

**General Assembly**  
**Addressing the Special Needs of Africa: Economic and Political**  
**by Amanda Hope**

The continent of Africa is a vast land with a wide variety of languages, cultures and traditions. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Africa has approximately 887 million inhabitants within its 54 nation states. During the last half century or so, many of these African nations gained independence from European colonial rulers. However, since their break from their colonial ties, many African nations have faced numerous economic and political problems that have been extremely detrimental to the continent as a whole. These problems stem from issues such as instability, corruption, conflict, violence, and despotism. As a result, Africa is the poorest and most underdeveloped continent in the world.<sup>1</sup> According to the 2006 Human Development Index, of the 177 countries reviewed, Africa had 27 nations ranked in the “low human development” grouping. Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan spoke of the hardships post colonial Africa has faced and is still facing in his speech, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security, and Human Rights For All*. Annan explained:

[M]uch of Africa — especially South of the Sahara — continues to suffer the tragic effects of persistent violent conflict, extreme poverty and disease. Some 2.8 million refugees — and fully half of the world’s 24.6 million internally displaced people — are victims of conflict and upheaval in Africa. Africa continues to lag behind the rest of the developing world in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. About three quarters of the world’s AIDS deaths every year occur in Africa, with women the most affected. The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in many African countries is both a human tragedy and a major obstacle to development. Of the one million or more people

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Sandbrook, *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985.

in the world killed by malaria each year, roughly 90 per cent are killed in sub-Saharan Africa, most of them children less than five years old. Much of sub-Saharan Africa continues to face a combination of high transport costs and small markets, low agricultural productivity, a very high disease burden and slow diffusion of technology from abroad. All these make it particularly prone to persistent poverty.<sup>2</sup>

Although Africa is the poorest continent in the world, it is important to understand that there are nations within Africa that are not as impoverished. These countries include South Africa, Botswana and many of the countries in the northern section of the continent, which is also known as the Maghreb. Unfortunately, the vast majority of African countries have inhabitants who are living in poverty. It has been suggested that much of Africa's poverty can be attributed to its colonial history. Post-colonial scholar Frantz Fanon has argued that colonialism has made a lasting psychological effect because it has created a sense of inferiority and subjugation, which has, in turn, led to a lack of growth. Poverty in Africa has arguably been the root cause of the spread of diseases, a lack of education, and internal conflicts, which many of the poorest nations in the continent are engaging in or recovering from.

For these reasons, the African Union (AU) was created. The AU consists of 53 of the 54 nations in Africa. The AU focuses on issues such as the African economy, governance, and human rights. In order to uphold sovereignty, the AU is made up of union, regional, state, and municipal authorities, as well as several hundred institutions. However, even with the creation of this body, Africa remains in a dire condition. The issues of bad governmental policies, climate change, and unfair trade practices have

---

<sup>2</sup> Kofi Annan, "In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security, and Human Rights for All," Reform the UN, 30 Oct. 2007, <<http://www.reformtheun.org/index.php/issues/126?theme=alt3>>.

resulted in famines across the continent. Due to inadequate systems of distribution, food is not easily disseminated among the populations of starving people.

In an effort to address the special needs of Africa, On September 8, 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration Resolution during the 8<sup>th</sup> plenary of the Millennium Summit. This resolution sets out to “support the consolidation of democracy in Africa and assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development, thereby bringing Africa into the mainstream of the world economy.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in 2005, the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) released *The Millennium Development Goals in Africa: A Graphical Illustration of Progress and Prospects*. The OSAA released the report for the purpose of showing the trends in MDGs in Africa and highlighting the achievements of African nations to date.

Additionally, there are several initiatives that have been established in order to address the special needs of Africa. One of the most prominent initiatives is the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), which “is a socioeconomic program of the African Union.”<sup>4</sup> Most recently, the sixty-second session General Assembly (GA) has marked “the mid-point to 2015, the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals” for NEPAD: fifth consolidated report on progress in implementation and international support. This “ report examines policy actions taken by the international community to meet the commitments made by the Group of Eight countries at their 2005 summit...The report also analyses the extent of international

---

<sup>3</sup> “United Nations Millennium Declaration,” The United Nations. 30 Oct. 2007, <<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>>.

<sup>4</sup> “How African countries are implementing NEPAD,” in OSAA Briefs, July 2005, 30 Oct. 2007, <[www.un.org.esa/africa](http://www.un.org.esa/africa)>.

support to help African countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals and implement the New Partnership for Africa's Development projects and programmes.”<sup>5</sup> This report also recognizes that by marking the mid-point of meeting the MDGs by 2015, it serves as an unfortunate reminder of how many African countries are not close to meeting most of the MDGs.

During its 61<sup>st</sup> session, the GA adopted resolution A/RES/61/234, which focuses on enhancing the role of subregional offices of the Economic Commission for Africa. Both the G-77 and the European Union were strong supporters of this resolution. Other adopted resolutions adopted in the 61<sup>st</sup> Session include A/RES/61/158, which calls for a Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, A/RES/61/139, which calls for assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa, and A/RES/61/230, which calls for implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

In addition to initiative programming, there is a need for support in such areas as additional development assistance, especially greater Official Development Assistance (ODA). This aid has generally been a product of the members of the Development Assistant Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic and Co-Operative Development (OECD). The OECD also has an African Economic Outlook (AEO) report, which “aims to provide policy makers, private sector operators, and researchers with an objective analysis of economic and social developments on the African continent. One common concern of donors, private investors and local policy makers about African

---

<sup>5</sup> “New Partnership for Africa's Development: fifth consolidated report on progress in implementation and international support,” Report of the Secretary General, 3 Aug. 2007, The United Nations, 30 Oct. 2007.

countries is the lack of consistent, reliable, and timely information on their economic, political and social developments.”<sup>6</sup> The OECD suggests that annual reports on development very rarely cover African development on a country-by-country basis. This organization suggests that because Africa is a place of such great diversity, it is essential to produce periodic reviews of the various countries and their situations, and the need of short term prospects, which, according to OECD, is a necessary tool for good policy making and economic development.

With all of the problems Africa is facing, there is a great need for support in areas such as poverty eradication, debt relief, global climate change, support for education, good governance projects, etc. The delegates of the General Assembly are charged with the following: thinking critically about ways in which African nations can achieve most, if not all, the MDGS by 2015; the role of good regional involvement; active participation by women; NGOs and civil society in developing Africa, and the possibility of focusing on African economic development on a country-by-country basis.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

- 1) Should the United Nations place more of an emphasis on economic development and good policy making on a country-by-country basis in order to be better able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals?
- 2) How important is the involvement of women in developing Africa nations?
- 3) If many of the African nations have not been able to make sufficient progress in reducing extreme poverty at the mid-point of MDGs, how achievable will the MDGs be in the next eight years?
- 4) Is financial investment in Africa essential to its economic development? Does it cause economic dependency?
- 5) What are good alternatives to the financial investments in Africa?
- 6) How effective have civil society and NGOs been in addressing the special needs of Africa?

---

<sup>6</sup> “African Economic Outlook,” Development Centre, Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 30 Oct. 2007, <[http://www.oecd.org/about/0,3347,en\\_2649\\_15162846\\_1802984\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/about/0,3347,en_2649_15162846_1802984_1_1_1_1,00.html)>.

7) Overall, how effective has the UN been in addressing the special needs of Africa?

**Sources:**

“African Economic Outlook,” Development Centre, Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development  
[http://www.oecd.org/about/0,3347,en\\_2649\\_15162846\\_1802984\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.htm](http://www.oecd.org/about/0,3347,en_2649_15162846_1802984_1_1_1_1,00.htm).

“How African countries are implementing NEPAD,” in OSAA Briefs,  
<http://www.un.org.esa/africa>.

Kofi Annan, “In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security, and Human Rights for All,” Reform the UN,  
<http://www.reformtheun.org/index.php/issues/126?theme=alt3>.

“New Partnership for Africa’s Development: fifth consolidated report on progress in implementation and international support,” Report of the Secretary General.

Richard Sandbrook, *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985.

“United Nations Millennium Declaration,” The United Nations.  
<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>>.

## **The Palestinian Refugee Problem** **by Hansen Hunt and Elizabeth Sgarella**

*“His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country”<sup>1</sup>*

Arthur James Balfour, Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, 1917

### **Historical Background**

The Palestine problem that has plagued the Middle East for three millenniums was triggered once again in 1917 with the Balfour Declaration, a statement that influenced the British Mandate of Palestine giving Great Britain jurisdiction over the region once ruled by the Ottoman Empire. The League of Nations intended the Mandate of Palestine to be a temporary administrative change “until such time as they are able to stand alone”<sup>2</sup> The goal was never realized and Great Britain exploited the power bestowed upon them through the mandate to create Palestine as a “national home for the Jewish people”<sup>3</sup>. As stated in the Balfour Declaration, they intended to protect civil and religious rights of non-Jewish individuals residing in Palestine. Great Britain was not able to accomplish this task with the large influx of Jewish people and failed to prevent wars between Arabs and Jews for decades to come, leading to what is now referred to as the Palestine Question: How to create peace in the Middle East and eliminate the refugee problem?

According to the 1922 census, the Palestine population was 78.34% Muslim and 11.14% Jewish<sup>4</sup>. Due to persecution in Europe and the British Mandate of Palestine as a Jewish home, there was a large influx of Jewish immigration. By 1947, Palestine was made up of 58.06%

---

<sup>1</sup> Balfour Declaration, Nov 2, 1917

<sup>2</sup> Mandate for Palestine

<sup>3</sup> Balfour Declaration

<sup>4</sup> Palestine Population

Muslim and 33.24% Jewish<sup>5</sup>. Although the Arab people remained in the majority, they were outraged by their loss of political sovereignty. The drastic increase in Jewish immigration drew violent opposition and prompted the Arab population to take the defensive and revolt against both the British government and Jewish people. The riots of 1929 were the first significant battle with 133 Jews and 116 Arabs killed<sup>6</sup>. Two decades after the Balfour Declaration took effect, the Arab's rebelled and started the Great Arab Revolt which lasted three years. The Arab guerilla forces were defeated by the British government and sources say 5,000 of the rebel group were killed<sup>7</sup>.

To reduce the rapid increase in Jewish people and violence in Palestine, Great Britain introduced the White Paper in 1939. This document prohibited any further immigration into Palestine. At that time, there were a large number of Jewish refugees being persecuted by Germany who were not permitted to enter Palestine. Leaders of the Zionist community met to discuss the issue and established the Biltmore Program which called for the following:

The fulfillment of the original purpose of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate.  
To found there a Jewish Commonwealth.  
Unalterable rejection of the White Paper of May 1939.  
That Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world<sup>8</sup>

The Zionist movement began to oppose Britain because the movement wanted unlimited immigration and a Jewish state rather than a home for the Jew's within Palestine. Now the Palestine problem included three factions: Great Britain, Arabs, and the Jews. In 1947, Great Britain was unable to control the situation and handed the problem over to the United Nations.

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.mideastweb.org/palpop.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Great Britain

<sup>7</sup> Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Timeline

<sup>8</sup> Biltmore Program



In May of 1947, the UN appointed the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to analyze the situation and submit a report. On September 1<sup>st</sup> the UNSCOP submitted their report and called for a partition of two states, resulting in the GA Partition Resolution 181. Palestine was to be divided into one Jewish state and one Arab state. The US, Soviet Union, and Zionist group supported the resolution but the Arab League refused to recognize it.<sup>9</sup> After Resolution 181 was written, the Jewish leaders began building a wall to separate the two factions. On May 14, 1948 Israel declared its independence and was recognized as a nation state. The newly formed Jewish state allowed all immigrants to enter. Soon the Israeli War of Independence began.

One day after Israel was recognized as a state, the British government left Palestine completely and the surrounding Arab nations declared war on Israel. Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia all fought against the newly established state<sup>10</sup>. The instant the Arab-Israeli War began, hundreds of thousands of refugees began fleeing or were forced to leave their home country. According to the British Police Report of April 26, 1948, Palestinians were already fleeing either to prevent being attacked or because their Palestinian leaders had left and forced the people to follow<sup>11</sup>. Israel continued to defend itself from Arab attacks while expanding its borders outside the UN adopted partition. The UN realized Israel was not following the original Partition Plan or the peace talks and Resolution 194 demanding the demilitarization of Jerusalem and that peaceful refugees be allowed to return to their homes or be compensated for their losses<sup>12</sup>.

As the number of Palestinian refugees continued to increase and the conflict failed to end, the UN created an organization to provide assistance to refugees. Resolution 302 in 1949 created

---

<sup>9</sup> Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Timeline

<sup>10</sup> Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Timeline

<sup>11</sup> GA Resolution 194

<sup>12</sup> UN GA Resolution 194 (III)

the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to directly assist Palestinian refugees. The UNRWA definition of a Palestinian refugee is “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict<sup>13</sup>.” The UNRWA provided education, health, relief and social services. There has been debate regarding whether a Jewish refugee fleeing Arab states to Israel is eligible for similar assistance and compensation from their home countries<sup>14</sup>.

Little was accomplished over the next decade, although the Israel, along with Great Britain and France invaded Egypt following Egyptian President Nasser’s attempt to nationalize the Suez Canal. This was followed by the establishment of one of the first peace keeping missions in the region in 1956. This dispute had only complicated the situation regarding relations between Palestinians and Israelis.

In order to provide representation for Palestinian refugees, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was established in 1964.<sup>15</sup> The founders of the PLO sought "to organize the Palestinian people and to enable them to play a role in the liberation of their homeland and promote self-determination.<sup>16</sup>” In reaction to a lack of cooperation and commitment by Israel, the organization’s goal was to take back their land by organizing an army.

Israel understood what the PLO stood for and expected an organized attack. In 1967, Israel reacted by taking the offensive and attacking and conquering the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights during the “Six Day War” in June 1967.<sup>17</sup> In response the UN to call for peace and Israel’s withdrawal of the Palestinian territories in UN Security Council Resolution

---

<sup>13</sup> [www.unrwa.com](http://www.unrwa.com)

<sup>14</sup> Jewish Exodus, Wikipedia

<sup>15</sup> Important Events of the last 100 Years

<sup>16</sup> PLO Background

<sup>17</sup> Israeli–Palestinian Conflict Timeline

242.<sup>18</sup> The Six Day War led to the second exodus of Palestinian refugees, estimated at 325,000 people. In order to find a solution that could satisfy the PLO and Israel, the UN declared the PLO the legitimate representative group of the Palestinian people and allowed them to participate in the General Assembly with observer status beginning in 1974.

In the late 1970's, wars lessened and peace talks increased. At the urging of United States President Jimmy Carter, Egypt and Israel signed a peace agreement in 1979; it resulted in Egypt becoming isolated from the Arab world. Numerous resolutions were passed in the General Assembly attempting to promote peace in the region and addressing the issues of refugees and displaced persons. In 1981, peace talks diminished and Israel attacked an Iraqi nuclear plant and PLO structures in Beirut. An informal cease-fire lasted about a year, but in 1982 Israel attempted to defeat the PLO by invading Lebanon and Beirut. Israel withdrew from Lebanon, but tensions only increased. Constant attacks continued until 1988 when further peace talks were held.

Israel's peace plan of May 14, 1989 sought to promote peace with all Arab states, improve refugee conditions, and establish elections and self-rule for Palestinian Arabs. In 1993 Israel and the PLO agreed to mutual recognition through the Oslo Declaration of Principles and the PLO agreed to remove anything referring to the destruction of Israel from their charter while Israel agreed to withdraw from Palestinian territories.<sup>19</sup> After the Oslo agreement, large scale war diminished, but terrorist attacks continued to hinder any movement towards peace.

### **The Current Situation**

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency defines a Palestinian refugee as a person “whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict.” There

---

<sup>18</sup> Important Events of the last 100 Years

<sup>19</sup> Israel Peace Plan

are very few original survivors today, but UNRWA's definition of a refugee also covers the "descendants of persons who became refugees in 1948." The number of registered Palestinian refugees has subsequently grown from 914,000 in 1950 to more than 4.4 million in 2005, and continues to rise, although UNRWA only assists refugees taking refuge in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (UNRWA).

The right of return has been a very important issue for these refugees since 1948 and is reflected in GA resolutions 194 (1948) and 3236 (1974), which declared it an inalienable right. These efforts have helped legitimize the Palestinian right to return, but have had little impact on promoting a lasting solution, especially since Israel is not convinced that its Arab neighbors would continue to respect its right to exist.

Most Palestinians feel that the right of return is critical to peace with Israel. Many Israelis felt that the right of return for Palestinians would eventually undermine the stability of the state of Israel. Some Palestinians feel that they should not only be granted the right of return, but that they should also be able to establish a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, as envisioned by earlier resolutions on the issue. A Palestinian state would give Palestinians the ability to return to their native soil and also offer citizenship to those who returned and perhaps those who chose to stay in other countries.

Proposals for settlement of the Palestinian question from the United Nations and international community in general are predicated on the assumption that there should be a separate Palestinian state. Yet the implications of such a settlement vary across the Middle East. In Lebanon and Syria, most Palestinians are stateless; the establishment of a Palestinian state would ease Lebanese and Syrian concerns about the political ramifications of the Palestinian presence. In Jordan, Palestinians can obtain Jordanian citizenship. If Palestine were to gain its

own state, Jordanian officials have implied that dual citizenship would not be available; Palestinians would have to choose one political identity.

Some Palestinians feel that if they are not granted the right of return, they are at least entitled to compensation and reparations. They feel that reparations should be paid to all those who will not be allowed to return and compensation should be paid to all those who lost property. “Estimates of the cost range from \$92 billion to \$147 billion” (Ghada and Cotran, 243).

While these issues remain part of the overall equation, the current problem is the continuing violence carried out by both sides and their inability to come to any mutual agreement on the right of the other side to exist. Israel’s efforts to establish settlements or build barriers in what is considered Palestinian territory and restrictions on movement and other rights of the Palestinian people have exacerbated conditions from the Palestinian point of view. Continued violence and terrorist attacks carried out by more extremist elements of the Palestinian movement have led to worsening conditions from the perspective of Israel.

Nevertheless, diplomatic efforts have continued and even escalated over the last fifteen years, beginning with the Oslo process. The Oslo Accords (1993) called for “mutual recognition and five-year period during which Israel would remove its troops from major Palestinian population centers” (Israel, Palestine and the Occupied Territories). But the next decade was marked by continuing violence rather than movement toward a lasting peace. In 2003 a combined effort of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the UN led to development of the “Roadmap.” The Roadmap outlined several steps leading to an independent Palestinian state, but Israel continued to impose its occupation and constructed many new settlements and Palestinian violence continued, undermining the provisions of the plan.

Other alternatives have been proposed as well including the Saudi Plan (2002) and the Geneva Accord (2003). Both plans received extensive media coverage along with regional and international interest, but Israel was not willing to comply with either. There was some hope for peace after the death of Yasser Arafat, but the election of a Palestinian government headed by Hamas and subsequent violence led Israel to back off from negotiations. Sporadic violence has continued and, while there have been some interactions between Palestinian and Israeli leaders, the peace process remains stalled despite current efforts of the U.S. Secretary of State (and others) to bring both sides to the negotiating table.

The challenge facing the international community remains essentially the same as it has always been: How to find an equitable solution for both sides that will recognize the rights and dignity of both peoples and their right to exist as separate political entities in a spirit of mutual trust and cooperation.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. Can the international community promote a settlement or are bilateral negotiations the most effective approach?
2. Do the Oslo Accords or the Roadmap still provide the basis for a settlement?
3. Should reparations be paid to the descendants of refugees – both Palestinian and Israeli?
4. Is formation of a separate Palestinian state a prerequisite, or at least a necessary condition, for a long-term settlement?
5. Is a guarantee of Israel's right to exist a prerequisite, or at least a necessary condition, for a long-term settlement?
6. While it has not been discussed in this paper, another aspect of any long-term settlement is the status of Jerusalem? What should that status be?
7. What other conditions must be met for a stable, long-term peace to take effect?

### **Sources:**

"**Balfour Declaration.**" Encyclopædia Britannica. 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 17 Oct. 2007 <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9011963>>.

**Biltmore Program, Palestine Population, Israel Peace Plan, UN Resolution 194, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Timeline**, "Copyright by MidEastWeb for Coexistence R.A. - <http://www.mideastweb.org> All rights Reserved."

**Ellis, Marc**, "On the Palestinian Right of Return." On the Palestinian Right of Return 2001. Arab Research Institute, [http://tari.org/marc\\_Ellis.htm](http://tari.org/marc_Ellis.htm)

**Ghada, Karmi and Eugen Cotran**. The Palestinian Exodus, 1948-1998. New York: Garnet & Ithica Press, 1999.

**Great Britain**, 1930: Report of the Commission on the disturbances of August 1929, Command paper 3530 (Shaw Commission report).

**Important Events of the last 100 Years**, <http://www.un.int/palestine/history/imp.html>, Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations.

**Israel, Palestine and the Occupied Territories**: Global Policy Forum 2007. <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/israel-palestine/peaceindex.htm>

**Jewish Exodus**, <http://www.wikipedia.org/>

"**Mandate for Palestine**," Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 11, p. 862, Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem, 1972

**PLO Background**, <http://www.un.int/palestine/PLO/back.html>, Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations.

**UNRWA**. "Who is a Palestinian Refugee?" 2003. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 24 October 2007, <http://157.150.195.10/unrwa/refugees/whois.html>

**UNRWA History**, <http://www.un.org/unrwa>, Public Information Office, UNRWA Headquarters, Gaza.

## Bridging the Gap Between Relief and Development

*By Michael Graf*

Within the past few decades' large-scale conflicts have taken place all over the world in such areas as Iraq, Darfur, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Afghanistan. Combined with natural disasters such as the Indian Ocean tsunami, epidemics, desertification and droughts, these events have tested the humanitarian response capacity of the United Nations to its limits. The issue we face before our committee is how to bridge the gap between relief and development in areas torn by conflict and disaster. The bridge that must be built in order to span this gap must provide a continuous stream of relief, medical aid, basic supplies and other human necessities to affected areas far beyond the initial disaster or incident. This effort must go on until sustainable resources are available to help return the local populations to safe and practical living standards. This is the mission of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. Such disasters have shown that the United Nations can stand up to the test when called upon to provide relief to the areas affected. It should also be noted that the United Nations cannot stop catastrophes, but its work within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Committee can alleviate their affect.

