The Hague International Model United Nations

Forum: Environmental Commission 1 (EVC1)

Issue: Methods to transition from oil-based energy sources to renewable energy sources in Less economically developed countries [LEDCs]

Student Officer: Paula Serrano Lizarralde

Position: Deputy President

Introduction

Renewable energy refers to all energy sources that do not deplete, unlike fossil fuels. Renewable energy sources such as the sun and wind have an infinite lifetime and will not get used up over time. Currently, thirty-five billion and a half barrels of oil are used per year, it is estimated that in 50 years the world will have run out of oil and in 100… out of coal. At present, the share of renewable global electricity is 30%, which is undoubtedly a step in the right direction. However, less economically developed countries (LEDCs) are struggling to transition towards renewable energy as the transition can be costly, not to mention that most LEDCs rely on fossil fuels as a source of income and would be greatly impacted by the transition away from fossil fuels. Because of this, reaching 100% renewable energy would require it to be inexpensive and accessible.

Since the industrial revolution, there has been an increase in human-made greenhouse gas emissions which in turn has heated our planet. The UN has stated that global warming must be capped at 1.5 degrees Celsius in order to avoid catastrophic effects, such as the bleaching of corals, acidification of the ocean, death of ecosystems, and massive extinction of animals. To be able to do this, fossil fuels must be curbed and a transition towards renewable energies that do not exploit natural resources or expel greenhouse gases. Although there have already been initiatives to turn away from fossil fuels, LEDCs fall behind as solutions are not economically viable and MEDCs benefit from their

fossil fuel use. Additionally, around the globe, there are 760 million people who live without access to electricity hindering their opportunities to move forward and develop as towns and cities, another 2.6 billion people use traditional energy sources which can be dangerous and lead to health issues.

With current pledges and targets, global temperatures are expected to rise by 1.9 -2.1 degrees Celsius by 2100. However, if existing policies are continued, a 2.5 - 2.9 degree increase is expected, which is 1 degree to 1.5 degrees more than the tipping point established by the UN. It is important to note that climate change tends to affect developing nations stronger and quicker than rich countries that have the means to mitigate climate change. To be able to slow down the rapid heating of the world, the focus must be placed on LEDC emissions as they increase in growth, while MEDC emissions start to plateau. Sustainable solutions for LEDCs that are appropriate and applicable to their environments must be found to achieve this goal.

Definition of Key Terms

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy refers to energy that comes from an infinite source that will not be depleted. Energy from sources such as solar, hydropower, wind, geothermal, and tidal mass are renewable as we have an infinite amount of energy from these sources.

Fossil Fuels

Fossil fuels are a form of natural fuel such as coal or petroleum that comes from the remains of living organisms that have been exposed to high amounts of pressure and heat over millions of years that turn them into oil or coal. Because of the amount of time it takes to create these fuels they are not considered renewable even though they are natural (“Merriam-Webster Dictionary”).

Less Economically Developed Countries

Less economically developed countries refer to developing nations with less economic power. To be considered an LEDC three main factors are considered: the people have low incomes, the people have little access to good nutrition, health care, and education; and the country’s economy is unstable as it derives from land-based sources or primary industries. These countries also suffer from structural impediments to allow for sustainable development (Britannica “Less Economically Developed Countries”).

Climate Change

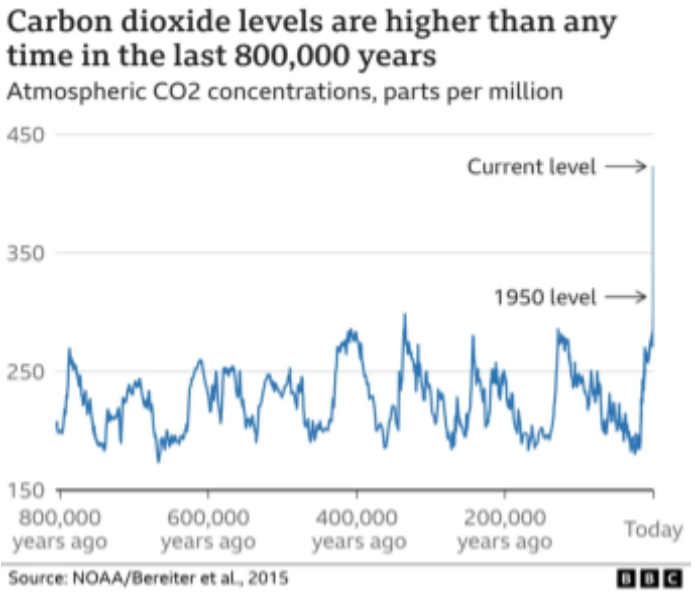
Climate change refers to long-term shifts in global temperatures over long periods of time. This occurs due to the greenhouse effect, a property of our atmosphere that holds heat in so that our earth isn't at an average temperature of -18 degrees Celsius. Although these shifts can be natural, since the 1800s (industrial revolution) human activities have become a prominent driver in climate change (United Nations).

