

**United Nations Against Poverty:  
Addressing Rural-Urban Nexus in Social Protection**

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**Abstract**

Social protection is one of the key solutions to alleviate poverty and to increase the productivity of populations. However, the intertwined nexus of rural-urban development should be concerned when it comes to the problems' resolution. The United Nations agreed upon the SDGs and establish UNDP back in the 90s to alleviate poverty and achieving the set 5Ps. However, many systemic and structural challenges impact the people's livelihood about the social protection issues. Multilateral and national engagement should be more people-oriented and able to address the new challenges especially during the global recovery against the Covid-19 pandemic. This article discuss how the interchangeable notion of rural-urban development, urban bias, transmigration, multilateral cooperation, and other welfare concerns should be considered when resolving the challenges of social protection for the people.

**Keywords:** Development, social protection, poverty, urban, and rural.

**Abstrak**

*Perlindungan sosial adalah salah satu solusi utama dalam mengentaskan kemiskinan dan meningkatkan produktivitas populasi. Namun, keterkaitan dari pembangunan area rural dan urban harus diperhatikan dalam resolusi permasalahan tersebut. PBB telah menyetujui SDGs dan mendirikan UNDP pada tahun 90-an untuk mengatasi permasalahan kemiskinan global dan mencapai target 5P. Sayangnya, banyak permasalahan sistemik dan struktural yang muncul yang dapat mempengaruhi kesejahteraan hidup rakyat banyak dalam isu perlindungan sosial. Partisipasi dan perhatian dari level multilateral dan nasional harus berorientasi pada rakyat dan harus mampu mengatasi permasalahan pemulihan ekonomi global dari Covid-19. Artikel ini membahas bagaimana gagasan yang saling berkaitan dalam nexus pembangunan area rural dan urban, urban bias, transmigrasi, kerjasama multilateral, dan berbagai permasalahan lainnya dibahas ketika menyelesaikan tantangan kebijakan perlindungan sosial untuk masyarakat.*

**Kata kunci:** Pembangunan, perlindungan sosial, kemiskinan, urban, dan rural.

## A. INTRODUCTION

Vic George defines poverty as a lack of material goods or services. This set of understanding consists of core necessities as well as a list of other necessities that change over time and place (Spicker, 2007). These particular needs are food, clothing, fuel, or shelter. In addition, Baratz and Grigsby associate poverty with inadequate economic resources and consumption (Spicker, 2007). More relatively, it also implies that poverty according to these experts is related to “welfare values including self-esteem, aspirations, and stigma and ‘deference’ values, including aspects of status and power. However, the aforementioned explanations are an interpretation of a socially constructed definition of poverty (Spicker, 2007).

On the other hand, the World Bank simply defines people that live in poverty are living under or equivalent to \$1.90 a day (*World Bank Group's Operational ...*, 25 Mei 2021). Additionally, International Labour Organization (ILO) also considers poverty must be one of the matters that should be eradicated as ILO defines a proper social protection system for people and families having security in the face of vulnerabilities and contingencies (Gracia et al., 2003). These matters had been inculcated by the international community through article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Article 9 of the

International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in regards to social security. As ILO already defines that social protection as the set of public measure that society provides for its members to protect them against economic and social distress, it then includes the protection of various contingencies such as sickness, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, death, health care, and another form of insurance on the socio-economic aspect of their life (Gracia et al., 2003). However, with the current perilous situation and condition of uncertainty, the conflict that occurred, economic disparities, alongside the pandemic that struck the global economy, it is sure then the member states would need a major shift within the state to recover from such crises.

Firstly, we need to define what is rural. There are several methods to determine and define the rural area, it could be defined based on the purpose of their usage such as for empirical studies, policy measure, analytic tool, or spatial/ performance indicator (Pechrova, 2015, p. 197-204). According to OECD, rural areas could be identified by observing the density of population on a certain area, and determine that an area could be identified as rural if the population within the local units (administrative entities) is below 150 inhabitants per square km (OECD, 2011, p. 3). The European Union established another

criterion in determining rural areas, the EU defined rural areas as all areas outside urban clusters, “urban clusters” are clusters of contiguous grid cells of 1 square kilometer with a density of at least 300 inhabitants per square km and a minimum population of 5.000 (Eurostat, 2020).

