

HISAR SCHOOL

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“Globalization: Creating a Common Language”

SA4 - Sustainability

*Investing in sustainable and renewable energy in
rural areas*



**RESEARCH
REPORT**

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Forum: Special Assembly 4 (SA4) - Sustainability

Issue: Investing in sustainable and renewable energy in rural areas

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Introduction

Set out in 2015 as a successor to the Millennium Development Goals, which were partially successful, UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to achieve -as stated in their name- sustainable development on the global scale, in all counties alike, by the year 2030. One of these seventeen goals, SDG7, concerns addressing the need for “affordable and clean energy” in a sustainable fashion.

In an ever-globalizing world, the priority in the resolution of these issues is usually allocated to the already-more developed urban regions, which enjoy greater direct exposure to this trend. In the background, however, exists rural areas and their populations, whom the urban populations are dependent on for this purpose, making the resolution of their issues just as important to address as those of urban populations.

This committee will seek to address the aspects of this sustainable and renewable energy access issue that concern these rural populations, considering especially the lack of priority given to the resolution of this issue for these populations hitherto. The delegates of the committee should not forget, however, that there are many faces to this issue, including environmental, economic, and other consequences of any solution attempts.

Definition of Key Terms

Rural Areas: Rural areas consist of farmlands, forests, unarable lands, and all other lands that lack dense human habitation except for in the form of interspersed houses and comparatively small communities that may not be categorized as cities or towns, most depending nearly exclusively on agriculture for sustenance

Renewable Energy: Energy that comes from sources that replenish by themselves, at least in the foreseeable future, such as solar energy, geothermal energy, hydroelectric energy, tidal energy, among others



A Joint Solar and Wind Farm; An Example of Renewable Energy

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Sustainable Energy: Energy that is renewable, as well as harvested in a manner that meets various sustainability criteria such as being harvested in a manner that minimizes environmental impact and integration and informing of the local inhabitants into/about the project to foster local acceptance

General Overview

Especially in the modern day and age, the importance of achieving universal access to energy, including notably electricity, has increased greatly. Parallely, the number of people lacking access to electricity have been falling in the third millennium: While there were 1.7 billion people worldwide lacking access to electricity in the year 2000, this number has decreased to just 1.1 billion people in 2016. This decrease was due to, in a large part, the complete electrification of China and half a billion new people getting access to electricity in India.

While the countries listed above, as well as those in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and Latin America have approached universal electrification, some regions, namely South and Southeast Asia and especially Sub-Saharan Africa have been lagging behind. In fact, many countries in this latter region, especially the landlocked ones, have electrification rates around only 25 percent; however, there exists some positive future prospects, since as of 2014, the rate of electrification in the subcontinent has surpassed the population growth rate. Despite this, International Energy Agency's official projections show that 670 million people, mostly in rural areas, are still expected to lack access to energy in 2030, the year by which SDG 7.1 aimed for this value to virtually equal zero.



The UNDP Logo for SDG 7

This is where sustainable and renewable energy sources come into play, as a possible solution both for this problem, as well as a partial remedy for environmental problems faced by world, especially considering developing countries' tendency to use non-renewable and unsustainable energy sources for short-term economic benefits.

It remains important to draw some additional important connections in this section. Electricity and energy may be treated as nearly synonymously on this matter, as electricity is the chief means of transferring renewable energy; only as electricity becomes more prevalent may renewable energy sources stand to replace fossil fuels' role in energy supply. It should not be forgotten much of the world's energy consumption is in the form of electricity. This is why the spread of renewable electricity sources will correspond to a higher renewable energy usage rate.

Renewable electricity sources comprise a special opportunity for Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) and Developing Countries to boost their electrification rates and the state of their economies as in most of these nations, the prevalent fossil fuel energy sources need to be imported from other nations. On the other hand, most such nations have opportunities for multiple types of renewable energy sources

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to become more widespread, in the form of solar, wind, geothermal, hydroelectric, biomass, and biofuel energy sources. Such a spread would not only help the nations on environmental matters, but it would also help their economies by increasing employment, decreasing their foreign dependence, for the reasons stated above, boosting the value of their currencies and concurrently their living standards, even if by a small margin. Of course, it would also ensure the spread of proper electrification and provide access to the inhabitants of rural areas to reliable energy sources, which would stimulate industrial development.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG)

A subsidiary of UN-DESA (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs), DSDG is responsible for promoting, implementing, and coordinating the SDGs. Since SDG 7 is very similar to the agenda item, delegates may find useful resources from DSDG. They may also enlist their support in implementing their measures to tackle the issue at hand. They also organize the annual High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

UN Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP aims to promote and achieve global development and is another agency responsible for the achievement of the SDGs. Therefore, most of the notes for DSDG also applies to UNDP.

UN Energy

UN Energy is UN's official body responsible for energy affairs. Harnessing their assistance in expanding global access to energy, especially sustainable energy, would not only be possible but would also be in accordance with their primary goals. Delegates can make use of their expertise on the matter in their resolutions, as well as of the resources they provide in their research.

International Energy Agency (IEA)

IEA is an international organization, not connected to the UN, which consists of many members of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and also coordinates with other major world powers, such as Russia and China, also working on energy issues and publishing research reports that may be greatly helpful to the delegates.



The Logo of the IEA

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Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Thus far, the attempts at resolving this issue have been greatly localized, often occurring on a national or a subcontinental scale, by organizations such as UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. The localized nature of these attempts has also meant that many regions have been left out from the application of possibly useful solutions, due to their locations outside these areas. Therefore, there is a need for coordinated international effort on tackling this issue. However, the 2018 session of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development will have had as one of its focus goals SDG 7; so, the delegates should evaluate its results before carrying out new measures trying to solve the issue.

Possible Solutions

Considering the virtual lack of funding for projects related to the agenda item in areas of interest, but a high amount of benefits, including economic ones, that would be garnered from the investment in these fields, finding a temporary source of funds remains a key part of any solution attempts. This goal may be achieved through private sector-government cooperation projects in building renewable energy infrastructure, such as dams and solar or wind farms, whereby the government would provide the land resources and operation rights to the investors who would pay for the construction and in exchange, be allowed to operate and profit from these facilities. It remains important, however, for the government to not burden themselves with long-term financial obligation such as revenue guarantees for their own sustainable development.

Another means of resolving the matter at hand could pass from having a subsidiary or division of UN coordinate an international initiative to spread and promote the use of renewable energy in rural areas, by creating projects such as public awareness programs on the matter and centralized financial support to governments' efforts on creating renewable and sustainable energy sources, to be led by experts on the matter. This initiative may also conduct research into the current situation of the matter, as well as research into effective methods of enhancing the spread of renewable electricity sources in countries of interest, specific for each nation to maximize the efficiency of the projects conducted. Of course, either plan of tackling the issue of interest would require the delegates to come up with additional implementation details and more detailed ideas on what type of projects could be implemented. However, these two mechanisms are alternative generalized methods of tackling the matter.

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