Even with the UN's success in such events, the gap that must be bridged is referred to as the period between immediate post-conflict/disaster and the initiation of development programs. Major international contributors across the world are trying to close this gap. However, they have been lacking the coordination, communication and foresight needed between relief and development agencies, to work effectively. To further complicate the situation there is also a lack of coordination amongst organizations within the UN system. This internal struggle within the UN has hindered additional development mechanisms from spawning, and has lost the faith of local host governments in the UN's ability to remedy the situation. Furthermore, donor nations and organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, the United States, Canada, and the European Union, are hesitant to give continual funding past the initial disaster. This hesitance stems from the "lack of progress" or stagnation of local entities to develop their own structures to go beyond the initial relief given by such donors in these emergency areas. The donors then refuse to give further aid, until a



fundable cause is discovered. This lack of funding also causes delays in the implementation of projects, which further delays sustainable development and finally retards progress. This creates a downward spiral of relief in the areas that need it the most. The question before 2<sup>nd</sup> committee is how to overcome the gap in order to prevent the reversion to conflict or disaster and promote sustainable development.

The link between relief and development is referred to as a continuum or linear progression. Operations providing relief to humanitarian crises must initially be followed by a program of rehabilitation and eventually restored to a level where sustainable economic development can take over. From the ever more frequent occurrences of man-made events, such as war or environmental disasters, the linear model was proven not to accurately portray the necessary steps towards rehabilitation. Further steps were needed to further fill the gap between relief and development. Instead, the added steps in the continuum were that one must wait for the emergency to run its course before initiating rehabilitation and reconstruction work. However, in an ongoing disaster or emergency, it is necessary to pay close attention to the progress of the relief, and its effectiveness, to accurately prescribe the necessary remedies, such as medicine, supplies, monies or programmes, to maintain a steady path towards development. "As an example, at the same time that one must provide essential drugs, medicines and health care to victims of emergencies, there is also a need to train health workers and maintain effective health monitoring systems, if the society is to have any hope of sustaining its own health and medical services."<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the process of linking relief to development has taken on new meanings and responsibilities. Any international assistance to areas in need must be accurately researched to avoid negating existing economic and civil systems, such as agricultural programmes, in order to not disturb the pre-existing development already in effect. In forums discussing international assistance and relief, such as the UNDP and United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the primary goal sought is to blend emergency relief with economic and civil development. Development in these affected areas has also been charged with the

---

<sup>1</sup> UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS, "The Link Between Relief and Development." Humanitarian Report 1997 8/09/07 <[http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha\\_ol/pub/humrep97/link.html](http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/pub/humrep97/link.html)>.

advancement of lenient economic policies, installation of democratic forms of government, and the implementation of essential structures to protect human rights.

While the initial focus of humanitarian relief agencies is to save lives, these added responsibilities ensure the continuation of the agencies need to foster national or local structures to deal with long-term development needs. Hence, given relief aid from such agencies, without the foresight or know-how to build local capacity, most likely increases the chance of long-term dependency on such aid. In order to curb long term dependency on relief agencies responding to aforementioned emergencies, "a central task must be to identify, understand and seek to strengthen whatever coping mechanisms victims draw on during their time of crisis. Relief programs must then seek to address immediate needs while helping to strengthen these mechanisms and, thereby, laying the foundation for recovery."<sup>2</sup>

This process is known as the "move from "pure relief" to "relief tied to recovery." This process can only be implemented in a situation where there is improving security where progress of mollification is already underway. In cases of humanitarian disasters that occur from extended periods of conflict, such as the Golan Heights in the Levant, Cambodia, Bosnia or Afghanistan, methods of de-mining, and or implementation of security measures, are vital to agriculture and the self sufficiency of the local populations stricken by the conflict.

Additional issues that complicate the process of relief to development, include the transient refugee populations in the regions affected by such emergencies, and the so-called "CNN factor" that exists from distant volunteer contributors who watch such events on television. The process of returning refugees to areas stricken by disaster and applying the sustainable relief and development programmes that are created, remains to be one of the most difficult tasks of aid agencies, host governments and the United Nations. Problems existing from the re-integration of local populations in affected areas stretch the limits of resources available and test the implemented relief and development infra-structures built. It remains a daily struggle to see refugees successfully adapt to the post emergency programmes, and will continue until more viable relief/development methods are established.

---

<sup>2</sup>

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS, "The Link Between Relief and Development." Humanitarian Report 1997 8/09/07 <[http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha\\_ol/pub/humrep97/link.html](http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/pub/humrep97/link.html)>.

Moreover, the “CNN factor” stems from the intense media attention given to such disasters after an event has taken place, and results in the eventual limited attention given post initial relief and aid. This sudden drop of attention is a primary cause of the gap discussed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Committee, and must be overcome in order to fill the gap that emerges prior to the eventual goal of sustainable development. With the attitude of immediate gratification that TV viewers embody, the solution must be to further involve these distant participants, through metaphorically bringing home these tragic events, in order to ensure due diligence to the process of overcoming the challenges between relief and development.

Hence, one of the primary solutions to solving the CNN factor and ultimately building the bridge between relief and development is the commitment to seeing an emergency through all of its phases, to an end where no relief is needed and the local populations can work semi-independently towards their region’s prosperity and growth.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. What actions must local and national authorities take to resolve development and crisis issues that fall within their areas of control?
2. How can the interaction between the UN and relief agencies in the field be changed or reformed to ensure a common strategy for post conflict/crisis situations?
3. How can UN coherence be improved to smooth the transition from relief to development?
4. What efforts can be made to provide an accurate system of information exchange to synchronize country strategies, planning, budgeting and resource mobilization to increase effectiveness and reduce transaction costs for fragile and strained governments in transition countries?
5. What possible sources or methods of funding must be obtained to overcome the “relief/development financing gap” for continuing financial assistance?

**Sources:**

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/53/plenary/a53-139.htm>

## **Second Committee**

### **Eradication of Poverty: Addressing the Needs of LDCs**

#### **General Background**

Since the inception of the United Nations in 1945 one of the underlying tenets has been the elimination of poverty around the globe. Yet as we progress further into globalization the disparities between the rich and poor continue to grow. It is up to the international community to work towards the elimination of this gap, but it cannot be accomplished through simply dictating it to be so. What is needed is a new paradigm in political thinking that caters towards eliminating poverty truly and effectively. This new paradigm must be based on a foundation that honestly wants to solve the issue and a real attempt by the world and the United Nations to target poverty as its number one concern.

Poverty is affecting millions around the globe from the *Favelas* of South America to the shanty towns of East Asia. Not only do the people living in poverty have a miserable life, but they are now a burden on the state by not being able to produce any real income. People living in these conditions are driven towards crime, and more and more often terrorism, in an effort to gain some type of income. Also populations living in poverty generally have higher birth rates, which, coupled with a lack in many cases of some kind of formal education, results in more and more people being born into a life of poverty. In 2000 members of the United Nations signed onto the Millennium Development Goals, a comprehensive list of eight goals to guide development efforts in the future. At the top of the list is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

Poverty in this case can be measured by the amount of people in the world that live on less than \$1-a-day. World Bank data shows that more than 1.1 billion people in the world fall into this category. The causes of poverty, and also usually wealth disparity are numerous, which makes it difficult to pinpoint one particular reason. What is important though is how we go about incorporating these people back into society as functional members. This can be especially difficult considering that most children born into poverty will have an increasingly difficult time moving out of poverty. One of the keys then is to ensure that all members of the state will have access to at least some type of formal education. Education is the key for moving out of the ghettos and being brought into modern society with a purpose. In the 2007 Millennium Development Goals progress report, the UN recognized that “most economies have failed to provide opportunities to their youth, with young people more than three times as likely as adults to be unemployed.” This should underline just how big a factor education can be.

It is important to realize how profound a change in the world poverty rate would be. Archbishop Desmond Tutu recently held a discussion focused on how poverty fuels terror and said that, “You can never win a war against terror as long as there are conditions in the world that make people desperate -- poverty, disease, ignorance, et cetera.” This really highlights how states can justify working harder towards the elimination of poverty. An investment in people pays out across the board; better education results in a more productive country that is better able to care for itself.

So how can we work towards reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty? The answer, we are told, is *growth*. It really is that simple as long as we continue to spend and manufacture and to live our lives without changing a thing we can feel good about ourselves because we are slowly reducing the world population living in poverty. However, that answer

underestimates the severity of the problem, the tremendous disparity between rich and poor. In 1993 the poorest 1 percent of the world's population accounted for only 0.8 percent of the income while the richest 10 percent made 50.8 percent. In order to truly combat this worsening situation we need to begin to look into other alternatives to solving this problem.

While there has been much progress made in the addressing the poverty issue particularly in South East Asia there are still a number of areas making little to no progress. Many of the poorest states that are landlocked and least developed show a lack of progress and in some cases are moving further into poverty. Areas in Western Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa show the greatest need for development assistance, yet it only trickles in. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has noted that the benefits of worldwide economic growth are being unevenly distributed and that the most developed countries have failed to live up to their commitment to provide "adequate financing within the global partnership for development and its framework for mutual accountability." Even after 2005, when the leading industrial nations met to pledge to double aid to Africa by 2010, total aid declined in real terms by just over 5 percent in the first year.

According to a recent UN report, while worldwide economic growth generally drove incomes up across the board, it failed to address the issue of those living in extreme poverty. Economic growth is generally a good sign; however, while world incomes have been consistently increasing over the last decade there has not been a proportional increase in people moving out of poverty. This shows that simple economic growth is not enough there needs to be direct action to ensure the monies gained from economic expansion is more evenly distributed. There also needs to be greater involvement from the people who are in positions to make a difference.

More radically this requires a new mindset: a paradigm designed to actually combat the problems of the world today. This is something we have begun to see in the “*pro-poor growth*” terminology adopted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund; this term however misleads us into believing that economic growth is still the answer. In reality there are other solutions available in the form of wealth redistribution. The World Bank’s own analysis claims that each extra \$1 billion of aid in 1997 lifted over 400,000 people above the poverty line permanently. Today if we were to redistribute only 1% of the income of the world’s richest 20% to the world’s poorest 20% it would be equal to about as much as economic growth of 20%. To put this in perspective between 1990 and 2001 for every \$100 of growth in the world’s income per person only \$0.60 went to reducing poverty below the \$1-a-day line. The irony in this whole situation is that many of the countries that signed onto the MDG’s are also involved in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development which set the goal, in 1970, of giving 0.7% of their GDP towards poverty reduction. Had they have actually given the amount they could have eradicated poverty below the \$1-a-day line by 1999, just before the MDGs were adopted.

While economic expansion slowly drives up the worldwide income it does little to address the income inequality prevalent today. This is an unacceptable solution as most of the MDGs assume that poverty is the leading cause of many of the major problems we face today. What is needed is a more active stance on the elimination of poverty; it is time for us as citizens of the world to really work towards achieving this goal. A new paradigm will be required to eliminate poverty in the world today; it is up to us to come up with the solutions.

## **Discussions in the United Nations**

One of the major venues within the UN system for the discussion of the eradication of poverty has been the annual session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in particular the 2006 substantive session held in Geneva, Switzerland from 3-28 July. Several speakers during ECOSOC's Coordination Segment discussed poverty eradication under the theme "Sustained economic growth for social development, including the eradication of poverty and hunger" (6-10 July 2006). The Segment was introduced by Ambassador Hannesson (Vice-president of ECOSOC, from Iceland). He noted that economic growth is not an end in itself; there is an elusive linkage between economic growth, social development and the eradication of poverty. He said we must learn how to manage that relationship, but on a case-by-case basis since not one model fits all situations (*from Report on ECOSOC*).

South Africa, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, stated that the relationship between sustained economic growth and social development for eradication of poverty and hunger is a mutually reinforcing relationship, requiring a comprehensive, integrated, coordinated and balanced approach. There is a need for greater policy and coordination at a global level, but also a need to ensure that countries have adequate national policy space for adopting nationally developed and owned socio-economic policies and strategies. It also requires a multi-sectoral approach and an enabling environment for the achievement of social goals in areas related to poverty. There is also a need for reform of the international financial and trade architecture, a comprehensive solution to the external debt problem, the need to increase market access for developing countries and the need to have an equitable multilateral trading system. The G77 called upon all member states and the Bretton Woods Institutions to



translate commitments made at the major UN conferences and summits into concrete and specific actions (*from Report on ECOSOC*).

Finland, on behalf of the European Union and associated states emphasized that poverty eradication is the primary and overarching objective of the EU's development cooperation and that the EU member states support the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategies at country level, especially for Least Developed Countries. Combating poverty will be successful only if equal importance is given to investing in people, protecting natural resources, securing rural livelihoods and investing in wealth creation. The EU's comprehensive strategy emphasizes reconciling economic growth and sound environmental management, promoting social equity and cohesion as well as economic prosperity with high-quality employment for its citizens. The EU is determined to make significant progress towards meeting the commitments with regard to internationally agreed goals and targets including the MDGs and those deriving from UN summits in Copenhagen, Monterrey and Johannesburg, as well as the Doha Development Agenda. The poor need to be informed and empowered to participate in poverty reduction strategies and other policy-making processes by increasing their access to land, labor, technology, information and financial and business services, and by investing in basic social services, social protection and infrastructure (*from Report on ECOSOC*).

These presentations, while not speaking for every country, provide a starting point for discussions at the Model UN conference. Delegates should consider how best to implement some of the policies or concerns set forth by these and other speakers. They may also want to consider the level of progress that has been made thus in achieving Millennium Development Goal one – eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. This is reflected in the Millennium Development Goals Report of 2007, which, *inter alia*, points out “the proportion of people living

in extreme poverty fell from nearly a third to less than one fifth between 1990 and 2004. If the trend is sustained, the MDG poverty reduction target will be met for the world as a whole and for most regions” (Millennium Development Goals Report, p. 4). But the challenge before the international community is how to sustain this trend, and especially how to make progress in those areas where progress has been limited and where the level of inequality has actually risen in recent years (MDG Report, pp. 6-8).

### **Least Developed Countries: a special case**

While poverty is a world-wide problem, it is especially challenging for the fifty states classified as the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). They are classified as LDCs based on three criteria: low income (under \$750 per capita), human resources weakness (based on nutrition, health, education and adult literacy), and economic vulnerability (OHRLLS homepage, p. 2). In order to address the special concerns of these countries and others the UN established the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island States (OHRLLS). The role of the High Representative is to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, to advocate in favor of LDCs, and to assist in mobilizing international support for the Programme of Action (OHRLLS homepage). The Programme of Action “includes 30 time bound and measurable international development goals including those contained in the Millennium Declaration (OHRLLS homepage, p. 2). The UN has also established the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and, through other venues, sought to provide debt relief (the G-8), pledges of additional assistance (the Monterrey Consensus), and improved trade relations (the Doha Round discussions in the World Trade Organization – WTO). These approaches are meant, *inter alia*, to assist the LDCs to overcome

their current problems and “graduate” from the list of LDCs. However, many of these approaches have not been fully implemented and much remains to be done. As the Office of the High Representative notes, “There is no universal magic formula for poverty reduction that could be applied across the globe but there exist an ample number of good practices that could serve as a model and be replicated”; identification of these practices “is essential for mobilization of international support and resources for the implementation of the [Programme of Action] PoA” (OHRLLS homepage, p. 3).

The Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of the Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries (A/61/173) notes the importance of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, which have been used by at least 35 LDCs and pay particular attention to the MDGs. The report also notes, as suggested earlier in this paper, that there is a tenuous nature between economic growth and poverty reduction and that in some countries there has been “a negligible decline, and even some increases in income poverty,” despite overall economic growth (A/61/173, p.6). The report reiterates the importance of debt relief, ODA, FDI, and improved trade relations (A/61/173, pp. 10-12). It then goes on to suggest priorities for future action on the part of national governments themselves: nationally owned development strategies, strengthened governance, promotion of peace and security, gender mainstreaming, increased productive capacity, agricultural and rural development, managing the benefits of natural resources, and combating HIV/AIDS (A/61/173, pp. 12-18). Thus there is general agreement on what needs to be done, the need for enhanced cooperation with and support from other states, regional organizations and the UN system. The challenge for delegates is to help bring this about.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. What are the root causes of poverty?

2. What role can the Second Committee play in addressing these causes?
3. What role should the UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA, the primary development agencies, play in addressing poverty?
4. What role should the World Bank or IMF play?
5. What kind of cooperation is necessary between development agencies and the World Bank and IMF?
6. How can member states, particularly donor countries, be encouraged to live up to commitments reflected in the Monterrey Consensus or calls for debt relief?
7. What role do NGOs or civil society have in addressing poverty?
8. How can member states support improvements in education to promote long-term social, economic and political development to help address the root causes of poverty?
9. How important is good governance in eradicating poverty? How can it be promoted?
10. What other mechanisms such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) or Country Strategy Notes (CSNs) might be helpful in addressing poverty and hunger?
11. What role should the UN country teams play in working with governments to address the eradication of poverty?
12. What are the best practices that could be replicated to assist LDCs in addressing poverty?

**Sources:**

Millennium Development Goals Report 2007 (available on United Nations website – [www.un.org](http://www.un.org))

Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island States homepage – [www.un.org/special-rep/ohrrls ldc](http://www.un.org/special-rep/ohrrls ldc)

Report of the Secretary-General on the “Midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010,” A/61/173, 12 July 2006.

UNHCR Report on the “2006 ECOSOC Substantive Session,” Geneva: 3-28 July 2006; summarized here with permission of the authors – Lesley Cole, MUNFW Secretary-General and Mike McBride, consultant UNHCR; segments of the report are drawn heavily from statements of ECOSOC Chairs and the delegations of South Africa and Finland.

## **Second Committee The Economic Empowerment of Women**

*“A series of human rights treaties and international conference agreements, forged over several decades by governments...provides a legal foundation for ending gender discrimination and gender based rights violations. These agreements affirm that women and men have equal rights, and **oblige states to take action** against discriminatory practices.” – From introduction to “Women’s Rights Are Human Rights”*

Eighteen percent of the developing world or 985 million people worldwide continue to survive in abject poverty on less than \$1.00 a day. Although 70% of those living in this state of abject poverty are women, undeniable evidence links the empowerment of women to the stimulation of economic growth and therefore the reduction of poverty. According to the 2007 Global Monitoring Report published by the World Bank, progress, however small, has been made in recent years towards empowering women within a majority of developing countries particularly in social areas such as health and education. Unfortunately, in this same report the World Bank also recognizes that economically productive areas in developing countries such as agriculture, the private business sector, and infrastructure and government have been significantly slower in implementing changes that would encourage female participation, eliminate discrimination, and lead to the overall empowerment of women.

### **Economic Empowerment through Agriculture**

In rural areas throughout the developing world, agricultural practices are not only a source of food but also a source of income for most families, and women play an integral role in local economies from tilling the fields, to tending to the livestock, or simply fetching water. However, women involved in agriculture are far from becoming economically empowered as

obstacles such as unequal property rights, lack of agricultural training and support, and preoccupation with daily household duties set them apart from their male counterparts.

Many traditional societies in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa maintain laws or customs that prohibit women from owning or inheriting property. If laws intending to empower women through land ownership exist in these countries, enforcement, especially in rural areas, is severely lacking. All too often, husbands or fathers are in sole control of the family land and, therefore, in control of whatever family-earned income can be gained through either agricultural production or sale of the land itself. If a woman should be fortunate to inherit land, in many cases it remains her husband's right to sell the land as he wished without any obligation to furnish his wife with a share of the profit.

Along with limited access to land ownership, women involved in agriculture worldwide also struggle with issues of incomplete training and lack of direction or support from local agricultural agencies. Environmentally unsound practices such as slash-and-burn farming can lead to agricultural and therefore economic failure, and yet many women involved in subsistence farming are not aware of the consequences of their methods. In the People's Democratic Republic of Laos, UNFPA began a program in 1993 to educate the women of mountainous village communities about the dangers of slash-and-burn agriculture. In addition, the UNFPA program also introduced an environmentally sound and profitable cash crop known as cadmium. Within a short period of time, these programs of agricultural education and support have empowered the women financially as well as socially within their villages allowing them the ability to make key decisions in their fields as well as in their families.

Finally, women involved in agricultural communities lack economic empowerment due to a preoccupation with or, more accurately, an obligation to fulfill the household duties necessary to the survival of their families. Activities such as child care, food preparation, and wood and water collection remain daily time-consuming responsibilities for many women living in rural communities in the developing world. According to the 2002 UN Millennium Project Report on Education and Gender Equality, women in some Sub-Saharan African countries spend on average 800 hours a year collecting wood for fuel; due to poor or non-existent transport systems, women in these rural communities spend 65% of daily household time and effort in transport. If women are to become empowered economically through agricultural activity, the time consumed with basic household tasks must be greatly reduced. One recommendation is to improve access to water, sanitation, and transport systems so that daily trips to collect water or dispose of waste take a fraction of the time. In addition, improving roads in rural areas will also allow women involved in agriculture an increased opportunity to trade their goods outside their own communities, thereby increasing profits and furthering their own economic empowerment.

### **Economic Empowerment through Business**

According to former World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz, “gender equality in the workforce makes economic sense” as improved equality for women increases productivity and profits by encouraging greater female participation in the workforce. Surveys and studies conducted in both developed and developing countries, however, reveal that businesses worldwide in areas such as hiring practices, pay, labor requirements and conditions, and the process of granting of business loans or credit show signs of gender inequality. Marriage, child birth, familial duties, and low or insufficient education hinder the entrance of women into the

workforce in many countries, and, in some countries, women are prevented from contributing to the workforce altogether through cultural or legal institutions. In addition to this, increasing trends in part-time, temporary, or casual positions of labor have limited the employment of women, especially those living in impoverished areas of the world; this uncertainty of income leaves them vulnerable to unfavorable working conditions, wage exploitation, and general discrimination. To combat such rampant gender inequality and to empower women economically through the business sector, reforms and legal enforcement must be promoted culturally and through governmental action.