There are also definitions based on the spatial characteristics such as driving time to the nearest city, landscape, and land cover or settlement structure of the municipality or according to prevailing economic activities (Pechrova, 2015, p. 197-204). Although there are no agreed definitions of rural areas, it could be concluded that an area could be determined as rural if it is not “urban” in nature. Each nation has its characteristics of the urban area, but most of the time, an urban area is classified by categorizing them based on population density, economic function, etc. A scholar argues that there is a need to differentiate the concept of “rural area” and the concept of “village”. The concept of the village is heavily emphasized on the homogeneity of the local community, while the concept of the rural area was distinguished based on certain characteristics or a set of characteristics as stated above. Although most scholars agree that rural areas should be defined based on certain characteristics or a set of characteristics, the characteristic itself differs and is up to interpretation from every independent state.

This section is meant to give a glimpse of how social protection systems, in general, came to be. Social protection was marginal to mainstream understandings of development up until the early 1990s. The World Bank even rejected programs on workers’ social protection in the 1980s, calling it economically harmful and socially unjust. However, the general paradigm on the idea of social protection systems shifted when the 90s rolled in, especially after the 1997 Asian economic crisis. A heightened awareness of many negative impacts of global poverty resulted in social protection being a preferred instrument of the Millennium Development Goals. In a paper written by (Merrien, 2013, p. 84), it is even said that the World Bank promoted social protection as a “key component of international poverty reduction strategies” or social risk management. In the 1990 World Development Report released by the World Bank, the organization legitimized social ‘safety net’ programs meant to protect people against two types of economic hindrances; the inability to resume work /earn and/or a reduction of the ability to do so during times of politic, economical, and environmental upheaval. As stated by (Gentilini, 2005, p. 139), these safety nets are mostly based on monetary transfers or the provision of food supplies. These programs were often coupled with initiatives to curb “the trap of dependency” by also providing additional measures such

as public work programs.

The year 2000 was arguably remembered for the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With the MDGs adopted, social protection was no longer a minor debate in discussions regarding development within the international community. By this time, the major contributors to the topic were the World Bank, the UK's DfID, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, UNICEF, and the UNDP. The general tenor of discussion during those days was focused more on peaceful accommodation as opposed to confrontation. However, (Merrien, 2013, p. 88) further stated that both approaches were still discussed; one expressed in primary terms of instrumental efficiency championed by the World Bank, and another promoted by DfID, with more attention to social rights and advocacy. The 2000s saw a compromise reached between the formerly incompatible positions of "social risk management" and "transformative social protection" where social protection is no longer seen as an expenditure but as a means of strengthening social and human capital. Accordingly, it quickly became a key element of development policies. However, as can be seen, today, poverty is still rampant and existing systems are far from perfection.

## **B. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Rethinking Rural-Urban Development**

### **and Economic Growth**

Generally, the concept of rural-urban development is always been associated with the term of 'peri-urbanisation'. Peri-urbanisation itself has the definition of urbanizing the rural areas to embrace a more urban character both physically and socially (Webster, 2002). This kind of phenomenon is usually caused by the changes of rural population, agricultural economic changes, and the likelihood of being pressed by the demand to develop their rural areas to be more attractive and competitive in international economic competition (Woltjer, 2014). Periurbanisation itself tends to be happening in developing countries, especially in Asian cities where modernization has encouraged the rural population to embrace urban lifestyle (Hudalah, Winarso, & Woltjer, 2007, p. 9-11). To relate this narrative further to economic growth in combating poverty, a research by Nguyen et al (2018) concluded that urbanization does show a tangible correlation and relationship with positive economic growth, however the connected results seem to be non-linear and it may obstruct the growth projection after reaching a certain threshold (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018). This finding is relevant with Chen et al. (2014) where it concluded that economic benefits catalyzation can be happening after a higher urbanization, however it may not reach an optimum expected benefits for the people's welfare. This will surely force

countries' to adjust their policy expectations and be more attentive towards the other factors like the transition of institutions, development of education and social care, and the reforms within the rural areas' governance (Chen, et al, 2014).

