



# UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

*Background Guide*

Director: Lauren Russell

Chair: Renee Wang

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# Director's Letter

Dear Delegates,

Hello! My name is Lauren Russell and I am ecstatic to serve as your Director of the United Nations Human Rights Council for KINGMUN 2018. I am currently a senior at Peninsula High School in Gig Harbor, Washington and have been participating in Model UN since I founded my school's club at the beginning of my junior year. Over the course of five committee sessions, we will have the opportunity to create dialogue on two pressing issues to the humanitarian world. The first of which touches on the negative social ramifications of urbanization, and the second topic that addresses discrimination against women in less economically developed countries (LEDC's.) The UNHRC holds a vital role in providing safety for the international community, so it is important that we develop and establish both long-term and short-term solutions to both these causes.

With an increasingly globalized world, urbanization is certain. Since the industrial revolution started back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, countries have been becoming more urbanized due to the advancements in technology, the development of the economy, and the incentive to become larger on the global scale. What we, as the UNHRC need to address is the human rights violations that come with this increase in urbanization. These violations are triggered by unemployment, poverty, mitigation of minority cultures, and many other impacts that arise when we see a country becoming urbanized. We will be also focusing on KINGMUN 2018's theme of Section 13 referring to climate change. In cities, there is environmental degradation from the loss of biodiversity, lack of proper irrigation, and improper cleanup for waste in cities.

The other topic we will be discussing is the discrimination against women in developing countries. Many of these LEDC's still face an enormous patriarchal barrier regarding the status of women in society. The UNHRC will try to explore solutions to give rise to the rights of women by addressing first the issues that women face regarding discrimination and then deriving solutions to combat it. We will focus on women in the workplace, political status, and other sectors where we see discriminative gender disparities.

My first Model UN conference I represented Cote d'Ivoire in the UNHRC. Though the small size of my country and minute presence it has on the international stage, I recognized the importance and impact that every country has on the committee. Each delegate has something to offer that will make an impact on the final result of the conference: the resolutions. It is my goal to get everyone actively engaged in conversations throughout the conference. I am extremely gratified to be serving as your director alongside my wonderful chair, Renee Wang, and my excellent assistant director, Megan Wong in the committee where I fell in love with Model United Nations. I'm looking forward to meeting all of you in April and wish you all good luck and happy diplomacy for KINGMUN 2018!

Best Regards,  
Lauren Russell  
Director of the UNHRC

# ~ TOPIC 1 ~

## History

Ever since the beginning of time, humans have felt the need to be bound together in groups and communicate with one another. The first societies that existed, such as Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt filled their social and work roles in things separated by gender. As these societies continue to develop, governmental systems become more complex, the economy becomes more developed, and culture begins to thrive.

During the late 17th century and early 18th century, the agricultural revolution was a response to increasing technological advancements in farming. The results of this were a decrease in the number of farmers employed, an increase in population. The combination of growing masses of people that were less needed to man the fields led to a deluge of individuals to the cities, a process known as urbanization. This process of urbanization facilitated the Industrial Revolution that also began in Great Britain in the 1750's, was the first stepping stone in urbanization on a larger scale. Technological advancements were increasing, including the invention of the steamboat, which made the transferring of domestic goods more accessible and made markets more interdependent. In addition, the idea of the "factory" became much more prevalent increased the number of people moving to cities for a living.

The first major social impact recognized was a discrete difference in how the social hierarchy was. There was an even greater economic disparity between the upper class and the lower class, creating greater indifference between these classes. The upper class, which consisted of the aristocrats, politicians, and the nobles began to start autocratically rule the political sphere of the city. While the status of the rich increased, the lives and social conditions of the lower class decreased. Peasants, which made up a significant proportion of urban population, were faced with despicable working conditions. Factories had brutal hours, unsanitary condition, and in places such as the coal mines, the workers were put in danger. In addition, with the poor distribution of people, many were moved to cities and this caused an influx of population. The percentage of homelessness rose and with the increased levels of urbanization, the infrastructure was not increasing at the same rate to support the rise of these cities. Industrialization also marked a period in which there was a growing middle class, the bourgeoisie which consisted of factory owners, merchants, and professional workers lost a great deal of political power to the upper class.

In highly concentrated urban environments, a new mode of transportation started to develop: the automobile. This increased the efficiency of everyday life, however, automobiles did not have set regulations. Inevitable, there was an increase in air pollution that factored in from the lack of restrictions on the greenhouse gas emissions. Also, the development of the car made the demand for oil, a nonrenewable resource, much higher.

In more recent years, we are started to see the impact of urbanization truly take action. Greenhouse gas emissions are higher than ever, there is more instability and overpopulation in cities, and the social aspects of life for some are diminished. Some countries, in order to combat climate change and reduce their carbon footprint, have begun to de-industrialize their nations. However, the implementation of pathways to deindustrialization have only been implemented in the more economically developed countries(MEDC's). The countries who were not greatly industrialized yet, have seen their urbanization grow in past years and this has led to some greater impacts such as the rise of crime and gang violence. This has led us to know the severity of the crisis at hand today.