In addition to improvements in existing inefficient and unequal business practices, high promise for female economic empowerment lies in micro-financing institutions. Through the innovation of micro-loans, micro-financing institutions are able to extend limited credit to poor entrepreneurs who would ordinarily lack the steady employment needed to gain such a loan. In this way, women in developing countries are able to begin a small business and not only provide for their family but also save money to allocate towards other ventures. Women involved in profitable micro-businesses find that their economic empowerment allows them a voice in matters of the house and home, increased social mobility, and higher self-esteem.

The success stories of women involved in business through micro-loans and savings are not only numerous, but found worldwide. A UNFPA sponsored project in Bangladesh paired small business loans with business skills training geared towards women in order to address rampant poverty-stricken conditions within local villages. The result was the creation of a small industry of dressmaking that not only economically empowered the female business owner



through increased profits but also provided training and employment for many of the younger women in the village.

In the African nation of Chad, another project organized by UNFPA reaches out to women by combining business lessons and micro-credit loans with reproduction and HIV/AIDS education. While the women gather at local markets to sell the products of their entrepreneurship such as clothes, fruits, vegetables, and hand-made soap, they engage customers in informational discussions regarding HIV/AIDS prevention, transmission, and treatment. Examples such as these make it evident that the economic empowerment of women allows women access to the social and educational empowerment they so desperately seek.

### **Economic Empowerment through Government**

When examining the unequal access to land and property ownership and the gender-based discriminatory practices in businesses worldwide, it is clear that legal reform is necessary. The largest obstacle to the economical empowerment of women lies in restrictive cultural practices and inefficient government action against repressive customs; therefore, increased female political involvement and representation is an important step towards economic empowerment. However, despite the requirements set forth during the Beijing Platform for action, many countries are falling short of the target that 30% of the seats for national parliament be held by women. In addition to the need for female voices in government, the formation of and support for women's organizations are crucial to promote increased awareness and political pressure for issues that affect women, including improved access to economic opportunities.

### **Conclusion**

As the World Bank points out, it is important to keep in mind that "gender equality does not necessarily mean equality of *outcomes* for males and females; it means equal access to the

*opportunities* that allow people to pursue a life of their own choosing.” Although there are those who consider gender equality to be unnecessary or culturally impossible, economic equality for women is highly beneficial for everyone. When women have access to the economy, profits and economic growth increase, the amount of women in post-secondary education increases, health education and awareness becomes widespread, child-mortality decreases, the over-all standard of living increases, and poverty levels drop nation-wide. If given equal economic opportunity through agriculture, business, and government, the women of the world will become empowered and therefore able to enjoy a higher economic living standard and enhanced social and political expectations.

### **Questions**

1. How can individual nation-states overcome cultural practices and norms in order to encourage greater female participation in the work force?
2. What steps should UN agencies take towards ensuring that economic programs encouraging female participation and empowerment are effectively and consistently implemented in rural communities?
3. What improvements can be made towards measuring the success or failure of programs intended to ensure the economic empowerment of women?
4. In what way do existing human rights treaties and international agreements oblige states to take action against discriminatory economic practices?
5. What are the short-comings of the previously authored declarations that have led to their unsuccessful or in complete implementation?
6. Is it possible for UN agencies to develop self-sustaining programs of economic empowerment and equality, or will it be necessary for UN representatives to remain consistently involved?

### **Sources**

“Advancing Gender Equality: World Bank Action Since Beijing.” World Bank.  
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/fullreport.pdf>

“Empowering Women, Boosting Economies.” World Bank.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTGENDER/0,,contentMDK:21079590~menuPK:336874~pagePK:64020865~piPK:149114~theSitePK:336868,00.html>

“Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women.” UN Millennium Project.

<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Gender-frontmatter.pdf>

“Women’s Work and Economic Empowerment.” UNFPA

<http://www.unfpa.org/gender/empowerment1.htm>

**Third Committee**  
**Reducing Forced Displacement: IDPs, Migrants, and Refugees**  
**by Tom Schaeffer**

Today there are approximately 235 million people worldwide who have been forced to leave their homes for reasons of safety and security or have voluntarily left to enhance their chances of economic improvement or survival. These people represent the members of the global society who have been attacked or marginalized by their governments. Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, following the Nazi atrocities during WWII, the United Nations has been engaged in a global effort to establish a worldwide consensus on the appropriate treatment of people on the move – individuals forcibly displaced as a result of man-made conflicts or natural disasters and those who have migrated for economic reasons (1). Since the adoption of the UDHR in 1948, however, consensus on how to respond to these situations of people on the move has been very difficult to establish.

On 14 December 1950, in order to dedicate specific United Nations resources to the fight for humanitarian causes, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established to, according to its mandate, lead and coordinate “international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide” (2). Since then UNHCR has helped more than 50 million refugees. Over the years UNHCR’s role has expanded to cover other people of concern as well: stateless persons, internally displaced persons and returnees. According to the UNHCR, there are approximately thirty-two million people around the world that they are currently assisting (2). Within the 32 million there are two groups, refugees and internally displaced persons, we will examine here.

## **Refugees**

A refugee is “any person who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.” (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Article 1). Currently UNHCR reports there are approximately 10 million refugees of concern to the Office, a slight rise in number over previous years due to the number of refugees who have fled Iraq.

Because of the manner of their departure from their home countries, refugees face difficult challenges abroad as they are often forced to leave with little or no documentation, money, food, or water. Another problem facing a refugee is that the host countries are often unwilling and unprepared to handle the influx of hundreds of thousands of now homeless, desperate people. This mass migration often results in problems within the host country as well as cross-border tensions. Refugees often occupy land or camps near the border leading to cross-border tensions; they may cause harm to the environment due to the need for fuel, water and sanitation. Since they receive aid, they often get more assistance than the local communities near which they are located leading to tensions within those communities and increased levels of crime and violence. Those countries that do provide assistance for refugees often spend billions of dollars through their assistance programs, causing a drain on their own economies. And some refugee situations have gone on for decades due to the lack

of a solution for the problems that caused the refugees to flee in the first place, leading to what are known as “protracted situations” or “forgotten emergencies” (12).

The UNHCR, along with other international aid agencies such as UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Committee of the Red Cross, work to help host/recipient countries support refugees until they can return home. This return is known as voluntary repatriation and is the preferred solution to refugee situations, but, according to UNHCR, must be carried out in safety and dignity for the refugees. Where such a solution is not possible, UNHCR, in cooperation with host governments or third parties, promotes local integration within the host country or resettlement to a third country. But resettlement poses the problem of finding a country willing to accept thousands of new residents.

Approximately a dozen countries have established yearly quotas to accept refugees, but these fall far short of the number of people who have applied for resettlement (12).

Refugees generally live in encampments outside of major population centers and survive in miserable conditions. They face numerous problems such as a lack of documentation, the need for legal protection, food shortages, and even threats of deportation. Iran, Pakistan, the United Republic of Tanzania, and now Syria and Jordan host the largest number of refugees, but there are a number of countries that host well into the thousands, especially in Africa where the largest total of refugees resides (12).

UNHCR ‘s primary mandate is to provide legal protection for refugees and in doing so it works with governments to help them develop screening procedures, legislation, and assistance in interpreting International Refugee Law as reflected in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and the Protocol on the Status of Refugees (1967). But as the number of refugees has grown since the founding of UNHCR, the Office has also taken

on the task of providing shelter, clothing, medicine, and food as well as long-term assistance in the areas of education, medical assistance, and psychological counseling. It does so with the help of many other agencies and approximately 650 non-governmental organizations, known as implementing partners. But providing the needed assistance, ensuring safety and security in camps, and even gaining access to victims make UNHCR's task difficult (12).

An illustration of the security problems faced by humanitarian staff is the recent killing of United Nations humanitarian staff in the Darfur region of northwestern Sudan. These killings pose serious problems as the United Nations cannot send their workers into regions where their security is in doubt; the recent killings have prompted the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, Manuel da Silva, to issue a condemnation of the killings saying, "The United Nations calls upon everyone in Darfur to recognize the neutrality of all humanitarian staff, and the vital work that they are doing, and to ensure their safety" (10).

Currently, UNHCR is at work in many countries with refugee populations but perhaps none as important as its work in the Darfur region, where over 200,000 refugees have poured across ill-defined borders only to face violence, hardship, and loss in Chad or the Central African Republic. At the same time, UNHCR is helping repatriate Sudanese into the south Sudan where progress has been made to safely bring the people back into that region (5). And Sudan itself is the host to thousands of refugees from Ethiopia in eastern Sudan.

The war in Iraq has also resulted in over two million refugees, most of them now in Syria or Jordan. It is clear that militarization of populations will continue to pose a serious threat to humanitarian operations. Finally, as noted above millions of refugees have remained in the host countries for well over a decade. The international community is beginning to

give greater attention to these situations, but has not addressed the root causes of the crises sufficiently to allow for refugees to voluntarily repatriate.

### **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

Internally displaced Persons (IDPs) are people who have been driven from their homes, generally through government action, but who have not crossed the border of their home country. These people, approximately 25 million, often face the same issues as refugees except it is often difficult for international aid agencies to reach them with supplies of food, water, and medical care, in part because any assistance from humanitarian agencies or non-governmental organizations must be with the consent of the government. But the host country may be resistant to foreign operations on its own soil, especially if it has been the cause of the displacement to begin with. The host government either will not recognize the problem or might claim that the IDPs are part of a hostile or revolutionary organization. Often, the problems that caused the population dispersal require multinational negotiations to declare cease fires in civil war areas or to generate agreement on the treatment of IDPs before the humanitarian assistance period can begin. This is not easy to achieve, yet as a Report of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has noted, humanitarian access to IDPS “is the prerequisite to all humanitarian operations” (6).

One of the major problems facing not only IDPs but the international community itself is that no organization within or outside of the United Nations has a mandate to provide assistance for IDPs. Everyone acknowledges that the primary responsibility for IDPs rests with the home country, but as noted above the home country may be unwilling or unable to care for them. In the case of natural disasters where no one is to blame, host countries generally welcome assistance and provide access as witnessed in the reactions to the Indian



Ocean tsunami. But man-made/conflict situations are different. Host governments are unwilling to yield their national sovereignty to outside entities who might interfere in their political and or military activities and who might report on such issues as human rights violations or abuses (12).

There are also no legal standards within the United Nations system to properly address the problem of IDPs. Secretary-General Kofi Annan did appoint a Special Representative for IDPs (Mr. Francis Deng, Sudan) who compiled a list of Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. But while these have been referred to in United Nations resolutions as a useful framework for addressing IDP issues, they have never been officially adopted. Many developing countries are reluctant to do so as they fear that adoption of the principles could be used to justify a violation of their national sovereignty should an IDP situation arise in their countries.

The director of OCHA, who also has the title of Emergency Relief Coordinator, has also established an IDP unit within OCHA that has monitored IDP situations. OCHA's Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) has also addressed the issue of IDPs and tried to come up with a coordinated approach among the various agencies involved with IDPs. The IASC includes representatives from OCHA, UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, the ICRC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and representatives from NGOs. It meets regularly in Geneva or New York, but does not have operational capability. Nevertheless, it does try to promote cooperation and consistent policies among various actors within the UN system on IDPs and many other issues relating to humanitarian assistance (12).

As a result of lessons learned from the Indian Ocean tsunami, OCHA also established a new mechanism to deal with IDP situations known as the “cluster approach.” As a result of imperfect coordination during and after the tsunami, studies suggested that agencies might be more effective if one agency took responsibility for organizing the response in different areas of need – clusters of organizations dealing with a particular issue. As a result nine clusters were established such as health, education, camp management, shelter, protection. One agency has been given the lead in each cluster to organize those organizations who have the capability to assist in that area. For instance, WHO is the cluster lead in health, UNICEF in nutrition and water and sanitation, and UNHCR in protection, shelter, and, along with IOM, camp management (12; OCHA website).

While OCHA and most agencies are supportive of the cluster approach, member states are skeptical – developed countries are generally supportive but want to see evaluations to determine how effective it is; developing countries are concerned that any such efforts take place only with the approval and consent of the host government and also want to see evaluations of the approach. Nevertheless, agencies have tried the approach in various forms in nine countries and are considering its use in others (12).

Another area of activity relating to IDPs involves risk reduction. Member states have adopted the Hyogo Protocol that calls for taking steps to prepare for future natural disasters and address the needs that result from them. This raises issues involving the sharing of technology, promotion of early warning systems, and funding for risk reduction strategies (12).

A major change that has occurred in recent years is the enlargement of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), whose goal is to have available approximately \$500

million for countries and humanitarian organizations to use to address the aftermath of natural disasters. Donor countries thus far have been quite generous and the fund has reached well over \$300 million. The CERF is administered by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) in consultation with governments and agencies. But long-term funding for such efforts will always remain a problem (12; OCHA website).

Despite these efforts, significant problems remain in relation to IDPs that can be addressed by delegates to the MUNFW Conference. Should any single agency have a mandate to assist them? Should the Guiding Principles relating to IDPs be officially adopted? How can the root causes that lead to conflict and forced displacement be addressed? How can we promote the effective sharing of technology to promote risk reduction strategies in the face of future natural disasters? Is the cluster approach a useful mechanism? How can sufficient funding be assured to respond to natural disasters and enable displaced persons to return home? What steps need to be taken to ensure sustainable returns and reintegration?

### **Migration and Migrants**

In discussing migrants it is important to differentiate them from IDPs and refugees; they are people who have not necessarily fled violence, or government oppression, but rather, have at least some choice in their displacement as many migrate to new countries in order to find better economic and living conditions. The United Nations Convention on Migrants in 2003 defines a migrant as “a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national” (8). Categories of migrants include skilled or unskilled workers, permanent settlers or temporary migrants; student migrants; family reunion migrants; or transit migrants. While the causes of their

displacement are of a non-violent, non-forced nature, migration has been a problem for some countries because the number of migrants can overwhelm local governments or cause significant political upheaval in native populations. Today there are an estimated 191 million migrants worldwide with just over 5 percent living in the United States (9). Of course, illegal immigration has been a major topic in the United States and other developed countries, especially in the wake of 9/11.

In addition to worrying about the political posturing of a host country's leadership, migrants face even larger problems in their host countries: xenophobia, discrimination from the local population, legal challenges, and access to medical care and education. Often the migrant is traveling alone with the aim of sending money back to their families still in their home country (remittances) or, as is largely the case in the United States, many migrate to new areas with close family members in order to achieve opportunities for themselves and their children. This situation places a strain on the children who, like their parents, often have no access to medical care, education or legal rights. The United Nations, through adoption of such documents as the Millennium Development Goals and the Convention on Migrants, has called for nations to respect and recognize migrants, to eliminate racism, and to increase the level of tolerance in all societies (11). Some of the rights recognized by the Convention include their rights, to leave and enter the state of origin, the "right to life," the right to freedom of religion, as well as the right to property. Other rights include due process of law and other rights given to citizens (11).

The international community has begun to address the overall question of migration through interagency efforts and international conferences or meetings. These include the UNHCR/IOM Action Group on Migration (AGAMI), the Global Group on Migration

including a variety of agencies, and the International Forum on Migration to be held by member states in Belgium. Discussions of migration also occur in substantive sessions of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

One particular issue, which is related to the topic on displacement for MUNFW's Third Committee, is what is referred to as mixed-migratory flows. Refugees, who have a specific mandate and specific legal protection through International Refugee Law are often treated as migrants when they enter a receiving country and are often sent home without being able to exercise their right to seek asylum since countries do not have a legal obligation to accept migrants. Refugees, who fear persecution, cannot legally be sent back where they might be subject to such persecution – this is termed the right to *non-refoulement*. Nevertheless, several governments have denied refugees this legal protection, and UNHCR is actively trying to call attention to this problem, which it refers to as the asylum-migration nexus (12). Delegates may wish to consider what, if anything, can be done to resolve the problem of mixed migratory flows.

### **Solutions**

Preparedness, prevention, and addressing the root causes of conflict would be the most cost effective solutions to the problems of refugees, IDPs, and mixed migratory flows, but such solutions have been illusive and difficult to achieve. In their absence, the international community must decide how best to respond to these situations, who should respond, how to coordinate such a response, and how to pay for it. At the same time such efforts must be cognizant of the concerns of many countries that their sovereignty not be violated, while addressing the needs of those who are suffering the most – refugees, internationally displaced persons, and migrants.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. What steps can be taken to address the root causes of conflict that often result in refugee flows?
2. What can be done regarding protracted refugee situations?
3. Who, if anyone, should have a mandate to address the problems of IDPs?
4. How can the United Nations better tackle the challenges associated with access to refugees and IDPs?
5. Should the cluster approach be the standard mechanism for addressing IDP situations or are there other alternatives?
6. Is the CERF the most effective instrument for providing funding? What role should bilateral or multilateral funding mechanisms play when the needs exceed the funds available from the CERF?
7. How can the United Nations improve on preparedness and prevention efforts in regards to natural disasters? Is “Hygogo” sufficient?
8. What can the United Nations do to influence member states to relax restrictive immigration policies?
9. What rights should migrants have in host countries? What responsibilities should they have?

### **Sources:**

1. David Shiman, *Teaching Human Rights*, (Denver: Center for Teaching International Relations Publications, U of Denver, 1993): 6-7
2. <http://www.unhcr.org/basics.html>
  - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Official Website – Basic Facts
3. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9063038/refugee>
  - Encyclopedia Britannica Online
4. <http://www.refintl.org/content/article/detail/1358/?PHPSESSID=3a5f319c26ed676977d69>
  - Refugees International
5. <http://www.unhcr.org/partners/PARTNERS/441033252.pdf>
  - United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees
6. <http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/documents/2006/reports/ECOSOC%202006%20-%20Humanitarian%20Coordination.pdf>
  - Official Report of the Secretary General to ECOSOC, July 2006

7. <http://ochaonline.un.org/AboutOCHA/tabid/1076/Default.aspx>  
- OCHA Official website – Brief History
8. [http://www.migrantsrights.org/Int\\_Conv\\_Prot\\_Rights\\_MigWorkers\\_Fam\\_1999\\_En.htm](http://www.migrantsrights.org/Int_Conv_Prot_Rights_MigWorkers_Fam_1999_En.htm)  
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and their Families
9. <http://www.globalissues.org/HumanRights/racism/immigration.asp#IntroductionWorldwideImmigrantsStatistics>  
- Global Issues.org – Immigration
10. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/iha1233.doc.htm>  
- United Nations Condemns Killing of Aid Worker in Darfur
11. <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/millennium.htm>  
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Migrants
12. Interview with UNHCR consultant, November 2007
13. “Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement,” OCHA, 2000

**Third Committee**  
**Addressing Gender-Based Violence**  
**by Melanie Abe \***

*Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The long-standing failure to protect and promote those rights and freedoms in the case of violence against women is a matter of concern to all States and should be addressed.*

(Fourth World Conference on Women Platform for Action, 1994)

**Conventions and Intergovernmental Bodies**

While it has taken several decades to bring women's rights to the forefront in the United Nations, it has taken the UN system even longer to address the problem of violence against women. Women's rights are embodied in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and specific conventions relating to women. These conventions include the Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949), the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952), the International Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO, 1960), the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age of Marriage, and Registration of Marriages (1962), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979). These conventions have been supplemented by other agreements established by the International Labour Organization regarding women's economic rights (ILO Nos. 100, 111, 156; Pietila and Vickers, pp. 248-253).

Women's issues have also received attention at a series of conferences on women held in 1975, 1980, 1985, and 1995. These conferences and subsequent UN actions resulted in the



adoption of the Declaration and World Plan of action for Implementation of the Objectives of International Women's Year (Mexico City, 1975); the naming of 1976-85 as the UN Decade for Women (UNDW) (adopted by the General Assembly in Resolution 3520, 1975); the development of the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the UN Decade for Women (Copenhagen, 1980); the setting forth of the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (FLS) for the period 1985-2000 (Nairobi, 1985); and the establishment of the Platform for Action (PFA) (Beijing, 1995) (Pietila and Vickers, pp.252-253).

The United Nations has also created a number of bodies that have been active in promoting women's issues throughout the UN system. These include the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), established by the 1979 Convention.

Upon its adoption in 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women came to be known as the International Women's Bill of Rights. It is the only treaty that establishes the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles. There are now 185 states parties to the convention; they report at regular intervals to the Committee on national efforts to implement the policies included in the Convention; CEDAW's panel of experts then provide responses to the country reports on a wide range of issues relating to women rights.

But it was not until the late 1980's, following the Nairobi Conference and the publication in 1989 of *Violence Against Women in the Family* by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, that the issue of violence against women began to receive higher priority among

women's issues. This study was followed in 1993 by the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the General Assembly in 1993. This Declaration provided a clear definition of the issue and was later embodied in the Platform of Action adopted at the Beijing Conference in 1995 (Pietila and Vickers, pp.263-266).

The Commission on the Status of Women has been charged with monitoring the follow-up to the Beijing Conference (Tessitore and Woolfson, p. 229). Section D of the Platform for Action, entitled "Violence Against Women," begins with the 1993 definition of violence and goes on to detail various forms of violence and the actions member states and the international community should undertake to eliminate such practices.

According to the Declaration, the term "violence against women" means "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Accordingly, violence against women encompasses but is not limited to the following:

- a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutes and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs” (para. 113).

Section D of the Platform goes on to note that violence may also occur during armed conflict (murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy); that it may include forced sterilization and forced abortion, female infanticide and prenatal sex selection; and that specific groups of women (women belonging to minorities or indigenous peoples, refugee women, migrant women workers, and those living in conditions of poverty or armed conflict) may be especially vulnerable to violence.

