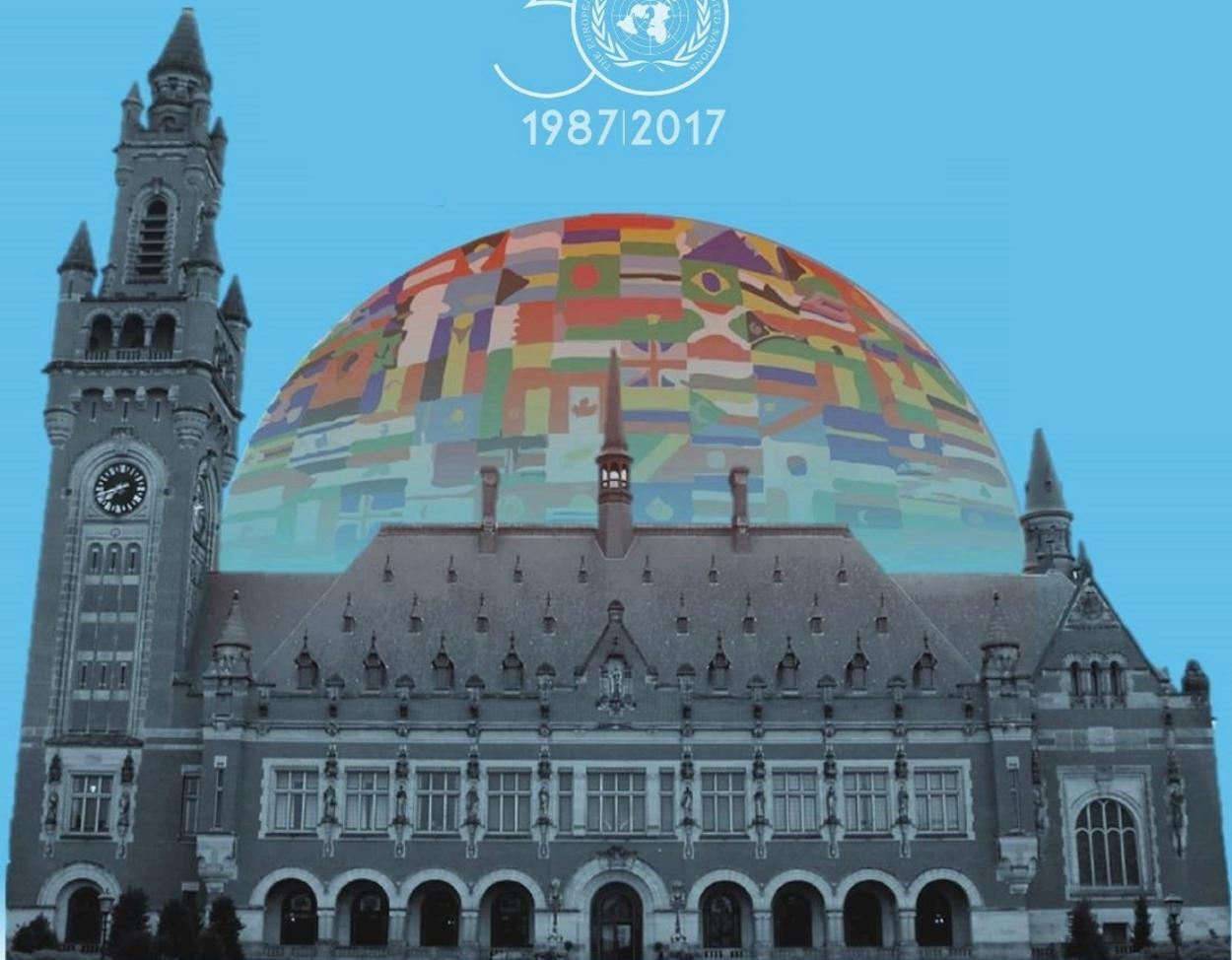


TEIMUN

THE EUROPEAN INTERNATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS



Welcome Letter

Distinguished Delegates,

Greetings from your dais. It is our privilege to welcome you to to the grand 30th session of The European International Model United Nations (TEIMUN) in The Hague, Netherlands. We hope that you will gain a new perspective from this conference as well as a greater understanding of the United Nations and international affairs. We believe that you will create fond memories of new friends and have an enriching, stimulating, and enjoyable week of debate and social events in The Hague.

