education
- https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-africa/girls-education
- https://plan-international.org/quality-education/gender-equality-education

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