The Platform also points out that “acts or threats of violence are obstacles to achieving equality, development and peace” that often are associated with high social, health, and economic costs (para. 117). Violence often results from unequal power relations between men and women and may derive from cultural patterns or other activities that perpetuate the lower status of women throughout society (para. 118). Such violence is exacerbated by the shame associated with denouncing such acts, lack of information or legal remedies, low levels of education, and media images that portray violence against women (para. 118). Lack of data on the incidence of violence and lack of training for those in authority or those in a position to assist women also contribute to the problem (paras. 120-121).

In order to deal with the problems noted above, the Platform provides several suggestions for actions to be taken by governments and civic organizations. Governments in particular should (a) condemn violence against women and refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations; (b) refrain from engaging in violence against women; (c-d) enact and review appropriate legislation; (e-f) ratify and implement appropriate international human rights norms including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women; (g) mainstream a gender perspective in all policies and programmes related to violence against women; (h-i) provide access to legal remedies and punish those who commit acts of violence against women; and (j-s) provide appropriate information, education, and support for women to learn about and report on acts of violence against women (para. 124-129).

The problem, of course, is that despite the extensive definition of violence against women, the numerous guidelines available to states, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society, and the existence of several international bodies charged with promoting women's issues, especially the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and CEDAW, there has been a widespread failure to achieve the goals embodied in various conferences, conventions, declarations, or plans of action. In fact, in some cases, such as the trafficking of women, the situation has gotten worse.

This situation is reflected in the fact that the General Assembly placed on its agenda for several years the item entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women" (Tessitore and Woolfson, p.230) and extended the meetings of CEDAW to give further consideration to reports from member states on their progress in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The General Assembly debates and country reports point out that discrimination and violence continue to affect women in virtually every country, but that certain groups of women and young girls, in particular refugees, the internally displaced and migrants, are even more vulnerable to acts of discrimination and violence including trafficking for purposes of prostitution.

## **Vulnerable Groups**

Refugee women and girls, in addition to the general problems that result from being forced to flee their country of origin, are particularly susceptible to sexual violence and exploitation during their flight and even while staying in refugee camps where security conditions may be lacking. In addition, women often have to assume the role of head of the household, something they may be unaccustomed to and which may be inconsistent with their traditional customs. Moreover, in refugee camps women are not always allowed to participate in decisions regarding distribution of food and consequently women and girl children may not receive adequate nutrition. Finally, lack of educational, health and counseling facilities may lead to further problems, especially for those women and children who have undergone sexual abuse since they were forced to flee their homes.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has developed guidelines for dealing with women and children (UNHCR, Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women). These include recommendations about involving women in decision-making in camps, providing appropriate counseling and health services, and ensuring that girls have access to educational programs. Nevertheless, cultural practices and shortages of funds, materials and trained staff have made it difficult for UNHCR to implement these guidelines.

Internally displaced women and children often face similar problems to those of refugees. In some cases, where conflicting parties are not willing to grant access to organizations providing humanitarian assistance, the situation may be even worse. In areas such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Rwanda mass rape and other forms of sexual violence became part of a concerted effort to displace minority populations. While these activities have now been declared war crimes and subject to criminal prosecution under the International Criminal

Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and the more recently established International Criminal Court (ICC), there have been very few prosecutions of those who have committed such crimes.

Migrant women and children also face the possibility of sexual violence and exploitation through the practice of illegal trafficking in women and children. Unscrupulous agents promise jobs and other opportunities for would-be migrants and then often force women and children into prostitution or various forms of economic exploitation. As poverty and internal conflicts have increased, the desire of numerous peoples to seek opportunities outside of their country of origin has led to an increase in this practice.

In recent years the United Nations has recognized that men and boys may also be subject to sexual and gender-based violence. Most reports and resolutions addressing the topic use gender-neutral language in referring to these crimes. Delegates will need to keep this in mind as they discuss this issue. But the majority of victims are women and girls, and most programs that have been developed seek to provide protection and support for them.

### **Current Discussions**

Current discussions of gender-based violence, the term preferred by women's organizations since it encompasses sexual violence and includes both sexes, have been muted. Concerns have been expressed about trafficking in women and children and sexual abuse carried out by some peacekeeping troops and humanitarian agencies, but attempts to address the issue in the context of humanitarian emergencies where women and children are most vulnerable have met with some resistance among developing countries. At the most recent discussions in the General Assembly on strengthening the coordination of United Nations emergency humanitarian relief, which covers a wide range of humanitarian topics, only the European Union, Australia,

Iceland, Mexico, Norway, and the Republic of Korea mentioned the issue (General Assembly Press Release GA/10660). Norway made the strongest statement noting that it “remained deeply concerned about the sexual and gender-based violence destroying the lives of thousands of women and girls each year. The use of sexual violence as a method of warfare was appalling, and the international community had a collective responsibility to ensure that such acts did not go unpunished. Thus the United Nations should take the lead in establishing more effective preventive and protective measures to address sexual and gender-based violence” (Press Release GA/10660, p. 11). Countries such as the Russian Federation and India seem particularly opposed to including direct references to gender-based violence in resolutions on this topic, preferring instead the more general term “violence,” which they argue encompasses other forms of violence that do not need to be specified.

Recent resolutions on this issue have included paragraphs on gender-based violence, but even this “agreed upon” language has had rough sledding in the most recent (November 2007) negotiations on the resolution on “Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations” (based on co-author’s observation of the negotiations). Past resolutions have urged “all Member States to take effective measures to address gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies and to make all possible efforts to ensure that their laws and institutions are adequate to prevent, promptly investigate and prosecute acts of gender-based violence (GA resolution 61/134), or called upon “States to elaborate and implement strategies to report on, prevent, punish all forms of violence against women, girls and boys, in particular sexual violence and abuse” (GA resolution 60/124). The Security Council has also addressed the issue in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

Thus despite what appears to be consensus among member states that gender-based violence is a major problem, it has been difficult to move forward in addressing this issue given differences of opinion about, *inter alia*, definitions, the scope of UN involvement, national sovereignty, and the role of NGOs and civil society. This provides delegations to the Third Committee with a number of questions to explore during their debate.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. How has the approach to gender based violence changed over time?
2. What can be done to address gender-based violence in general?
3. Can the United Nations recommend action regarding issues that are often domestic in nature and supposedly under the domestic jurisdiction of states?
4. What should be done about gender-based violence that is more international in character such as trafficking, violence against vulnerable groups such as refugees, internally displaced persons or migrants, or acts committed during war or other humanitarian emergencies?
5. What resources are available to support states in their effort to combat gender-based violence?
6. What role should UN-based organizations play in addressing this issue? How can their efforts be strengthened?
7. What roles should NGOs or civil society play in addressing this issue?
8. What can be done to raise awareness of the issue in general and, in particular, the public misperception that only women are the victims of such violence?
9. How important is it to involve males in the fight against gender-based violence and how can this be accomplished?
10. What kind of programs or policies can be pursued to address those cases where cultural or religious beliefs seem to support some aspects of gender-based violence?
11. How can the international community move forward on this issue when there is resistance to even discussing the topic?

**Sources:**



\* The first portion of this paper is a shortened and modified version of an earlier Issues Book paper entitled “Abuse, Violence, Trafficking and Other Violations of the Human Rights and Well-Being of Women and Children, Including Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Migrants,” by Michelle Cervantes, prepared for the 51st Session of MUNFW.

Pietila, Hilka and Jeanne Vickers, “The UN system in the vanguard of advancement of women: Equality, development and peace,” in Chadwick F. Alger (ed) *The Future of the United Nations System: Potential for the Twenty-First Century*. The United Nations University: Tokyo, 1998. (pp. 248-281)

Tessitore, John and Susan Woolfson (eds), *A Global Agenda: Issues Before the 52<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations*. Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, MD, 1997.

UNHCR, “Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women,” n.d.

United Nations, “FWCW Platform for Action: Violence against Women.”  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/violence.htm#diagnosis>

United Nations Daily Press Briefings: 25 May 1999 and 29 June 1999.  
<http://www.un.org/News/briefings>

United Nations General Assembly Resolutions A/53/116, 117, 125, 127, 128.  
<gopher://goher.un.org:70/00/ga/recs>

United Nations Press Releases GA/SHC/3473-3482 <http://www.un.org/plweb-cgi/doc.pl?>

Websites that will contain additional information on the activities of various UN bodies include:

[www.unhchr.ch](http://www.unhchr.ch) (The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights)

[www.unifem.org](http://www.unifem.org) (United Nations Development Fund for Women)

[www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org) (United Nations Population Fund)

[www.un-instraw.org](http://www.un-instraw.org) (UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women)

[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw) (Commission on the Status of Women)

[www.un.org/womenwatch/cedaw](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/cedaw) (Conv on the Elimination of Violence Against Women)

[www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/cedw.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/cedw.htm) (Committee on the Elimination of Violence Against Women)

**Third Committee**  
**Protecting the Rights of the Elderly and Disabled**  
**by J.T. Nagayama**

*“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.” - Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 25*

**Overview**

As Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights suggests, the importance of the protection of the rights of the elderly and disabled is vital to the international community. With the elderly population continually increasing and given the poor quality of treatment available to disabled individuals in the world today, this is quickly becoming a widespread issue. The elderly and disabled are subject to a lack of basic freedoms and rights such as education and health care. They also face discrimination due to their age and limited capabilities to perform in the workplace or other aspects of life. Nations need to begin to take responsibility for these persons in order to combat the problems facing the elderly and disabled. The United Nations, various member states, and non-governmental organizations have all placed importance on the issues pertaining to the elderly and disabled, especially to increase awareness, yet changes remain insufficient. The needs of the disabled and elderly have frequently been overshadowed by seemingly more urgent and important problems, thus preventing governments and other bodies from acting to their fullest in addressing these special needs. Several conventions, assemblies, committees and other bodies have been established to combat these problems, but more changes need to be made to better the lives of the elderly and disabled.

## **Background**

### **The Elderly**

In the world today, one out of every ten people is at least 60 years of age, and the average population age continues to increase. By 2050, an estimated one out of five individuals will be 60 years or older, and by 2150, one out of every three. As this trend continues, the international community will face more problems providing for the old and integrating them into society. The increase in the percentage of elderly populations is attributed to the drastic change in both birth and death rates, creating a setting where there is a high population growth with people living longer lives. As a result, States need to address the current needs of the elderly while also preparing for a future of a larger elderly population. Governmental policies are necessary to promote awareness of aging issues along with a plan of action to increase the capacity for development and poverty eradication. Nations should work to integrate the elderly into society while protecting their rights and tending to their everyday needs.

The Dominican Republic and Zambia have worked towards the protection of the elderly, establishing programs for the aging within their countries. The Dominican Republic focuses on the integration and the establishment of equal opportunities for the elderly. The government has invested in the support and protection of the elderly to promote higher living standards. Zambia has also worked to create equal opportunities, but has a more focused approach on the integration of the elderly into society along with providing them with medical support. Several programs have been set up to support the

elderly including providing basic medical care for all people over 65 and access to various health care and clinics around the country.

### **The Disabled**

The World Health Organization defines a “disability” as “any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.” According to this definition, there are currently over 650 million disabled persons in the world, with approximately 80 percent residing in developing nations. Many of these disabled people are unable to receive proper treatment or gain access to equal rights and freedoms as a result of the situations in which they live, especially when their government is unable or unwilling to address their needs or provide those in need with the proper resources and information. In addition, a majority of these individuals are unable on their own to come up with the funds necessary to improve their quality of living and gain access to valuable rehabilitation facilities.

In 1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons was enacted, and the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons was created. The Programme of Action and the Year brought more awareness to the issues facing the disabled while also stressing the need for the protection and equal opportunities for disabled persons. Following the International Year of Disabled Persons, the United Nations Decade was enacted in 1983 and continued until 1992. During this period, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities was formed to guide and provide governments with direction with regards to the handling of the disabled. The

Standard Rules are nonbinding, but could be implemented through the support of the international community.

In the Asia Pacific Region, the countries met several times following the Decade of Disabled Persons to address the problems facing the disabled in the region. Many of the countries in the region have enacted legislation to protect and support the disabled, such as India's Persons with Disabilities: Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation Act and the Philippines' Magna Carta for Disabled Persons. Such legislation, however, presently lacks strong oversight or enforcement due to the specificity of language. Several other countries have followed the lead of the Asia Pacific Region, but in the majority of the situations the disabled people and groups are unable to come up with the money or time to take advantage of the laws.

Elsewhere in countries such as the Russian Federation and Mali, there has been an increase in support of the disabled along with plans of action to increase the protection and standards of living for people with disabilities. The Russian Federation has worked with the Special Rapporteur in conjunction with the Standard Rules to establish programs and support for the disabled. The focus is placed on the provision of equal opportunities for the disabled and the improvement of medical care and social services. Mali has also worked to create equal opportunities for the disabled, while supporting individuals and their families. They have implemented national action plans to provide greater services to their citizens, but need more funding and support from the international community.

### **United Nations Involvement**

The United Nations has remained active in the protection and fight for the rights of the elderly and disabled. Several Conventions, Assemblies, Committees, and other

Bodies have been formed to assist those in need while establishing a plan of action for States to follow. The different Committees within the General Assembly have also been working towards advancements in the treatment of the elderly and disabled, while also bringing about more awareness of the problems these individuals face.

### **The Elderly**

The international community came together in 1982 in Vienna for the first World Assembly on Ageing, adopting the International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Assembly set the foundation for the actions and decisions regarding ageing for the following two decades leading up to the Second World Assembly. The goal of the Assembly was achieved through the establishment of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, focusing on two main points: humanitarian and developmental issues. The Plan of Action focused on integrating the ageing into society without discrimination, and providing ample opportunities for employment, education and health care. The Plan also addressed the needs of the elderly by providing options to improve standards of living and social welfare. Twenty years after the first World Assembly, the global community once again joined together in 2002 for the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, whereupon the Madrid Plan of Action was adopted. The Plan of Action addressed the growing challenges and problems facing governments regarding the elderly. The Plan focused on three main issues: development, health, and supportive environments for the ageing. Objectives ranged from improving living conditions of the ageing to increasing employment and social security. In addition, the Plan focuses on developing nations and the situation the elderly face within these countries. Overall, the Plan of Action forms a

design for counties to follow in dealing with issues regarding the elderly for the present and future.

The General Assembly adopted a resolution on the Follow-Up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing during the 61<sup>st</sup> session in 2006. This resolution encouraged the support and funding for research and data-collection initiatives along with the development of the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing. The resolution also recommended States take into account the impact of poverty on the elderly in their policies regarding the ageing. In addition, the international community was called upon to support the elderly and national efforts to support and protect the elderly.

### **The Disabled**

In December 2001, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 56/168 establishing the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. The Ad Hoc Committee formed a working group to create a draft text of a convention in accordance with the resolution guidelines. The draft text was adopted during the 8th session of the Committee in August 2006 along with an optional protocol. The Ad Hoc Committee presented the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the optional protocol for adoption by the General Assembly in December 2006. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, held in March of 2007, focused on the protection of equal rights and freedoms for the disabled while also integrating them into society. The Convention addressed various issues including the treatment, respect, non-discrimination, and equality of opportunity for the disabled.

Previously, in 2005, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on the Implementation of Action concerning Disabled Persons: realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities. The resolution called for countries to promote awareness within their borders and further assist the disabled population with available resources. Governments are also encouraged to share more information and technology with other countries to promote the best treatment and support of victims, along with placing their support and funds in the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability. Non-governmental organizations affiliated with the disabled are encouraged to also support the fund and provide protection to the disabled in less developed areas.

### **Conclusion**

Given the increasing attention being given to the rights and needs of the elderly and disabled, the UN system, member states, NGOs and civil society should consider how to build on the progress already made in addressing these issues.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What actions have been successful in the protection and support of the elderly and disabled?
2. What other measures can be taken to secure the rights of the elderly and disabled?
3. How can the United Nations system help improve governmental policy regarding the elderly and disabled?
4. How can nations improve the situation with the elderly and disabled? What programs, technical assistance, or sources of funding would be appropriate?
5. What role should NGOs and civil society play in this process?



## **Sources**

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/disabilities-convention.htm#3>

<http://www.globalaging.org/agingwatch/GA/adraftres61L6.pdf>

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/diswpa00.htm>

<http://www.un.org/ga/61/third/third.shtml>

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N05/537/86/PDF/N0553786.pdf?OpenElement>

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/gashc3827.doc.htm>

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/>

**World Health Organization**  
**HIV/AIDS, STIs, Malaria and Tuberculosis**  
**by Sara Price**

**Introduction**

The World Health Organization is a specialized agency affiliated with the United Nations; it is charged with handling global public health concerns. While the WHO is working in at least some sense on almost every public health topic imaginable, the issues that continue to threaten public health in almost every region in the world include: malaria, tuberculosis (TB), HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The degree to which these issues affect certain regions depends upon a number of factors including a country's level of development, its commitment to developing a public/private health sector, access to resources, etc. It is the African region that deals with all of these public health issues in an increasingly losing battle. Africa continues to have the highest prevalence of new malaria infections, TB and drug-resistant TB infections, HIV and STI new incidence cases.<sup>1</sup>

This essay will address all of these health topics. First, it will briefly define the characteristics of the disease and current methods of treatment and prevention. It will then discuss WHO's efforts to address each disease. Finally, it will turn to Africa, providing statistics and reporting on the current work and issues that continue to face that region and the global community.

**Malaria**

---

<sup>1</sup> See link: <http://www.who.int/globalatlas/default.asp>; (World Health Organization)

Malaria is caused by the parasite plasmodium, which is transmitted to humans via the bites of mosquitoes hosting the parasite. In the human body, the plasmodium parasites multiply in the liver, and then infect red blood cells.<sup>2</sup> While Malaria is both treatable and preventable, the intensity and regularity of the disease fluctuates based on local climate factors such as rainfall patterns, the proximity of individuals to mosquito breeding sites, or unpredictable natural disasters.<sup>3</sup> Malaria infects 500 million people annually and the mortality of the disease is localized in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>4</sup> The issues relating to the high mortality resulting from malaria will be discussed in detail later. Malaria is treatable, if the disease is detected early and treatment is administered correctly.<sup>5</sup> As far as treatment goes, there are anti-malarial drugs that have become more accessible to at-risk populations.<sup>6</sup> However, treating malaria is neither simple nor quick. It takes time and if the patient is not taking their medication properly, it is likely that they can develop drug resistance.<sup>7</sup> In addition to anti-malarial medications, preventing Malaria is possible through vector control programs. The idea behind vector control is to isolate and significantly reduce the number of insects within the home. The two major methods of vector control include indoor residual spraying of long-acting insecticide (IRS) and long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs).<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that the main insecticide

---

<sup>2</sup> (World Health Organization)

<sup>3</sup> (World Health Organization)

<sup>4</sup> (World Health Organization)

<sup>5</sup> (World Health Organization)

<sup>6</sup> (World Health Organization)

<sup>7</sup> (World Health Organization)

<sup>8</sup> (World Health Organization)

used for both methods is DDT and there is no alternative currently available.<sup>9</sup> These methods have proven extremely effective, but continued effectiveness and sustained implementation of this program is contingent upon financial support both from national and international bodies.<sup>10</sup>

The World Health Organization has made a major commitment to fighting malaria. Regional programs have been established on every continent dedicated to the tracking, monitoring and treatment of malaria. It has also established the WHO Global Malaria Programme that is responsible for “malaria policy and strategy formulation, operations support and capacity development, and coordination of WHO's global efforts to fight malaria.”<sup>11</sup> The Department establishes and promotes — based on evidence and expert consensus — WHO policies, normative standards and guidelines for malaria prevention and control, including monitoring and evaluation”.<sup>12</sup> One of the most important branches of the WHO Global Malaria Programme is the regional office in Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa is unquestionably the region most affected by malaria. The WHO regional office, the African Organization for Malaria (AFRO/MAL) is currently working on compiling a data base, working on increasing intra-country staff and encouraging political and financial support.<sup>13</sup> This organization has a comprehensive list of country profiles that outlines their work on malaria within the countries and continued

---

<sup>9</sup> (World Health Organization)

<sup>10</sup> (World Health Organization)

<sup>11</sup> (World Health Organization)

<sup>12</sup> For more on WHO Global Malaria Programme, visit:

<http://www.who.int/malaria/aboutus.html>

<sup>13</sup> (World Health Organization)

barriers to implementation.<sup>14</sup>To summarize, the major issue of concern for Africa in terms of fighting malaria include: (1) training/ recruitment of more intra-country staff to monitor malaria patients in order to reduce potential for drug resistance, (2) providing vector control tools to as many individuals as possible and (3) procuring political commitment and follow-through on the part of member states to financially support malaria control programs. These challenges are echoed in the issues of tuberculosis (TB) as well.

### **Tuberculosis**

Tuberculosis (TB) is a contagious disease...it spread though the air...Left untreated, each person with active TB disease will infect on average between 10 and 15 people every year. But people infected with TB bacilli will not necessarily become sick with the disease. The immune system “walls off” the TB bacilli which, protected by a thick waxy coat, can lie dormant for years....One-third of the world's population is currently infected with TB bacillus.

TB treatment has only been curable within the last 50 years. Unfortunately, treating TB has become much more complicated with the onset of drug-resistant TB. For every first-line drug used to treat TB, a strain of the disease has become resistant. Drug resistance occurs when a patient has begun treatment but ceases taking drugs when they feel better, or do not take their medication regularly. While drug-resistant TB can be treated, it requires chemotherapy for up to two years as well as a regiment of second-line drugs; these drugs also tend to be much more costly than first-line. Clearly this is a treatment option that is simply unavailable to those suffering in developing countries (WHO).

As a means of controlling drug-resistant TB, in 2006 the WHO revamped its stop

---

<sup>14</sup> (World Health Organization)

TB strategy, the core of which is the DOTS strategy (WHO). The six components of this project include the following: (1) pursuing high-quality DOTS expansion and enhancement to make high-quality services available to all those who need them, specifically those in remote and vulnerable areas; (2) addressing TB and its partner diseases, such as HIV; (3) structuring national TB control programs so as to contribute to overall strategies to advance financing, planning, management, information and supply systems and innovative service delivery scale-up; (4) engaging all health-care providers in public, private, corporate and voluntary positions; (5) empowering TB patients and communities to contribute to TB control tasks; and (6) enabling and promoting research for new vaccines, diagnostics and drugs (WHO). “This strategy also incorporates a set of targets corresponding with the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 6, Target 8: Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of TB by 2015” (WHO). Unfortunately, even if the Stop TB Strategy is implemented globally, prevalence and death rates will be not go down in Eastern Europe and Africa (WHO).

