STUDY GUIDE

EKMUN 2025

UN-OHRLLS

Topic A: Ensuring a smooth transition for Graduating Least Developed Countries (LDCs) through sustainable support mechanisms.

Topic B: Combating youth poverty through equal access to education and employment.

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Dear Delegates,

As the Secretary-General of EKMUN'2025, it is my greatest honor to welcome you to this year's conference. Soon, we will come together to engage in discussions that mirror the complexity and importance of real-world diplomacy. Each one of you brings a unique perspective, a distinct voice, and an ambition to create change and it is exactly this diversity that makes Model United Nations such a powerful experience.

Over the upcoming days, you will find yourself not only debating international matters but also stepping into the shoes of world leaders, policymakers, and diplomats. The preparation, dedication, and curiosity you bring to this conference will shape not just your experience, but the overall atmosphere of cooperation and respect that defines EKMUN'2025

Throughout this conference, you will not only have the opportunity to discuss global issues but also to develop essential skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, and negotiation. Remember that Model United Nations is not just about reaching resolutions it is about understanding perspectives, fostering respect, and finding common ground among differences.

I strongly encourage each one of you to be bold, respectful, and solution-oriented during your sessions. Let this conference be a place where your voices are heard, and your ideas make an impact.

I wish you all productive debates and unforgettable memories.

Warm regards,

Ayliz Çolak

Secretary-General of EKMUN'2025

WELCOME LETTER FROM THE USG

Dear Delegates,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) at EKMUN25.

As the Under-Secretary-General of this committee, I am thrilled to see so many bright, engaged students coming together to discuss some of the most pressing issues facing vulnerable nations today. From tackling the challenges of poverty and trade barriers to addressing climate change and disaster resilience, the topics before us call for creativity, empathy, and a global perspective.

Whenever I go back to my memories, MUN-related ones are always the most compelling ones which makes this duty even more valuable for me. As the chairboard of UN-OHRLLS, our main aim here is to make this experience worth remembering by contributing to delegates personal and academic growth, broadening their vision and harboring their interest and enthusiasm in world issues, politics, history, and diplomacy while having fun and meeting new people.

I look forward to witnessing your passion and diplomacy throughout the sessions. Together, let’s make this an enriching and memorable experience for everyone involved.

Warm regards, Nisa Nur AKAN.

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United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)

UN-OHRLLS stands for United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.
It's a UN Secretariat office created in 2001 to advocate for and coordinate international support for three vulnerable groups of countries:
LDCs – Least Developed Countries
LLDCs – Landlocked Developing Countries SIDS –
Small Island Developing States

Its role is to mobilize resources, monitor progress on UN Programmes of Action, and keep the issues of these countries on the global agenda.
Typical topics revolve around:
For LDCs: poverty reduction, education and health gaps, debt relief, trade access, climate vulnerability.

For LLDCs: transit trade and transport corridors, dependence on neighbors for port access, high logistics costs, regional infrastructure cooperation.

For SIDS: climate change and rising sea levels, disaster resilience, small undiversified economies (tourism/fisheries), renewable energy.

Cross-cutting: Sustainable Development Goals, technology transfer, financing for development, food security, international partnerships.

AGENDA ITEM ONE: Ensuring a Smooth Transition for Graduating Least Developed Countries (LDCs) Through Sustainable Support Mechanisms

1. Background and Context

Having established what the LDC category represents, it is now essential to understand how a country moves through the graduation process and the specific criteria involved.

The LDC Category and the Goal of Graduation

The category of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) was established by the UN General Assembly in 1971 to identify the most disadvantaged and vulnerable developing countries and provide them with special international support measures (ISMs) in areas like trade, Official Development Assistance (ODA), and technical assistance.

The ultimate goal of the LDC category is sustainable graduation for countries to develop enough to no longer need the special support measures. A successful graduation means the country can continue its development trajectory without falling back into the LDC category, a phenomenon known as "reversal."