## Past UN Action

In Article 25 of its 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNUDHR), the United Nations affirmed that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family." Since then, the UN has made extensive efforts to maintain this affirmation, even in the face of urbanization and its negative ramifications on human rights. As populations shift towards the cities, bodies like

the UNHRC recognize cities as “key players in the promotion and protection of human rights” (A/HRC/30/49, p.11). In particular, the UN has done tremendous work in providing adequate housing and safe water and sanitation in urban areas.

Adequate housing, as defined in the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) General Comments No. 4 (E/1992/23) and No. 7 (E/1997/22, annex IV), adequate housing under international law is having secure tenure without worries of having one’s home being taken away, and being able to keep one’s culture, with access to services, schools and employment. The United Nations Housing Rights Program (UNHRP) first launched in April as a collaboration between UN Habitat and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). THE UNHRP Fact Sheet No. 21, “The Right to Adequate Housing,” was published in 2009 and reaffirmed housing rights not only through Article 25 of the UNUDHR, but also through Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, Article 21 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and Articles 9 and 28 in the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In 2017, the UNHRC Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context explored the financialization of housing and its detrimental impact on human rights and called for governments to ensure markets serve housing need rather than investment priorities (A/HRC/34/51). This is also part of an ongoing effort to implement the New Urban Agenda, the urbanization framework dedicated to reaching Sustainable Development Goals, established in October 2016 at the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador. It works to target the marginalization of people living in slums, indigenous peoples, migrants, people with disabilities, refugees, and older people as cities expand. This agenda was endorsed by both the UNHRC (OP4, A/HRC/32/L. 11) and the GA (A/RES/71/256) in 2016. Besides adequate housing, this agenda also extensively addresses the issue of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, one example being in Article 34.

Water and sanitation were first recognized as a human right in July 2010 in the GA, that clean drinking water was “essential to the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights” (A/RES/64/292). This was reaffirmed by the UNHRC in September 2010, that rights to water and sanitation are legally binding upon Member States (A/HRC/RES/15/9). This was followed in 2011 by a UNHRC resolution that called on States to ensure enough financing for “sustainable delivery of water and sanitation services, enforcing safe drinking water and sanitation as a human right” (A/HRC/RES/18/1). Since 1990, the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program for Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene has reported estimates of progress on drinking water accessibility levels across the world. With the New Urban Agenda in mind, the program is working to reduce inequalities in service levels by 2030.

## Current Situation

Today more than half of the global population resides in urban areas, and this number is only projected to increase. By 2030, approximately 60 percent of the world’s population will live in cities, 90 percent of which will take place in primarily African and Asian cities. As overpopulation grows increasingly apparent, the number of unsanitary and insecure living situations will rise to accommodate the lack of living space on the planet. Simultaneously, gender disparities, violence, and discrimination are steadily increasing as well.

Close to half of the world’s urban dwellers inhabit relatively small settlements of less than 500,000 residents, and only one in eight live in the 28 mega-cities with more than 10 million inhabitants. Tokyo, Japan currently houses the most inhabitants, with a staggering 38 million inhabitants. By 2030, there will be a projected 41 mega-cities with more than 10 million inhabitants, growing by more than a third of the current population. According to UN-Habitat, one-billion or one-third of city-dwellers worldwide reside in slums. While cities promote access to cheaper living for the poor, authorities undermine their progress through forced evictions. Although forcing residents, primarily lower-income families, to exit their homes may optimize the economic functioning of cities, states increasingly fail to recognize the rights of poor households and individuals. While



many cases are evidently unfair, only a fraction of eviction cases find their way to courts. The poor are unwillingly moved to live in make-shift shelters on nearby streets, swept away by unashamed city officials in the development of many urban areas. According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), an estimated 880 million urban residents lived in slum conditions in 2014, a large increase from the 792 million in 2000. In addition to losing their homes, evicted people often lose all of their personal possessions. Although housing was declared a fundamental human right throughout the UN since 1986, the number of evictions continue to increase. In nations including the United Kingdom, the number of tenants for rented homes being evicted has grown by more than a third in the past 12 years.

In 2015, the member states of the UN adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all through a set Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 11 specifically relates to urbanization by calling on nations to build cities that are “inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.” However, many urban residents still face discrimination, primarily in the housing market to reside in urban areas. Minorities, indigenous people, migrants, and people with disabilities all find it difficult to find new homes and are less likely to be offered potential housing units to consider. Although thoroughly implemented into many regulations by organizations such as the UNHRC and the European Union, these laws are poorly regulated and are often disregarded. These marginalized groups also find increased adversity when looking for jobs, and find themselves. In nations including China, both rural and urban migrants face discrimination at levels below medium-wage. Additionally, non-locals are becoming increasingly marginalized, and face difficulty when finding jobs. Without a further look into existing regulations, individuals across the world will continue to endure potentially avoidable difficulty when searching for homes or jobs.