Currently, the estimated TB incidence rate for sub-Saharan Africa is 29% of the global incidence rate, with infections of 343 persons for every 100,000 (WHO). “Both the highest number of deaths and the highest mortality per capita are in the Africa Region” (WHO). The World Health Organization regional office in Africa reports that, “the number of countries using DOTS has been increasing [yet] all of these countries are at different levels of implementing the DOTS strategy; 56% of the countries have attained 100% population coverage. The remaining countries are in the pilot and expansion phase”

( <http://www.afro.who.int/index.html>). The major issues of concern for the global health community regarding the high TB incidence in Africa echo the issues regarding malaria. They include: (1) universal implementation of the DOTS strategy to combat further spread of drug-resistant TB; (2) getting a commitment on the part of national and international political bodies to donate funds for the project; (3) continuing to support research for better drugs and vaccines to treat TB and drug-resistant TB. The public health issues presented by TB are closely associated with those presented by HIV/AIDS. Because TB is an opportunistic infection associated with HIV/AIDS, the two diseases are a deadly combination (WHO). The two diseases are often dealt with as one, but HIV/AIDS does carry a separate set of issues of concern for the international public health community.

### **HIV/AIDS**

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a retrovirus that infects cells of the human immune system, destroying or impairing their function. In the early stages of infection, the person has no symptoms. However, as the infection progresses, the immune system becomes weaker, and the person becomes more susceptible to so-called opportunistic infections. The most advanced stage of HIV infection is acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). It can take 10-15 years for an HIV-infected person to develop AIDS; antiretroviral drugs can slow down the process even further. HIV is transmitted through unprotected sexual intercourse (anal or vaginal), transfusion of contaminated blood, sharing of contaminated needles, and between a mother and her infant during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding.

Though there is no vaccine for HIV, a treatment plan known as ART-Anti-retroviral Treatment, has been established. “Standard antiretroviral therapy (ART) consists of the use of at least three antiretroviral (ARV) drugs to maximally suppress the HIV virus and

stop the progression of HIV disease. Huge reductions have been seen in rates of death and suffering when a potent ARV regimen is used (WHO)". The major problem with this treatment is providing universally affordable medications to all HIV patients. The WHO estimates that "about 39.5 million people are now living with HIV, of whom more than 37 million live in low- and middle-income countries...at least 6.5 million of these people are in need of ART (WHO)." The challenge with ART is two fold. First, providing affordable access to drugs that are extremely expensive, and many of which are still patented as intellectual property by the drug companies that developed them, is a huge problem. Second, ART requires intensive supervision by health care providers, because development of a strain resistant to these medications could have serious repercussions in countries that have access to only a few kinds of drugs.

The World Health Organization has taken the lead within the UN system in the global health sector response to HIV/AIDS (WHO). Their work includes "evidence-based, technical support to WHO Member States to help them scale up treatment, care and prevention services as well as drugs and diagnostics supply to ensure a comprehensive and sustainable response to HIV/AIDS" (WHO). The WHO is involved in countless projects in almost every country and has taken the lead in the UNAIDS program where it partners with several other UN agencies and humanitarian actors. "While partnering with global institutions within and outside the UN, the WHO HIV/AIDS Department works in the following areas:

- Policy development, and normative and technical guidance to help countries scale up HIV/AIDS interventions in the health sector;



- Country support, including capacity building and training for health workers;
- Securing an adequate supply of HIV medicines, diagnostics, and other tools;
- Monitoring the global spread of HIV/AIDS and the availability of treatment and prevention services;
- Advocating for greater global attention and commitment to HIV/AIDS” (WHO).

No region needs more of this department’s attention than Africa. The World Health Organization’s regional branch in Africa has been working diligently to respond to the enormous number of new HIV infections throughout the continent. Treating and preventing HIV is a very complicated issue. For simplification purposes, the issues that should be focused on include: (1) access to ART treatment, (2) increasing healthcare personnel to monitor treatment and reduce a patient's chances of drug resistance, (3) continued commitment on the part of member states to finance treatment and prevention programs sponsored by the World Health Organization.

### **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)**

Though a separate health issue, sexually transmitted infections, STIs are often discussed in conjunction with HIV. The World Health Organization, UNDP and the World Bank currently sponsor a program called the Sexually Transmitted Disease Diagnostics Initiative:

The SDI was founded in 1990 in response to a widely-perceived need to improve care for patients with sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in resource-limited settings through improved diagnostics. It is estimated that 80-90% of the global burden of STIs occurs in the developing world where there is limited or no access to diagnostics. In particular, there is an urgent need for improved diagnostics for STIs in HIV endemic areas as studies in sub-Saharan Africa have shown that STIs are important cofactors in the transmission of HIV infection. The STI secretariat had been housed in various agencies since its inception and has most recently moved from UNAIDS to the World Health Organization, where it

is managed out of the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR). The placement of SDI in the Product Research and Development group of TDR allows the initiative to benefit from the considerable expertise in product development, evaluation and implementation in the group and to exploit synergies in the development of diagnostics for other communicable diseases (WHO/OMS 2001; [http://www.who.int/std\\_diagnostics/about\\_SD/workplan.htm](http://www.who.int/std_diagnostics/about_SD/workplan.htm)).

The issues of concern for treating and preventing STIs are similar to those for HIV/AIDS. The focus of international discussion should remain centered around three themes: (1) access to treatment, (2) increasing healthcare personnel to treat and test for STI to reduce the risk of complications from untreated infections, (3) continued commitment on the part of member states to finance treatment and prevention programs sponsored by the World Health Organization.

### **Conclusion**

It is important that member states understand that as far as these health issues go, some are of major concern for certain regions, while others are problems on a global scale. Since, a dichotomy exists between member states who possess the resources to support treatment and prevention and those who are dependent on financial assistance and the sharing of medicines and technology, the international community needs to determine a fair way to share the burden presented by these diseases. The World Health Organization is uniquely positioned to help in this process, but reaching solutions also requires political will and commitment on the part of all stakeholders. Hopefully, WHO's assembly can begin to move in this direction and provide hope for millions of innocent victims throughout the world.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. What policies should govern the production of generic medications for distribution to developing countries?
2. How can intellectual property rights be respected, while ensuring a more equitable distribution of medicines and knowledge regarding these diseases?
3. What is the role of individual member states in this process? Intergovernmental organizations? NGOs? Civil society?
4. What programs can be developed to provide additional personnel and appropriate education and public awareness in countries of need? Who should fund such programs?
5. How can member states who have pledged assistance be held accountable in fulfilling those pledges?

### **Sources:**

World Health Organization. (2007). *Global Malaria Programme (GMP)*. Retrieved June 25, 2007, from <http://www.who.int/malaria/>

World Health Organization. (2007). *Health statistics and health information systems*. Retrieved June 25, 2007, from <http://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/regions/en/index.html>

World Health Organization. (2007). *HIV Infections*. Retrieved June 25, 2007, from [http://www.who.int/topics/hiv\\_infections/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/hiv_infections/en/)

World Health Organization. (2007). *Malaria*. Retrieved June 25, 2007, from <http://www.who.int/topics/malaria/en/>

World Health Organization. (2007, April 27). *Malaria ATM-WHO/AFRO*. Retrieved June 25, 2007, from [http://www.afro.who.int/malaria/vision\\_mission.html](http://www.afro.who.int/malaria/vision_mission.html)

World Health Organization. (2007). *Tuberculosis*. Retrieved June 25, 2007, from <http://www.who.int/topics/tuberculosis/en/>

World Health Organization. (2001). *Work plan*. Retrieved June 25, 2007, from [http://www.who.int/std\\_diagnostics/about\\_SDI/workplan.htm](http://www.who.int/std_diagnostics/about_SDI/workplan.htm)

**World Health Organization (WHO)**  
**Safe Water and Sanitation**  
**by Azaam Samad**

Despite the fact that water is one of the few necessities of life, millions of people around the world are not given access to clean, usable water. There are 1.1 billion people worldwide who do not have access to clean drinking water, and about 2.6 billion people who lack the means to sanitize the water they do have access to.<sup>1</sup> “Almost 42,000 people die each month from diseases related to low quality drinking water and lack of sanitation. Over 90 percent of them are children under the age of 5” according to the WHO and UNICEF, and it is even said that “At any one time, half of the world’s hospital beds are occupied by patients suffering from water-borne diseases.”<sup>2</sup> According to UNICEF, there are two key issues on water quality that are threatening the lives of millions. These are fecal contamination of drinking water, which leads to the deaths of around 4,000 children a day, and contamination of drinking water with naturally occurring arsenic or fluoride which, over time, leaves people severely crippled and can lead to death.<sup>3</sup> Other problems with contamination stem from salt-water intrusion as well as corrosive groundwater that can damage pumps and pipes, making the act of bringing water to those who need it even more expensive.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the areas that are affected the most also happen to be the areas where populations are growing the fastest, such as Africa and Southeast Asia. Because of this, it is estimated that by the year 2025, more than two thirds of the world’s population will be living in areas that face severe water situations.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> WHO/UNICEF, 2005 [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/waterforlife.pdf](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/waterforlife.pdf), 40

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/factsheet.html>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/wes/index\\_water\\_quality.html](http://www.unicef.org/wes/index_water_quality.html)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/wes/index\\_water\\_quality.html](http://www.unicef.org/wes/index_water_quality.html)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/factsheet.html>

However, health problems are not the only ones caused by a lack of access to clean water. On the average for a family of six people in Sub-Saharan Africa, it takes around three hours to collect and carry home enough water for cooking, drinking, and basic hygiene.<sup>6</sup> The role of water sanitation and access to clean, usable water affects the education of children. As former Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan discussed at the 12<sup>th</sup> Commission on Sustainable Development in 2004:

Water is intimately linked with education and gender equality. Girls who have to spend time gathering water for the family tend not to be in school. And where schools have sanitation, attendance is higher, especially for girls. Water is connected to health, since millions of children get sick and die every year from water-borne diseases and for lack of basic sanitation and hygiene<sup>7</sup>.

This lack of education leads to problems with regards to the developing countries' economic and socio-economic conditions.

It is clear that there is much work to be done regarding safe water and sanitation. Much of the work has to do with the need to provide safe water and sanitation facilities for to those who are in dire need. At the moment, strategies that deal with groundwater that has been contaminated with arsenic or fluoride are limited and unaffordable for the people who are actually affected.<sup>8</sup> These strategies have included substituting water sources by using uncontaminated wells or rainwater harvesting, but these paths are only available in certain areas and can only help so many people. Other strategies that have been used include chlorination when it comes to storage facilities. This strategy has proven to be effective in reducing the number of water-borne illnesses present in

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/factsheet.html>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/wes/files/SSHE\\_OxfordRoundTable\\_2005.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/wes/files/SSHE_OxfordRoundTable_2005.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/wes/index\\_water\\_quality.html](http://www.unicef.org/wes/index_water_quality.html)

populations.<sup>9</sup> However, a more affordable method for treating contaminated water would enable treatment to be given to those who are unable to afford the current treatments available. For the past decade or so, UNICEF has been working with countries such as India, Bangladesh, and others where serious fluoride and arsenic contamination is present. “UNICEF's focus on both issues has been on strengthening the systems for monitoring water quality, facilitating water treatment by households and advocating for alternative water supplies when necessary.”<sup>10</sup>

As far as pathogens being a threat to human health, “classical” water related pathogens (typhoid and cholera) are still one of the main causes of disease throughout the world. However, new strains are constantly emerging that must be combated as well. According to a report published by the WHO, “Between 1972 and 1999, 35 new agents of disease were discovered and many more have re-emerged after long periods of inactivity, or are expanding into areas where they have not previously been reported.”<sup>11</sup> Understanding these new diseases as well as gauging the risk and discovering ways to manage them is vital when it comes to designing a plan to combat water sanitation issues.

It is important to note that just providing clean water will not solve the world’s safe water and sanitation problems. “The most important lesson learned from water and sanitation programmes worldwide is that water and sanitation facilities on their own do not result in improved health.”<sup>12</sup> Hygiene is the key to keeping people in developing areas with water sanitation problems safe and healthy. And the only way to give those people the key is to educate them. Many water-borne infections can be prevented if

---

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/factsheet.html>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/wes/index\\_water\\_quality.html](http://www.unicef.org/wes/index_water_quality.html)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.who.int/entity/water\\_sanitation\\_health/emerging/emerging.pdf](http://www.who.int/entity/water_sanitation_health/emerging/emerging.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/wes/index\\_hygiene.html](http://www.unicef.org/wes/index_hygiene.html)

people protect themselves with good hygiene practices and behavior. There are already a number of UNICEF programs designed to increase awareness in communities where the practice of proper hygiene is not the norm. These programs are set up to promote hygiene by providing low-cost washing facilities that fit the specific needs of the community. These programs are also laddered in a way that allows them to provide and introduce technology to families that can afford it.<sup>13</sup>

If one is to design a new plan of action, various issues must be taken into account with regards to each individual area, as the plan must be adapted to the environmental, social, cultural, and economic situations of each region. The WHO's own Framework for Safe Drinking Water sets a few basic guidelines for devising a preventive management plan with regards to safe drinking water.<sup>14</sup> This framework focuses on five components. The guide starts with identifying health-based targets based on an evaluation of health concerns. Then, it must be determined whether the drinking water supply as a whole (from source to treatment to point of consumption) can be delivered to the identified health-based targets. This stage is called the "system assessment" stage. Then comes operational monitoring of the control measures in the drinking water supply that are of particular importance in securing drinking water safety. Finally come management plans that document the system assessment and monitoring plans, as well as describing actions to be taken in normal operation and incident conditions, which include upgrades, improvements, documentation, and communication. In addition to the steps mentioned

---

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/wes/index\\_hygiene.html](http://www.unicef.org/wes/index_hygiene.html)

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/dwq/gdwq3\\_2.pdf](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/dwq/gdwq3_2.pdf)

above, an independent system must observe and verify that the above steps are being implemented and are operating properly.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, it will be an uphill battle. To begin with, less than one percent of the earth's water resources are available for human use due to the vast majority of our water being saltwater or freshwater trapped in the ice caps. In addition to this, in countries such as the United States, China and India, fresh groundwater is consumed at a rate that far exceeds the rate that it is replenished. This leaves the option of transporting safe water to places that need it an even less viable option. It is clear that an answer needs to be found that addresses the issues that the world currently faces with regards to water safety and sanitation. This must be a solution that not only achieves the short-term goals of improving the health and lives of billions, but also the long-term goals of creating the means to have a sustainable way to produce safe, usable water.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. What programs have been most effective thus far in addressing this problem? What are the lessons learned? How can they be extended to other regions?
2. What is the role of the international community, regional organizations, member states, and NGOs and civil society in addressing this issue?
3. How can advanced technology be disseminated to those areas most in need?
4. What role should the World Health Organization play in promoting public awareness, sharing of technology, and funding regarding safe water and sanitation?
5. Where should funding for new programs come from?

### **Sources:**

[www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/factsheet.html](http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/factsheet.html)

[www.unicef.org/wes/index\\_hygiene.html](http://www.unicef.org/wes/index_hygiene.html)

[www.unicef.org/wes/index\\_water\\_quality](http://www.unicef.org/wes/index_water_quality)

---

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/dwq/gdwq3\\_2.pdf](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/dwq/gdwq3_2.pdf)



[www.unicef.org/wes/files/SSHE\\_OxfordRoundTable\\_2005.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/wes/files/SSHE_OxfordRoundTable_2005.pdf)

[www.who.int/entity/water\\_sanitation\\_health/emerging/emerging.pdf](http://www.who.int/entity/water_sanitation_health/emerging/emerging.pdf)

[www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/dwq/gdwq3\\_2.pdf](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/dwq/gdwq3_2.pdf)

**World Health Organization:  
Maternal Health  
by Giorgiana Balan Radulescu**

**Introduction**

Deciding to become pregnant and give birth can be a life altering decision. Unfortunately, in some cases, it is also a fatal decision. “Although pregnancy and childbirth is regarded as a natural process, maintaining a balance between handling normal deliveries and readiness to deal with complications represents a challenge to health systems and a tension in safe motherhood programs.”<sup>1</sup> In fact, childbirth is a high risk procedure that has claimed far too many lives in various regions of the world where there is an absence of a well-functioning health system. Recent statistics indicate that in developing countries maternal health has been widely ignored. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), poor maternal health claims the lives of approximately half a million women every year. Furthermore, data from 2001 indicate that “maternal and prenatal conditions represented the single largest contributor to the global burden of disease.”<sup>2</sup>

Without a doubt, a complex set of factors must be addressed before adequate progress is made with regard to maternal health, especially in the disadvantaged areas of the world. These factors include, but are not limited to, specific causes of maternal deaths such as HIV/Aids and malaria, hemorrhage, and/or unsafe abortions. In addition, political, economic, and social conditions such as poverty, inequality, limited access to resources, and lack of government intervention at the regional, national and international level contribute to the lack of substantial progress on the issue of maternal health.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Maternal Deaths: an Unacceptable Lack of Progress." Disease Control Priorities Project. Mar. 2007. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.dcp2.org>>. (p.1)

<sup>2</sup> "Maternal Deaths: an Unacceptable Lack of Progress." Disease Control Priorities Project. Mar. 2007. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.dcp2.org>>. (p.1)

In order to address the problem an integrated approach should be considered, where all actors involved play a specific role in the advancement of a functioning health system in which accurate data are published and maternal deaths are accounted for. As stated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), improving maternal health will lead to more stability worldwide; however, this can only be achieved through dependable collaboration at all levels of the health system, family and community structures and government or non-governmental entities.

### **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

Of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000 by United Nations, the issues of “maternal and child health within and between countries” poses one of “the most serious challenges to achieving the MDGs, particularly in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.”<sup>3</sup> Experts on the issue agree that little progress has been made in reducing maternal deaths, although “nearly all maternal deaths could be prevented with proper prenatal and postnatal care, along with skilled attendance at childbirth and the availability of emergency care for serious complications.”<sup>4</sup> Essentially, with adequate training and basic technological developments, as well as existing interventions that are simple, affordable and effective, improvements in maternal health will permit countries to move toward the realization of the MDGs within a realistic timeframe.

### **Causes of Maternal Deaths**

The period in which a woman’s health can be compromised by life threatening conditions begins at the time of conception and continues up to 42 days after giving birth.<sup>5</sup> There are two common types of conditions that are life threatening: *direct obstetric conditions* and *indirect*

---

<sup>3</sup> "Maternal Deaths: an Unacceptable Lack of Progress." Disease Control Priorities Project. Mar. 2007. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.dcp2.org>>. (p.1)

<sup>4</sup> "Maternal Deaths: an Unacceptable Lack of Progress." Disease Control Priorities Project. Mar. 2007. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.dcp2.org>>. (p.1)

<sup>5</sup> "Maternal Deaths: an Unacceptable Lack of Progress." Disease Control Priorities Project. Mar. 2007. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.dcp2.org>>. (p.2)

*obstetric conditions*. *Direct obstetric conditions* are directly related to the pregnancy and account for approximately 80% of all deaths. The latter type refers to conditions that are “aggravated by or threaten pregnancy.”<sup>6</sup> Diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS are examples of *indirect obstetric conditions* that gravely impact maternal health.

### **HIV/AIDS and Malaria**

Malaria has progressed as one of the key impediments to making pregnancy safer, especially in Africa where “30 million women living in malaria-endemic areas become pregnant each year.”<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, malaria is not only a threat to pregnant women but also to their babies. Consequently, the number of recorded newborn fatalities is as high as 200,000 deaths per year.<sup>8</sup> “Pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to malaria as pregnancy reduces a woman’s immunity to the disease, making her more susceptible to malaria infection and increasing the risk of illness, severe anemia and death. For the unborn child, maternal malaria increases the risk of spontaneous abortion, stillbirth, premature delivery and low birth weight – a leading cause of child mortality.”<sup>9</sup>

Based on evidence introduced by the WHO, “reducing the burden of malaria in pregnancy and improving the health of mothers and newborns” is an achievable goal. The WHO recommends the following three strategies in “the prevention and management of malaria during pregnancy: insecticide-treated nets (ITNs); intermittent preventive treatment; and effective case management of malarial illness.”<sup>10</sup> In addition, where drugs are available the recipients need to be educated regarding their proper use.

---

<sup>6</sup> "Maternal Deaths: an Unacceptable Lack of Progress." Disease Control Priorities Project. Mar. 2007. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.dcp2.org>>. (p.1)

<sup>7</sup> "Lives at Risk: Malaria in Pregnancy." World Health Organization. 2007. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

<sup>8</sup> "Lives at Risk: Malaria in Pregnancy." World Health Organization. 2007. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

<sup>9</sup> "Lives at Risk: Malaria in Pregnancy." World Health Organization. 2007. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

<sup>10</sup> "Lives at Risk: Malaria in Pregnancy." World Health Organization. 2007. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

## **Other Causes**

According to a comprehensive report entitled *Disease Control Priorities in Developing Countries*, the “five major maternal conditions that account for an estimated 75 percent of maternal deaths [include] hemorrhage, sepsis, hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, obstructed labor, and unsafe abortion.”<sup>11</sup>

A large percentage of women living in remote regions of the developing world are unaware of the potentially fatal risk involved in induced abortions which are generally “performed by people lacking the necessary skills or in an environment lacking the minimal medical standards, or both.”<sup>12</sup> As a result, an estimated 68,000 pregnant women die during the procedure or due to complications such as infections.