Global Warming

Global warming refers to the rise in global temperatures due to the greenhouse effect in the atmosphere (United Nations).

Background Information

The graph to the right shows the increase in CO2 emissions over the last 800,000 years. The cyclical nature of climate change in the world has been altered since the Industrial Revolution when anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions spiked to levels unseen in the past. The UN says that if global temperatures are able to stay underneath the 1.5-2 degree increase in temperature from pre-industrial times before the end of the century the situation will be manageable. Nonetheless, more extreme versions of the adversities currently being faced would still occur. With an increase of 2 degrees more than 99% of coral reefs would be lost, in contrast with 70-90% at 1.5. Similarly by staying at a 1.5-degree increase twice the number of plants and vertebrates are at risk of extinction as they are exposed to unsuitable climate conditions and several hundred million people would be susceptible to climate-related poverty and relocation by 2050. The UN-mandated 1.5-degree increase was considered a "tipping point" is currently underway to be reached sooner than imagined, which would lead to irreversible damages such as the collapse of the Greenland ice sheet.

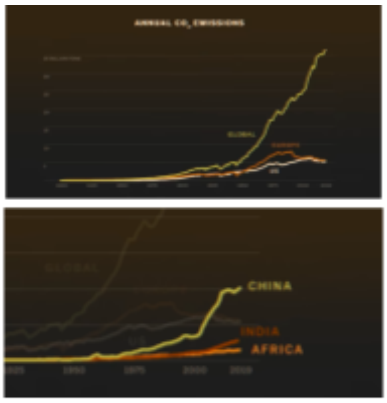


Carbon dioxide levels in the last 800,000 years (News)

The global temperature is currently sitting at a 1.3-degree increase from pre-industrial times and 2024 has been the warmest year recorded in history. With increasing warming, entire coastal cities and island nations are put at risk of disappearing. Coastal cities like Miami in the US or Osaka in Japan could be drowned by 2050 and entire nations across the Pacific could disappear as a result of melting ice caps in the Arctic. People living in LEDCs are more susceptible to the dangers of climate change as they have

fewer resources to mitigate and adapt to the ever-changing climate, this has led to debates on the equality of climate change relief as LEDCs account for a small portion of greenhouse gas emissions yet are more vulnerable to its effects.

Political challenges of climate change have led to delayed action. Different leaders have opposing views on climate change. In some countries, entire economies rely on fossil fuels and would be deeply impacted by the shift away from fossil fuels, such as Trinidad and Tobago. Furthermore, MEDCs have been struggling to keep up with their end of the bargain that called for 100 billion dollars a year as relief to developing nations in order to push the shift to renewable energies. Nonetheless, the common voice of LEDCs is one of criticism towards the rich countries who profit off of the oil from poor nations and simultaneously refuse to move away from fossil fuels although they have the capital and resources to do so. For LEDCs to be able to move away from fossil fuels and shift towards renewable energy there must be economic relief that allows them to make the shift without their economies taking a hit.



Graph showing carbon emissions in different countries. Close up on China, India and Africa
Vox - The End Of Oil

Transitioning LEDCs towards a greener energy system is a way to guarantee that our future stays underneath the 1.5 degrees that the UN has called for. As seen on the graph to the left, efforts made across Europe and the US have started to show a decline in CO2 emissions, however, the emissions in developing countries are starting to rise quicker, data that is concerning to scientists across the globe. If the emissions of developing nations cannot be slowed down, the efforts made by rich countries will not be as valuable.

Developing nations are facing a new challenge as they are forced to follow cleaner energy paths than those of MEDCs historically, to be able to see a change in our carbon emissions. To move away from fossil fuels they are going to need to find affordable renewable energy that does not impact their economies or the lives of their citizens.

Economic reliance on fossil fuels

Fossil fuels have become the basis for economies across the globe, many of which are developing nations that depend on fossil fuels to move forward. The International Institute for Sustainable Development highlights the financial risks for emerging LEDCs such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, and South Africa, due to their dependence on fossil fuel revenues. The global transition to clean energy could cause them a 278-billion-dollar revenue gap by 2030. Additionally, political systems in resource-rich nations, often marked by authoritarianism and corruption may not prioritize equitable energy access and can lead to a stronger hold on fossil fuels by political leaders.

