UNDP 2012
BACKGROUND GUIDE

2012

Letter from the Dais

Hello MITMUNC 2012 Delegates!

I am extremely excited for this year's conference and our session in the UNDP. I am Noga Feinberg, Head Chair for this year UNDP, and a freshman. I plan on majoring in economics and mathematics (freshmen do not declare a major until the end of their first year here at MIT). My co-chair, Tamara Djordjevic, and I look forward to meeting you all in committee!

The United Nations Development Program is an innovative UN body operating under the Economic and Social Council of the General Assembly, which advocates international change and aims to connect countries to resources and information that enable people to lead a better quality of life.

This year's committee of the UNDP will attempt to address the status of women in developing countries and the availability of information and communication technologies in developing countries. We, in the UNDP, will aim to come up with innovative and effective resolutions regarding these crucial issues.

We hope that while you are debating on these issues, you realize how close world issues are to our everyday lives. We also hope that you discover your potential to make a change in the world, whether it is through international development, working with the UN in the future, or making breakthroughs in science and engineering.

See you in the spring!

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Topic 1:

Women's Status in Developing Countries

INTRODUCTION

According to the statistical results in many categories, women have not achieved complete equality with men in any given nation. Some data showing the discrepancy between men and women include: poverty (women comprise 70% of the poorest people in the world), migration and lack of living conditions (about 80% of world's refugees are women), education (two-thirds of illiterate people are women) etc. In 1979 United Nations passed a convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, also known as the Bill of Rights for Women, which was ratified by 160 countries. UN's commitment to solving this problem was more recently shown on the Millennium Summit in 2000, when all 193 UN member states decided to pose the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women as one of the eight millennium development goals. Developing countries, having less financial resources and other viable problems at the same time, have a more complex situation regarding this matter.

FOCUS AREAS

In order to more efficiently address the women empowerment, UNDP has identified five major fields of action. As their scope is very extensive, we will focus on areas that are connected to economic and political development associated with women empowerment. Besides these areas, UNDP gender equality section deals with combating HIV/AIDS spread and social stigma and environment and energy issues that could be bettered with the inclusion of women.

Poverty reduction

In most of the developing countries, women are primary providers of food and family caretakers. On the other hand, their work has not been legally recognized and it is unpaid most of the time, so they don't have the chance to possess their own property, start businesses, or contribute to economical decision-making. By enabling them these things, we could potentially create more stable economies, better policies and better labor division overall. Therefore, gender equality would benefit the poverty reduction, especially in the countries where particular jobs are done exclusively by women, as in developing countries.

The presented issue could be alleviated by the promotion of equal rights, inclusion of women in managerial and economic areas, providing equal educational opportunities for both genders. Some progress has been made in this area. For example, in 1999, Ethiopia's ratio of women to men in primary education was 0.61, whereas in 2004 it increased to 0.77. Nevertheless, substantial work still has to be done to achieve the ultimate goal of equality.

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Democratic governance

Women are traditionally underrepresented in politics. Situation on this matter differs severely among countries. For example, 47.3% of seats in parliament in Sweden were held by women in 2007, as opposed to 0% in Saudi Arabia, 4.4% in Turkey, 0.3% in Yemen, 2% in Egypt etc. Parliament representation was fairly low even in developed countries: 16.3% in the USA, 12.2% in France, 13.3% in Ireland etc. Since some jobs in developing countries are done exclusively by women, their leadership is necessary there. In addition, they could contribute making public policies that would address general needs better. This would insure overall progress of society and economy and contribute to general stability in a particular country.

Conflict   prevention   and   peace   building

During armed conflicts, women are equally, and in some cases even more, affected than men. Nevertheless, they rarely participate in decision-making and peace building processes. Better delegation of women during the wartime could accelerate the country's recovery, ensure better logistics and even save their lives. Since armed conflicts are more common in developing countries, and in some they last for decades, this issue is particularly applicable to them.

Past and Current Actions and Initiatives

UNDP/Japan Women in Development Fund

Established in 1995 as a joint project between the Government of Japan and UNDP, Women in Development Fund helps innovative projects that would promote inclusion of women in local projects. Good practices that come up from the conveyed projects are later presented to other regions with similar capacities that could have use of them. However, this fund needs more resources and countries that would be willing to implement projects of interest to it. So far, Women in Development Fund has started several major global initiatives such as **"**The Political and Social Economy of Care**"** in Argentina, Nicaragua, South Africa, Tanzania, Republic of Korea, India and Japan. Fund's projects mainly apply to more than one country or a region of countries (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Arab states, Latin America). The projects emphasize global cooperation, which is quite different from most of the projects for developing countries that concentrate on a particular country.