Graduation is a major development milestone that improves a country's reputation, boosting investor confidence and promoting integration into the global economy. But at the same time upon graduation, a country gradually loses access to the LDC-specific support, most critically:

Preferential Market Access: Loss of duty-free, quota-free access to major markets (e.g., the EU's Everything but Arms scheme). This is a primary concern for export-oriented LDCs like Bangladesh.

Concessional Finance: Reduced eligibility for highly concessional loans (low interest, long repayment) from multilateral institutions.

Technical Assistance and Special Treatment: Loss of special flexibilities in multilateral agreements, such as those within the World Trade Organization (WTO)

The LDC Graduation Process

The graduation process is a formal, multi-year, and technical process governed by the **UN General Assembly** based on recommendations from the **Committee for Development Policy (CDP)**, a subsidiary body of ECOSOC.

LDCs are reviewed every 3 years by the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP) based on three criteria, with specific thresholds set for inclusion and graduation:

Criterion	Definition	Focus	Current Graduation Threshold (approx.)
1. Gross National Income (GNI) per capita	A measure of the country's income level.	Poverty/Income	≥ $1,306 (or twice this for "income-only" eligibility)
2. Human Assets Index (HAI)	A composite indicator of human capital, including indicators for health (e.g., under-five mortality) and education (e.g., secondary school enrollment).	Human Capital	≥ 66
3. Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index (EVI)	A measure of structural vulnerability to external economic and environmental shocks.	Resilience/Sho cks	≤ 32

Graduation occurs when a country meets the threshold in at least two out of three criteria in two consecutive reviews. After ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly approve, a country graduates, typically following a 3-year transition period.

Recent Graduations
Botswana (1994), Cape Verde (2007), Maldives (2011), Samoa (2014), Equatorial Guinea (2017), Vanuatu (2020).
Upcoming: Angola, Bhutan, Solomon Islands, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Bangladesh are on track to graduate by 2030.

2. Key Issues in LDC Graduation

1. Loss of Preferential Treatment

This is arguably the most immediate and feared challenge for graduating LDCs, particularly those with a highly export-dependent economy (like Bangladesh's ready-made garments sector).

- **Trade Preference Erosion:** LDCs benefit from special arrangements like the European Union's **"Everything but Arms" (EBA)** initiative, which grants duty-free, quota-free access for nearly all their exports. Upon graduation, this status is generally **phased out** over a period (often three years) and replaced by a less generous scheme, such as the standard **Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)**. This means products face significantly higher tariffs, which can severely impact their global price competitiveness.
- **Reduced Financial Access:** Graduated LDCs typically lose priority or exclusive access to concessional financing and specific support funds, such as the **Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF)** for climate adaptation. They must then compete for funding with all other developing countries, often at higher interest rates.
- **Loss of WTO Flexibilities:** LDCs benefit from **Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT)** under World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements, which grants them longer transition periods to implement certain trade rules (e.g., the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights - TRIPS). These flexibilities are also withdrawn, demanding a more immediate and costly alignment with international trade norms.

2. Institutional Capacity Constraints

The ability of a country to successfully manage its transition depends on the strength and sophistication of its national institutions and policy frameworks.

- **Trade Negotiation and Policy:** Graduated countries must quickly pivot from relying on LDC preference schemes to negotiating and implementing complex **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)** or meeting the stringent standards of other non-LDC trade preference schemes (e.g., the EU's GSP+ which requires adhering to human rights and labor conventions). Many LDCs lack the necessary domestic expertise and institutional coordination for this.
- **Regulatory Implementation:** Having lost the S&DT flexibilities, domestic agencies responsible for customs, intellectual property, sanitation standards, and quality control must be strengthened rapidly to meet international obligations and retain market access.
- **Resource Mobilization:** Institutions must become highly effective at **domestic resource mobilization** (e.g., improving tax collection) and strategically attracting **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** and blended finance to offset the anticipated decline in development aid and concessional loans.