Debt relief

Many LEDCs find themselves trapped in relying on fossil fuels by rich countries. As they drown in debts, LEDCs are pressured into oil to be able to pay MEDCs. Nonetheless, fossil fuel projects rarely generate the revenues expected and tend to leave countries in more debt than before. According to a report titled, *The DebT- Fossil Fuel Trap* written by a group of multiple NGOs and climate change organizations. The debt owed by global south countries has increased 150% since 2011 and 54 countries are currently in a debt crisis" As a result, LEDCs policies and laws are built around paying back debt and not working towards a greener future.

Mozambique can be used as a case study to understand this effect, after taking loans from London-based banks in 2013 without parliamentary approval their debt burden has doubled. The unattainable projections of earnings from gas field discoveries have left Mozambique struggling to repay its debt. Similarly, the sentiment in Argentina concedes with that of Mozambique as countries are being forced back into fossil fuels causing them to shift away from green projects.

Although MEDCs have agreed to pay many developing nations to help build greener policies and shift away from carbon fuels, with the political and economic challenges facing LEDCs, moving away from fossil fuels could leave them in worse economic situations.

Inaccessibility to renewable energy

Renewable energy resources are often inaccessible to LEDCs due to limited infrastructure, insufficient financing, and lack of technology. These challenges hinder their ability to harness renewable energy, despite having abundant natural resources like solar and wind power. The transition to renewable energy requires substantial external support, including investments, knowledge sharing, debt management, and development assistance, to overcome these barriers and ensure a sustainable transition for LEDCs.

Lack of technology development and Access

The lack of access to developing technology has put the LEDCs at a disadvantage, decreasing their chance to develop and move forward toward a greener future. The high initial costs of green energy such as solar panels, wind turbines, and battery storage systems, require substantial upfront investments that many LEDCs cannot pay. The absence of local manufacturing forces poor countries to import technology from MEDCs at high costs delaying the transition. Similarly, the lack of institutions and funding for research and development groups in developing countries hinders their ability to transition towards greener energy sources. Additionally, innovation from other countries is not always applicable to the needs of LEDCs.

The lack of funding makes it difficult for LEDCs to update their electric systems and power grids which in turn makes it difficult to apply sustainable energy as their systems are not supportive. Moreover, renewable energy needs high energy storage to be successful, solar and wind power are intermittent energy sources that rely on storage technologies such as lithium-ion batteries and smart grids to be

productive. These technologies are often unavailable or too expensive for LEDCs, causing them to rely on oil-based energy sources. Without proper energy storage, the amount of energy produced by renewable sources is not enough to make a full transition into greener energy sources.

In other cases, LEDCs have renewable energy sources which they rely on from the past. In Ecuador, the hydroelectric power system has been used for decades. However, the lack of rain in the country over the past months has left Ecuador with little to no energy and blackouts for as long as 14 hours. To be able to have a smooth transition into renewable energy sources there has to be an understanding in LEDCs to ensure that renewable energy doesn't cause massive disruptions such as that seen in Ecuador.

Energy Access

Energy access is fundamental to the development of countries. Access to reliable and affordable energy is essential for economic growth, education, healthcare, and quality of life. In many LEDCs, large populations lack access to electricity and in many cases rely on dangerous electricity that can harm their health and livelihoods. The transition to green energy has hopes to reduce the number of people living without access to energy and address this issue more sustainably. Transitioning to green energy offers a unique opportunity to address historical inequities in energy access. Many rural communities are underserved by the oil and gas industry as expanding centralized grids is often too expensive to be a viable solution.

Currently, energy access is serving as a driver for green energy adaptation worldwide. Decentralizing energy through renewable sources and expanding energy access through green solutions demonstrates their viability and scalability, encouraging further investment and adoption of green energy.

Common but differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)

CBDR, is a principle of international environmental law established by the UNCCF stating that all states are responsible for addressing global environmental destruction yet not equally responsible. The principle balances the need for global environmental action while recognizing that historically rich nations have been responsible for the greater share of emissions. LEDCs have contributed far less to climate change, but often face the impacts through extreme weather, rising sea levels, and resource scarcity. CBDR outlines the need for developed nations to bear a greater share of the burden when it comes to fighting climate change.