Gender Thematic Trust Fund

Similar to Women in Development Fund, GTTF has even broader scope of action. It makes innovative projects that would present precursors to wider initiatives, that are most of the time multi-disciplinary. The priorities of GTTF include all of the MDG focus areas listed above. So far, GTTF has received nearly 10 million dollars, which helped initiatives in more

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than 65 countries. However, GTTF, although a robust organization, relies on particular donors and their capacities. So far, the governments of the Netherlands, Spain, Finland and Denmark have given their contributions, along with individual donors. Therefore, GTTF has an uncertain destiny that could be better regulated by engaging more countries and country blocks that could help.

UNite to end violence against women

UN's Secretary General Ban Ki-moon started this campaign in 2008 with the goal of ending violence against women worldwide. The striking statistics show that women of age 15-44 are more likely to be victims of rape and domestic violence than of cancer, war, malaria and car accidents. Violence occurs through many different scenarios, all of which have the underlying reason in discrimination against women. UNite works to enforce national legislatures that would end violence against women, increase public awareness and fight against sexual violence. Numerous nation-specific campaigns have been conveyed so far in Africa, South America and South-eastern Asia. Arab countries have not yet joined UNite's initiatives.

POLICIES OF DIFFERENT REGIONS

European Union

In 2010 EU adopted Strategy for equality between women and men for the next five years that largely relies on economic links between equal gender inclusion and economic growth. As stated in this document, main efforts should be directed to opening the labor market to higher female participation, encouraging women entrepreneurs, facilitating family-related leaves and child care, and promoting gender equality in immigration procedures. In addition, this strategy vouches for equal pay, gender balance in decision-making positions, and constant monitoring that would indicate if the improvements were made. Although this strategy is meant to be applied to EU countries, it represents a possible model for strategies applicable to developing countries. It also points out the necessity of equal gender inclusion for economic growth, which is a crucial topic for all developing countries.

On the other hand, EU is committed to achieving all the MDGs, including that which concerns women empowerment. European Commission on Development and Cooperation (EuropeAid) has stated that "gender inequality and poverty are closely related", hence they should be regarded as an integrated problem. It is also stated that the poverty in part emerges from women's unequal access to human rights, employment, information, social services, infrastructure and natural resources. In 2007, Council of the EU adopted the set of conclusions in 24 points that address how EU should help developing countries on the matter of gender equality. This document asks for all EU countries to give their contributions, and for cooperation from the local governments of developing countries. So far, EU has given a substantial financial contribution to many initiatives on women

empowerment, and has a budget of 57 million Euros for the investments in the period from 2007-2013.

African Union

The African Union (AU) Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa was adopted by the Heads of State of the AU in July 2004. This declaration recognizes gender equality as a priority, and addresses many areas in which it could be improved. Operative paragraph 12 of the Declaration commits the Heads of State to report annually on progress made in gender mainstreaming and to support and champion all issues raised in the Declaration, both at the national and regional levels. Whereas some countries have provided extensive annual reports and cooperation (e.g., South Africa), some have shown less enthusiasm (e.g., Algeria).

On the other hand, some countries, such as Ethiopia, have shown progress, but mostly in a legislative sense. They have incorporated laws that ensure gender equality, and encouraged women inclusion in decision-making, but did not achieve substantial results in these areas. They have also addressed equal availability of education and healthcare. Generally speaking, most of the countries haven't concentrated on the economic development linked to women empowerment.

Arab League

The Arab Charter on Human Rights was adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States on 22 May 2004, and generally speaking, it affirms the principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, hence condemning gender discrimination. However, these principles are not equally respected among countries. For example, in Saudi Arabia women do not have the right to vote or to be elected, cannot drive, and are required to have a male guardian.

On the other hand, countries with similar backgrounds such as Pakistan have achieved significantly higher rate of gender equality, with women participating in the government, having wider access to education and work places. Arab League countries are culturally different from other countries, for they typically have governments that are more strongly oriented towards religious institutions. Therefore, implementation of women empowering initiatives must be sensitive to local traditions and distinctive laws.