The General Assembly plays a unique role within the United Nations as a primary entity tasked with overseeing a wide range of issues. In addressing the issues, the GA works to gain consensus through its universal membership and acts loosely with the other councils. This year, we will be discussing two topics, Disaster Resilient Development and Improvement of Education in Rural Areas. In order to help with your preparations for the conference, this study guide provides you with a brief outline of the topics debated while in committee. However, your research should not be solely dependent on this background paper as we suggest you explore your State's policies in order to have fruitful debates and create comprehensive resolutions.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding the General Assembly. We are truly excited to meet you all! We hope you enjoy reading the following study guide, and we look forward to hearing your ideas this July!

Your Chairs,

Alifa Starlika & Kevin Chen

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Introduction

Education is a growing area of priority around the world as technology continues to extend its dominance over marketplaces. Education's importance is highlighted by the Education of Rural People's Initiative stating that "education is the basic building block of every society. It is the single best investment countries can make towards building prosperous, healthy and equitable societies."¹ The growth of urban areas and the continued development of less economically developed countries (LEDC's) has led to a growth in the need for both a literate and skilled workforce. As a consequence, most prioritization of education has occurred in urban areas, creating an education gap with rural areas that are often still centers of agricultural labor. This in itself has economic consequences for rural areas and promotes urbanization.

The issue at hand is complicated, as societal pressures for development and an increased focus in relation to education in urban areas has led to a lack of institutional and economic support for education services in rural areas. Furthermore, children and adults in rural areas remain perpetually uneducated due to a systematic set of conditions that makes it difficult for them to break the cycle and receive quality education. The lack of previous education in itself makes the issue all the more dire, as these rural communities are underrepresented at the local level and scarcely at all on the international level.

Education of rural areas is thus key. Not only is it important to close the education gap between urban and rural areas, it is also vital for the agricultural economy in which skilled and educated workers are involved, as development relies upon a skilled workforce to initiate and maintain progress. Furthermore, education and basic literacy can help communities in substantial ways, as it increases the ability to represent oneself in the wider societies, and enhances the communication of needs and desires to the wider world.

Delegates should keep in mind all potential benefits of education in rural areas, and should attempt to tackle the root causes that have created the education gap. This paper will begin with a description of the current situation, both of the issues that rural areas are facing and the actions already undertaken to resolve and tackle these matters on the international and local level. Subsequently, this paper will present a case study, so that delegates can see how this all translates into practical action. Finally, this paper will end with Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA's) which will guide the delegates' discussion and resolution writing during debate.

¹ "The ERP Partnership." *Education for Rural People: ERP Home*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 June 2017. <<http://www.fao.org/erp/erp-home/en/>>.

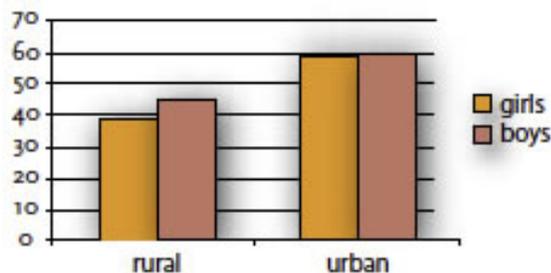
Current Situation

Issues Facing Rural Areas

Education itself is considered a necessity in many parts of the world, including rural areas. However, unlike many urban areas, there are a number of factors that contribute to making it more difficult for those in rural areas to receive education both of a high standard and over an extended period of time. Without basic education, children and adults in rural areas can miss out on important life skills and opportunities, even from achieving a minimal level of literacy. As the gap between urban and rural education levels grows, with 4 out of 5 of the 61 million children worldwide that are not in school living in rural areas, the issue is in danger of becoming self-perpetuating.²

The main challenges affecting education in rural areas are related to access, economics, and resources. Access is often a key factor in determining a child's ability to gain education. Many rural children have to travel vast distances to reach their schools and often these schools are only at the primary education level.³ In

Global secondary school attendance (%)



order to reach schools at a secondary education level or higher, the distances travelled are often much greater.⁴ Furthermore, education in rural areas is more gendered than in urban areas due to a range of factors including cultural practices and beliefs. This is especially the case within rural areas of the African continent.⁵ This further restriction to education for girls and women highlights the complicated nature of tackling the issue on a worldwide scale.