As cities continue to expand, many municipal waste-disposal systems fail to keep up, especially regarding the poor sanitation that those living in slum conditions are forced to endure. UN-DESA states that “the safe removal and management of solid waste represents one of the most vital urban environmental services.” However, a recent study conducted in 2013 revealed that in cities from 101 countries surveyed, only “65% of the urban population was served by municipal waste collection.” Sanitation is vital for citizens to stay healthy, as uncollected solid waste can lead to the spread of water-borne diseases, including diarrhea, cholera, and Trachoma. In addition to poor sanitation, many households struggle with their right to water, as numerous urban areas do not have access to sufficient clean water. In a survey conducted in India, around 90% of slum residents do not have access to a piped water supply; these residents are required to retrieve water from public taps, often times run by mafia and gangs. Although the right to water is generally thought to be challenged in rural areas, it is becoming a frequent issue in urban environments as well.

In the 2016 Habitat III conference in Quito, Equator, the 167 nations represented produced a comprehensive roadmap addressing the potential outcomes of urbanization for the following 20 years. In the New Urban Agenda, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 21, 2016, leaders have committed to provide basic services for all citizens, eliminate discrimination, support cleaner cities, respect the rights of refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons, as well as support green initiatives. Although a big step towards advancing human rights for all, these commitments must be integrated at the “national, subnational, and local levels,” requiring new urban rules and regulations in individual nations in order to be fully achieved.

## Bloc Positions

### Less Economically Developed Countries(LED C's) with Heavy Urbanization

Developing nations with heavy urbanization face some similar issues as developed nations but often have more severe ones as well, and with fewer resources to combat them. In countries like India and China, there has been tremendous growth in cities like Mumbai and Beijing. Despite this, infrastructure in these nations struggle to keep up with the rapid growth of urbanization. This is manifested in key issues such as water sanitation. Pollution,

in particular, has also become prominent, with few regulations alongside a lot of people. Factories and cars heavily contribute to air pollution. Perhaps most importantly, as businesses begin to thrive in these large cities, housing becomes more and more expensive. In 2016, housing prices in Chinese cities increased by 23% overall, with some cities like Shenzhen increasing by over 53%. Since December 2010, housing prices in Shenzhen have increased over 103%. In the face of urbanization, nations in this bloc seek to continue supporting businesses while also facing the challenge of limited resources and underdeveloped infrastructure in densely populated cities.

## LEDC's with Growing Cities

Developing nations with a slower urbanization rate do not experience the same magnitude of human rights issues as LEDC's with heavy urbanization; however, rights violations continue to increase as cities grow. As the rate of urbanization increases in these countries, the correlation of economic growth struggles to keep up, increasing the standard of living gap between the wealthy and the poor. Although urbanization may lead to large increases of development and the reduction of poverty, it can at times do the opposite. In areas like Southeast Asia, access to urban sanitation facilities is just over 50%, compared to the 96% of developed nations. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 42% of the urban population has access to sanitation facilities. As sanitation contributes enormously to our overall health, regulations must be reviewed to allow a greater access of sanitation for more city dwellers. Additionally, in Colombia and Venezuela, there are over 2.0 million people living in the El Sur and Libertador slums respectively. In Sierra Leone, Sudan, and the Central African Republic, the percentage of the urban population living in slums is over 62%. In many of these nations, the slum population continues to increase due to the number of poorer citizens transitioning from rural living to urban living that cannot afford a place to live. Policies must be changed to improve access to affordable housing for slum dwellers and new urban inhabitants to reduce the number of those living in unsafe and unsanitary environments.

## United States

As an industrialized and well-established nation, the United States does not encounter the same enormity of human rights violations as other countries. However, as the number of urban residents increase, the availability of housing units fail to keep up, resulting in higher prices for living space. The low supply and high demand for housing has spurred a housing crisis, primarily for middle-class and low-income families. In Los Angeles, California alone, there was a 26% increase in homelessness between 2016 and 2017. Additionally, while family homelessness has decreased steadily in the past decade, over 600,000 families experience homelessness, a surge in forced evacuations due to recent horrific natural disasters.

Nearly one-hundred percent of the population has access to a sanitation facility in the United States, and the US is currently working to aid other nations in improving urban sanitation globally. Through the U.S. Global Development Lab, the U.S has aided residents in India, Ghana, and Indonesia to uplift millions out of poverty and to provide effective sanitation solutions. Issues including open defecation and poor sanitation infrastructure have been limited to hundreds of thousands in Indonesia alone. With the aid of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), it is possible for the United States to further reduce the human rights violations that arise from urbanization; however, the member-state must initiate the change within their own policies.