From the paragraph above, in relation with the multilateral engagement from the UN, it can be concluded that the UN and member states should work together in mapping out and identifying the underlying factors that may possible impede economic growth whilst maintaining a healthy pace of modernization. UN-Habitat through its publication in 2019 recommended that the member states should be acquiring the following guiding principles in developing their rural-urban areas, these principles are: (a) implementing a localized and local-based policy and governmental interventions; (b) encouraging a more integrated governance; (c) adopting a more spatial and functional system as the approach; (d) providing an inclusive financial climate and ecosystem; (e) balancing partnership between the public and private sectors; (f) caring for a more human rights-driven approach; (g) providing social protection; (h) sustainable for the environment; (i) engaging all actors to be participative; and (j) formulating the evidence-based and scientifically-proven policies and approaches (UN-Habitat, 2019). To support this, a research argued that the sustainability of rural-urban areas must be driven by a smart

and practical development reflecting from the SDGs and mapping out a critical criterion of the development should be carefully assessed to be coherent with the goals and policy clarity (Sheikhnejad & Yigitcanlar, 2020, p.20-21).

## **2. Rural-Urban Nexus on Social Protection and Development**

The rural-urban nexus is one of the important controversies to be scrutinized. Social protection is intertwined with development, economy, social livelihood, human security, labor, and even the human rights spectrum. With social protection policies being influenced by a dynamic economic and political situation, decentralization of policies from the central to regional government becoming more important to cope with the best actual policy practices (Hofman & Kaiser, 2006). This decentralization can catalyze a greater and stronger regional government application of policies because decentralization can lower the burden of the central government in maintaining particularly a wide and numerous rural areas; and second, the decentralization can eventually help the regional government to prescribe their policy adjusting to their needs and capacity. Theoretically speaking, there have been numerous academic discourses explaining the urban settlement of rural populations and the reciprocity of these migrations to social protection in a human capital approach (Xie et al., 2020).

Talking specifically about rural-urban nexus in regards to social protection and development, IFAD (2015) through its publication argued that urbanization is linked with rural development, wherein this case the intense migration of people and trade connectivity triggers the massive growth of remittance between rural and urban area – particularly in the developing countries. In regards to social protection program procurement, the government should minimize sub-optimal progress and colliding policies from the central to the regional bureaucracy (World Bank, 2012). Aside from the governmental effort, the public plays a key role in bridging the gap between the rural and urban human resource & economic development (micro sectors). The public itself or we would like to refer to it as the ‘civil society’ will run their business and check & balance government interventions in the economic cycle. We have to understand that the more productive the industries and the people themselves, then the more benefits could still be secured without hassling to maintain the balance between cash flows and welfare systems. The potentials that can be reached if this nexus is connected can be an innovative solution for the member states to apply suitable to their economic and human development characteristics.

In regards to economic development especially in LDCs and conflict-torn countries, the destabilization of financial

and monetary policies affects macro/ and microeconomic matters. This will not only disabled countries to achieve the SDGs and other development projects in regards to social protection, but also can prolong the unhealthy and exacerbated conditions like inflation, loss of investments, and others. According to UN DESA, there are several matters that should be considered when assessing the economic performance for development (including social protection): (a) The need for a more risk-based analysis to preserve economic growth and inclusive welfare program; (b) economic and development balancing, either in environmental, social, and multi-sectoral context; (c) the livelihood of the people either about the food security, environment, mitigation efforts against disaster, and health situation; (d) Income inequality, economic disparity, and social conflict of interest between each social class which hamper the goals of effective sustainable solutions since society is the key pinnacle actor behind the circle of economy; and (e) Financial crisis, pandemic, emigration, urbanization, and the resilient building mechanism for all communities in every member states to be more cohesive and the existence of financial crisis brings the importance of economic liberalization based on effective long term financing, investments, fiscal policies, and all business class empowerment to achieve effective control and entrepreneurship (DESA, 2013). The use of economic

stimulus must be effective and dedicated through the mainstreaming of improved coordination, a universal approach for all communities, and policy mapping with feasible partners and visible parameters to achieve the development goals (Jaiyesimi, 2016).

### **3. Urban Sprawl (Urban Bias)**

A large collection of the literature shows that a country's economic development has never been detached from agricultural development. A lot of the now-developed nations were once reliant on agriculture and are now enjoying robust economic stability laid upon years of agricultural development based in rural areas. Despite its importance, there has been a systemic bias against agriculture and the rural economy in terms of development resources allocation. This bias is called the urban bias. To say the least, urban bias is present at the grassroots level of financial and political institutions worldwide. As Bezemer and Headey (2008, p. 1342) argued, "The bias is systemic because it has fundamental institutional causes grounded in the political economies of both the developing and the developed countries, and in the development profession itself".