While recent WHO statistics on unsafe abortion suggest that there has been a decrease in maternal deaths caused by unsafe induced abortion procedures, “the risk of death remains high at 50 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.”<sup>13</sup> In some cases, methods of intervention such as education, planned pregnancies and/or some form of contraception have been effective in avoiding unplanned pregnancies and reducing the *demand* for induced abortions.

## **Challenges**

There is a gap between developing and developed countries regarding maternal health. “Some countries, often the poorest, show a pattern of massive deprivation, with only a small minority, usually the urban rich, enjoying reasonable access to health care, while an

---

<sup>11</sup> "Maternal Deaths: an Unacceptable Lack of Progress." Disease Control Priorities Project. Mar. 2007. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.dcp2.org>>. (p.1)

<sup>12</sup> Thomson, Prentice. "WHO Report Calls for New Approach to Save Lives of Mothers and Children." World Health Organization. 7 Apr. 2005. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

<sup>13</sup> "Maternal Deaths: an Unacceptable Lack of Progress." Disease Control Priorities Project. Mar. 2007. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.dcp2.org>>. (p.2)

overwhelming majority is excluded.”<sup>14</sup> Based on a report compiled by the WHO, there is great concern over the fact that many governments implement policies that discriminate against both women and children, a group that is often “excluded from even the most basic health benefits: those that are important for mere survival.”<sup>15</sup> Not only is the discriminative treatment of women and children a human rights concern, but also an economic one. Countries with high maternal death rates assume the health and education costs of children whose mothers have died as a result of unsafe abortion practices, complications during pregnancy or even after giving birth. In fact, rather than reducing poverty, maternal deaths contribute to the vast gap between the rich and the poor in developing countries.

Proper maternal care assumes a continuum of care by skilled personnel from the beginning of the pregnancy, throughout the pregnancy, during delivery, and postpartum. Unfortunately there is a shortage of health care professionals. However, as global concern has risen over the issue of maternal health, the WHO has initiated a pilot program that seeks to make skilled care available for every woman, especially in disadvantaged areas.

### **Interventions**

“Risk factors for both serious maternal health problems and potential death can be social, economic, or cultural; and they can be related to the health system or to the health condition of the mother. To reduce the risk factors, health system improvements must be complemented by attention to wider social, economic, and cultural factors as well as to reproductive rights.”<sup>16</sup> The number of deaths among pregnant women can be reduced with simple procedures, similar to those applied in the developed world. One approach is enhanced family planning; the key in

---

<sup>14</sup> Thomson, Prentice. "WHO Report Calls for New Approach to Save Lives of Mothers and Children." World Health Organization. 7 Apr. 2005. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

<sup>15</sup> Thomson, Prentice. "WHO Report Calls for New Approach to Save Lives of Mothers and Children." World Health Organization. 7 Apr. 2005. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

<sup>16</sup> "Maternal Deaths: an Unacceptable Lack of Progress." Disease Control Priorities Project. Mar. 2007. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.dcp2.org>>. (p.2)

family planning is counseling. Women should be aware of the protective methods available against unwanted pregnancy, as well as disease. Through education, women are empowered and in control of their own bodies. Essentially, women are given a choice and more options, eliminating maternal death as an option all together. But this is not enough. In addition to education, the physical environment needs to be addressed. Access to safe water and appropriate sanitation facilities must be provided by local or national authorities. Infrastructure must be improved to ensure access to hospitals and clinics. Governments need to educate and train more health personnel and mid-wives. Furthermore, community volunteers, often provided through the efforts of NGOs, can offer the much needed assistance both in terms of education and introducing resourceful administrative strategies in care facilities.

Ultimately, it is essential that decision makers place the issue of maternal health higher on their political agendas and empower women to take part in the decision-making process. However, the international community also has an imperative role to play in providing greater financial assistance, in sharing information concerning emerging technological advancements and best medical practices, and assisting in the provision of medicines. While “progress depends on a complex set of factors including solving human resource problems, effective referral systems, extending access to services to the poorest groups, improved surveillance, and additional research”<sup>17</sup>, the possibilities for improving maternal health in the future look promising.

---

<sup>17</sup> "Maternal Deaths: an Unacceptable Lack of Progress." Disease Control Priorities Project. Mar. 2007. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.dcp2.org>>. (p.4)

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. In light of the fact that improving maternal health depends greatly on a functioning health system, what other social, economic, cultural, and/or political factors should be addressed to enhance the development of effective health systems?
2. Although non-governmental organizations (NGOs), agencies such as WHO and UNICEF, and governments have made financial contributions to promote maternal health programs, in cases where funds have not been used effectively, which actors should be held accountable?
3. How should a donor country (government) or organization respond to governments that need financial assistance in order to improve maternal health in their respective countries, but who do not ensure access for all women and children to maternal health services?
4. A prevailing challenge pertaining to developing nations is training and retaining skilled personnel who are needed to provide proper maternal health services. However, due to the high poverty rate in those countries and low wages, it is difficult to find quality personnel. What incentives should the government provide to skilled professionals as a means of improving maternal health? How can the international community help?
5. What mechanisms exist for increasing the use of effective interventions and eliminating ineffective or harmful ones?
6. How can donor countries be convinced to increase their financial contributions to address issues of maternal health?

### **Sources:**

#### **Internet**

Chowdhury, Sadia. "Public Health At a Glance - Reproductive Health." The World Bank. 2007. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.web.worldbank.org>>.

Fottrell, Edward. "Revealing the Burden of Maternal Mortality: a Probabilistic Model for Determining Pregnancy-Related Causes of Death From Verbal Autopsies." BioMed Central (2007). 7 June 2007 <<http://pophealthmetrics.com/content/5/1/1>>.

"Lives at Risk: Malaria in Pregnancy." World Health Organization. 2007. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

"Involving Communities." World Health Organization. 2007. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

"Malaria in Pregnancy." Roll Back Malaria. World Health Organization. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.rbm.who.int>>.

"Maternal Deaths: an Unacceptable Lack of Progress." Disease Control Priorities Project. Mar. 2007. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.dcp2.org>>.

"Maternal Health." UNICEF. 2007. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.unicef.org>>.



"Millennium Development Goals." World Health Organization. 2007. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

"Population & Reproductive Health." The World Bank. 2007. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.web.worldbank.org>>.

"Skilled Attendants." World Health Organization. 2007. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

Thomson, Prentice. "WHO Report Calls for New Approach to Save Lives of Mothers and Children." World Health Organization. 7 Apr. 2005. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

"Why do so many women still die in pregnancy or childbirth?." World Health Organization. 2007. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

### **Online Forum/Newsgroup**

Ribera, Joan M. "Malaria in Pregnancy: What Can the Social Sciences Contribute?" The Policy Forum. Apr. 2005. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.plosmedicine.org>>.

### **Reports**

Africa and the Millennium Development Goals, 2007 Update. United Nations. UN Department of Public Information, 2007. 6 June 2007.

### **Speeches**

Chan, Margaret. "Health in a Changing Climate." World Health Organization. World Environment Day. 6 June 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

"Make Every Mother and Child Count" World Health Organization. World Health Day. India. 2005. 8 July 2007 <<http://www.who.int>>.

**UNICEF**  
**Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition**  
**By Matt Doyle**

The sensation of hunger begins after only a few hours without food; however, the human body can survive weeks without intake. The un-sated sensation of hunger is described as a mild pain in the pit of the stomach. These hunger pangs begin after 12 to 24 hours without eating. Pangs, caused by small contractions, last about 30 seconds. These pangs, intermittent at first, will eventually become constant. Hunger contractions are more intense in young healthy individuals. In addition, strong emotions such as joy, anger and fear can override the body's signals for food. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 850 million people worldwide were undernourished from 1999 to 2005. Today one in seven people are not getting the proper nutrition to lead a healthy and active life.

Undernutrition is the medical term for the inadequate consumption, poor absorption and excessive loss of nutrients. The term malnutrition refers to both undernutrition and overnutrition caused by overindulgence or excessive intake of specific nutrients. Hunger due to lack of nutritious food is only one cause of undernutrition; other common causes include diarrhea, malaria and HIV/AIDS. Extensive periods of undernutrition can lead to starvation, reduced intelligence, disease, infection and death.

There are two basic types of undernutrition. First, protein-energy malnutrition (PEM) refers to inadequate availability or absorption of energy and proteins in the body. PEM refers to Kwashiorkor and Marasmus. Kwashiorkor is marked by swollen abdomens and cheeks, and reddish discolorization of the skin, caused by insufficient protein intake and micronutrient deficiency. Marasmus is caused by severe energy deficiency; the body will appear emaciated

and weight may be reduced to under 80% of the normal weight. Marasmus is seen most often in infants less than one year while kwashiorkor is seen mostly in children older than 18 months.

Second, micronutrient malnutrition is the lack of essential nutrients such as vitamins and trace elements that are necessary in small quantities for the body to function normally.

Micronutrient deficiencies lead to a variety of diseases and impair normal functioning of the body. Deficiency in micronutrients such as Vitamin A reduces the capacity of the body to resist diseases. Deficiency in iron, iodine and vitamin A is widely prevalent and represents a major public health challenge. An array of afflictions ranging from stunted growth, reduced intelligence and various cognitive abilities, reduced sociability, reduced leadership and assertiveness, reduced activity and energy, reduced muscle growth and strength, and poorer health overall are directly related to nutrient deficiencies.

It is important to understand the two types of undernutrition because they are targeted in different manners. For example, iodine deficiency, micronutrient malnutrition commonly leads to goiters. This enlargement of the thyroid gland has been controlled with great success in regions that approve iodized salt. For instance, the only regions in India that still have high goiter prevalence are in areas that refuse to allow the marketing of iodized salt. On the other hand, one common strategy against PEM for infants is high protein porridge distribution or protein bars for young children.

Undernutrition is implicated in more than half of 10.5 million deaths of children under 5 years that occur in low and middle income countries each year. The consequences of this issue are very extreme for the individuals and families affected and the communities and nations concerned. There are several issues surrounding undernutrition, and what causes it, first and foremost, is poverty. The inability of individuals to afford an energy efficient diet, and the lack

of dietary diversity and essential minerals and vitamins contribute to increased child mortality. Poverty levels have terrible affects on families. Also, family size in many under developed nations also plays a critical role in undernutrition. Because many developing nations are based around household workload, many families have numerous children to provide a larger work force, and in turn those children become victims of undernurtition because the families cannot afford to provide proper food for each individual within the household. Poverty is the number one reason for undernutrition world wide; however it is not an individual factor.

Another major contributor to undernurtition is the lack of transportation to areas such as markets and more populated areas where trade opportunities flourish. When individuals do not have access to the proper food, it obviously contributes to undernutrition. Coupled with this lack of transportation, is the lack of both knowledge of basic farming techniques, as well as a lack of sufficient equipment to be successful enough to properly harvest food sources. Moreover, many of these nations who have very high undernutrition rates do not currently produce enough food nation wide to be able to feed everyone within their country. Finally, conflict and natural disasters such as drought can lead to undernourishment due to lack of stable food sources.

### **The Millennium Development Goals and Alleviating Hunger**

Alleviating hunger coincides with several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The second target of the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG), to reduce by half the number of people who suffer from hunger, uses the proportion of underweight children as one indicator of progress. Three countries, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, account for half the developing world's underweight children. According to the 2007 MDG report it is unlikely that the goal will be met in Sub-Saharan Africa or Southeast Asia.

Efforts to address micronutrient deficiency have made significant contributions towards reaching the MDGs. Vitamin and mineral deficiencies are recognized as a global health problem affecting 2 billion people. Pregnant and lactating women and young children are the most vulnerable because they have a greater need for vitamins and minerals, and they are more susceptible to the harmful consequences of deficiencies. Proper amounts of iodine can have an impact on poverty (Goal 1) and education outcomes (Goal 2); vitamin A supplementation has a direct impact on child health (Goal 4); provision of multiple micronutrients is tremendously important for women of childbearing age and affects their health during pregnancy, whether they survive childbirth (Goal 5), and the baby's birth weight and health during breastfeeding (Goal 4).

### **UNICEF and the United Nations**

UNICEF has focused on ending child hunger and undernutrition. In 2007, the executive board met and established guidelines on what they would like to accomplish in their battle with child hunger. This was a joint meeting with the WFP and UNICEF, and the results were very positive. They adopted the goal of dropping the percentage of underweight children under five years of age by half (in 1990) by 2015. What they would need to accomplish this would be doubling the rate of progress seen within the last fifteen years. Within this initiative, they determined that vital areas needed to be targeted to achieve this goal in such a short amount of time. UNICEF wants to see an increase in the amount of infants being breast fed, the introduction of vitamin A tablets (2) per child, therapeutic foods for over 300,000 children per year, increases in the ability for households to be food secure, as well as the increased use of hand washing with soap and implementing iodized salt. This will be done by creating cohesion among initiatives dealing with child nutrition, as well as raising awareness internationally, and building on current programs and initiatives already installed. This will increase the focus on

children and families, as well as add support to country level policies and systems, with high rewards and minimal costs. These initiatives allow the international health agenda to be re-focused on efforts to eliminate the issue of child hunger and malnutrition. The Global Alliance to Improve Nutrition (GAIN) provides technical advice on fortified foods and other mechanisms to boost nutrition. This partnership includes development agencies, governments, foundations and industry to improve nutrition, and has been a benefit to UNICEF.

The United Nations General Assembly also has taken a stand against child hunger and seeks to curb this problem on a global scale. In A/Res/55/2 in 2000, the United Nations General Assembly sought to increase global awareness, and issued a declaration that by 2015, member states would work to cut the number of starving children in the world in half. The member states of the United Nations have recognized that over 90% of the world's hunger is due to people living in poverty. The United Nations has addressed the issue of child hunger many times, and A/Res/47/150 is a perfect example of this. This resolution provided the guide for coordinating the United Nations response to world hunger, and the reconsideration of the role of the World Food Council (WFC) to restructure activities within the United Nations, to help make their fight against world hunger more successful.

Further, the UNICEF has worked with the World Food Programme (WFP) to integrate school feeding initiatives. What this accomplishes is the ability for malnourished children attending school to be properly nourished so they develop on the same level as children who are not starving. The school feeding is a benefit in two ways. It gets children into schools and guarantees adequate nutrition. This program encourages hungry children to attend school, as well as helping them focus on their studies and not on the hunger problems they deal with on a daily basis. Another program run through the WFP is the work for food program. This provides

assistance for developing countries by providing food for individuals working within the projects. This increases household food security, allowing children to be fed by the work of their family members. The WFP has been the first line of defense for the United Nations in the fight against hunger. Its goal is to improve the nutrition and quality of life of the world's most vulnerable people at the most critical times in their lives.

### **Conclusions**

There have been major successes and massive improvements in the area of child hunger along with improvements in sanitation and water conditions. Community and country based approaches have been positively influenced, and the rate of hungry children has been steadily decreasing. Moreover, improved family and community care practices have been developed and increased, and these developments have had a very positive impact on the rates of child survival, growth and development.

Nevertheless, millions of children continue to suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Possible solutions to some major questions surrounding child hunger and malnutrition may include greater synergy between intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations to cooperate against child hunger and malnutrition, and most importantly, to reduce poverty as the underlying cause. Moreover, the use of resources within agencies may also need review. Finally, greater awareness of the problems may be needed as well as increased core funding combat child hunger and malnutrition.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. Forty-one percent of the world's undernourished children live in conflict zones. How can and should they be assisted?
2. How do you strengthen worldwide policies that are child-focused with regard to hunger and under/malnutrition?

3. Is the UNICEF target goal of doubling the current rate of improvement achievable? What steps can individual countries take to achieve this rapid rate of improvement?
4. What can individual countries do to increase the nutrition level of their own populations?
5. What role should NGOs and civil society play in addressing these issues?
6. What role should WFP and FAO play in addressing these problems? How can the UN promote more effective coordination among UN and specialized agencies?

**Sources:**

Economic and Social Council E/ICEF/2007/9, Annual Report of the Executive Director: Progress and achievements against the medium-term strategic plan  
<[http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/index\\_40364.html](http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/index_40364.html)> [accessed October 10, 2007].

UNICEF Executive Board, Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition Initiative E/ICEF/2007/11, <[http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/07-11\\_ECHUI.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/07-11_ECHUI.pdf)> [accessed October 10, 2007].

UNICEF Annual Session on Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition Initiative  
<[http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/index\\_40364.html](http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/index_40364.html)> [accessed October 10, 2007].

World Food Programme, Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition Initiative: Global Framework for Action Summary Note provided by the WFO, Informal Consultation on the Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition Initiative (ECHUI), October 9<sup>th</sup> 2006  
<<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/resources/wfp111813.pdf>> [accessed October 10, 2007].

UNICEF, Progress Report for Children, <<http://www.unicef.org/progressforchildren/>> [accessed October 10, 2007].



**UNICEF**  
**Educating Girls and Adolescents**  
**by Nikole Allen**

A quality and diverse system of education equips its recipients with the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure a safe and simpler transition into adulthood and grants them abilities to engage in the political, social, and economic processes of the nation in which they reside. It is essential that girls as well as boys are educated. Universally, women's education has a direct effect on the safe and healthy development of their family and specifically their children. In 1948, the United Nations ratified the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, proclaiming that all children, boys and girls, have the right to a basic education. Education is a primary necessity in defeating poverty, preventing disease and exploitation, and creating sustainable development within a society.

**Millennium Development Goals**

The Second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) is focused on achieving universal primary education by 2015, while Goal 3 seeks to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education as soon as possible and in all levels of education by 2015. According to the 2007 MDG Report, during the 2004/2005 school year there was an overall increase in enrollment of school-age children to 88 percent, up from 80 percent in 1990/1991. Sub-Saharan Africa shows the largest improvement with enrollment up 16 percent from 1991; however, 30 percent remain un-enrolled. Furthermore, there is a 3 percent discrepancy between boys and girls in school at the primary level. This pattern is especially prevalent in southern and western Asia. This trend changes drastically when comparing rural to urban areas. For example, around 30 percent of school age children in rural settings are not in school, while only 18 percent of children in urban settings are not attending school.

Figures of enrollment do not consider children over primary school age that enrolled late. This is prevalent in some regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa. Statistically, children who enroll later are from poorer families where the mother has no education. The fact that these students usually face learning challenges and do not progress beyond primary school is especially worrisome.

As recognized by UN member states, issues of education constitute two of the eight most pressing issues in the world today. Education is also a large factor in achieving the other development goals as well. For example, as the 2007 MDG report indicates, mothers without formal education are not progressing adequately toward the pre-determined targets in the areas of health and education. Additional resources will be needed to focus on these populations to achieve any of the MDGs. There have also been reductions in the under five years of age mortality rate. The largest improvements were made in areas of high socio-economic status or where mothers have received some formal education., suggesting a correlation between educated mothers and child survival.

Regarding Goal 5 (reducing maternal mortality rates), women with primary education are twice as likely to seek out a skilled attendant to assist in birthing. Additional schooling reduces the rate of maternal deaths and reduces the likelihood of likelihood of HIV transmission, especially mother to infant. Children whose mothers have no education at all are more than twice as likely to be out of school than children whose mothers have even some education. This trend holds true even in the developing world, where 75 percent of the children not in primary school also have uneducated mothers.

In 2005 there were 72 million children of school age not attending school, 57 percent of whom were girls. What this statistic does not take into account is the number of students who

enrolled but did not attend or the countries unable to produce statistics due to natural disaster or war. What's more, two-thirds of the 781 million illiterate adults in the world are women.

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), girls who are educated are likely to marry later and to have smaller, healthier families. Education enables girls to know and claim their rights for themselves and their families.

### **Barriers to Overcome**

Barriers to education include but are not limited to: school fees (not limited to tuition), child labor, health crises such as HIV/AIDS, discrimination, conflict, tolerance of sexual harassment, security concerns and opportunity costs (working, caring for the family and raising societal value in other ways). Barriers to girls' education are more extensive including pregnancies, marriages, scarcity of female teachers, lack of bathroom facilities, and gender roles. All of these barriers combine with poverty and cultural values creating additional challenges for girls' to begin or complete formal education. This complex web of barriers needs to be addressed at all levels.

A Mozambican study of barriers to girls' education revealed that girls living in a semi-urban setting desired a modern or western-inspired lifestyle. This aspiration for modernity despite poverty leads many girls to pursue alternatives to formal education, leading to a large number of dropouts. In many cases, this increases the likelihood of intergenerational sex and the transmission of HIV/AIDS. The report argued that this phenomenon is due to the schools' inability to impress upon people the long-term benefits of education versus immediate social and material benefits. The opportunity cost of attending school includes both time and money as even free education systems carry some costs; if the benefits are not seen or understood by the parents or the students, then children are inevitably removed from school.

The Mozambique study also found this was true in rural areas where families remove their children from school because the long-term value to the family is not seen or understood. Girls are often removed from school for their *lobolo* (bride price). Once married or pregnant, girls do not return to school. Sons, on the other hand, are affected by patrilineal inheritance because the male child is expected to be a breadwinner for the family as adults lose labor power.

A study by the Asian Development Bank and Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic found that enrollment of school age girls was dependent on their ethnicity and primary language:

For example, Lao Lum girls - whose first language is Lao - account for 67 percent of the total school-girl age population, yet comprise 81 percent of the primary school enrollment for girls. By contrast, Lao Theung and Lao Sung ethnic minority girls, who are not native Lao speakers, account for 23 percent and 10 percent of the total female primary school age population respectively, yet comprise only 15.4 percent and 3.2 percent of primary school enrollments. At the secondary levels, these imbalances become even more marked due to significant drop out levels at the primary level by ethnic minority girls.

Free and compulsory education is not often as simple as it sounds: many times laws are not enforced. Individual teachers may charge fees; schools may impose requirements (such as uniforms or shoes) that are difficult for families to meet; and fees are frequently required to take the end of year exams necessary for advancing to the next grade. Compulsory education laws are either not enforced or are difficult to enforce without birth records. At the same time, an estimated 50 million children are not registered at birth, the majority of whom are female. In many countries, the lack of a birth certificate can prevent admission to school or block eligibility to take examinations. Some educational systems have discriminatory laws that prevent pregnant girls from attending any level of education.