3. Sustainability of Development Gains

Graduation criteria often do not fully capture the quality and resilience of development gains, raising the risk of reversal if not support.

- **Structural Economic Transformation:** For many LDCs, meeting the GNI criteria is often driven by a single sector (like garments or resource extraction) or simply by a small, growing population. A truly sustainable graduation requires **economic diversification** away from reliance on one or two volatile commodities or sectors.
- **Human Asset Quality:** While the **Human Assets Index (HAI)** may meet the threshold, a country may still struggle with the *quality* of education, the availability of specialized skills, and enduring inequalities (e.g., regional disparities or gender gaps) that could slow progress post-graduation.
- **Avoiding the "Middle-Income Trap":** The risk is that a country graduates to lower-middle-income status, only to get stuck due to a failure to transition to a high-productivity, innovation-driven economy, potentially leading to stagnation and a failure to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

4. External Shocks and Vulnerabilities

Many LDCs, especially SIDS and others graduating on the basis of GNI alone, remain acutely vulnerable to shocks that can erase years of progress and trigger a reversal back into the LDC category. This is captured by the **Economic and**

Environmental Vulnerability Index (EVI), which many graduating countries still fail to meet.

- **Climate Shocks:** Graduating countries, particularly SIDS (like Vanuatu and Tuvalu), face existential threats from sea-level rise and the increasing frequency and intensity of cyclones, which can instantaneously destroy infrastructure and agricultural production.
- **Economic Shocks:** Dependence on a few export products (commodity dependence) or remittances makes them highly susceptible to fluctuations in global commodity prices or economic slowdowns in their main trading partners.
- **Health and Pandemic Shocks:** The COVID-19 pandemic severely tested the resilience of graduating LDCs, highlighting their weak public health systems and the vulnerability of their global supply chains, leading to requests for delays in their graduation timelines.

Addressing these vulnerabilities through **resilience-building mechanisms** and **extended, non-LDC-specific support** (such as specialized climate adaptation finance) is crucial for an irreversible and smooth transition.

In light of these challenges, the international community has designed several mechanisms to ensure that graduation does not lead to economic regression.

3. Existing Support Mechanisms and Frameworks

International support for graduating Least Developed Countries (LDCs) is delivered through a coordinated system spanning policy, finance, and trade. The goal is to avoid an abrupt cessation of support that could disrupt a country's development trajectory.

United Nations Frameworks

The core policy structure is driven by the United Nations, particularly the Office of the High Representative for LDCs (UN-OHRLLS).

- **Smooth Transition Strategy (STS):** This is the mandatory, nationally-owned plan that every graduating LDC must prepare during the three-year preparatory period. It outlines how the country will adjust to the loss of LDC benefits and sustain its development gains. The UN system provides extensive technical support for its formulation.

- **DPoA Sustainable Graduation Support Facility (iGRAD):** A key deliverable of the Doha Programme of Action (2022-2031), this facility is designed to provide cohesive, integrated advisory, and capacity-building services to help countries prepare and implement their STS.
- **Technology Bank for LDCs:** This institution assists LDCs, including those graduating, by enhancing their capacity in **science, technology, and innovation**, which is critical for structural transformation and economic diversification.
- **UN-OHRLLS:** This office coordinates the entire UN system's support, provides international advocacy, and monitors the implementation of the STS and post-graduation progress.

International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Aid

Multilateral banks and financial institutions play a central role in managing the financial shift.

- **World Bank and IMF:** These institutions provide both **concessional financing** (soft loans) through bodies like the International Development Association (IDA) and technical assistance to help countries manage their debt and fiscal policy. While LDC status is a factor, eligibility for some concessional windows often shifts post-graduation to be based on income-per-capita.
- **Regional Development Banks:** Institutions like the African Development Bank (AfDB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) offer essential **soft loans** and project financing for large-scale infrastructure and development initiatives.
- **Official Development Assistance (ODA):** The gradual reduction in ODA is mitigated by encouraging bilateral donors to maintain or increase their aid commitments during the transition period, focusing on key development sectors.

