

Forum:	Economic and Social Council
Issue:	The issue of ensuring social and economic equity in impoverished areas
Student Officer:	Olivia Reed
Position:	Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Olivia Reed, I am 17 years old, I am a student at Byron College and I will be serving as a Deputy President of the Economic and Social Council during the 7th PS-MUN. I have participated in numerous MUN's before, including the 6th PS-MUN conference, however this will be my first time as a chair.

The issue of ensuring social and economic equity throughout impoverished areas is an urgent one that needs to be tackled. Everyday, people face extreme poverty and have to endure the conditions that accompany this. By not having social or economic equity, people experience vast inequalities that severely impact their lives. I hope this study guide will help further your research into this topic, and that this upcoming conference will be a most enjoyable one. My email is oliviareedsomers@gmail.com , do not hesitate to contact me regarding any questions you may have.

INTRODUCING TOPIC

Achieving both social and economic equity is a problem that many impoverished areas have trouble establishing, and whilst its recognition has grown, it is clear that its meaning is not fully understood. Equity is based on the idea of moral equality, the principle that people should be treated as equals. This is the idea that, despite many differences, all people share a common humanity or human dignity and, as a result of this, we must consider how each of them should be treated. This is not the same as treating people equally. Income related inequalities in ownership of assets and the variety of services and benefits are growing. There is greater inequality in the distribution of opportunities for unemployment and underemployment, affecting the disproportionate number of people at the lower end of the socio-economic scale. ¹

In developing countries, people's access to and interaction with key institutions are shaped by power balances in the political, economic and social spheres, often leading to adverse incorporation and social exclusion. Despite there being difficulties in applying the same rules of establishment for economic and social equity within all areas, it has been observed that there are three general rules; equal life chances for

¹ <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ifsd/SocialJustice.pdf>

everybody, equal concern for people's needs, and meritocracy (the government, or holding of power by people selected according to merit).²

Despite there being a difference between equity and equality, it should be noted that 'social equality' is relevant; a state of affairs in which all people within a specific society or isolated group have the same status in certain respects, often including civil rights, freedom of speech, property rights and equal access to social goods and services.³

Although equity and its importance has grown, it is also evident that it is seen as less relevant than other issues. A reason for this may be that equity considerations seek to work against existing power imbalances, which will always be a struggle. An alternative explanation is that, like mentioned above, poor understanding of the topic may be why it is underrepresented.

KEY TERMS

Civil rights

The rights of citizens to political, social freedom and equality⁴

*Economic equity*⁵

The situation in an economy in which the apportionment of resources or goods among the people is considered fair and impartial.

*Impoverished*⁶

Something that is being reduced to poverty

Social equity

It should be stated that whilst there is no concrete definition for 'social equity', it is generally defined as "fair access to livelihood, education and resources; full participation in political and cultural life of the community."⁷

² <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/4577.pdf>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_equality

⁴ https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/civil_rights

⁵ Business Dictionary, © 2017 WebFinance Inc.

⁶ <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/impoverished>

⁷ http://www.reliableprosperity.net/social_equity.html

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

International Forum for Social Development

The International Forum for Social Development was a three-year project undertaken and introduced by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs between November 2001 and November 2004 for the purpose of promoting international cooperation for social development and supporting developing countries and social groups not benefiting from the globalization process. “Open Societies, Open Economies: Challenges and Opportunities” represented the overall theme of the project, which was financed through extra budgetary contributions and carried out within the framework of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, and of subsequent major international gatherings, including the Millennium Summit and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, held in New York and Geneva, respectively, in 2000. Four meetings of the Forum were held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, as follows:

- Financing Global Social Development, 7-8 February 2002
- Cooperation for Social Development: The International Dimension, 16-17th October 2002.
- International Migrants and Development, 7-8 October 2003
- Equity, Inequalities and Interdependence, 5-6 October 2004

The meetings brought together invitees from different regions and different walks of life. During the year this work was under preparation, the United Nations reviewed the commitments made ten years ago in Copenhagen to promote social development and in Beijing to pursue equality between men and women. The 2005 World Summit, which produced the largest gathering of world leaders in history, was held by the General Assembly in New York from 14 to 16 September and focused on development, security and human rights, as well as on United Nations reforms proposed.⁸

During the Post World War II period, the Cold War, poorer country governments often found that if they tried to improve any situation for their people, they could have been perceived as a threat or worse still pursuing communism. They may have faced external pressure, external meddling in internal affairs or even military intervention by the more economically developed countries. The powerful nations would claim this was ‘necessary’ for reasons like world stability, national interest, or to save the other country from themselves, but it would often be to do with protecting “their” national interests, such as a secure and constant supply of cheap resources or some other reason related ultimately to maintaining influence and power⁹. This factor made it increasingly hard for LEDC’s to break free from poverty, corruption and inequalities.