United States

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is committed to providing development assistance for gender equality issues worldwide. USAID's programs address economic growth, democracy and governance, education, gender-based violence, women's legal rights and global health. In addition, it contains a special section devoted to women in Afghanistan. USAID's policy largely concentrates on economic development linked with women inclusion, such as promoting small and medium women enterprises.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Developing countries

The UN collaborates with many developing countries to promote gender equality. Still, it seems that the progress could be accelerated. Some of the topics that developing countries should consider in this debate are:

- What aspect of women empowerment is particularly important for this country/region?
- Which countries share the similar problems and thus could be potentially good for collaboration?
- Long-term and short-term plans and their economic implications
- Are the initiatives for gender equality a priority in developing countries, and why yes/no

Developed countries

Women are generally less affected in developed countries. However, gender inequality in developing countries decreases global security and economic development, thus indirectly affecting the entire world. Therefore, developed countries would have the use of better women inclusion in developing countries. Some of the questions that should be considered by developed countries are:

- Stability in which developing region would have the largest impact on the country?
- How can that country help women empowerment in developing countries?
- How can that country tie its economic development with gender equality in developing countries?
- Could developing countries in particular region unite their actions in providing gender equality for more productive work, or is individual work more efficient?

COMMITTEE GOALS

1. Create a policy that would promote an efficient regional fight for gender equality in the democratic governance

2. Create a plan that would tightly link women empowerment to economical development and designate nation-based entities that would convey this plan

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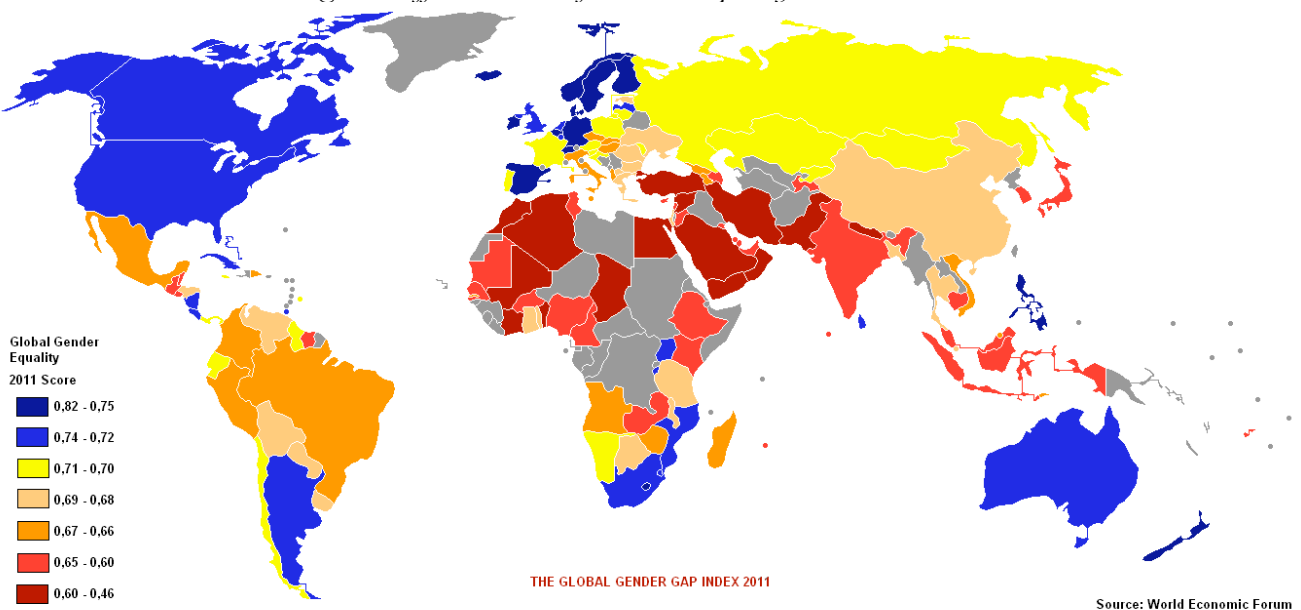
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APPENDIX

Figure: Different Rates of Gender Equality Worldwide

Global Gender Equality 2011 Score

- 0,82 - 0,75
- 0,74 - 0,72
- 0,71 - 0,70
- 0,69 - 0,68
- 0,67 - 0,66
- 0,65 - 0,60
- 0,60 - 0,46

THE GLOBAL GENDER GAP INDEX 2011

Source: World Economic Forum

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TOPIC 2:

AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are any technologies used to gather, distribute, or implement information. These technologies are vital assets in promoting the availability of knowledge and information. ICTs play a fundamental role in the globalization of developing countries by providing them with a link to vast global information networks. The Millennium Development Goals Target 8F calls for the availability of new technologies -- especially information and communication technologies -- in developing countries. The use of information and communication technologies can be applied in the fields of socioeconomic development, international development, and human rights.

