



MUNESCO

Forum: Special Focus 2

Issue: Eradicating extreme poverty with a special emphasis on sub-Saharan Africa

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Introduction

Although extreme poverty has been reduced by half since 1990, it remains a challenge facing humanity, especially in developing regions. One in five people still live on less than \$1.90 daily, in developing parts of the world, and on the global scale, 700 million people struggle to live in extreme poverty. Moreover, many people are still in risk of slipping back into extreme poverty. The outcomes of this go far beyond than the lack of income and resources necessary to ensure a sustainable livelihood. This usually leads to hunger, malnutrition, restrained access to education and healthcare and even social discrimination and exclusion. Inclusive economic growth must be sustained in all parts of the world in order to ensure the eradication of extreme poverty.

Poverty has many dimensions and the most fundamental reasons behind it can be listed as unemployment, social exclusion, and high vulnerability of certain populations to disasters, diseases and other phenomena which result in a lack of productivity. 70% of the global total of extremely poor people live in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia in lower middle-income countries including China, Indonesia, India and Nigeria.

In 2000, the United Nations established the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in order to increase global partnership to reduce extreme poverty, setting out eight targets with the 2015 deadline. The first goal reads as “Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger” with the target of halving the proportion of people who live on less than \$1.25 a day between the years 1990 and 2015. Despite the fact that this target was met ahead of the 2015 deadline, with 1 billion people lifted out of extreme poverty, there still remains a lot to accomplish.

As the time allocated for the MDGs elapsed, the United Nations announced the 2030 agenda, also known as the Sustainable Development Agenda, announcing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These ambitious targets build on the success of the MDGs and call for “concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet.”¹ Goal 1 of the 2030 Agenda aims to eradicate poverty in all its forms and everywhere. This should be done in a responsible manner, however, and the future generations’ needs should not be compromised. The most significant difference between the MDGs and SDGs is in terms of inclusiveness, as the MDGs only involved developing countries whereas the SDGs are universal. However, considering Goal 1, some regions of the globe should be targeted specifically, such as the sub-Saharan Africa, as an overwhelming majority of the people in extreme poverty reside there.



¹ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>



Definition of Key Terms

Extreme poverty: A condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information that depends not only on income but also on access to services.² The poverty line was revised in 2015—since then, a person is considered to be in extreme poverty if they live on less than 1.90 international dollar according to the World Bank.

Sub-Saharan Africa: This term refers to the part of the African continent that lies south of the Sahara Desert. The north and sub-Saharan regions of Africa have been separated by the extremely harsh climate conditions. Sub-Saharan Africa is home to the overwhelming majority of people living below the poverty line.



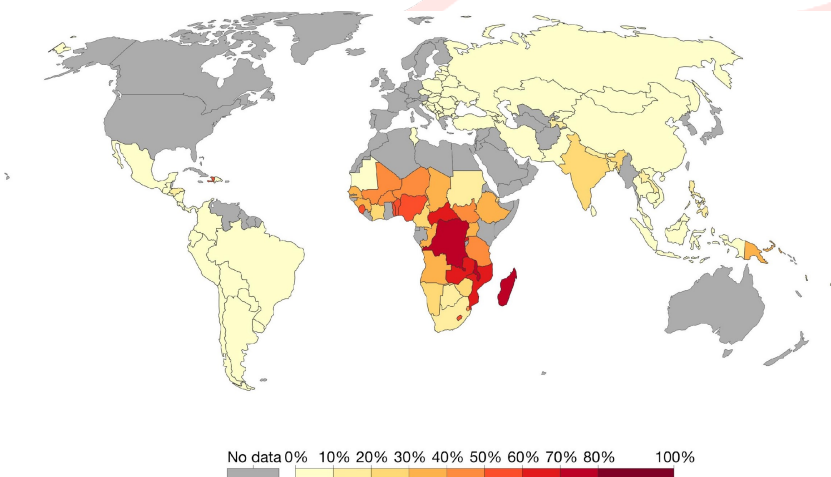
Sustainable development: Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Gross domestic product (GDP), total market value of the goods and services produced by a country's economy during a specified period of time. It is used internationally as the main measure of output and economic activity.

Background Information

During the first half of the 20th century, the growth of the world population caused the absolute number of poor people in the world to increase, even though the proportion of people in poverty was decreasing. After around 1970, the decrease in poverty rates became so steep that the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty started falling as well. This trend of decreasing poverty—both in

absolute numbers and as a share of the world population—has been a constant during the last three decades. The map below shows the share of the population living in extreme poverty. Note that the ratio is the highest in sub-Saharan Africa.



