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## United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



## The Perks and Plight of Global Partnerships

### Topic Background

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the UN's global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. Given its rather expansive yet thus enabling mission statement, its global efforts are currently concentrated on realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015. Adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 heads of state and governments during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, these eight goals, drawn from the actions and targets contained in the Millennium Declaration, have been serving to provide a framework for fulfilling the mission statement of UNDP:

- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

The MDGs synthesize various commitments made at different conferences and summits, establish explicitly the need for interdependence on the issues contained, acknowledge the importance of democratic governance and human rights as the grounds for success, state timely measurable indicators, and are generally regarded as UNDP's greatest achievement

in the new millennium, because something of such scale has never been implemented before, much less agreed upon by so many different heads of state and governments.

Every goal has a part in contributing to the betterment in quality of life for all, but of these eight, global partnerships are of particular importance to the UNDP's continuing efforts in achieving the MDGs as planned, because it is the only stipulation that specifically addresses and encourages international relations. For a less developed country to accomplish any of the first seven goals, developed countries must first provide means for them to overcome local and national issues, enabling them to understand the global perspective. Once they do, they in turn empower even needier countries, and with the proper infrastructure of correspondence in place, the MDGs can then be executed systematically.

Knowing this, many member nations in the UNDP have already taken various approaches in becoming the change they hope to see in countries of need, actively engaging themselves and delivering their end of the bargain. Australia, for one, continues its strong ties with its neighbors in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Solomon Islands and East Timor. With an Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget of \$2.491 billion, Australia actively engages in ways to best serve partner countries at a level consistent with its own economic circumstances and capacity to assist. Providing debt relief, staffing health care institutions, and helping reconstruct war torn nations, Australia has been very proactive about establishing connections. Thailand, on the other hand, has offered its support to other less developed countries by



opening its market and making foreign direct investments for the building of essential infrastructure. As a long-time recipient of foreign aid, Thailand can also share its successes, lessons learned, and advise other developing countries. The Thai International Cooperation Programme (TICP), in particular, is committed to sharing Thailand's expertise and experiences to enhance the chance of success for those walking in their path. And because it can engage in certain inter-country dialogues and contend with issues pertinent to its region, Thailand is an essential agent of change for many developing countries nearby. Both of these countries exemplify the solidarity and cooperation sought and practiced among member nations, working together to achieve the MDGs by 2015 as originally planned.

While each participating member nation assumes its part in the whole slightly differently, much of the contributions have been monetary, the partnership usually involving a more developed country pledging to financially support one that is less developed. The latter then must do its part to ensure greater accountability to citizens and efficient use of resources, and global partnerships serve to bring in more effective aid, sustainable debt relief and fairer trade rules in order for the local, national, and global efforts to integrate seamlessly.

With all the perks of global partnerships, however, there are perils, which is what brings us to our topic #1. What could possibly go wrong with such all-encompassing, seemingly altruistic plan, you might ask? Well, plenty, actually. *With more money comes more problems, as the rapper Notorious B.I.G. once proclaimed.*

The reason is because there are certain people behind some of these operations meant to help the needy whose interest lies in helping themselves. While there are many cases in which global partnerships are executed flawlessly, the lack of an across-the-board oversight policy renders many problems. There are seven specific targets listed under Goal 8, as well as 17 indicators to help keep track of progress made in terms of these targets, but the loose structure left within the goal meant to allow for flexibility to fit different needs and situations have since been manipulated, prompting scattered responses and results.

## Case Study: Argentina

Argentina is one country that has been devastated by hastily negotiated global partnerships that have cost the nation a deficit of six billion dollars of foreign investment. Despite its abundance of natural resources and educated workers in comparison to its regional peers, Argentina is facing its worst economic crisis since 2000-2001. There is a problem that is embedded in "broken contracts, debt defaults and weak institutions," but the real issue stems from the fact that investors are often focused on short-term gains – when their expectations are not met right away, they pull out their support as they wish, leaving the country in dire jeopardy with a sudden drop in circulating funds. The inconsistent give-and-take of funds has left Argentina scrambling to make sense of the situation at hand, thus putting all the other development goals on hold.

## Issues to Consider

Global partnerships are excellent in theory, but the execution can falter and create tension and division, when they are in fact



meant to bring countries together. They can actually have an aversive effect when not moderated carefully. How then, are both the developed and developing countries to negotiate? What are some realistic, tangible ways that can ensure and foster the collaborative and reciprocal nature in which these global partnerships should be formed? You might want to start by examining current trends among countries involved in global partnerships – what seems to be the bonding agent that pulls nations together? What are some incentives for the helping countries to engage in helping others? Do remember that an argument is only as strong as the counter argument which you should both provide and rebut to make your argument stronger – anticipate them, and use them to your advantage. Be the devil’s advocate, even. Why should the responsibility lie solely with the countries on the giving end? What can the countries on the receiving end do to make these transactions occur as smoothly as possible? After identifying some of the issues in the questions mentioned above, consider then your nation’s history, struggles, and other relative aspects that need to be explored in determining your policy. Generating a feasible and well-articulated solution that encompasses all of these things will ultimately yield a strong delegation policy.

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## Back to the Basics

### Topic Background

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have allowed the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to make leaps and bounds in delivering tangible results to bring much sought help to the needy worldwide, but their short-term nature has been overlooked with regards to the underlying purpose of the UNDP, which is to continue advocating for change beyond the year 2015. To review, the UNDP is “the UN’s global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.” One of its many ongoing efforts is documented through the annual Human Development Reports (HDRs). Commissioned by the UNDP, HDRs focus on managing development issues around the world, around the clock. Coupled with the MDGs, HDRs ensure the comprehensiveness of the scope of operation within the UNDP, as they each accommodate different needs, and cater to different goals, the first being more short-term and the latter being more long-term. Together, the two act as a system of checks and balances for realizing all aims of the UNDP.

