

# Economic and Social Council

## Strategies to aid sustainable development in LEDCs

### **Description of the problem:**

The gap between More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) and Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) is really enormous in several aspects. In order to stabilize their situations and to further their global integration, the help of MEDCs is essential.

The main problems which occur in LEDCs, and which have to be combated in order to guarantee sustainable development, are struggle towards democracy, industrialization, substandard wages, child labour, unfairness in trade, lack of education, gender equality and health.



### **Definition of key terms:**

**LEDC** Less Economically Developed Country stands for a country, which has low economic and living standards. According to the World Bank, a country with a GNI below USD 11.905 per capita is considered a LEDC.

**MEDC** More Economically Developed Country stands for a country with high economic and living standards. The GDP is for example one factor included in the criteria for being considered an MEDC.

**MNC** Multinational Corporation stands for an enterprise that is operating in several countries and being managed from one country, usually an MEDC.

**GDP** Gross Domestic Products stand for the total market value of all final goods and services produced in a country during a fixed period, mostly a year. GDP can also be measured per capita by dividing the population.

**GNI** Gross National Income stands for the sum of value added by all resident producers plus any product taxes and the income received from foreign countries. GNI can also be measured per capita (per person).

### **General information:**

The LECS's are facing the following 9 problems:

*Struggle towards democracy:*

The global integration of LEDCs can't be furthered properly until the focus of the governances is concentrated on fighting corruption and stabilizing the democratic infrastructure. They can be given endless help but it will be useless if the governances can't guarantee appropriate use.



### *Substandard wages:*

Due to the fact that the LEDCs have large and poor populations - according to the World Bank, 1.2 billion people have less than USD 1 for living per day- the demand of employment is extremely high. The MNCs take advantages of this by paying substandard wages, which are below the International Labour Standards adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

### *Working conditions:*

The workers are exposed to harmful substances without being properly protected, which can lead to health problems such as for example lung diseases. The many hours of work bear no relation to the low wages.

### *Child labour:*

According to UNICEF, 218 million children were engaged in child labour in LEDCs in 2004. In many states, such as for example Somalia or India, child labour is an important factor for sustaining the economy. But no matter which motives lie behind, child labour is harmful to children. Not only does work deprive children of their right to education as stated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, it is also harmful to their health or physical and mental development. Furthermore children who work are not only exploited but also very often abused. They work for substandard wages or no wages at all under bad working conditions. Such exploitation goes against Article 32 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which recognizes the right of a child to be protected from economic exploitation and calls for regulation of work hours and salaries of working children.

### *Debts and unfair in trade:*

In order to stabilize the economic and social situation, the LEDCs get direct aid from MEDCs -which leads to growing debts of the LEDCs-. There is not much chance they will be able to pay back these debts, as the world market prices for their raw materials and manufactured export goods are very low. Furthermore, they are often confronted with discriminating trade regulations. Last but not least, they are dependent on expensive imports from the MEDCs. All in all, the national income is not high enough to finance the old debts, which then again results in new ones. The vicious circle is completed.

### *Lack of education:*

The children of LEDCs can often not be taught because there is no money to build schools, to afford qualified personnel and the materials needed. The lack of education makes it almost impossible for the children to have a perspective of a better future.

### *Gender equality:*

Women in LEDCs suffer from inequalities in several sectors. Most women are not educated, because if there is education, girls are often excluded. They also have fewer economic opportunities and because of that, they are excluded from decision-making processes. Overall is their role in society much smaller than the role of the men.

### *Health:*

A lot of diseases are spread in LEDCs without any way of combating them. A lack of money to pay the inoculations needed and the lack of hygiene in these countries are a threat to their

population. Medical centres and primary health care provided through donations and the sending of qualified personnel in the sector of medicine are rare. And last but definitely not least the lack of awareness of diseases and their related precautions in the populations. It is of utmost importance to combat the spread of diseases like HIV/ Aids.

#### *Environment:*

It is important to raise public awareness in the LEDCs about the environment and the exploitation of natural resources. They must understand that an eco-friendly development would improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

#### **Relevant treaties, UN resolutions and actions taken:**

- *International Labour Standards (ILO)*
- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December 1948)*
- *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (2 September 1990)*
- *Investigation into sexual exploitation of refugees by aid workers in West Africa (A/57/604/Add.1)*
- *United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/55/L.2)*
- *Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention (17 June 1999)*
- *Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development (A/Conf.199/20, September 2002)*
- *Gender Equality Action plan ( DFID, Department For International Development, 2009-2012)*
- *European Strategy to promote gender equality in development cooperation*

#### **Strategies:**

There are a lot of organisations and industrial countries willing to support the development of LEDCs. They are, however, also the main reason for the situation of the LEDCs. Industrial countries such as the countries of the European Union, the United States of America, China, and Japan play a major role in the exploitation of the LEDCs. Especially their trading policies suppress the appropriate development of LEDCs. Trade barriers and trade restrictions such as extremely high customs duties are hindrances for the economy of developing countries.

Nevertheless, the European Union is the worldwide biggest aid donator, spending 49 billion euros on supporting the developing countries, and after years of unfair trade, the first well organised strategies come into existence.

In order to advance the trading conditions and hence the situation of the worlds least developed countries, the European Union established the “Everything But Arms initiative” in 2001. This initiative aims to eliminate all duties and quotas for all products except for arms coming from LEDCs. By opening their markets to the poor countries and by developing special trading relationships the LEDCs shall be able to compete on the world market.

In 2008 the members of the European Union paid 0,4 % of their GNP for developing aid. For 2010 they are planning to increase this amount of money by 0,16 % .  
Furthermore the EU supports a lot of small programmes and initiatives aiming to help LEDCs.

Examples of measures for sustainable development in LEDCs could be:

- technical cooperation and policy dialogue
- legal and judicial strengthening
- international reform in agriculture
- the possibility for students of LEDCs to study abroad
- full access to the World Trading System

Eco-friendly strategies:

- organic farming striving to reverse severe land degradation
- low-cost solar energy projects
- environmental standards (for for example miners)
- raise public awareness about the earth's changing climate
- minimize environmental threats
- improve national resource management
- sound management of chemicals
- sustainable solid waste management system in order to keep cities clean

These are possible strategies, but by no means all strategies, so please look for other initiatives and strategies, be creative and come up with your own –hopefully very bright-ideas.

### **Useful Sources an Links:**

Child Labour:

[www.unicef.org/protection/files/Child\\_Labour.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Child_Labour.pdf)

International Labour Standards:

[www.ilo.org/global/what\\_we\\_do/InternationalLabourStandards/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/what_we_do/InternationalLabourStandards/lang--en/index.htm)

UNICEF:

[www.unicef.org/crc/](http://www.unicef.org/crc/)

Convention On The Rights Of The Child:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

Department of International Development:

[www.dfid.gov.uk/](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/)

Africa gender equality action plan:

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/africa-gender-equality-action-plan.pdf>

Development programmes of the European Union:

[http://europa.eu/pol/dev/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/dev/index_en.htm)

Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development:

<http://www.un-documents.net/jburgdec.htm>

EU strategy for Africa:

[http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/development/african\\_caribbean\\_pacific\\_states/r12540\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/development/african_caribbean_pacific_states/r12540_en.htm)

[http://www.edc2010.net/detail\\_page.phtml?page=section\\_14](http://www.edc2010.net/detail_page.phtml?page=section_14)

Johannesburg Plan of Implementation:

[http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD\\_POI\\_PD/English/POIChapter8.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English/POIChapter8.htm)

Eco-friendly initiatives:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32902&Cr=unep&Cr1>