Energy transition challenges vary between countries. LEDCs lack infrastructure and governance conducive to adapting renewable energies. CBDR asks for tailored approaches that consider the needs and dynamics of every country to avoid unrealistic expectations for LEDCs to match the pace of MEDCs. By acknowledging the differentiated responsibilities, CBDR ensures that global climate action is fair and this encourages more participation from developing nations.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

UN (The United Nations)

The UN is involved in this issue through its committees on development and environmental concerns. Through these commissions, they have been able to engage in diplomatic conversations regarding energy access, renewable energy transition, and the development of LEDCs. The UN helps to facilitate conversation and diplomacy between rich countries and poor countries so that engagement in positive dialogue and steps forward can take place. Meetings such as COP 16, the meeting on biodiversity held in Colombia are organized and mitigated by the UN to hold diplomatic conversations on environmental issues.

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)

The UNDP focuses on eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities while promoting sustainable development. In the context of energy and environmental issues, the UNDP collaborates with governments and communities to implement policy reforms and institutional changes that lower carbon emissions and mitigate climate change impacts. Additionally, they assist nations in balancing development needs with sustainability goals.

UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme)

As the UN's environmental authority, UNEP's work in setting global environmental standards is instrumental for a greener future. UNEP supports countries in adopting renewable energy legislation and enhancing their capacity to meet international climate commitments. The organization also provides technical assistance and funding opportunities to LEDCs, empowering them to invest in clean energy infrastructure. UNEP's focus on sustainable resource management ensures that renewable energy projects in LEDCs prioritize environmental integrity.

IRENA (International Renewable Energy Agency)

IRENA, is an intergovernmental organization that aids and supports countries into a more sustainable future, focusing on funding cooperation and policy change. By providing expertise and financial assistance, IRENA supports renewable adoption in LEDCs. Its initiative often focuses on solar wind and hydropower projects, offering solutions tailored to the specific needs of developing nations. IRENA also promotes regional collaboration and knowledge sharing to help LEDCs build the capacity to manage renewable energy independently.

US

The United States has contributed to energy access initiatives through programs like USAID and Power Africa, which aim to expand energy infrastructure in LEDCs. For example, Power Africa has supported over 140 projects, providing millions with access to electricity through solar and wind energy. However, the nation has faced criticism for its inconsistent climate policies, notably during the Trump administration of 2016-2020 which withdrew from the Paris Agreement. Despite these setbacks, many U.S.-based initiatives have continued to fund and promote renewable energy in developing regions.

Germany

Germany has been helping through the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and other programs like the International Climate Initiative. Germany supports renewable energy projects in LEDCs. Their efforts include funding and expertise for solar, wind, and hydropower installations. For instance, GIZ has implemented renewable energy programs in Africa and Southeast Asia, focusing on building technical expertise and creating policy frameworks. Germany's support extends to providing financial assistance and sharing best practices to ensure the sustainability of energy transitions.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has supported renewable energy in LEDCs through UK Aid and initiatives such as REPP. These efforts focus on increasing access to clean energy, particularly in underserved regions, while promoting private investment in renewable energy technologies. REPP has financed over 30 renewable energy projects in sub-Saharan Africa, providing electricity to thousands while fostering economic development.

Japan

Innovation in Japan through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has provided solar, wind, and hydropower projects to promote renewable energy across less developed countries. Through JICA the country has financed and implemented solar, wind, and hydropower projects in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. JICA’s initiatives prioritize innovation, such as the development of microgrids and energy storage solutions, which are critical for expanding energy access in remote and rural areas of LEDCs.

G77:

G77 is the largest intergovernmental organization of developing countries in the United Nations. Originally set up on the 15th of June 1964, the group has worked towards improving the conditions of life in developing countries mainly by lifting millions out of poverty. However, they are now facing climate change crises that have disproportionately impacted them. As of 2020, the funding gap to help developing countries reach the SDGs by 2030 increased by 56% which has in turn hindered efforts towards greener societies.

China

China has emerged as a major player in renewable energy investments in Africa. By Funding large-scale wind and solar farms, China supports energy transitions while addressing its global development goals. The country also invests in education and training programs, helping LEDCs build local capacity to manage renewable energy systems. Notable examples include China's Belt and Road Initiative, which includes clean energy projects in partner countries.

Brazil

Brazil's expertise in bioenergy and hydropower has been supporting renewable projects in LEDCs. By sharing knowledge and technology the BRICS country has been helping nations in Latin America and Africa harness their natural resources for clean energy production. Brazil's emphasis on sustainable energy ensures that projects not only provide electricity but address economic growth as countries move away from fossil fuels.