## More Economically Developed Countries(MEDC's)

Most Western liberal democracies tend to have a heavy emphasis on human rights and the protection of citizens, therefore this mindset is likely to be carried out by most MEDC's. More economically developed countries tend to have more infrastructure and are more urbanized. Even in the most economically prosperous nations, cities are still experiencing the negative social consequences that urbanization has caused. The threat of homelessness is encroaching in major cities with low emphasis on infrastructure and sustainable development. Due to the fact that these Member States are the ones already facing the problems caused by unsustainable

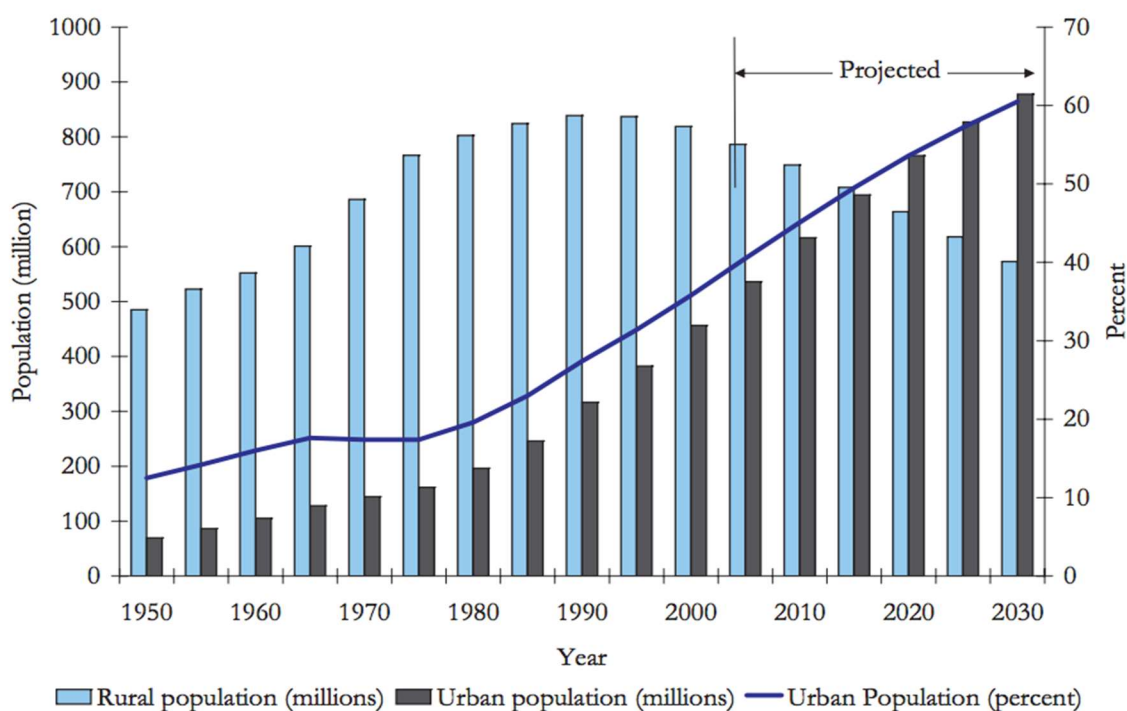
urbanization such as excessive poverty, environmental degradation, and the diminishment of minority cultures, they should be the major players in focusing on a plan to form adaptation measures for MEDC's in facing the consequences of urbanization. Since the state of their nation and economy is based on their industry, they will need to formulate these measures carefully to bilaterally work in favor of their nation's economy and well-being.

## Case Studies

### China

Since its economic reform in 1978, China has urbanized rapidly. From a meager 18% in 1978, China's urbanization level reached 41% in 2005 and is projected to reach 54% by 2020. This growth is assisted by the massive population size in the country. While currently at 1.4 billion, it is still growing at a rate of around 12.9 million a year. The graph below depicts China's rapid urbanization trend, as well as a projection through 2030.

**Figure 5.1: Trends in Urban and Rural Population, PRC**



China's rapid urban population growth. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/27965/urbanization-sustainability.pdf>

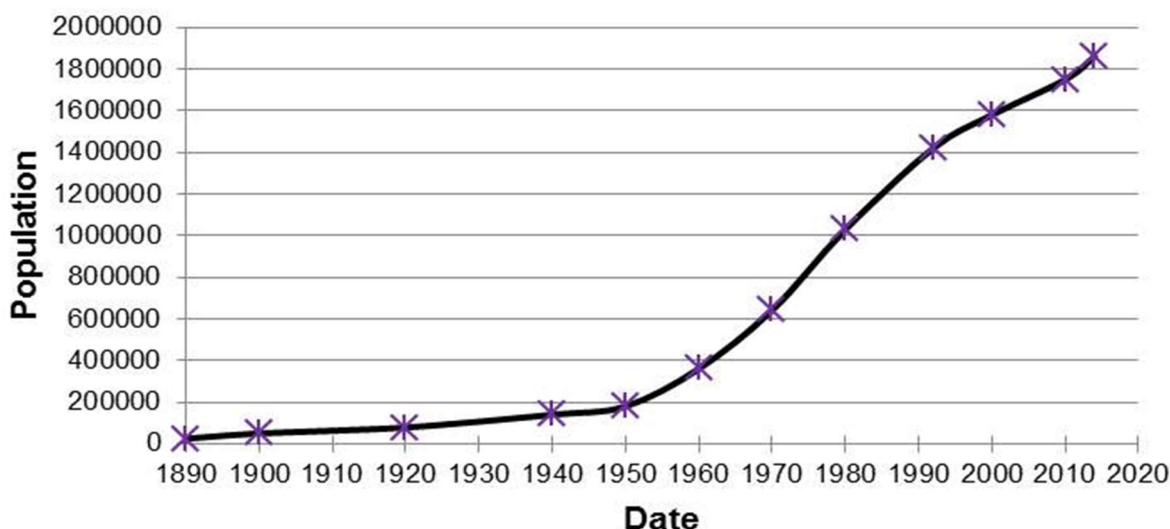
China's urbanization has and continues to be cultivated by its economic growth. As businesses thrive, job opportunities open in cities and attract migrant workers. These migrant workers are the main ones who face human rights violations in the face of urbanization. China requires city-dwellers to be registered to receive certain benefits, registration is extremely inaccessible for newcomers to the city. Thus, migrant workers are unregistered, and they are often denied essentials such as health services, affordable housing, and education for their children. More recently, after a large house fire in November 2017, Beijing launched a 40-day "Safety Evacuation Campaign" that also happened to leave thousands of migrant workers without homes, evicted into the midst of a cold winter.