Background

ICTs have the ability to provide benefits to a wide range of sectors, ranging from health, education, commerce, government, gender empowerment, human rights, and scientific aptitude. However, there are many disparities in the extent to which different developing countries, as well as different socio-economic groups within the countries, benefit from ICTs. The gap between those with access to ICTs and those without access is referred to as the "digital divide".

There are many causes behind the digital divide. Disparities within countries can often be attributed to a lack of suitable products, high costs, unavailability of necessary education, language barriers, scarcity of human resources, and absence of a robust government regulatory framework. A majority of disparities between countries is due to a wide variation in government policy regarding ICTs.

The eighth Millennium Development Goal calls for the establishment of a global partnership for development; specifically, the United Nations strives to promote development in the context of globalization and interdependence. In its 55th session, the General Assembly emphasized the role technology in globalization, stressing the need to promote universal access to knowledge and information, in addition to the necessity of eliminating the digital divide by facilitating the widespread use of ICTs to provide developing countries access to the global information network and thus allowing them to benefit from globalization. In 2001, the UN established the ICT Task Force, whose role is to lead a public-private partnership in which Member-States, non-profit organizations, and the private sector collaborate towards the creation and distribution of ICTs towards development.

Industry collaboration has come a long way in tackling the digital divide. In 2006, Ericsson partnered with the UNDP in an effort to improve mobile coverage in rural areas of developing countries. Similarly, Intel worked in India to deal with problems arising with PCs due to environmental damage and unreliable power sources in rural areas. Likewise, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology institute-based non-profit One Laptop Per Child developed a $100 laptop with assistance from corporations such as Google and NewsCorp, which is sold to governments and then distributed to children by schools.

However, it is not enough just to provide suitable products, it is also necessary to provide the education needed to use the technology. Many critics of One Laptop Per Child question whether the project takes into consideration the cost of teaching materials and teacher training. Groups such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) focus on the distribution of ICT skills across the African population, mainly through an e-schools program implemented in primary and secondary schools. A USAID led project in Guatemala trained a collective of farmers to download daily information about market trends and pricing, and then spread this information to other farmers. Furthermore, the farmers were trained in bargaining and negotiation in order to assist them in implementing this information. This initiative enabled farmers to demand fair prices for their goods, as well as base their production off of supply and demand trends in order to increase returns.

Country Blocs

The role of national governments is crucial to the success of ICTs in bridging the digital divide. Many national governments, often in collaboration with the UN, have adapted programs to assist the widespread implementation of ICTs within their countries. In the early 2000's, for example, the UNDPs Internet Initiative for Africa (IIA) conducted high-level workshops for government officials before the commencement of the project. This served to ensure the countries active participation in the project, which increased its success. Similarly, the phenomenal ICT led progress of countries such as Estonia, Malaysia, and Costa Rica is often attributed to strong political resolve and national leadership.

The employment of ICTs is able to provide benefits in many different areas. ICTs have been shown to increase gender equality in many regions. Groups of women in India are able to sell the textiles they produce directly to European consumers over the Internet. Many women organizations build an online network over which to share information and build support for change by encouraging accountability and transparency. However, there are many barriers to women's access to ICTs, spurring many initiatives to provide women access to the benefits of ICTs. A joint UNDP and Ministry of Social Security project at improving women's ICT skills; the project aims to train 800 women over three years in the hopes of enabling women to find employment in addition to creating new jobs, both for

themselves and for others. The Japanese Women in Development Fund and software donations by Microsoft funded the project.

Committee Goals

This committee will seek to address the necessity of new technologies and determine their benefits and potential drawbacks. In addition, the committee will strive to come to a consensus on how the distribution of information and myriad communication technologies in developing countries can be best implemented.

Questions

1. What are causes of the digital divide within your country?
2. How can ICTs benefit developing countries? Which area should be prioritized (i.e. health care, human rights, education, socio-economic, et cetera)?
3. Are there consequences with ICTs (i.e. restricted freedom of speech, gender inequality, et cetera)?

Resources

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Information_and_Communication_Technologies_Task_Force

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