Timeline of Events

1992	**CBDR** Kyoto Protocol outlined the need for MEDCs to take accountability for their weight in the climate crisis and accept the burden of their actions similarly, it calls for MEDCs to help mitigate climate change in LEDCs.
August - 26th September 4th, 2002	**Johannesburg plan of implementation**. The World Summit on Sustainable Development of 2002, adopted a political implementation plan that called for increased access to renewable energy technologies, particularly in developing countries.
September, 2011	**Sustainable Energy for All** was an Initiative launched by the UN aiming to ensure universal access to modern energy services and double the share of renewable energy globally by 2030, with a significant focus on LEDCs
September, 25th 2015	**2030 agenda for sustainable development,** including SDG 7 which aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy. This included commitments to scale up renewable energy in LEDCs.
December, 12th, 2015	**The Paris Agreement**, signed by 196 parties, was a document with the overarching goal to hold global warming at 1.5-2 degrees Celsius. The document outlined different actions that Countries had to take to be able to achieve this. The agreement was signed during COP 21 in Paris, France.
June, 2018	**Global Environment Facility (GEF),** approved $500 million for renewable energy projects in LEDCs during its 6th replenishment meeting.

September 24, 2021	The **UN High-Level Dialogue on Energy** The first meeting in 40 years, where countries including LEDCs committed to increasing renewables as part of their SDG strategies.
September, 2023	During the UN General Assembly, further discussions were held to address financing and public-private partnerships for renewable energy in LEDCs with SDG 7 being a central theme.
November, 11, 2024	**COP 29 Azerbaijan** emphasized actionable steps towards transitioning to renewable energy in LEDCs as they focused on the theme “In Solidarity for a Green World”

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

UN resolution RES/76/210, submitted by the general assembly on the 6th of January 2022, outlines a solution to the issue of “Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all”. The resolution calls for more action to take place regarding SDG 7, equal energy access to all, and asks MEDCs to take into account their role in the energy crisis. Additionally, it expresses concern over insufficient global progress towards global energy goals as 2.6 billion people use harmful fuel and 7 million live without access to energy. The resolution links energy availability and access to development linking poverty eradication, economic development, education, and health.

2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The United Nations General Assembly adopted resolutions emphasizing access to affordable and clean energy as a critical sustainable development goal (SDG7). This includes encouraging renewable energy adoption in developing countries and supporting sustainable energy infrastructure.

The least developed countries' renewable energy and energy efficiency initiative promotes access to clean energy in LEDCs by fostering stakeholder collaboration to design tailored renewable energy solutions. It also emphasizes reducing dependency on imported fossil fuels, especially in remote or energy-insecure regions.

The UN and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) developed the renewable energy roadmap (REmap) to support countries, including LEDCs, in transitioning to renewable energy. It focuses on strategies like decarbonizing power systems, electrifying end-use sectors, and deploying

innovative solutions like green hydrogen.

Possible Solutions

towards achieving a smooth transition to renewable energy in LEDCs:

Providing economic relief and fulfilling financial commitments to less economically developed countries is a critical step in enabling their transition to renewable energy. Many LEDCs face significant financial constraints, which limit their ability to invest in sustainable infrastructure. Wealthier nations and international organizations must honor their pledges of financial aid and climate funding to support these countries in adopting renewable energy systems. Such investments can help offset the initial costs of transitioning, ensuring LEDCs are not left behind in global efforts to combat climate change.

Access to affordable renewable energy technologies for LEDCs to move away from oil-based energy sources. High upfront costs for technologies like solar panels, wind turbines, and energy storage systems often act as barriers for countries with limited resources. To overcome this, partnerships between governments, private industries, and international organizations can be established to subsidize costs, promote technology transfer, and create local manufacturing capacities. Making these technologies affordable and accessible can accelerate the adoption of renewable energy in LEDCs.

Promoting equity in climate action and fostering global cooperation is fundamental to addressing the unique challenges LEDCs face in transitioning to renewable energy. Many LEDCs contribute disproportionately to climate change impacts. International frameworks should ensure that these nations receive adequate support and that MEDCs hold up to their end of international legislation. By emphasizing fairness and shared responsibility, global cooperation can help bridge the gap between developed and developing countries to fight climate change.

Supporting LEDCs in transitioning directly to greener energy systems without replicating historical fossil fuel dependency is crucial for a smooth transition to renewable energy and a sustainable future. Many developed nations relied heavily on fossil fuels during industrialization, leading to significant environmental degradation. By understanding what MEDCs did wrong, LEDCs can move towards renewable energies without taking the same wrong steps. The direct transition can be achieved through targeted investments, knowledge sharing, and fostering innovation in clean energy solutions tailored to the needs of LEDCs.

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