This size has contributed to major pollution in cities that pose health risks to the general population, particularly the sick, the elderly, and the young. Yet, there has been progress in improving air quality in the past few years, as homes and businesses switch from burning coal to natural gas. Per Greenpeace, PM2.5 concentration levels fell 33% across Beijing, Tianjin, and 26 nearby cities. In Beijing alone, PM2.5 concentration fell by 54%.

## Brazil

Curitiba is the capital of the Brazilian State of Paraná. Up to the 1970s, the region was mostly rural, with a focus on producing commodities like green tea, lumber, and most of all coffee. The coffee boom in that began in 1960 marked a steady climb towards urbanization, as a third of the world's coffee output came from Paraná. The city population was increasing at 7% a year, mostly due to migrant workers searching for opportunities. Yet, the city's infrastructure was unable to support this growth, and major issues arose with issues ranging from flood protocol to sewerage.

**A graph of Curitiba's city population changing over time**



Curitiba's population growth over time, which a sudden increase around 1960.

<http://www.coolgeography.co.uk/A-level/AQA/Year%2013/World%20Cities/Sustainability/Curitiba.htm>

In 1968, the city of Curitiba established the Curitiba Research and Planning Institute (IPPUC) and approved *Plano Director*, or Master Plan for urbanization. The Master Plan and the IPPUC worked together to plan and carry out massive innovations to rebuild infrastructure that could support a much large population. This process was done with the community's involvement, with many open meetings held, maintaining a level of transparency that was unusual for the time. City planners paid special attention to city transportation, and even more so, to environmental sustainability. Flooding used to be a massive issue in Curitiba and the city used to spend great amounts of money on flood control, but city planners were able to virtually eliminate the problem. Garbage sorting collection was reorganized to reach even the most remote parts of the city, improving city cleanliness and public health as a whole. Several hundred thousand trees were also planted in this process. The urbanization process of Curitiba is generally viewed as a success, and this case study acts as a counterpoint to other situations today that can accrue human rights violations. Now a city of almost 1.9 million, Curitiba remains



one of the best examples of urban planning and sustainable innovation and continues to be a model for other cities.

## Further Research

Urbanization and Sustainability in Asia

<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/27965/urbanization-sustainability.pdf>

This publication goes into great detail about various Asian countries' path to urbanization, and some challenges they face along the way. It contains many case studies.

The New Urban Agenda

<http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda>

This is the New Urban Agenda adopted at the Habitat III Conference and endorsed by the General Assembly. It provides insight on considerations in urban planning in today's world.

Environmental Ramifications of Urbanization

<https://urban.yale.edu/research/theme-4>

This abstract by Yale University explains the consequence that urbanization has brought to the environment because of the lack of sustainability.

Diminishment of Minority Culture

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280089541\\_The\\_Indigenous\\_Experience\\_of\\_Urbanization](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280089541_The_Indigenous_Experience_of_Urbanization)

This link leads to research that shows the connection between urbanization and the diminishment of minority culture in society.

## Guiding Questions

1. How can Member States better distribute resources in cities?
2. What makes urban planning successful?
3. What measures can be taken to allow cities to adapt to environmental impacts?
4. How will building city infrastructure allow for economic status to grow which urbanizing sustainably?

## ~ TOPIC 2 ~

### History

Throughout history, women and men have always been seen in two separate spheres until recently. When the first few societies developed, there were two different roles people took on. The “hunters” which were the men, and their counterpart, the “gatherers,” which was the role that the women took on. The men were the ones who were solely responsible for working outside of the house to provide necessities for their family. While women, had the job of caring for the children and they were expected to stay in the home. These traditional gender roles are the root of the foundation of why women are still treated so unfairly in our society today.