Human rights and human development share a common vision and a common purpose—to secure, for every human being, freedom, well-being and dignity. There are seven distinct kinds of freedom the HRD is concerned with in particular, which are:

- 1: Freedom from Discrimination
- 2: Freedom from Fear
- 3: Freedom of Speech

- 4: Freedom of Want
- 5: Freedom to Develop and Realize One’s Human Potential
- 6: Freedom from Injustice and Violations of the Rule of Law
- 7: Freedom for Decent Work - Without Exploitation

As with MDGs, HRDs, too are administered through quantifiable means. But instead of relying on specific numbers and/or data, oversight is provided by various committees dedicated to setting the standards for basic human rights to protect and push for the freedoms listed above: Human Rights Committee (ICCPR), Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Committee against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). While all six of the committees are important in their respective ways, there is one committee with the highest number of active member nations that might indicate its relative importance. As of February 16, 2000, there was just one country that had not ratified or signed on board, and that committee happens to be the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Created in 1989, CRC is the newest human rights treaty body within the UN, yet it boasts an impressive membership of 191 nations, whose governments must submit regular, detailed reports on the national situation of children’s rights to the committee for examination. Beyond the basic rights of a child, this committee is



also responsible for the implementation of the optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, optional protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. The level of global interest in protecting out youths is at an all-time high, and this brings us to the second topic for the 56<sup>th</sup> session of BMUN UNDP – the use and proliferation of child labor.

### **Case Study: Cambodia**

In Cambodia, it is estimated that nearly 84% of the sample households in the Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey (CSES) of 1999 reported the need for the child to augment the household income. This is especially pertinent to the poorest 20% of the population in which children aged 5-17 years contribute 12.2% of household wage earnings. What is catastrophic about these numbers is that most of these are generated by children engaged in extensive domestic work in the child's own home. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), child domestic work has many features that differentiates it from other forms of child labor. 1) It is among the lowest status, least regulated, and poorest paid of all occupations, 2) most child domestic workers are live-in servants who can be summoned to work day and night, 3) a typical working hours for child domestic servants are 12-16 hours a day, seven days a week, 4) children can get recruited for domestic work very early on, 5) the earnings of these child domestic servants are often given directly to their parents or guardians, and lastly 6) child domestic work is among the most socially-isolated jobs, and it inhibits any contact with peers. This raises a lot of concern for the youths of Cambodia, because the child's education is often neglected because of this phenomenon.

Uktha, 19 years old, was forced to start providing for his family when his father passed away during Pol Pot's regime, which then caused his mother to fall seriously ill. He is considered lucky, though, because he has managed to stay on top of his academics, but that isn't to say that prioritizing his education was an easy decision to make. In order to go to school, Uktha has been going to work a graveyard shift as a scavenger, working from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. at a site 15 km away from his home. He is often stopped and beaten up by the Bang Thom gang that terrorizes the streets, but he chooses to risk his well-being on a daily basis in order to be educated. His two sisters, unfortunately, have long forgone their education to help out around their own home. As girls are more readily employed within the home, his sisters are part of the 85% of the 14-17 year olds in Cambodia that don't attend school.

Not only is child labor depriving the youths of Cambodia of an education, it is affecting their health as well. Some of the children are being exposed toxins and chemical hazards unsafe for their relatively small size and immature metabolic pathways. Some of the more desperate children have even been subjected to commercial child sex, putting them at risk for HIV/AIDS.

Given these facts, the child labor problem in Cambodia appears to be overwhelming, with 42% of children aged 5-17 years engaged in some form of work. However, not all of the child labor observed in Cambodia is necessarily detrimental. Some types of child work, especially in family-based activities, such as farming, fetching water and firewood, and minding the family grocery store, are often considered socially desirable, provided the work is not physically very demanding, does not take



up too much of the child's time, and does not interfere with the child's schooling. Child work in many traditional societies is an important means of transmitting job and vocational skills, including many traditional crafts and arts, from parents to children. The highly individualized and private nature of child domestic work makes it especially difficult to determine their absolute value, cultural or economic, or the lack thereof.

## Issues to Consider

The protection of human rights in helping developing countries attract and use aid effectively is an important issue for the UNDP, and considering how the future of our youths largely influences the prospect of its long-term goals, the topic of child labor is not something that cannot be taken lightly. As a delegate of the UNDP, these two factors should serve as the main premise for an argument both in session and for the position papers as well. How does the human rights policy in your country interpret the UNDP's mission statement, and what historical information might you have to offer to yield a clear, concise thesis?

In addition, keep in mind that there isn't always a social cost associated with the use of child labor, because it is culturally accepted and even anticipated, which would make it difficult to form an argument against it. Be sure to address the other perspective regardless of your own policy, and tactfully form a proposed solution that best proves your understanding of this global problem (or is it a problem?).

1. And lastly consider this: "The fact is that the [World Trade Organization]'s policies are creating conditions for the accentuation of poverty and the decline in

the condition of workers everywhere. Child labor is one manifestation or effect of the demands being placed on the majority of the world's population under a neoliberal economic regime," claims Saadia Roor, in his book, *Child Labor in Pakistan: Coming of Age in the New World Order*. Basically, he contends that globalization is responsible for the prevalence child labor, because it draws children into servitude by offering false hope of escape. There may or may not be any correlation, but I encourage you to take some time to explore the issue at a more grand, global scale that's in tune with the UNDP's mission statement in forming your thesis.

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