Source: World Bank

OurWorldInData.org/extreme-poverty/ • CC BY-SA

² United Nations. "Report of the World Summit for Social Development", March 6–12, 1995.



It is important to note that the international poverty line (\$1.90 a day) is extremely low. Thus, extreme poverty is a valid term for those living under this low threshold. Focusing on extreme poverty is crucial as it refers to those most in need. However, it is also important to point out that living conditions well above the international poverty line can still be considered as poverty and hardship.

In order to reduce extreme poverty and minimise the side effects of it, continuous actions take place on the international platform, led by the United Nations. The MDGs and SDGs are the broadest ones, with the main objective of eradicating extreme poverty.

Vicious Cycle of Poverty

In the cycle of poverty, families remain poor for three or more generations due to a number of factors. Short life expectations among the extremely poor causes the cycle of poverty to last for a long time such that the older generation does not live to positively impact economic or social values to the younger generation.

For a newborn, poverty begins at birth and, if he or she survives, grows up malnourished and often sick as their mothers cannot afford a better lifestyle. This cycle continues as the children become poor adults who give birth to poor children. The cycle of poverty has distinct indicators like less food, less water, poor health, illiteracy, poor sanitation, lack of opportunities, and low income, among other factors.³

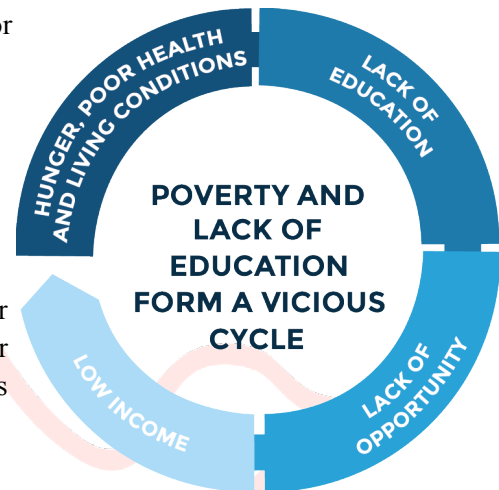
A long-lasting and coherent way of eradicating extreme poverty would be possible through breaking this cycle through effective policy-making.

Poverty in the sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa is developing rapidly towards high levels of prosperity and income. There have been major democratic improvements, resulting in more responsive and effective governments. Overall, the number of armed conflicts in the area seems to be on a downward trend. The private sector is improving in agriculture, as well as telecommunications, finance, housing and construction.

In addition, new technologies are spreading across the continent, leading to valuable progress in the areas of information and communication. Natural resources such as oil, gas are creating new opportunities. There have also been considerable improvements in human development. Africa's levels of extreme poverty have decreased since 1999, with expanded social policies also improving health and education services – including those targeting women and girls.

Still, there are many obstacles and challenges facing countries in Africa, preventing them from eradicating extreme poverty. Also, there are major discrepancies among the countries in the region: some are growing strongly, reaching Middle Income Country Status when others remain stuck in conflict and other crises, chronic poverty and low capacity. In many countries, economic growth is not benefiting the poorest. Further, an increasing number of youth are without adequate skills or jobs. Climate change, political instability, diseases, poor infrastructure, and mismanaged financial resources plague the region.



³ <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-the-cycle-of-poverty.html>



Goals were established in order to improve the prosperity and well-being of people living in developing regions. The first goal of the Millennium Development Agenda was eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

Extreme poverty rates have been reduced in every developing region, and the MDG target on the proportion of people living in extreme poverty has been met five years ahead of the target date. About 700 million fewer people lived in extreme poverty conditions in 2010 than in 1990 with an estimated decrease in proportion from 36% to 15%. Despite this impressive achievement at the global level, 1 billion people are still living in extreme poverty.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Global Development in 2015. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilise efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Goal 1 of the 2030 Agenda aims to eradicate extreme poverty on a global scale. Below are the targets of the goal:

- By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living less than \$1.25 a day
- By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definition
- Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable
- By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro-finance
- By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters
- Ensure significant mobilisation of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions
- Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions

Transitioning from the MDGs to the SDG

The outcome of the MDGs is inarguably positive as they enhanced the well-being and prosperity of many people universally. However, with the population world approaching 8 billion, there are some issues that can't be fully resolved within 15 years.



Poverty, unfortunately, is one of them. However, by building on the success of the MDGs and correcting the flaws of it, the SDGs can be the tool to end poverty.

It is important to note the differences of the SDGs in comparison to the MDGs in order to have an insight to the things that can be done.