The United States presents a case where these traditional gender roles existed. During the 19th century, there was a concept known as “republican motherhood.” This was the first step in legitimizing education for women, however, was only backed by the reasoning that if women were more educated, they would instill their education into the teachings of their future sons, in order to make their sons better in the future. In addition, there has been the idea of “separate spheres” which plays into the cult of domesticity. This is the ancient fundamental ideology that women only belongs on happenings that occur inside the house, and that women are meant solely for providing care for the children. They were not allowed to have a say in political or economic life.

Beginning in the 17th century, women started to have more of a role in society. The Industrial Revolution gave women a chance to work in textile mills and factories. However, even in these situations they were still treated significantly worse and were given smaller wages than their male counterparts. In addition, some women were given recognition during the Scientific Revolution, where women such as Margaret Cavendish, made scientific breakthroughs.

While we did see some advancements in the status of women in the Western world, in the less economically developed countries we still see traditional gender roles persisting. It is deeply rooted in some countries cultures. In the workplace, we still see a significant amount of discrimination against women in these countries with treacherous conditions and women being unable to attain jobs in high-status professions.

Much of this is rooted in the educational opportunities offered in LEDC's, where education is lacking. Young girls are not offered education in many countries and are unable to pursue any type of professional career. The UN and other nations have made significant strides to accomplish better education in LEDC's, however significant and adequate progress has not yet been made.

In the most recent century, women have been gaining a lot of advancements in their places in society, whether it's through voting rights or access to free education. Nonetheless, this issue still needs to be solved in order to stop the patriarchal aspects that still exist in LEDC's.

### Past UN Action

One of the UN's earliest efforts to combat discrimination against women was in 1967, through the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Within it, rights were broadly affirmed, such as the equal right to an education (Article 9). Education has become one of the major obstacles for women in developing nations, and extensive action has been taken to send more women to school. In 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 189 Member States adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that made education a priority and promised to financial support to implement it.

Besides education, violence against women has been especially detrimental in the battle against discrimination in developing nations. In 1993, the GA passed the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (GA A/RES/48/104). The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was first established by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1946 by Council Resolution 11(II) to documenting the status of women all over the world. After the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the CSW's mandate expanded to include monitoring and reviewing various programs through (ECOSOC 1996/6). Finally, after the

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the CSW contributes to following-up to the agenda to help actualize gender equality (ECOSOC 2015/6). The Commission meets annually, with a different review theme every year. For instance, 2016 focused on “The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls,” while 2017 discussed “Changes and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.” Beyond the CSW, the UNHRC itself also worked extensively to address the grave issue of violence against women, adopting 419 resolutions between 2010-2014 on that as well as others such as human trafficking and maternal mortality. In 2017, the UN and the European Union also started a new program, Spotlight Initiative, that focuses on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

In recent years, UN Women has been one of the UN’s main mechanisms in addressing discrimination against women. UN Women was created in 2010 by the GA in RES/64/289, merging various other organizations, with the Merged Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) being two of them. UN Women became operational in 2011 and is part of the United Nations Development Group, which itself is part of ECOSOC. The Fund for Gender Equality is UN Women’s grantmaking mechanism, and since 2009, has delivered over \$64 million to over 120 programs in 80 countries, helping over 10 million direct beneficiaries. Grants from this fund have been crucial in stripping away barriers for women in developing nations. For instance, in India, the fund supported the Dalit Women’s Livelihoods Accountability Initiative, helping women marginalized by the caste system engage in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme. Between 2009-2011, participation in 8 districts grew from 2,800 to 14,000. In Zimbabwe, UN Women provided impoverished areas along the Zambezi River with new equipment and training to Tonga women go into the male-dominated fishing industry. This helped women sell their own catch in self-organized collectives, becoming more economically independent. UN Women is also part of the Global Alliance for Clean Cook Stoves, and through the fund, provided women in Ghana with green cook stoves. These stoves not only help reduce the effects of climate change-induced desertification but more importantly, save time, allowing women to pursue other tasks or interests. They are also healthier, eliminating a health-barrier that previously contributed to limited opportunities for women.

## Current Situation

While significant progress has been made in closing gender equity gaps in the past few decades, gender equality is still far from being accomplished. On the basis of gender discrimination worldwide is the disparity in education for young girls and women. In 67 countries, primary school enrolment rates for girls is less than 85 percent. Globally, there is an average of 97 girls for every 100 boys in primary school, decreasing to 87 girls per every 100 boys at secondary school levels. According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), almost 33 million girls between the ages of 6 and 15 are not in school. Additionally, more than half of them will never set foot in a classroom. UNICEF also states that “Poor girls from rural areas with uneducated mothers are the children most likely to be excluded from learning opportunities.” If all women in poorer nations completed primary education, child mortality would drop by a sixth, saving one million lives each year. If they all completed secondary education, rates would cut in half, saving approximately three million lives. Furthermore, maternal mortality would be cut by two-thirds, saving 189,000 lives each year, if all women in poor countries completed primary school. Without an equal opportunity for education, women are limited in job choices and they become more prone to a life of poverty.