Figure 1: Global Secondary School Attendance Rates, United Nations. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/ruralwomen/facts-figures.html>

² Ibid.

³ "Rural Areas." *Rural Areas - Who We Serve - International - World Education, Inc.* N.p., n.d. Web. 04 June 2017.

<<http://www.worlded.org/WEIInternet/international/whoweserve/display.cfm?tid=1024&id=791>>.

⁴ Sepeda-Miller, Kiannah. "Morocco's Teachers Battle Urban-rural Education Divide." *Al Jazeera*. Al Jazeera Media Network, 19 Aug. 2015. Web. 04 June 2017. <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/morocco-teachers-battle-urban-rural-education-divide-150625081603977.html>>.

⁵ Unesco. "Education for Rural People in Africa." (n.d.): n. pag. 2006. Web. 4 June 2017. <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001502/150256e.pdf>>.

Economics also plays an important role in rural education. Rural families often have to contribute to the cost of education for their children which according to one study can average at 18% of their total incomes, double the percentage paid by urban families.⁶ Families in rural areas are also more likely to be living in subsistence and as a result can often not afford these contributions. Furthermore, education is frequently limited to primary level as children at an older age are considered an economic loss if they attend secondary education instead of working for the family.⁷ Girls may also marry for the economic benefit of the family instead of receiving an education. Families are thus faced with a range of economic choices with regards to education and despite research showing that "rural households value education for their children highly", often only one or even none of the families' children receive education beyond a basic level.⁸

Resources are also very important in determining the level and availability of education in rural areas. In many cases there is simply a lack of teachers, as they are unwilling to teach in rural areas, disconnected from their urban lives, and in cases where they are willing, they often teach classes with students of a variety of ages and education levels.⁹ The lack of teachers is matched by a lack of schools themselves to accommodate the widely dispersed rural populations.¹⁰ Governments are often unwilling or unable to pay for improvements that would help to facilitate improved learning conditions, such as for teachers, schools, books, computers or even larger scale infrastructure projects, such as better road networks and transportation systems.¹¹ There are many factors within rural education that can be improved to help facilitate better availability and levels of education but the resources are scarce and urban areas are traditionally better served than rural ones.

⁶ "Providing an Education to Children in Rural Areas – Challenges and Strategies." *Jacobs Foundation*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 June 2017.
<<http://jacobsfoundation.org/newsletter/providing-an-education-to-children-in-rural-areas-challenges-and-strategies/>>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Sepeda-Miller, Kiannah. "Morocco's Teachers Battle Urban-rural Education Divide." *Al Jazeera*. Al Jazeera Media Network, 19 Aug. 2015. Web. 04 June 2017.
<<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/morocco-teachers-battle-urban-rural-education-divide-150625081603977.html>>.

¹⁰ "Rural Areas." *Rural Areas - Who We Serve - International - World Education, Inc.* N.p., n.d. Web. 04 June 2017.

¹¹ Sepeda-Miller, Kiannah. "Morocco's Teachers Battle Urban-rural Education Divide." *Al Jazeera*. Al Jazeera Media Network, 19 Aug. 2015. Web. 04 June 2017.
<<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/morocco-teachers-battle-urban-rural-education-divide-150625081603977.html>>.

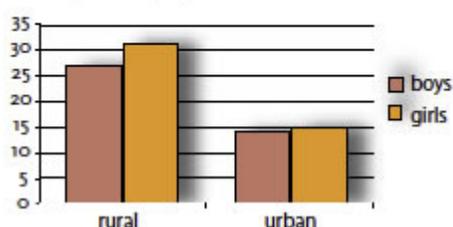
The issue of rural education clearly has many facets and the above summary is merely an overview of the complexities both families and governments face in dealing with the issue. However, the importance of receiving an education should not be in doubt and facilitating the improvement of access, economic viability, and the quality of education are key to creating a sustainable environment in which rural education levels are no longer so discrepant from urban ones.