Although universally present, urban bias affects least developed countries (LDCs) the worst. Within LDCs, political strife, unstable markets, various colonial inheritance, and overpopulation poses a

significant hindrance to the achievement of significant development due to the unattractively pessimistic economic climate said prerequisites has brought. To be more appealing to investors, both domestic and international, and to curb overpopulation, LDC governments tend to intensify urbanization rather than paying attention to the rural developments and this practice has given birth to urban bias from within.

Varshney (1993, p. 14) dissected the concept of urban bias and explored the possibility of its elimination. While it is true that most raw resources are located in the rural areas far from the city centers, it is in the urban areas that political and economic power is located and the latter being more articulate. To sum up, the countryside is economically poor because it is politically powerless – and this is one of the considerable status quo that needs to be scrutinized. However, a multiparty political system or a state-centered approach could help be the decisive factor in eroding urban bias. A prime example of the multiparty approach is the one adopted by India where every political party has been attempting to attract and concern the rural interests. Meanwhile, local governments in China served as a model of a state-centered approach to improving rural wellbeing. Rural wellbeing according to the FAO is the key measurement to decide the best merit-based approach in solving the multidimensionality of poverty in rural areas (Sen, 1981).

#### **4. Transmigration Problem between the Rural and Urban Areas**

Transmigration could occur simply due to the opportunity that an individual or a group of people wants to find in a “new land”. On the other hand, transmigration is a program issued by the government to transfer the people from a densely populated area into a lesser populated area whereas the purpose lies in a fairer distribution of population into other areas for the sake of the development within that area. Transmigration then also serves the function to prevent any area/city to have the right amount of population following their capability and capacity. If such disproportion occurred, the distribution of public services to all of the people may not be rendered properly by the government. Such predicament could be worsened as it might be a chain effect into structural poverty wherein eventually the people would stay in poverty if the incapability of the local government still exists to provide job security, social and economic protection for these people.

The UNDP already had an analysis in terms of poverty alleviation. One of the recommendations is to establish a positive work-cycle (Bhawuk et al., 2014, p. 65), whereas it includes empowerment, goal-setting, and skill development as factors that should be emphasized. It also encourages the government to provides socio-political

support (e.g., justice perceptions, access to resources, and peer/social support), a proper work design, and high-performance practices in which it encompasses a positive impact at work, feedback and job characterization, training of trainer, and job awareness program to attract all of the people to have the information of a greater opportunity.

Despite the aforementioned recommendation alongside a transmigration program to move the people onto an “idle land” to provide a better opportunity to them and to prevent the increment of slums area within the urban area, yet with a limited resource, it may just seem utopian. For instance, in Indonesia through General Soeharto’s regime, transmigration was done from Java, Bali, and Madura island onto the other islands such as Sumatra and Kalimantan to balance the demographic development. With average resettlement costs of US\$7000 per family in the mid-1980s, a transmigration program was an economic nightmare at that time (Adhiati & Bobsien, 2001), in which it would also need approximately 40 percent of the national economic budget for the development of the outer islands (Adhiati & Bobsien, 2001). More than 2 decades have passed from a massive transmigration program of General Soeharto’s regime, thus, it is important to see the relevance nowadays and how it impacts the national development agenda. Taking an example from Indonesia, the



transmigration process had been conducted throughout all of the major islands in Indonesia, yet most of the provinces like Sumatera Utara, Sumatera Selatan, Jambi, Bengkulu, Lampung, and three provinces from Kalimantan have an increment of the poverty percentages. Although Maluku, Papua, and most of Eastern Indonesia do not have an increment of their poverty percentage, yet most of the provinces lived way below the poverty line. It needs to be taken into account that transmigration policy needs to be ensured first whether the new city may have the capability to absorb such influx because if not, it would create another continuing problem such as structural poverty, massive unemployment, economic and social disparity.