In the job industry, women continue to face difficulty when seeking employment and face deficits in wages. On average, women in developing nations work more than men, with less time for education, self-care, and leisure. Women also spend more time completing unpaid housework, meaning men spend more time on leisure each day. In South Asia, over 80 percent of women in non-agricultural jobs are in informal employment, often times going weeks without pay. In sub-Saharan Africa, 74 percent of these women work informal jobs, and in Latin America, 54 percent. Additionally, women work in more vulnerable, low-paid, or undervalued jobs. According to UN Women, “49.1 percent of the world’s working women were in vulnerable employment, often unprotected by labor legislation, compared to 46.9 percent of men.” Subsequently, women were far more likely

than men to be in vulnerable employment in East Asia, South-East Asia, and South Asia, along with Sub-Saharan Africa. In terms of wages, women earn 77 cents for every dollar a man earns globally. Additionally, it is calculated that women could “increase their income globally by up to 76 percent” if the wage gap and opportunities disparity gap were both closed. This totals out to be USD 17 trillion globally.

On top of earning less money and working in dangerous conditions, women find more difficult when attempting to succeed in higher level positions. In developing regions, there are three male-owned businesses for every one female business. In South-eastern Asia, there are 3 male employers for every one female employer, and in Northern Africa, there are 13 for every two. Women continue to gain representation in parliaments, but disparities are still extremely apparent. In developing regions, 18 percent of national parliaments is comprised of women compared to the 23 percent in developed nations. In Western Asia and Northern Africa, only 11% of national bodies are comprised of women. With such disparities in positions of leaderships it is much more difficult for other women and young girls to feel empowered or inspired to aim for higher employment positions.

On a more pressing note, domestic violence against women continues to plague the globe, with abuse numbers increasing each year in many regions. The rate of femicide (murder of women and girls) has escalated over the last few years, primarily in Latin America. In Honduras, femicide occurs every 48 hours. While numerous laws have been passed to reduce the amount of femicide occurring, not much is done to enforce these regulations. Dowry deaths (killings by a groom’s family if the bride cannot meet the financial demand of her dowry) are responsible for the murders of thousands. In India alone, there were over 8,000 dowry-related murders, along with 106,527 cruelty cases. Women and girls account for 71 percent of human trafficking victims, and nearly three of every four trafficked women are used in sexual exploitation. Child marriage is also a factor in harassment, as 750 million women and girls alive today were married before their 18th birthday. Child marriage most commonly occurs in West and Central Africa, where over 4 in 10 girls were married before their 18th birthday. 1 in 7 were married before age 15. These early marriages can also result in early pregnancy and mental health issues, and interrupts education and job opportunities in the future.

In a report by the Demographic and Health Surveys, out of nine developing countries surveyed, more than one in six married women report being abused by male partners. At least one in ten have reported being threatened or publically humiliated by their husbands. Globally, every one in three women will report being abused in their lifetime, with over 1 billion women facing violence from an intimate partner. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is horrifically present in numerous regions today. More than 200 million girls have been cut in 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia where FGM is concentrated. FGM has no health benefits, and only harms girls and women in many heinous ways including immediate and long-term health complications. Although FGM numbers have decreased in most nations, many women and girls continue to live in fear of cruel treatment every day. Far more regulations need to be implemented to reduce abuse figures to zero for all nations, developing and developed.

## Bloc Positions

### Most Economically Developed Countries(MEDC's)

In the fight against gender discrimination in developing nations, developed member states have tried to help despite facing their own problems. There is no doubt that the gender gap exists in developed nations, whether regarding the wage gap, the workplace, or political participation. Double standards exist in the media and entertainment industry, and issues like domestic violence continue to be problematic. Yet, developed nations have closed the gender gap enough within their own borders to be able to spend time and energy combating the issue in developing nations, providing a large portion of funding to help women residing in these member states. The Fund for Gender Equality has received returning contributions from governments of member states like Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands. This fund has issued grants all over the world, contributing to women co-ops, creating job opportunities, and in general increasing empowering women economically.



## Middle East

Great strides in the past few decades have reduced the gender inequality throughout the Middle East, with healthier women, more educational equity, and obtaining a college education. However, opportunities for women still lag behind. Nations in the Middle East continue to possess the world's lowest rates of equal workforce participation between men and women. In the Middle East and North Africa, 25% of the workforce is comprised of women, half the worldwide average of approximately 50%. According to the World Bank, if current rates of unemployment continue, "there will be 50 million unemployed men by 2050 and a staggering 145 million unemployed women." In addition, women are also underrepresented in positions of high-status and power. The employment inequality is due largely to the stigma surrounding a "housewife"; that women are weak and busy taking care of their families. Gender-based violence persists in the Middle East, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and rape. In some regions of the Middle East, such as Oman, over 50% of females have been cut in FGM. Violence against females has surged in recent years after the Islamic State started growing and taking control of cities, as a means to prove power and dominance over entire towns. Immediate regulations need to be implemented by the member-states of the UNHRC to curb the violence occurring in the Middle East before millions more are injured or killed.