Actions Taken by Local and International Actors

The international community has long been committed to taking action on education around the world and the introduction of specific measures addressing rural education has served as an extension of this practice. Various international organizations and institutions have become involved, working together with local communities and groups, to improve rural education.

The UN have reiterated an organizational desire to improve education worldwide consistently since its founding. The UN millennium goals decided upon in September of 2000 include "Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education" with the deadline set for 2015.¹² The successor to these goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) include as goal 4; "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".¹³

Out-of-school children by sex and area of residence, 42 countries 2000/2008 (%)



These broader goals clearly emphasize the importance of improving education to the UN. More specifically, resolutions like ECOSOC Resolution 2004/48 and Human Right Council Resolution 8/4 state the need to "provide quality education for the rural poor" and "to take all appropriate measures to eliminate obstacles limiting effective access to education ... [for] children living in poor communities and rural areas" respectively.¹⁴

Figure 2: Gender distribution of urban and rural out-of-school children, United Nations. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/ruralwomen/facts-figures.html>

¹² UN. "What They Are." *UN Millennium Project | About the MDGs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 June 2017. <<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/>>.

¹³ UN. "SDGs .. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform." *United Nations*. United Nations, n.d. Web. 04 June 2017. <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>>.

¹⁴ United Nations. Economic and Social Council. *Coordinated and integrated United Nations system approach to promoting rural development in developing countries, with due consideration to least developed countries, for poverty eradication and sustainable development*. 2004/48 (23 July 2004) Web. 04 June 2017.

<<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2004/resolution%202004-48.pdf>>

United Nations. Human Rights Council. *The Right To Education*. A/HRC/RES/8/4 (18 June 2008) Web. 04 June 2017.

<http://ap.ohchr.org/Documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_8_4.pdf>

However, these statements are not examples of concrete work, that has actually been implemented. The United World Schools project is a more reflective example of what has been done around the world in an attempt to close the urban-rural education gap as well as to reduce the barriers to education which many children face in rural areas. This international effort is involved in many aspects, including but not limited to: building schools, training locals as teachers, protecting indigenous languages and cultures, developing appropriate curriculum, and working toward long term viability of existing schools.¹⁵ As is clear from these areas, the United World Schools project is a cooperative effort between local and international groups working to eradicate many of the barriers to education. In building schools and training locals as teachers they are providing the infrastructure that enable distance and resource barriers to be reduced.

Cultural barriers present a further challenge that such infrastructural improvements cannot overcome. While organizations such as UN Women, UNFPA, and UNICEF are engaged with discussions as to how this challenge can and should be addressed¹⁶, UNESCO's strategic plan focuses on the need to research the issue extensively, including the role of women in rural communities. The plan also extensively covers the infrastructural requirements as well as issues that arise in local communities.¹⁷ There is still much to be done to tackle cultural barriers but cooperation between international and local elements is a key aspect of the UN strategy.

Case Study

This case study will focus on The World Bank's Rural Education and Development Project (READ) in Mongolia between 2006 and 2013. The main goal of the project was to "enhance education quality in rural primary school grades 1-5" through providing increased learning materials, promoting professional teaching networks, improving the government's capacity to monitor results, and providing financial and technical support.¹⁸ In practice, this meant that the World Bank worked with the

¹⁵ "What We Do." *United World Schools Charity*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 June 2017.

<<http://www.unitedworldschools.org/who-we-are/what-we-do/>>.

¹⁶ "Society's Attitudes Must Change Worldwide to Stop Gender-based Violence, Say UN Officials." *UN News Center*. United Nations, 11 Mar. 2015. Web. 04 June 2017.

<<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50301#.WTQzZmiGPIU>>.

¹⁷ UNESCO Inruled. "Strategic Plan 2008-2013." *UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education* (n.d.): 1-28. United Nations. Web. 4 June 2017.

<<http://www.inruled.org/a/soft/101124/Medium-TermStrategicPlan2008-2013.pdf>>.

¹⁸ "Projects & Operations." *Projects : Rural Education and Development (READ) Project (formerly Rural Education Support Project) | The World Bank*. The World Bank, n.d. Web. 04

Mongolian government to provide the tools necessary to develop a more institutionalized norm of teaching, as well as to provide the resources for more effective learning conditions.