Security and safety issues affect girls' education more than the education of male children. Parents are less likely to allow their daughters to make a long walk to school or live in a dormitory because of the risk to their personal safety. While bullying and corporal punishment

affect both boys and girls, girls are more likely to be victims of sexual violence and rape. Female students' ability to feel secure at school is affected also by the limited number of female teachers as role models and confidants. Many school environments reflect traditional ideas about a gendered division of labor and, as a result, female students may be removed from class to perform such tasks such as cooking and building maintenance.

Perhaps the most complex barrier to education arises in times of national crises. In situations where children most need the stability of school the most, it is often not an option, such as in refugee camps. These situations exacerbate all other barriers to girls' education.

### **Multilateral Efforts**

UNICEF has worked with a number of countries to promote female education. These include national school readiness standards and parental education initiatives developed in part with Cambodia, China, Georgia and Uzbekistan; preschool programs in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Moldova, Romania, Togo, and Macedonia; and specialized education programs for children with disabilities in Belarus and Jamaica. Along with 54 nations, UNICEF has developed the Child Friendly Schools standards, which includes potable water, gender-segregated sanitation facilities, hygiene education and take home hygiene lessons. UNICEF has worked to bring central water sources to rural areas to free girls from labor and enable them to go to school. These school water and sanitation programs have been expanded into 85 countries. In some countries, UNICEF has helped to get sanitation and facility regulations included in national education guidelines.

Efforts to improve girl's enrollment and completion levels have not fully been consolidated. There are multiple efforts forged by different UN, intergovernmental and international agencies, although they generally have similar motives and goals. Today, the most

inclusive effort is the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI). UNGEI is intertwined with the Education for All Fast Track Initiative of the World Bank (WB), the EFA working group of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Acceleration Strategy for Girls' Education by UNICEF. In total there are nearly three dozen agencies united under UNGEI.

The Education for All (EFA) initiative was established at the 1990 World Conference on Education. Representatives at the conference agreed to establish universal primary education and minimal illiteracy rates by the end of the decade. But by 2000 many of the countries represented at the 1990 conference had not achieved these goals. A second conference, the World Education Forum, was held in April 2000 in Dakar, Senegal. At this Conference, the United National Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) was formed by 164 countries and nearly three dozen agencies in order to narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to provide universal primary education by 2015. Six goals were identified to ensure that proper education for children, youth, and adults was achieved:

1. Expand early childhood care and education.
2. Provide free and compulsory primary education for all.
3. Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults.
4. Increase adult literacy by 50 percent.
5. Achieve gender parity by 2005 and gender equality by 2015.
6. Improve the quality of education.

UNGEI is made up of a Global Advisory Committee and focal points offices. The Global Advisory Committee is composed of key partners dedicated to decision making, guidance and accountability. The focal points are located in different geographical regions in order to coordinate educational strategies and interventions at the national level. Focal points can then focus on the specific cultural needs of their region. For example, one area UNGEI has expanded is non-formal education for excluded or older children as part of an Education for Hard-to-Reach

Urban Working Children project. In Bangladesh 50,000 urban children, mostly girls, were admitted into 2,000 new urban learning centers.

### **School Feeding Projects**

Another major international initiative is the World Food Programme School Feeding (WFP-SF) programme, which began in 1963. The Global School Feeding Program designed to reach poor, out of school children was launched in 23 countries in 2001. The overall cost was 0.19 USD per child per school day. Within the first year there was a noted increase in girls and orphans in school in areas of high food insecurity, in some cases as much as 50 percent. The programme has also been said to improve student performance capacity and will, in the long-term, increase literacy, reduce malnutrition and shrink the gender gap.

Partnerships for this global program are extensive. In order for them to succeed, there has to be strong community and national support and involvement. In some cases there have been arguments that the children suffer because guardians refuse them food because they are well fed once per school day. However, the programme can function as a foundation for community nutritional education with parent teacher organizations. WFP also works closely with other international agencies such as UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO, UNESCO, the World Bank as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In some cases, such as Senegal, agricultural development partnerships have been developed, such as the Home Grown School Feeding project where all of the foods required for school feeding are bought from local merchants and farmers.

### **General Assembly Resolutions**

The United Nations General Assembly (GA) has also been active in the campaign to increase opportunities for education. General Assembly resolution A/RES/61/10 supports the use

of sports as a means to promote education, health, development and peace with sport celebrities serving as spokespersons and UN Goodwill Ambassadors. It also invites governments and sports organization to assist developing countries in building educational capacity through sports.

A/RES/61/140 designated 2003-2013 as the “Decade of Literacy and Education for All.” This resolution emphasizes the importance of targeting women and girls in literacy and education efforts. In addition, A/RES/57/254 created a United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) from 2005-2014. The resolution has four objectives: facilitating networking, linkages, exchange, and interaction among stakeholders in education for Sustainable Development (ESD); fostering an increased quality of teaching and learning in education for sustainable development; helping countries to make progress toward and attainment of the MDGs through ESD efforts; and providing countries with new opportunities to incorporate ESD into education reform efforts. One key idea throughout the scheme is the importance on multilateral cooperation.

### **Conclusion**

The issue of educational support for girls can partially be addressed with parental and community involvement; however, there has to be some effort at the national and international levels. There has been success in some regions with incentive programs that provide food, hygiene supplies, water or other benefits to the families of students, but girls’ education must become self-sustaining and no longer be impeded by larger social or institutional barriers. UNICEF needs to discuss how to learn from the successes and how to address ways to reduce or eliminate the social and institutional barriers. In addition, it needs to evaluate the success of current initiatives to determine whether they should be continued and, if so, how they can be strengthened.



### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. How successful our current initiatives sponsored by UNICEF and its partners such as the Girls Education Initiative or Education for All? Should they be continued? How can they be strengthened?
2. What steps are necessary to improve current educational systems?
3. Are children in disaster zones and refugee camps being targeted by multilateral education initiatives?
4. Do responses to education need to come from local, regional, national or international levels? Which are most effective?
5. Could the creation of a United Nations women's agency better fulfill the needs of gender equality in educational systems at all levels.
6. How can girls' enrollment be increased? In rural and urban areas? At primary, secondary and tertiary levels?
7. How can educational outcomes be improved to have a substantial economic and social impact?
8. How can multilateral initiatives encourage national commitment to education?
9. What role should NGOs and civil society organizations play in the development of gender equality in schools?

### **Sources:**

“2006 UNICEF Annual Report.” UNICEF, June 2007,  
[http://www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_39860.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_39860.html) [accessed September 19, 2007].

“Millennium Development Goals Report 2007.” United Nations, New York, 2007.

“Multifaceted Challenges: A Study on the Barriers to Girls' Education.” 2005, Copenhagen DC.

“ICN Calls for UN to fund a women's agency as an urgent priority.” International Nursing Review; Sep 2006; Vol 53 Issue 3.

“State of the World's Child Report 2007.” UNICEF, December 2006.

“World Food Program: Good Practices in education and Development 2002.” High Panel Discussion 2002.

“United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014): International Implementation Scheme.” UNESCO, October 2002.

“United Nations Girls' Education Initiative.” <http://www.ungei.org/index.php> [accessed September 19, 2007]

**UNICEF**  
**Protecting the Rights of the Child:**  
**Follow-up to “A World Fit for Children”**  
**by Max Beach**

**Introduction**

The world is currently faced with a very serious situation involving children. Over 29,000 children younger than five die each day from many preventable causes. Those who do survive to that age are faced with a multitude of problems such as malnutrition, lack of access to healthcare and education. Underlying many of these issues is the serious mistreatment of many children. According to Human Rights Watch, children all over the world face many forms of rights abuses including the use of children as soldiers; the worst forms of child labour; torture of children by police; police violence against street children; conditions in correctional institutions and orphanages; corporal punishment in schools; mistreatment of refugee and migrant children; trafficking of children for labor and prostitution; discrimination in education because of race, gender, sexual orientation, or HIV/AIDS; and physical and sexual violence against girls and boys.

In addition, Human Rights Watch emphasizes that children’s physical and intellectual immaturity makes them particularly vulnerable to human rights violations. Their ill-treatment calls for special attention because, for the most part, children cannot speak for themselves, their opinions are seldom taken into account and they can only rarely form their own organizations to work for change.

This issue presents countries with a chance to take positive action and to invest in the future of children. Much has already been done to help resolve these problems, but there is still a great deal more to be accomplished.

**Human Rights Conventions**

Human rights have been an issue of great concern to the world for many years. In 1948 the United Nations established international human rights norms by adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While not a legally binding document under international law, the universal acceptance of this document established the principle that all human beings are entitled to the same basic rights and should be treated equally regardless of color, religion, sex or class. Since then, the UN has adopted a number of legally binding treaties to help lay the framework to battle human rights abuses worldwide. Among the most important are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and, the most widely adopted of these, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

### **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

In Article 25, Section 2 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states “Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance.” The Convention on the Rights of the Child” addresses part of that statement, noting that there are various rights that should be granted to every child. Article One says that all persons below the age of 18 shall fall under the protection of this Convention. Article two requires that States parties protect all children and the rights granted to them under the Convention regardless of religion, class, sex, race or any variable of this sort. The Convention goes on to lay out the various rights granted to children under its protection. These rights come in three forms: (1) protection rights, (2) participation rights, and (3) survival and development rights. The Convention lays out the principle that

children should be free to express their opinions and be heard, as well as protected from various threats posed both by people and other natural forces.

The Convention's approval came on November 20, 1989 when it was adopted by the UN General Assembly. By September 1990 it had become a legally binding document after the twentieth ratification. It has been ratified by 192 states as of November 2005. The only states that have not yet ratified it are Somalia and the United States; however, both states have signed the treaty indicating their general support for its substance.

### **Millennium Development Goals**

The Millennium Summit in September 2000, attended by the leaders of 189 member states, led to the adoption of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals are a very ambitious and key part of the process of protecting the rights of children as well as ensuring them a safe future. The goals are especially relevant for children because six of the goals affect children directly. Children are at most risk to the problems the goals seek to address. In addition, investing in children benefits international community because they are at an age where these investments can have the greatest impact. Also, achieving the MDGs will benefit children since they represent a large proportion of the world's impoverished people.

### **A World Fit for Children**

In 2002, 180 world leaders dedicated themselves to the "A World Fit for Children" plan. This plan includes 21 specific goals aimed at promoting healthy lives; providing quality education for all; protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS. Essentially the purpose of the agreement is to commit leaders to the unfinished pieces of the 1990 World Summit for Children. "A World Fit for Children" calls upon many different actors to take responsibility and join in the process, such as mass media, families,

NGOs, local governments and the international community. It supports other agreed upon global actions such as the 20/20 initiative, which calls for 20 percent of the budget in developing countries and 20 percent of official development assistance (ODA) to be put toward basic social services that include water, sanitation, education, and healthcare.

### **Abuses of Children's Rights**

Children's rights are being violated and are under attack worldwide. Children suffer the most from abuses, whether they are state sponsored, the results of rebellion in less stable regions, or corporal punishment. For example, child soldiers have been forced to serve in a number of military organizations in developing countries. There has been some progress, however, in this area. In one instance, according to Human Rights Watch, the Chadian army has been under pressure to demobilize its child soldiers. In May of 2007 it agreed to do this and moved to release child soldiers within the military and the state's many state supported paramilitary groups. Since then UNICEF has helped release several hundred child soldiers, some as young as eight, from a military base within Chad. Nevertheless, they are still meeting much governmental resistance in the investigation of two other military bases within Chad.

Another example of child abuse involves Iran, which has continued to execute children for crimes committed when they were under the age of 18. Though Iran has ratified the Convention and has denied these actions, according to Amnesty International, some executions of children have taken place in the last few years.

Other concerns related to the trafficking of children for purposes of sexual exploitation, prostitution, or work in unsafe labor conditions. While the international community has adopted a number of resolutions on this topic, the practice remains widespread. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has been especially active in trying to address this problem.

## **United Nations Actions**

Currently UNICEF efforts are directed toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It is working in conjunction with many partners such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation on programs such as immunization, UNESCO and other UN or specialized agencies on education, WHO on health, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict. UNICEF also works with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to develop a data base and tracking system to reunite unaccompanied minors with their parents or other family members.

For example, in conjunction with the Gates Foundation, UNICEF is currently supporting a \$6 million campaign in Liberia to help rebuild and update schools as well as provide them with the necessary supplies to teach. The goal is to extend basic education to 750,000 children; currently they're at 350,000. In Niger, girls traditionally marry at a young age, many by the age of 12. Over half the girls of age 16 in Niger are married and have had their first child. They are also commonly forced into polygamous relationships as a result of traditions to strengthen the bond between families. The only way this will stop is when attitudes evolve and women and girls receive more equal treatment. And slowly these traditions are changing because of village committees and their promotion of children's rights. Many girls are also speaking out by meeting with village committees and elders. UN agencies and NGOs can also help promote these educational efforts.

Obviously, protecting children and their rights while providing them with a safe and promising future is a strongly held value worldwide. Now it is necessary to promote the implementation and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the

Rights of the Child, and more recent efforts such as “A World Fit for Children.” This will require action not only from NGOs, UNICEF and other UN agencies, but also cooperation between states, along with increased communication and education. And the end result? The hope is for a world where all children have access to necessities such as clean water, education, food, as well as a feeling of safety and security from disease, abuse, slavery and untimely death.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

- 1) Where does your state see itself in the protection of its children?
- 2) What can be done by your state to further assist in the protection of children both in your own state and internationally?
- 3) Which child rights agreements does your state support and are they currently considered a priority?
- 4) How important is protecting children to your state and are there circumstances within your specific state that complicate the government’s abilities to protect and provide for its children?
- 5) What impediments are there in other states that complicate their ability to protect and provide for their children?
- 6) How can UNICEF assist states in its dual goal of protecting children as well as provide them with necessities to create a more equitable future?

### **Sources:**

Amnesty International, “Iran the Last Executioner of Children.” 27 June 2007.  
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE130592007>

Human Rights Watch, Children’s Rights  
<http://hrw.org/doc/?t=children>

Human Rights Watch, “Chad: Government Keeps Children in Army Ranks.” Human Rights Watch. 16 July 2007.  
<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/07/13/chad16388.htm> [accessed 22 Sept. 2007].

UNICEF. Millennium Development Goals.  
[www.unicef.org/mdg](http://www.unicef.org/mdg) [accessed 13 Sep 2007].

UNICEF. United States Fund for UNICEF. 2007.  
[www.unicefusa.org](http://www.unicefusa.org) [accessed 13 Sep 2007].

UNICEF. “About the Goals.” Millennium Development Goals.

[http://www.unicef.org/mdg/28184\\_28230.htm](http://www.unicef.org/mdg/28184_28230.htm) [accessed 13 Sep 2007].

UNICEF. “A World Fit for Children.” United Nations, Special Session on Children.  
[www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_5597.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_5597.html). [accessed 18 Sep 2007].

UNICEF. “Implementing the 20/20 Initiative.” UNICEF. 1998. UNICEF. 10 Oct 2007.  
[http://www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_5597.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_5597.html)

UNICEF. “At a glance: Niger.” UNICEF. UNICEF. 11 Oct 2007.  
[http://unicef.org/infobycountry/niger\\_1420.html](http://unicef.org/infobycountry/niger_1420.html)

UNICEF. “At a Glance: Liberia.” UNICEF. UNICEF. 10 Oct 2007.  
<http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/liberia.html>

United Nations. “All Human Rights for All.” Universal Declaration of Human Rights. United Nations.  
<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html> [accessed 13 Sep 2007].



**African Union**  
**NEPAD: The New Partnership for Africa's Development**  
**by Justin Galvan**

Africa was the first continent to feel the presence of modern humans and now it is one of the last to enjoy the benefits of our progress. Unfortunately, Africa has earned an historical position of having been exploited for its resources, both raw and human, as well as that of a continent which was almost entirely colonized without the goal of post-colonial sustainability (Armitrage 78). Africa has a history of accepting foreign aid that ultimately results in more complications and less progress than before. Within the last decade, the nations of the African Union have begun to take the redevelopment of Africa into their own hands and now have programs that were created by Africans for Africans (Union 1).

The most significant program intending to strategically advance an independent Africa is the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It was created as an overarching framework with the goal of sustainable development and economic autonomy for the African continent and its peoples. The NEPAD was adopted at the 37<sup>th</sup> summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 2001 in Lusaka, Zambia (Union 1). It was not, however, the first African-made framework for development. It is actually the result of the merger of two previous plans focused on African development: the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme (MAP) and the OMEGA plan (Union 1). The impetus for establishing strategic frameworks like MAP and the OMEGA plan came in 1999 when the Presidents of Algeria, Nigeria and South Africa concurred that Africa had been

depending on the outside world for aid and programs while not creating its own plan for development (Startup 1).

MAP was a program devised by President Wade of Senegal that called for African leaders to pursue sustainable development with the goals of eradicating poverty and integrating Africa into the world economy (Startup 1). The ingenuity of this plan stems from the fundamental concept that Africa should not rely on foreign aid to reach its goals of development. Instead, it stated that Africa has everything it requires, like human skills and capital, and encouraged economic investment through joint responsibility and mutual interest (Startup 1). While the focus of MAP relied more on the political strength of African leaders, the OMEGA plan focused on education, health, agriculture and infrastructure needs by redirecting African investment, formerly committed to Western markets, back to Africa until the aspects of African society under focus could support themselves (Startup 1). When African leaders noticed the overlapping goals of the two programs they merged the MAP and OMEGA plans at the previously mentioned 37<sup>th</sup> Summit of the OAU, thereby officially creating the framework for African Development (Startup 1).

According to the official NEPAD website the primary objectives of the program are the following:

- a) To eradicate poverty;
- b) To place African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development;
- c) To halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process and enhance its full and beneficial integration into the global economy;

d) To accelerate the empowerment of women (NEPAD 1).

The objectives of the NEPAD are undoubtedly admirable and, if realized, will expedite the emergence of an Africa that encourages progress and prosperity instead of one that requires foreign aid and investment to merely maintain itself. The NEPAD objectives evoke pictures of a fully functioning and participatory continent that is integrated into the global community. But just as important as the goals of a strategic framework are the means that are used to obtain its ends. The principles by which NEPAD is to conduct its work include the following:

- Good governance as a basic requirement for peace, security, and sustainable political and socio-economic development;
- African ownership and leadership, as well as broad and deep participation by all sectors of society;
- Anchoring the development of Africa and its resources in the resourcefulness of its peoples;
- Partnership between and amongst African peoples;
- Acceleration of regional and continental integration;
- Building the competitiveness of African countries and the continent;
- Forging a new international partnership that changes the unequal relationship between Africa and the developed world; and
- Ensuring that all partnerships with NEPAD are linked to the Millennium Development Goals and other agreed development goals and targets (NEPAD 1).

The primary objectives of the NEPAD are long-term goals that can be attained by commitment and adherence to the above principles, but there are also results that are expected out of the NEPAD in the very near future. They include becoming more effective in conflict prevention and the establishment of peace on the continent; embracing democratic principles and the protection of human rights; developing effective poverty eradication measures; accelerating regional integration; and promoting genuine partnerships between Africa and the developed countries founded on mutual respect and accountability (NEPAD 1). There are numerous concepts and goals that determine the conduct of the overall NEPAD framework but there is, necessarily, a power structure responsible for the implementation of the NEPAD goals.

The configuration of the NEPAD command structure is comparable to many large-scale bureaucracies. It is headed by a highest authority which then delegates orders to smaller regional committees and organizations. The highest authority in NEPAD is the Heads of State and Government Summit of the African Union, formerly known as the OAU (NEPAD 3). This is the same body that is responsible for the mandate which resulted in NEPAD's creation and implementation. Program initiatives at the regional level are carried out by the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSIC) which is made up of three states per AU region (NEPAD 3). The personal representatives of the HSIC run the NEPAD steering committee which oversees the assignments and overall development (NEPAD 3). There is also a NEPAD secretariat that organizes projects approved by the HSIC and gives a progress report to the AU summit each year (NEPAD 3). NEPAD has outlined numerous goals for the future of the

African continent that will take years to realize. Critics of NEPAD have taken the relatively slow progress of the framework as a sign of weakness.

Some Africans waiting to feel the positive effects of NEPAD contend that this new framework offers nothing that the previous incarnations did. While civilians may be skeptical, investors and donor states have remained optimistic about the future of NEPAD (Startup 4). The Canadian government has acknowledged the slow progress of NEPAD but maintains it has reached important goals and created the 500 million dollar Canada fund for Africa devoted to NEPAD's progress (Startup 5). Canada's generosity rests on three areas of visible progress showing NEPAD has: one, established an organizational framework for the UN and other actors to interact with; two, halted eroding support of Africa's development partners; and three, brought peer review and accountability into Africa's progress against corruption (Startup 5). The International Monetary Fund has also supported NEPAD's efforts to promote peer review, which would be vital to its success (Startup 5).

What may be NEPAD's biggest immediate hurdle is performing well enough to eradicate the notion that it is no different than African development plans that have come before it. While the framework is having success in creating platforms from which organized action can take place, the platforms must be used to their full potential. Dissenters feel that they have not seen any changes in their regions and have no reason to believe that NEPAD is satisfactory or even functioning. To counter this the African Union should focus on promoting a trickle down effect of benefits and resources that come from the HSIC all the way down to the smallest villages and impoverished areas of Africa. If the individuals of Africa can experience tangible positive change then they will

rally around NEPAD at the lowest level, fulfilling its goal of getting Africa enthusiastically involved in its own development instead of merely participating in its survival.

**Questions:**

1. What is the current status of NEPAD? Are African States supporting the process?
2. What areas have seen the most progress? Are there lessons that could be applied to other issues?
3. How supportive are the international community in general or donor countries? How can the level of support – financial, technical, or other forms – be enhanced?
4. What role does/should the UN, its agencies and other specialized agencies play in the development or implementation of policies for NEPAD?
5. What role should NGOs or civil society play in this process?

**Sources:**

Armitrage, Susan H., Czitrom, Daniel et al. Out of Many; A History of The American People. Pearson Education Inc. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey. 2006.