- The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets are broader in scope and go further than the MDGs by addressing the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people. The goals cover the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.
- The new Goals are universal and apply to all countries, whereas the MDGs were intended for action in developing countries only.
- A core feature of the SDGs is their strong focus on means of implementation—the mobilisation of financial resources—capacity-building and technology, as well as data and institutions.

Bearing these in mind, there is a lot of hope that the SDGs will be a greater success in eradicating extreme poverty. The possible solutions part of this study guide elaborates on the things that should be done in order to achieve this in a sustainable manner.

Timeline of Major Events

Several projects are taking place on the global level supported on the international platform, led by the UN agencies and non-governmental organisations. These projects and initiatives target the regions in utmost need. Organisations such as the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank are responsible for crisis management projects in areas affected by extreme poverty. The aforementioned organisations support these regions with funds and development plans.

The table below outlines the events that are of utmost importance for poverty eradication as they express a global commitment to this cause.

6th - 8th September 2000	The Millennium Summit was held, a meeting among many world leaders lasting three days from 6 September to 8 September 2000 at the United Nations Headquarters in NYC. Eradicating extreme poverty was one of the key concerns of the summit.
8th September 2000	United Nations Millennium Declaration was adopted by the General Assembly. (A/RES/55/2) The third clause of this resolution is entitled “Development and Poverty Eradication” and is a commitment to halving extreme poverty by the year 2000.
1st January 2000	17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN Summit — officially came into force.



Relevant UN Treaties and Resolutions on the issue are:

- The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet. Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda (A/69/700)
- Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Report of the Secretary-General (E/2017/66)
- United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/RES/55/2)
- First United Nations decade for Eradication of Extreme Poverty (A/RES/51/178)
- Second United Nations decade for Eradication of Extreme Poverty (A/RES/62/205)

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The World Bank

The World Bank has two main goals to accomplish by 2030: ending extreme poverty by decreasing the proportion of people living on less than \$1.90 a day to 3% and promoting shared prosperity. This international financial institution provides developing countries with vital economic and technical assistance. The bank provide low-interest loans, zero to low-interest credits, and grants to developing countries which support the development of numerous investments in areas such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, agriculture, and environmental and natural resource management. Governments, other multilateral institutions, commercial banks, export credit agencies, and private sector investors finance the initiatives of The World Bank. The Bank is involved in approximately 13,000 projects all over the world that aim poverty reduction and economic prosperity enhancement. Please refer to their website for further research.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP is the UN agency primarily responsible for sustainable development affairs, thus, they lead the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda. The work of the organisation involves areas such as poverty alleviation, democratic governance and peace-building, climate change and disaster risk reduction. As the first goal of this agenda aims to eradicate extreme poverty on a global scale, the UNDP plays a major part in this process.

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations focuses on poverty and hunger reduction through improving agricultural productivity and promoting programmes that enhance direct and immediate access to food by the neediest. FAO helps developing countries to improve agriculture, forestry and fishery practices so that they can benefit from these natural resources in order to boost daily income.

China

China has one of the fastest growing economies in the world and they built an extraordinary socioeconomic policy in order to recover from conditions of extreme poverty. Since the beginning of this millennium, poverty rate in China decreased from 61% to 4%. All effective poverty reduction measures are based on industrial development in the country. Industrial development in poverty-stricken areas in China is supported and improved through the policies of the government. Also, technological development has a very important role in this process.



The Chinese government launched numerous targeted poverty reduction programs covering areas such as physical infrastructure, social development, and industrial development. An ancient Chinese saying goes: “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” In very basic terms, the Chinese development model taught people how to fish, by providing them with jobs.

Nigeria

The absolute proportion of Nigerians living below the poverty line as at 2010 was estimated at 62.6 per cent –51.2 per cent for the urban people and 69.0 per cent for the rural. Nigeria is among the nations with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies. This is implemented by National Emergency Management Agency in Nigeria. Nigeria is taking strong steps towards sustainable development, and extreme poverty is being reduced.

The Democratic Republic of Congo

The country is among the poorest in the region with nearly 88% population in extreme poverty. Children are severely malnourished and many die due to the adverse conditions.

The website provides detailed information about poverty eradication measures taken in the countries in the sub-Saharan Africa: <http://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/regioninfo.html>

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The first goal of the Millennium Development Agenda was eradicating extreme poverty and hunger in developing regions. This goal had three sub-targets which are as follows:

1. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day
2. Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people
3. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Extreme poverty rates have been reduced in every developing region, and the MDG target on the proportion of people living in extreme poverty has been met five years ahead of the target date. About 700 million fewer people lived in extreme poverty conditions in 2010 than in 1990 with an estimated decrease in proportion from 36% to 15%. Despite this impressive achievement at the global level, 1 billion people are still living in extreme poverty.