## Less Economically Developed Countries(LEDC's)

Discrimination on the basis of gender is especially prevalent in these countries that are less economically developed. Fewer developments have been made in the pathway towards gender equality, therefore we still see women holding many of the traditional gender roles. The notions of domesticity have prevented women from achieving such measures. For example, in Africa, women still have barriers in the accessibility of education and employment which prevents them from reaching equality in multiple milieus. The governments of these LEDC's are probably more likely to prioritize issues other than gender equality and are more worried about getting their countries developed. However, each LEDC's have a wide array of stances on the issue, so perspectives will change between nations.

## Case Studies

### Case Study #1: Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a nation composed of more than 163 million people and is one of the poorest and densely populated countries in the world. This country is an example of one who has attempted to implement policies that would increase the status of women, however, has not succeeded thus far in doing so due to the socio-cultural status quo. Women are discriminated against from birth to adulthood, and are expected to take over domestic roles such as cooking and sewing, and are seen as non-permanent members in the house due to the expectation of marriage.

The Constitution of Bangladesh declares all people as equal in all areas of the public realm of life. However, it recognizes Bangladesh's religious personal laws which are undisputedly unfair towards women. Marriage, divorce, custody of children, and inheritance laws. While there have been efforts made to reduce inequality, such as the Acid Crime Control of 2002 and the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980, these haven't been carried out properly due to corruption and the inability of the government to maintain these policies.

Another important leap in the progress was The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) being ratified in Bangladesh in 1984, and has aided significantly in moving towards equality in both primary and secondary education. Due to poverty, literacy rates in Bangladesh are still low but have been increasing in recent decades. The inequality in education, social status, the family, and other spheres of life introduce us to some issues that should be discussed in relation to the problem of gender discrimination.

## Case Study #2: Egypt

For the past few decades, Egypt has been facing a tremendous amount of gender-based discrimination and violence against women, particularly in the workplace and in domestic violence. This large flux of inequality is thought to be due in part to Arab Spring and the deterioration of women's rights during Mubarak regime from 1981 to 2011. The ultra-conservative doctrine at the time dehumanized women, reducing them to objects, and promoting the concept of sexual aggression against them.

Women's participation in the workforce is among the lowest in the world. Young women (aged 18-29) only comprise 18.5% of the labor market, with young men representing over half. In 2012, the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report ranked Egypt 130th out of 135 countries in terms of labor force participation. This low ranking is due mainly to the link between working and marriage, and the cultural concepts that link the two; women tend to be the only ones with household responsibilities, including children. Early marriage poses an additional issue, as the 2017 national census revealed that there were 118,000 girls married under 18. Gender discrimination in Egypt proves to be a pressing epidemic, that requires immediate attention by all member-states.

According to the UN, a 2012 study from the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights discovered that 38% of the women interviewed were forced into early marriages, 60% of women were exposed to domestic violence, and 51.6% have been subjected to verbal abuse, in a survey of 13,500 women. Subsequently, a report in April 2013 revealed that 99.3% of women and girls in Egypt had been subjected to sexual harassment. Violence has remained a horrific fear present in the minds of all women residing in Egypt and will continue to plague their thoughts until stricter regulations are implemented to protect women's rights.

Additionally, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), while illegal, remains a heinous tradition to many young women and adolescents in Egypt. A Human Rights Watch Report found that 55% of girls aged 15 to 17 had undergone FGM in 2015, decreasing from 74% in 2005. While this is a successful trend, over 90% of women in Egypt had been exposed to genital cutting, leaving many with emotional and mental scars far worse than their physical pain. Due to cultural beliefs, parents force their children into circumcision, in order to 'cleanse' their body and mind as well as to prepare them to be suitable for marriage. However, removing the female genitalia has no known health benefits and detrimental adverse health consequences. Although ruled illegal in 2008, FGM has continued to be routine, with only one doctor prosecuted and convicted. Egyptian authorities should formulate policies and additional training for law enforcement and educational personnel to remove the false known "benefits" that are associated with FGM, and to change the mindset of the society.

## Further Research

UN Women

<http://www.unwomen.org/en>

This is the site to UN Women, the main UN organization dedicated to gender equality. This is a good place to find past UN action.

Discrimination Studies in Developing Countries

<http://www.ijssh.org/papers/106-CH240.pdf>

This compares two developing countries, Bangladesh and Malaysia, in how their government's face social issues regarding women. This gives an in-depth explanation of the current socio-cultural status.

Social Institutions Role in Gender Equality

<http://www.gsdr.org/document-library/womens-discrimination-in-developing-countries-a-new-dataset-for-better-policies/>

This study gives insight as to how existing social institutions impact whether or not gender inequality will become less prevalent.

## Guiding Questions

1. What are some underlying economic issues that are barriers to gender equality, and how can we approach them?
2. How is gender discrimination in developing nations, and how does that change the way we try to eliminate it?
3. How do we get Member States to drift away from patriarchal social norms?
4. What type of approach to confronting inequality would be most successful?