Over the course of the seven-year project, the results suggest that the READ project “enhanced knowledge of reading instruction”, helped create more child friendly learning environments, improved literacy skills, increased teacher numbers, improved rural attendance, and improved government oversight.¹⁹ The cooperation between the international and the local in this case created the room for educational reform that led to improvements in rural Mongolian education.

This case study is only one example of a wide range of education based projects that the World Bank has and is currently undertaking. Importantly, each project is conducted in cooperation with local communities and governments and sets very specific goals. In doing so this allows the organization to tackle specific challenges through the development of solutions related to the unique circumstances of the project. No two rural areas present the same set of challenges and the approach of the World Bank accommodates this reality.

It is also important to note that in this case study the emphasis was very much on the need for institutional changes, in the way the Mongolian government coordinated education efforts, in how the professional teaching networks were organized, and in how rural areas were educated in comparison to urban areas. In highlighting this particular barrier, the World Bank’s approach may not have addressed other barriers, particularly cultural ones, which affect education in rural areas. Nonetheless, the General Assembly will have to take a holistic view on the issue of improving education in rural areas.

Conclusion

Education in rural areas is a topic that needs to be addressed by the General Assembly. The importance of closing the urban-rural education gap is not just critical to improving the quality of life in rural areas but is the key to improving economic conditions throughout the developing world. Improving the standards and availability of rural education will help create a new generation of adults more knowledgeable and capable of utilizing modern developments and technologies to their own, and their communities benefit.

While addressing this issue, the General Assembly must keep in mind several factors. It is important at all times to consider the viability of the ideas presented,

June 2017. <<http://projects.worldbank.org/P096328/rural-education-development-read-project-formerly-rural-education-support-project?lang=en&tab=overview>>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

as well as to address the issue of sustainability. Furthermore, the cultural and economic conditions and implications must be taken into account in any resolution that the council debates. Most importantly, the council must be able to show how barriers to rural education will be tackled and present a plan that can truly help close the urban-rural education gap.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMAs)

1. What are the barriers to rural education and how they be overcome?
2. What infrastructural requirements are necessary to produce sustainable change in rural education?
3. How can cultural barriers to rural education be tackled in a manner that is independent of the infrastructural changes that need to be addressed?
4. How can the urban-rural education gap be overcome and what are the key elements that have created this gap in the first place?
5. What actions have already been taken to address this issue and what lessons can be learnt from past actions?

Additional Readings

UNESCO Inruled Strategic Plan

<<http://www.inruled.org/a/soft/101124/Medium-TermStrategicPlan2008-2013.pdf>>

Education and Development in Poor Rural Communities: An Interdisciplinary Research Agenda. ERIC Digest.

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Real Children, Real Challenges

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<<http://www.unitedworldschools.org/who-we-are/what-we-do/>>.

Sepeda-Miller, Kiannah. "Morocco's Teachers Battle Urban-rural Education Divide." *Al Jazeera*. Al Jazeera Media Network, 19 Aug. 2015. Web. 04 June 2017. <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/morocco-teachers-battle-urban-rural-education-divide-150625081603977.html>>.

UN. "What They Are." *UN Millennium Project | About the MDGs*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 June 2017.

<<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/>>.

UN. "SDGs .:. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform." *United Nations*. United Nations, n.d. Web. 04 June 2017.

<<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>>.

United Nations. Economic and Social Council. *Coordinated and integrated United Nations system approach to promoting rural development in developing countries, with due consideration to least developed countries, for poverty eradication and sustainable development*. 2004/48 (23 July 2004) Web. 04 June 2017.

<<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2004/resolution%202004-48.pdf>>

United Nations. Human Rights Council. *The Right To Education*. A/HRC/RES/8/4 (18 June 2008) Web. 04 June 2017.

<http://ap.ohchr.org/Documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_8_4.pdf>

UNESCO Inruled. "Strategic Plan 2008-2013." *UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education* (n.d.): 1-28. United Nations. Web. 4 June 2017.

<<http://www.inruled.org/a/soft/101124/Medium-TermStrategicPlan2008-2013.pdf>>.

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