## **5. Covid-19 and Social Protection Systemic Problems: Connecting Dots**

The COVID-19 pandemic presented the world with unprecedented challenges. Many of which threaten the stability and livelihood of many in developing countries, leaving them at the mercy of government response plans and respective social protection systems. As published by Oxfam in December 2020, it is shown that 2.7 billion lives lack social protection to cope with the economic crisis tailing COVID-19. Over the past year, the world had spent USD 11.7 trillion to cope with the pandemic, but as much as 83 percent of the money (USD 9.8 trillion) was spent by 36 rich countries,

compared to 0.9 percent (USD 42 billion) spent in 59 low-income countries. If broken down, cash specifically put aside for social protection could be distributed as much as USD 695 per person in 28 rich countries but only as low as between USD 28 and USD 4 in low-income or emerging countries. Oxfam International's Executive Director, Gabriela Bucher depicts this perfectly with the statement "The coronavirus united the world in fear but has divided it in response." To make matters worse, out of the half-billion unemployed people, the numbers are twice as many for women than for men (Oxfam International, 2020).

Again, those living in low-income countries suffered the most, with workers residing in said countries losing over 23 percent of their working hours. However, further research has led to staggering results. As much as 41 percent of the 126 countries studied do have social protection schemes. The only problem is, they are only one-off payments, long since exhausted with only 13 percent of the countries having programs that last more than 6 months. Among these said countries, 8 out of 10, have not even reached half of their citizens. This is evidence of years of under-investment and often discredited advice. Many view this as the perfect time to counter said crises with unprecedented investments towards the betterment of social protection schemes to mitigate the long-term impact of the pandemic. Additionally, countries also can't

solely rely on foreign aid, especially during Covid-19 – because their development agenda and social protection has to be preserved by resolving the upstream core issues. However, the World Bank is providing an emergency funding for developing countries struggling with Covid-19 to assist the economic stimulus and maintaining a healthy macroeconomic performance (The World Bank, 2020).

## **6. Multilateral Solutions in Social Protection Agenda: Labor, Human Rights, and Economic Development Perspective**

Social protection is important either in labor welfare, human rights, and even economic development. Multilateral organizations like the ILO through the adoption of ILO Convention No. 152 back in 1952 stipulated the minimum standards for all nine fundamental sectors of social security protection. The set norms within the convention can be reflected with the current state of ILO's governance in handling social protection issues where the scope of social security is reciprocating around the two-dimensional strategy of social security which emphasized the stipulations of social protection baseline within the horizontal dimension and the extension and upgrades of social security guided by the ILO convention within the vertical dimension (International Labour Office, 2012). The international community commonly hold the principle where social protection is also

linked with labor productivity, in which in times of crisis like the current Covid-19 pandemic the lockdowns and social restrictions has forced people to work from their home and this is not a problem for the skilled labor who are working in corporations, however, this will be a problem to the labor who are working on informal sectors and other vulnerable vital and the primary sectors.

The data from OECD also concluded, to traverse the gaps amidst the uncertainty, boosting confidence for the market and producer is imperative as most of the countries all over the world is collapsing with minus 5 – 20 percent in GDP growth in 2020, which made uncertainty should be handled with sound and persistent efforts (OECD, 2020). Therefore, keeping the global supply chain going, specifically for the essential goods is a priority. The problem is not all developing countries' governments are aware of the importance of engagement for the people especially the forefront business actors to stay connected, because if any stimulus and trade-related measures were adopted without any conscious manner from the actor, the actors will just assume their business models in Covid-19 based on prejudices. So what is the correlation? In conclusion, with the crisis ongoing and corporations aren't able to fund their social protection program, member states need to take the sound steps to at least partially/ fully cover the minimum

threshold for the unskilled labor to survive while waiting for the manufacturing and the corporation situation to return onto stability.

Therefore what are the other key problems that could be resolved? Developing countries tend to be lower in terms of GDP compared to other member states and this has made pure government intervention isn't a sustainable solution. This can be resolved by identifying the systemic problems within the national legislation and provisions that ruled out the social protection procurement scheme, labor's contribution, incentives, and contributions to sustain the protection in the long run (Behrendt & Nguyen, 2018). Additionally, a clear mechanism between the contractors, sub-contractors, users, and the labor unions need to be consulted with an approach that has high burdens and insurance-based labor welfare to achieve specific and targeted measures.