Moreover, it is important to highlight that this decrease was not inclusive, as sub-Saharan Africa was the only developing region that couldn't meet the target. India and China, being the fastest growing economies of the world, substituted for this. China, with an accelerated industrial growth, managed to reduce the ratio of people in extreme poverty from 61% to 4%. Although this might seem as a valuable success, the irresponsible consumption and production patterns behind this decrease have posed a threat to the environment. At this point, it would be impossible to approve of the fact that this poverty eradication was sustainable.

In the sub-Saharan Africa, on the other hand, poverty rate remained the same from 1990 to 2002. Although in the past decade poverty reduction increased by a considerable amount, the region still lags behind. In 2015, (deadline of the MDGs) 40% of the population was living in extreme poverty.



Possible Solutions

Measures to eradicate extreme poverty must be taken into consideration more on the national level. There are conspicuous differences in the context of each country in terms of the needs of the citizens and the policies of the government. Therefore, country-specific policy-making and development strategies would be the most effective in recovering from the challenges of extreme poverty. The conditions a country is in must be evaluated with utmost care and a sustainable development plan should be formulated accordingly based on the country's potential. An international committee can be established to advise governments suffering from extreme poverty with further rights and responsibilities. An international development plan would most likely be ineffective as conditions differ drastically among countries.

Growth must be planned in an inclusive, labour-intensive way. Employment opportunities must be enforced by the government based on the resources of the country. Governments should be encouraged to invest in the human capital of people, especially for those in limited access to basic services due to reasons beyond their control. Nationally appropriate social protection systems (against severe weather, pandemics, economic crises, inflation...) must be implemented for all people in order to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

At this point, the significance of effective policy-making is very obvious. The quality of economic growth is as crucial as its quantity. Governments should adopt the necessary legislations in order to promote sustainable and inclusive development, to create more decent jobs, and to invest in public's health, safety, education, nutrition and sanitation. The durability of the aforementioned processes is also vital. An international commission on poverty eradication, again, would be helpful in assisting governments in need with the appropriate policies and projections.

Food market must be stabilised as the economy of developing regions especially in sub-Saharan Africa depend on agriculture. If food prices rise too much, this would most likely end up in a crisis of hunger, as people would not be able afford buying these foods. If the prices drop too much, farmers can be bankrupt and eventually production would stop. Improving agricultural productivity and promoting better nutritional practices at all levels is of utmost importance. National governments have the key responsibility in this process.

Empowering women can play a key role in eradicating extreme conditions of poverty in the sub-Saharan Africa. If women participate effectively in workforce, their financial dependence upon men and the government would be reduced. By 2030, appropriate actions should be taken in order to ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property.

Referring to the 8th goal on the 2030 agenda, the following measures should be taken in order to enhance economic growth when promoting decent jobs:

- Sustaining per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries.
- Achieving higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.

Also, by 2030, resilience-building measures for the poor would be very beneficial. Their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters must be reduced as such events are a major cause of extreme poverty.



Ensuring access to education is perhaps the starting point in poverty reduction because students can acquire relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, required for employment. Thus, they will play a major role in lifting their families from the vicious cycle of poverty. Ensuring equal education for everyone would be the keystone for lifting the society out of extreme poverty in vulnerable countries.

Overall, a broad development plan should be formulated for countries in need, and international cooperation should be encouraged among the rich and poor countries. Delegates should refer to policy-making measures, social security systems, market regulations, agricultural support, education and empowerment of women in a detailed way in order to clearly address this issue.

Targets of goals 1, 2, 4, 5 and 8 on the Sustainable Development Agenda would be a good starting point for formulating possible solutions. Since Special Focus 2 in MUNESCO is about Sustainable Development, delegates should put the issue into this context, approaching it from a variety of perspectives.

Useful Links For Further Research

- <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-1-no-poverty.html>
- <https://www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors/topics/millennium-development-goals-mdgs/goal-1-eradicate-extreme-poverty-and-hunger/>
- <https://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf166/aconf166-9.htm>
- <http://www.mdgmonitor.org/mdg-1-eradicate-poverty-hunger/>
- <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/06/08/ending-extreme-poverty>
- <http://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/regioninfo.html>

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- Thematic Paper on MDG 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger, United Nations Development Group
- Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality, World Bank Group, Washington DC