NEPAD. NEPAD in brief. The NEPAD Official Website. 27 July 2007.  
<http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/inbrief.php>

Startup, Josh. What is NEPAD?. The University of Iowa Center for International Finance And Development. 2006. 27 July 2007.  
<http://www.uiowa.edu/ifdebook/faq/NEPAD.shtml>

Union, African. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The African Union Official Website. 27 July 2007.  
<http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AUC/SpecialPrograms/nepad/nepad.htm>

**African Union**  
**Countries in Crisis: Sudan and Zimbabwe**  
**by Caroline Cox**

**African Union:**

The African Union (AU), formerly known as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), is a regional organization that works towards unity and solidarity among African Nations, while also working to help economic development and promote international cooperation. Ultimately, the AU seeks to be a collective voice for the whole continent to the rest of the world.

The African Union is based on the common vision of a united and strong Africa, the need to strengthen relations between governments and citizens, and increase solidarity and cohesion amongst the peoples of Africa.<sup>1</sup> The promotion of greater relations between citizens and their governments also allows the AU to promote socio-economic integration, leading to ties connecting countries within Africa.<sup>2</sup> “As a continental organization it focuses on the promotion of peace, security and stability on the continent as a prerequisite for the implementation of the development and integration agenda of the Union.”<sup>3</sup>

To achieve solidarity and unity among the nations, aside from old goals carried over from the OAU, the AU created additional goals for the Union. The additional goals set by the AU are to speed up the process for integration, enabling it to have a rightful and significant role in the global economy; safeguarding the sovereignty and territory of countries that have established themselves as legitimate countries within the international community; and promote international cooperation within the United Nations framework on behalf of all African Union Member States.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/au\\_in\\_a\\_nutshell\\_en.htm#vision](http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/au_in_a_nutshell_en.htm#vision)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/au\\_in\\_a\\_nutshell\\_en.htm#vision](http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/au_in_a_nutshell_en.htm#vision)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/au\\_in\\_a\\_nutshell\\_en.htm#vision](http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/au_in_a_nutshell_en.htm#vision)

In order to effectively decide on a collective and unified voice, the Heads of States of AU members meet annually and discuss events and issues facing the African continent. At these summits, the leaders work together to help identify areas within the international community they would like to see changed or areas in which the international community can help African nations better their citizens' lives.

At the Model United Nations of the Far West conference this year we will be simulating the African Union. We cannot, however, simulate all of the different committees of the African Union, so we will be simulating The Assembly of the African Union. Other committees include the Executive Council, the Commission, the Permanent Representatives' Committee, Peace and Security Council (PSC), the Pan-African Parliament, ECOSOC, and the Council of Justice.

The Assembly consists of the Heads of State and Government of the members of the African Union, and is the supreme organ of the AU. The Chairperson of the Assembly is elected to office by the Heads of State and Government from within the Assembly. The Assembly has nine functions: some of the most important are to "receive, consider and take decisions on reports and recommendations from the other organs of the Union; monitor the implementation of policies and decisions of the Union as well as ensure compliance by all Member States; give directives to the Executive Council on the management of conflicts, war and other emergency situations and the restoration of peace."<sup>4</sup> Any decisions, resolutions, or declarations made by the Assembly are made by consensus or by a 2/3 majority.

One of the agenda items assigned to the African Union is to consider how to address two situations that are placing stress on the African continent, especially in the areas of peace and security and respect for human rights. The two areas we have selected are Sudan and Zimbabwe.

---

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/organs/assembly\\_en.htm](http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/organs/assembly_en.htm)



## **Sudan:**

Upon gaining independence from the United Kingdom and Egypt in 1956, Sudan and its people have been in a constant state of disorganization and conflict. Beginning in 1955, Sudan entered into their first of two civil wars, to be ended briefly, by the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972, giving Southern Sudan autonomy on internal matters of the south.<sup>5</sup> After the agreement, Sudan entered into a ten year period of relative peace, only to be disrupted in 1983 by the introduction of Islamic punishment into the penal code in Sudan. After the 1985 coup, in hopes of reconciling the north and south, the new government rescinded the 1983 decree, however leaving the September Laws in place.

In 1986 the government and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army began peace negotiations and later in the year, both parties agreed to the "Koka Dam" declaration, calling for the abdication of Islamic Law and the convening of a constitutional conference.<sup>6</sup> The negotiations of 1989 brought about little progress in relieving tensions about the current civil war, and in October of 1989, the informal cease-fire broke down. Fighting continued into the next century, but a peace agreement was finally reached between the southern forces led by John Garang and the government in Khartoum that provided for power-sharing and an eventual referendum on independence for south Sudan. Unfortunately, Garang died in an accident and disputes over power-sharing and oil revenues have led to renewed fighting, placing the peace agreement in jeopardy

Forward to Darfur, one of "the world's greatest humanitarian crisis," and the effect that civil war has had on the people in the region. While the conflict in Darfur is not fought between the Muslim north and the Christian and Animist south, those conflicts left the citizens of Darfur

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/sudan-civil-war1.htm>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/sudan-civil-war2.htm>

disregarded and ignored by their government in decades of drought and near-famine conditions.<sup>7</sup> Since the beginning of the second civil war, much of Darfur has felt antagonism towards Khartoum, and subsequently, because of a lack of response to their worsening conditions, much of Darfur has been an anarchic state.

While historically the Darfur area has suffered recurring droughts, the combination of that drought with the systematic neglect from Khartoum has eroded the ability of communities to cope with such conditions.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, militants of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) began attacking government forces in March of 2003. In response, the government of Sudan carried out attacks on rebel bases and villages and encouraged Arab tribesmen (known as the Janjaweed) to attack the non-Arab tribes of the Fur, Massaleit, and Zaghawa, the dominant tribes of southern Darfur.

Most outside observers believe the current crisis is primarily the result of the Khartoum government's desire to eradicate the non-Arab tribes as part of an on-going concern over control of oil reserves in the region. But the conflict also results from the efforts of the more nomadic Arab tribes desire, or perhaps need, to find more grazing land for their livestock to the detriment of the non-Arab tribes who engage primarily in farming. A scarcity of water contributes to tensions in the region as well.

The systematic creation of famine in the Darfur region hinders Darfur's ability to survive, but also reinforces the feeling of abandonment and disregard. The government maintains that conflict within Darfur is due to tribal differences, nevertheless, "starvation was not mere negligence...it was military strategy," with no military justification. By the end of 2004, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated around 10,000 people were

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/darfur.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

dying every month.<sup>9</sup> By mid-2007 most studies suggest there have been approximately 400,000 deaths, the internal displacement of well over two million people, and an influx of over 250,000 refugees into neighboring Chad and the Central African Republic. This in turn has led to cross-border violence in those regions and unrest in both Chad and the Central African Republic.

While aid has been offered to the Sudanese government and the Sudanese people over many years, it has not always been accepted as such. The United Nations Security Council has passed many resolutions establishing different missions, imposing sanctions and extending mandates. However, the greatest challenge in effectively implementing the resolutions is the Sudanese unwillingness to have countries other than African nations come into Sudan.

Sudan did allow for the presence of an African Union mission, but its role is limited to monitoring the situation and it has not been able to contribute to a solution of the crisis. Finally in late 2006, after many conferences and agreements, the President of Sudan endorsed “the Addis Ababa and Abuja agreements, welcoming the progress made so far and calling for them to be fully implemented by all parties without delay and for all parties to facilitate the immediate deployment of the United Nations Light and Heavy Support packages to the African Union Mission in the Sudan and a Hybrid operation in Darfur.”<sup>10</sup>

The joint African Union/United Nations Hybrid operation was authorized by Security Council Resolution 1769 in July 2007. Acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, UNAMID is authorized to take necessary action to support the complete implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement, coupled with the protection of its personnel and civilians. By the end of December 2007, the process of transferring authority from AMIS to UNAMID should be

---

<sup>9</sup> *Darfur: A Short History of a Long War*

<sup>10</sup> S/RES/1769 (2007)

completed with necessary precautions taken in ensuring stability and legitimate authority of UNAMID.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to Security Council decisions and subsequent negotiations with the Sudanese government, a mission of the Human Rights Council issued a report in March (A/HRC/4/80) on human rights violations in Darfur with recommendations for the Council, the government of Sudan, and rebel movements. A few months later African Union military observers in Darfur reported that Sudanese militias had burned civilians alive and committed other atrocities. Subsequently, the African Union's Peace and Security Council announced in a meeting in Addis Ababa on July 27<sup>th</sup> that it was actively considering expanding the military observer mission into a multinational peacekeeping force with particular emphasis on disarming the Janjaweed if the Sudanese government does not do so.<sup>12</sup>

At the moment most of these issues remain unresolved. The government has been slow to accept the conditions imposed by the Security Council and is reluctant to have any forces involved in missions within Sudan other than African countries; peace talks scheduled to take place have been held up by disagreements among the rebel factions; and sporadic fighting and human rights abuses continue. If the projected talks do not succeed in moving forward on these issues, the United Nations and the African Union, in cooperation with each other, will need to decide what steps they should follow and whether they should or will become more actively engaged to bring the fighting and human rights abuses to an end, or if there are other alternatives that might be acceptable to the Sudanese government and rebel forces. Meanwhile, the people of Darfur and surrounding regions continue to suffer.

---

<sup>11</sup> UNAMID website

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/darfur.htm>

## **Zimbabwe:**

Zimbabwe's independence and revolutionary process happened in the late stages of the Cold War, East-West conflict.<sup>13</sup> After independence in 1980 and Robert Mugabe's rise to the presidency, the problems within Zimbabwe remained. While the international community found the revolution more political than social and thus legitimized the change,<sup>14</sup> Zimbabwe was faced with a significant economic challenge: white farmers, around 1 percent of the population, held 70 percent of arable land, leaving little land for the majority of the population to sustain themselves.<sup>15</sup>

In 2000, Mugabe began the much awaited land redistribution campaign, based on the Land Acquisition Act of 1992. The campaign led to a mass departure of white farmers, caused the economy to implode, and brought about shortages of basic commodities.<sup>16</sup> In 2002, Mugabe rigged an "election to ensure his reelection."<sup>17</sup> In the same year, Zimbabwe was suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations on charges of human rights abuses that still continue today.

In between Mugabe's reelection in 2002 and the parliamentary elections in 2005, Mugabe continued with his brutal repression of regime opposition and party intimidation to guarantee the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) would maintain control of parliament. In the spring of 2005, the "Zimbabwean government launched Operation Restore Order," in which the government would "remove criminal elements from the cities and return people to the 'rural origins.'"<sup>18</sup> The operation, with the use of police force and army support,

---

<sup>13</sup> Johnson, Vernon Damani. "The Question of Revolution in the Twenty-first Century: The Case of Zimbabwe." The Black Scholar 31.1 (Spring 2007): 3

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, Vernon Damani. "The Question of Revolution in the Twenty-first Century: The Case of Zimbabwe." The Black Scholar 31.1 (Spring 2007): 4

<sup>15</sup> Chrisman, Robert. "Zimbabwe: The Long Struggle." The Black Scholar 37.1 (Spring 2007): inside front cover

<sup>16</sup> CIA World Factbook, Zimbabwe

<sup>17</sup> IBID

<sup>18</sup> Security Council Report

rendered 570,000 people homeless, deprived 98,000 people of their direct livelihood, and directly or indirectly affected 2.4 million people.<sup>19</sup>

The displacement and eviction of the Zimbabwean people is a result of the increasing political polarization created by the creation of an opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), and the limitations Zanu-PF implemented on freedoms of expression, assembly, movement and association. During Operation Restore Order, poor urban areas were affected most because of their support of the MDC. Since the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change party in 1999, Zimbabwe has continued to suffer political violence, humanitarian and economic crises, and high displacement levels, due to the land reform programs instituted by the government in 2000.<sup>20</sup>

In response to the human rights abuses and the political and economic crises, international bodies and organizations have tried, through various tactics, to aid the people of Zimbabwe and stop all abuses in Zimbabwe. The United Nations, in June of 2005, sent a special envoy to Zimbabwe to investigate the effect of the evictions and displacements, stating on July 22 that the Zimbabwean government's 'indifference to human suffering' and disregard of 'several provisions of national and international legal framework' is in need of assistance from the UN.<sup>21</sup> Other countries identified and stressed the necessity of the UN Security Council's seizure of the matter and the urgency of engaging the Zimbabwean government in efforts to end the political violence and crises.<sup>22</sup>

While letters have been written and UN Special Envoys have been sent to Zimbabwe, many countries within the UN are opposed to discussing the matter in the Security Council,

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

because they see “the humanitarian crisis as a domestic matter which should not be considered to fall within the Council’s mandate.”<sup>23</sup>

Currently, the human rights situation in Zimbabwe remains dire. The majority of the population has been silenced by the government efforts to restrict citizens’ attempts to peacefully exercise their basic rights to freedom of expression, association, movement and assembly.<sup>24</sup> But many find it troubling and difficult to employ different organizations such as the United Nations or the African Union to aid groups in opposition to the Zanu-PF.

While authorities continue to prevent criticism of the government, police and other government officials continue to arrest hundreds of activist and opposition members at peaceful gatherings, by the use of force.<sup>25</sup> More recently, the Zimbabwean government has introduced the Interception of Communications Act, whereby Zimbabweans’ rights to freedom of information, expression and privacy are completely disregarded.<sup>26</sup> Given the grave human rights violations that have occurred over the past year and the lack of accountability within the government for these violations, it is of particular interest to the African Union as a body, to see where the AU can step in assist the citizens of Zimbabwe in opposing and changing the policies of the government.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. What is to be done about countries in obvious need of assistance from outside actors?
2. Can these situations be ignored under the guise of respect for national sovereignty, or, as was agreed to in the World Summit Outcome document, is there a “responsibility to protect?”
3. At what point will the African Community as a collective body come together and stand against human rights abuses and political violence?

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid page 2

<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch

<sup>25</sup> ibid

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

4. Are we willing to make bold statements about what to do when a country is blatantly violating human rights?
5. What can the African Union do as a group to aid these countries? Politically? Economically? Other?
6. How can the African Union work together and in conjunction with UN agencies to better African nations and their citizens economically and socially?
7. What issues need to be targeted to ensure situations like Darfur no longer exist or at least are unable to escalate?

**Sources:**

African Union in a Nutshell. 13 Jan 2006. African Union. 18 Nov 2007 <[http://www.african-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/au\\_in\\_a\\_nutshell\\_en.htm](http://www.african-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/au_in_a_nutshell_en.htm)>.

The Assembly. 13 Jan 2006. African Union. 18 Nov 2007 <[http://www.african-union.org/root/au/organs/assembly\\_en.htm](http://www.african-union.org/root/au/organs/assembly_en.htm)>.

Chrisman, Robert. "Zimbabwe: The Long Struggle." The Black Scholar 37.1 (Spring 2007): Inside front cover, inside back cover.

Document about non-interference and non-intervention within the AU Constitution:  
[www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/5WNJDL/\\$File/IRRC\\_852\\_Kioko.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/5WNJDL/$File/IRRC_852_Kioko.pdf)

Flint, Julie and Alex de Waal. Darfur: A Short History of a Long War. Zed Books, 2006.

Human Rights Watch. "A Call to Action: The Crisis in Zimbabwe SADC's Human Rights Credibility on the Line." Human Rights Watch Backgrounders. Aug 2007  
<<http://hrw.org/backgrounder/africa/zimbabwe0807/>>.

Johnson, Vernon Damani. "The Question of Revolution in the Twenty-first Century: The Case of Zimbabwe." The Black Scholar 37.1 (Spring 2007): 2-11.

Pike, John. "Darfur Liberation Front, SLM, SLA, JEM." Military. 24 Oct 2005. Global Security.org. <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/darfur.htm>>.

Pike, John. "Sudan Second Civil War." Military. 24 Oct 2005. Global Security.org. <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/sudan-civil-war2.htm>>.

Pike, John. "Sudan – First Civil War." Military. 24 Oct 2005. Global Security.org. <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/sudan-civil-war1.htm>>.



United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1769 (2007).

United Nations Security Council. "Update Report: Zimbabwe." Security Council Reports. No. 5, 19 Dec 2005. <[http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/{65BF9F9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9}/Update%20Report%2019%20December%202005\\_Zimbabwe.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/{65BF9F9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9}/Update%20Report%2019%20December%202005_Zimbabwe.pdf)>.

United Nations. UNAMID: African Union/United Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur. 2007. <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unamid/index.html>>.

United States. Central Intelligence Agency. The World Factbook: Zimbabwe. 15 Nov 2007. 12 Nov 2007 <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/zi.html>>.

**African Union**  
**Cooperation Between the African Union and the United Nations**  
**by Stephanie Hilmes**

The major regional body in Africa, the African Union, is advancement in itself in that it joins African states into a cohesive self-governing entity. It is an African body run by and for Africans. While significant, this organization working alone will not be able to address effectively the pressing issues in the region. Therefore, cooperation with international actors (including other regional bodies) must be encouraged in order to deal with such problems as underdevelopment, the lack of achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the effectiveness of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Africa is the most underdeveloped continent. According to the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, at least 30 of the 50 least developed countries are located in Africa. Underdevelopment is characterized by a "low-income criterion, a human resource weakness criterion, and an economic vulnerability criterion" (UNOHRLLS). Conflict and the lack of development are prime examples of why cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations is so crucial to stabilizing the region. The declaration "Enhancing UN-AU Cooperation: Framework for the Ten-Year Capacity Building Programme for the African Union" agreed on cooperation on eight levels. One level underscores the need for cooperation in "promoting international peace and security of the African continent." Another covers all aspects of cooperation including the following areas: "peace and security; assistance in institution building, and political and electoral matters; humanitarian response, recovery and food security; social, cultural and health issues; and the environment". It also calls

for cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations system to align support for the “New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) with the evolving Framework.” Furthermore, it continues to call for cooperation between the organizations of the United Nations and the African Union.

Recent forms of cooperation have come from partnerships between Member States of the African Union and United Nations Programmes. On 24 April 2007, the African Union agreed to address the challenges African faced in the form of “agriculture and food security.” The World Food Programme and the African Union have agreed to a partnership to “mobilize efforts and resources” for addressing these problems in which African Union Member States have agreed to “allocate at least ten percent of their national budgets to agriculture.” The World Food Programme aims to “help millions of people survive food crises, to rebuild their lives and to receive an education and improve their nutritional status.”

The United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) projects and programmes is built around the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations through NEPAD is intended to efficiently translate the Millennium Development Goals into acceptable working legislation for African countries. In response to NEPAD, the international community has built increasing support for Africa’s development. More aid and debt relief has been sent to African countries and the impact has improved the lives of millions of African people. Within this cooperation, ample progress has been made in “extending and deepening debt relief through the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and bilateral debt relief

initiatives.” Seventeen African countries have benefited from the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative as of end-April 2007.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Africa has increased substantially as well. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported that foreign direct investment cash flow has reached “thirty-one billion dollars, compared to seventeen billion dollars in 2004.” The United Nations system remains the stronghold for international support for Africa; this support includes the implementation of NEPAD and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Further negotiations on the “economic partnership agreements between the European Union and African countries” are also taking place so that by the end of 2007 the European Union will have “non-conforming trade preferences” with Africa. This would expand the economic partnership between the African Union and the European Union, help African countries reach the Millennium Development Goals, and re-enforce the basis of NEPAD. Other agreements such as with the Group of Eight (G8) need to occur to allow the African Union to work toward the goals set out in the framework of NEPAD and the Millennium Development Goals.

In keeping with the United Nations efforts to support African development, the General Assembly adopts an annual resolution on cooperation between the UN and the African Union. The resolution adopted during the 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the General Assembly (A/RES/61/296) on covered a variety of topics that could serve as a basis for further discussion in the African Union’s deliberations. Among the more important points included in the resolution were the following:

- Support for ten-year capacity-building programme for the AU noted in above (pp 6);

- Welcome for the agreement to hold joint meetings between the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council (pp 7);
- Emphasis on the need to address the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons (pp 10);
- Invitation to relevant UN bodies to “intensify their efforts to support cooperation with the African Union” (op 3);
- Requests to enhance the capacity of the AU Peace and Security Council in a variety of ways (op 5a-5i);
- Calls to support efforts to implement the MDGs (op 7);
- Recognition of the need for sustainable and predictable financing and support for AU peacekeeping operations (op 8);
- Calls for cooperation to address the problem of illicit trafficking in small arms, light weapon and anti-personnel mines (op 9), the global fight against terrorism (op 10), and the illegal exploitation of natural resources (op 11);
- Encourages the UN system to address the challenges of poverty eradication through debt cancellation, enhanced official development assistance (ODA), increases in foreign direct investment (FDI), and transfers of affordable and appropriate technology (op 14);
- Support to implement the Plan of Action for the program “A world fit for children” (op 15);
- Development of a coherent strategy for the promotion and protection of human rights (op 16) and the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases (op 17);
- Requests cooperation to promote a culture of democracy, good governance, and respect for human rights and the rule of law (op 18).

### **Questions for Discussion:**

How can the African Union build upon the points of agreement as outlined in A/RES/61/296?

What should the role of the United Nations system be with respect to peace and security in Africa? What role should the AU play in these efforts? How can the AU guarantee protection of national sovereignty while reducing threats to peace and security on the continent?

What support from the international community is most important to promote the goals of NEPAD? The Millennium Development Goals?

Which agencies, funds, and programmes of the UN system should be most actively engaged in cooperation with the AU and in promoting development in Africa? What specific policies or programs can they promote?

**Sources:**

BBC News- Africa- Country Profiles [www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/default.stm](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/default.stm)

The African Union [www.african-union.org](http://www.african-union.org)

The New Partnership for Africa's Development [www.nepad.org](http://www.nepad.org)

United Nations Development Programme [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

The UN Millennium Development Goals [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)

The UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries,  
Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States  
<http://www.un.org/special-rep/ohrlls/sid/default.htm>

General Assembly Resolution A/61/296