From the perspective of human rights, a proportionate and justified social protection policy is needed as part of the fundamental rights to acquire protection and economic prosperity. The concerns of social protection are intertwined largely with the concern of the livelihood of the people. The role of human rights governance approach itself on this issue should be able to promote civil and political rights of the people to stand as the value enshrined within the perspectives for all policymakers when deliberating the solutions to address the

social protection problems through the legal framework to pursue much more responsible welfare and socially equal community livelihood in each industry. Multilateral efforts should be concentrated not only as mere financial assistance or capacity building to improve either the human resource or the welfare but also to correctly help the countries (semi-peripheral and peripheral countries) to thrive in the post-crisis situation where stimulus and incentives are imperative to restart the economy and sustain the social protection to help the poor communities. However, bureaucracy concerns still become a tangible obstruction to achieve this notion.

Several contentions need to be understood in regards to the economic dimension in rethinking multilateral efforts to accelerate development. *First*, the deprived macroeconomic performance and bad investment climate should be the concern by the UN and national government. The macroeconomic status quo is one of the vital benchmarks when it comes to the deliberation of labor demand, capacity-building policies, and wage-setting provisions. The condition of macroeconomic policy needs to be concerned more when resolving the labor welfare issue, why is that so? Theoretically, the macroeconomic labor productivity by the concept is defined as the average output of the work progress in the construction per the workers, this concept will eventually be led

to the conclusion that macroeconomic labor productivity is not merely assessed from its physical development but through the sub-sectors productivity performance that can be created by pre-development research and market mapping (Choi et al., 2013). Not limited to that, the macroeconomic performance is also correlated where the models in reviewing the prosperity of the labor from macro-economic policy analysis will require more extensive assessment regarding how the employees' dynamics will simultaneously impact the earning level of labor within a particular sector/subsector. In which, this narrative is somehow relevant to the factor of institutional forces from the stakeholders and how the government's judgment could assess how deprivation and setbacks within a labor system can be surfacing up and what are the flaws of it.

The size of the labor force and its component within the industry will surely affect the national economic growth especially to determine the gyroscope of the industry and how reliable these labors to improve national valuation (Li & Prescott, 2009). Hence, from this, we can see that labor welfare itself from the status quo can only be empowered if the government maps the policy correctly. And without a correct policy mapping when analyzing the pre-existing policy instruments to predetermine the model which can eventually forecast the outcome, the parameters and indicators that the government might use will not be on

target and the evaluation criteria to top-up the policies for labor welfare betterment will be assumed by a wrong prejudice among the policymakers. Thus, with blurred policy criteria and unprecise implementation, it could lead to a wrong assumption in legislating legal provisions and bills to create more investments to increase the labor opportunity and the industrial market valuation. Logically, this will increase the national GDP and it could increase income for the government to fund the social protection program for the labor. Moreover, the investment climate supported by the correct macroeconomic policy will secure mutual benefits and not only the relative engagement from the public and private actors. Continuous capital investment will also support the notion of sustainable sector empowerment and industrial advancement which will increase not merely the labor's prosperity but also the purchasing power, which will be a cross-cutting concept with the elimination of poor society.

*Second*, the underpaid and overworked labor with no social protection and inadequate working conditions tend to be the first vulnerable actor to be exploited as forced labor. Minimum wage unregulated by the government and lack of monitoring and compliance from the corporations tends to proliferate the problem onto another extensive dilemma as most of the forced labor were not highly educated thus making them vulnerable to be deceived under the

name of incentives. The linkage between underpaid workers and exploitation has always been perceived the same, about the characteristics where the nature of supply and demand within the labor industry and the increasing urgency for the business actors to keep the production cost low and slashing the number of outcomes has made these conditions linked to the notion of exploitation. With shifting understandings where institutional framework where the labor is being affiliated with, bargaining process between the workers and the employer, and the presence of its labor union community stood within the wage determination process as the reason for the existence of underpaid workers as a common norm.

With this issue is highly potential to be escalated as an exploitation issue –or we know it as forced labor, member states must establish clear legal provisions. There are several key problems within this spectrum. First, with the government struggling on the issue of economic recession and lack of investments to recover the economy, they may pass a bill that could eventually stand as the lubricant for the FDIs, projects, contracts, and other investments to establish and attracts more labor, but the detrimental effect is when they are deprived in terms of their human rights and safety as labor. Because rapid investments may open more jobs but the corporations who are driven by profits are not operating with political

motivation and therefore compliance should be there. As the adoption of ILO Convention No. 29 has brought the idea where member states who are ratifying the convention should refrain from modern slavery, mobilization of labor with force and not voluntarily, labor exploitation from the status quo with 14.200.000 cases should be concerned more as state-imposed forced labor has decreased dramatically (ILO, 2014).