⁸ <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ifsd/SocialJustice.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.globalissues.org/article/4/poverty-around-the-world#Inequalityfueledbymanyfactors>

COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

Action Aid -

Action Aid helps people to fight for rights that they are denied. Action Aid doesn't just 'set goals', they address the underlying issues that cause inequalities. They believe that the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few will continue to contribute to our unjust world. Their work across the world is vital as they ensure that ordinary people have access to essential public services such as education and health care, and prohibit tax dodging so that everyone can benefit.¹⁰

ICPD (International Conference on Population and Development) –

The ICPD believe that development will not be achieved unless the needs and rights of everybody are acted upon, especially those within impoverished areas. They state that inequalities amongst the world harm economic efficiency, threaten social cohesion and ability and undermine human capable accumulation. ICPD reinforce the idea that the roots of inequalities must be tackled by addressing laws or policies that act upon discrimination.¹¹

DESA (The Department of Economic and Social Affairs) –

DESA is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: (i) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which States Members of the United Nations draw to review common problems and to take stock of policy options; (ii) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint course of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges¹²

China –

As a result of China's non-traditional donors to Africa, the economic and political stronghold of Western countries in Africa has gradually decreased.¹³ China's trade flow to Africa are not only welcome investments in the global growth and poverty reduction agenda, but they also have an enormous impact on civil unrest and instability, by creating local job opportunities in the poorest areas. Therefore, policymakers turn to China to help combat issues such as unemployment and inadequate social services in education and health.¹⁴

¹⁰ <http://www.actionaid.org/what-we-do/inequality>

¹¹ <http://icpdtaskforce.org/post-2015/promoting-equality-including-social-equity-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/>

¹² [http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/pdfs/10-50143_\(e\)_\(desa\)dialogues_ecosoc_achieving_gender_equality_women_empowerment.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/pdfs/10-50143_(e)_(desa)dialogues_ecosoc_achieving_gender_equality_women_empowerment.pdf)

¹³ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/the-conversation-africa/how-and-why-china-became_b_9775722.html

¹⁴ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dambisa-moyo/china-is-helping-emerging_b_5051623.html

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Name of Event	Description of event
2 August 2013	Mozambique society defends resources	On the 2 of August 2013, Mozambican civil society organisations took action against governments failure to manage land. According to the organisations, this highlighted the result of corruption and concentration of wealth and power.
February 1 2013	South African Mining Strike	South Africa's mining sector recently witnessed a strike from an independent union of mine workers and resulted in the death of 34 of these workers. The unions occurred as a result of the weakening of the formal union NUS. The strikes proved South Africa's failure to address employment and poverty in line with its rapid economic growth.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Social protection could be given to ensure that nobody falls below the minimum level of wellbeing and into poverty. This could include actions such as; minimum wage policies, guaranteed government employment, social insurance or basic income grants. More attention placed upon organisations or agencies that help combat the issue at hand, as well as making the issue at hand and the difficulties that people face, fully understood, in order to gain full further awareness of the issue. Secure people's access to economic employment and livelihood opportunities, including legal and policy provisions, decent work and equal pay, social protection with attention placed on especially vulnerable groups and help create employment opportunities.

By challenging embedded power imbalances, power relations can cause and sustain inequity. Tackling harmful power relations takes time, and the empowerment of disadvantaged people must be combined with improving accountability mechanisms and reforming democratic institutions. It is important to build a vibrant civil society and an independent media. Addressing unhelpful attitudes and beliefs can also help foster social cohesion and build a pro-equity social contract. 'Downstream' action is required to improve equity by reducing inequality. Progressive taxation can help, if the additional fiscal space created is used to fund interventions that will support equity. Other priorities include lowering taxes on staple goods and applying taxes on property – inheritance taxes are key. Land reform is also crucial and redistribution may be required to provide the poor with productive assets.

Already adopted UN actions:

1) 6-8th September 2000

The General Assembly re-affirmed the need to grant equality throughout, as well as the need for development and poverty eradication.

2) In 2010 the Economic and Social Council discussed the empowerment of women and the need for gender equality, and as a result, the Council focuses itself on equality.

3) 12th December 1974

Resolution adopted by the UN recognised economic rights and the need for international economic relations.

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