## **7. Relevant International Past Efforts by the United Nations**

- a. The establishment of the UN Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Development Programme or UNDP is one of the UN's specialized programme agencies that has the main mandate to assist and monitor the development of member states in achieving the sustainable development goals and addressing certain thematic issues ranging from environment, development capacity building, human security, and addressing the issues of the socio-economic field. Established in 1965 with 170 countries as the member, UNDP also assists member states to promote inclusive and effective governance in member states, building resilience to improve the livelihood of the people, and also eradicating poverty & promoting

equality (UNDP, 2020). Historically, UNDP itself was a merger between EPTA and Special Fund Programme, these are the UN specialized technical assistance efforts in 1962 to be more effective in assisting UN member states (Murphy, 2006).

To assist member states in achieving the sustainable development goals and increasing their resilience to face the five challenges (poverty, inequality, crisis prevention, environment, and innovative partnership) UNDP worked with member states in guiding and channeling the international assistance through sponsored pilot projects, trade reformation, debt relief, and inclusive development dialogue (UNDP, 2017). The tremendous effect of the global economic crisis has led UNDP to accelerate their programs based on the SDGs and MDGs to act as the “score-keeper” for member states national development program and these efforts were proven as successful when UNDP in 2013 was evaluated has progressively combating poverty and the vulnerable communities through their efforts and relief measures directed towards member states (UNDP, 2017).

- b. UNDP 2018 - 2021 strategic plan  
UNDP 2018 - 2021 strategic plan is a 3-year comprehensive strategic action

implemented by the UNDP as the guiding vision and principle of their operations in assisting member states to grow their national development plan thus catalyzing it so the SDGs themselves could be achieved by 2030. The UNDP Strategic plan itself is being used as a medium to visualize the periodic and comprehensive efforts by UNDP to assist member states in achieving sustainable development goals. Current UNDP 2018-2021 strategic solutions outlined the importance of the efforts to enhance their innovation, strengthen mutual goal partnerships, establish result-oriented roadmap policies to achieve the 2030 SDGs, and other technical recommendations and guiding principles (UNDP, 2018).

- c. Social security (minimum standards) convention, ILO Convention No. 102  
This convention was adopted in 1952 and is accounted as the flagship convention of all ILO Social Security Conventions and it's the only legal and labor law instrument until now that upholds international ratifications and accessions. The convention itself is also adopted based on the social welfare principles and establishes the minimum standards based on the best practices from all nine sectors of labor welfare (ILO, 2018). The convention itself allows

the legal compliance from its state parties to extend the step-by-step social welfare spectrum and relate it to the social security schemes based on the populations and the beneficiary of the social protection program. This convention also trademarks several key provisions such as collective financing and benefits by insurance contribution mechanism. Complementing social security channels and also progressive national policy objectives were also elaborated in this recommendation.

d. Sustainable Development Goals

The adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) began from Rio+20 or also known as the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCED, 1992). Rio+20 was held in 2012 as a twenty-year follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). In Rio+20, it is noted that most of the world leaders that came were from the G20 (UNCED, 1992). The world leaders that attended the Rio+20 believe that they have to create a global agenda that contains key issues that the world is facing – this agenda is intended to be the blueprint for every country in the world. With that purpose, the governments make up their mind to establish global

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNFPA, 2015). Beforehand, there was an agenda that is similar to the SDGs - that agenda is called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Thus, we can have a conclusion that SDGs are not just built to create a blueprint for countries but also to continue, and to formulate a “better version” of MDGs. SDGs could improve and address the points that were reviewed by a lot of actors. One of the points that were previously reviewed was about the limited scope and goals in MDGs - MDGs only has 8 goals and it seems to be economy or poverty eradication oriented. With that review taken into account, the governments then created a more inclusive, broad, and constructive scope in SDGs. With a total of 17 goals and 169 targets, the SDGs will address and encourage the implementation of all the critical sectors in each scope until 2030.

As the international community continuously enhance and cope up with the status quo to execute the best scenario out of the worst options on decision-making, the delay of SDGs achievement is inevitable unless the global community could have the guidelines and compliance on channeling the efforts to recover and inject stimulus to the weakened

capital through the importance of green economy-boosting, effective institutionalization for sustainable infrastructure & superstructure, and looking for an innovative way to establish the maintenance of progress so the SDGs can be achieved punctually with its optimum implementation (Srivastava, et al., 2020). If this could be achieved, therefore the negative forecasts and projections in regards to the SDGs won't take place and the global community will be more resilient than before under the principle of timely responses and adjustments to be more flexible overall negativities. This narrative is surely intertwined on how the perspective of SDGs should be incorporated when trying to alleviate the social protection problem.

- e. UN-related resolutions regarding economic and social fundamental concerns related to social protection. Most of the UN ECOSOC's resolutions were completely comprehensive on stipulating the importance of SDGs in this matter especially including the financial assistance for the people and social protection. Social protection was integrated into these resolutions such as from the ECOSOC resolution E/2020/L.14; E/RES/2020/22; and E/2019/2. And also, for most of the resolution given,

ECOSOC is now expected to address the issue with a much more general approach to the principal organ within the UN. For most of the resolutions given above, the flow of the resolution focuses on the topic of social inequalities, comprehensive review of the policies adopted by member states, and maintaining the efforts to achieve SDGs on time by the comprehensive policy review (ECOSOC, 2017). For the General Assembly, the UNGA resolution 70/1, this resolution is pretty much controversial because this resolution stipulated the fundamental stipulations about SDGs. Thus, the approach itself has to be comprehensive and dynamic when taking collective approaches in policy recommendations related to social protection.

## **8. The Overview of Countries Challenges in the Issues**

- a. Developing countries or semi/periphery countries

Developing countries during this pandemic might face many challenges in regards to how they could recover as a state. It is then an obvious thing that many countries have already reallocated their national budget not only for mitigation programs, but also for its prevention, response, and recovery



program. By shifting their budget mostly going for the health sector, it will be a challenge on how they could devise, implement, or try to adopt new programs that may not become their national priority. It should be taken into account that although the developing countries are struggling with COVID-19, such challenges like socio-economic problems will always become one of the fundamental challenges in regards to providing social protection and poverty alleviation. For instance, following a limitation on movement and budget, affects the way such entity like the local government should find an alternative funding mechanism, manage any public-private sector complexity (if any), or even try to maintain the quality of the human resources itself to maintain, monitor, or even the evaluation of the related programs in regards of social protection and poverty alleviation.

- b. Developed countries or core countries

We cannot deny that developed countries are also affected by this pandemic in which there is a huge budget reallocation and shift within their policy for the recovery or response program towards COVID-19. Nevertheless, developed countries already had a bigger privilege in

regards to capital investment, technology, facility, or even the capability to ensure social protection towards vulnerable actors in this kind of situation. Problems that may lie within developed countries are on how they could contribute towards other developing countries through international cooperation as a part of the moral obligation of the international community to recover from this pandemic. Moreover, international cooperation may be related towards reciprocity that exists so that both of the parties involved could gain mutual benefits for them, hence, the problem is on what kind of feedback and benefits could developed countries get by having to cooperate with the developing countries. If mere cooperation with good faith on poverty alleviation programs can be done, the global community then must provide a good train of thought or rationalization on why this kind of cooperation could be on the developed countries' concern

## C. CONCLUSION

Despite the current pandemic, poverty alleviation and social protection systems would always face the aforementioned challenges. Whether it is the availability of the human resources to provide proper public services, bureaucracy process, or

even the inclusivity of the assistance provided to ensure social security to the society, it will always become a dynamic process as it will adjust the political decision of the government and also its economic capability to provide those. It needs to be taken into account that the international community through the UN entities had strived to offer many assist-ances through their guidelines and programs in a form of in-kind assistance, information-sharing, or funding. Yet, the international community still needs to scrutinize the current status quo on what kind of technicalities could become a sustainable answer to resolve the current issue and/or fill the current loopholes of the past international actions. Lastly, the rural-urban development nexus needs to be addressed timely and shouldn't be forgotten by the member states and the stakeholders when trying to achieve a more sustainable endeavor in development goals. Following the elaboration on this paper, the nexus between rural and urban development is proven to be strategically connected and further technical research to see the intersectional issues and cross-cutting solutions are expected to be deliberated.

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