Trade and World Trade Organization (WTO) Mechanisms

The immediate concern over the loss of preferential market access is addressed through negotiated extensions.

- **Extended Trade Preferences:** UN General Assembly resolutions strongly urge developed country trading partners to allow for a period of extended preferential market access for the graduating country. For example, the **European Union** allows for a three-year transition period for its Everything But Arms (EBA) preferences post-graduation.

- **WTO Waivers and S&DT:** WTO members agree to provide **Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT)** and waivers, allowing LDCs greater flexibility (e.g., in implementing the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights - TRIPS). These flexibilities are subject to negotiation and phased withdrawal.

South–South and Triangular Cooperation

Support from emerging economies offers a less conditional, often investment-focused alternative.

- **Emerging Economies:** Countries like China, India, Brazil, and Turkey offer various forms of assistance, including **low-interest loans, foreign direct investment, and capacity-building** tailored to development priorities.
- **Regional Partnerships:** Regional bodies such as ASEAN and the African Union promote shared strategies, regional economic integration, and sometimes collective funds to cushion external shocks.

While these frameworks provide a foundation, their effectiveness ultimately depends on how countries implement strategic, long-term reforms.

4. Strategic Approaches for Ensuring Smooth Transitions

Sustainable graduation requires a holistic, multi-pronged approach that moves beyond preference reliance toward inherent competitiveness and resilience.

Phased Withdrawal of Benefits and Incentives

The principle of "smooth transition" is embodied in the **gradual, predictable phasing out** of support measures, rather than an abrupt "cliff edge."

- **Longer Grace Periods:** Trading partners are encouraged to implement a 5–10 year phased reduction in trade preferences and concessional loans post-graduation to provide stable operating conditions for investors and exporters.

- **New Incentives:** The international community is exploring new, targeted incentives—beyond traditional LDC support—to reward graduating countries for their progress and encourage continued structural reforms.

Institutional Strengthening and Governance

A country must develop the internal capacity to manage a more complex, post-LDC policy landscape.

- **Fiscal Capacity:** Critical focus is placed on building effective **tax administration capacity** and strengthening budget management to increase **domestic resource mobilization**. This ensures the government can autonomously finance key services.
- **Regulatory Reform:** Enhancing **anti-corruption measures** and streamlining regulatory frameworks is key to improving the business climate and attracting sustainable private sector investment, replacing the lost LDC advantage.
- **Disaster and Climate Response:** Institutional capacity for **climate adaptation and disaster response** must be significantly enhanced, particularly for small island developing states (SIDS) and highly vulnerable LDCs.

Economic Diversification and Competitiveness

The primary long-term solution is to build resilience through broad-based economic growth.

- Value-Added Industries: Policy should strategically promote a shift toward value-added industries (e.g., higher-end manufacturing, knowledge-intensive services) to move away from primary commodity or basic garment production.
- Reducing Export Concentration: Diversification of exports and export markets reduces reliance on a narrow set of buyers and makes the economy less vulnerable to single-market downturns or the loss of a specific trade preference scheme.
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Focused support for local entrepreneurship and start-ups helps foster innovation and creates new, high-productivity jobs.

Private Sector Engagement and Finance

Mobilizing private capital is essential to fill the void left by reduced ODA.

- Targeted FDI: Incentives and streamlined processes are needed to encourage foreign direct investment (FDI) in sustainable sectors that align with the country's national development plan.

- Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs): Utilizing PPPs for financing major infrastructure projects (power, transport, digital connectivity) leverages private sector efficiency and capital.

Long-Term Monitoring and Peer Learning

The international community must commit to monitoring post-graduation performance to ensure the transition is irreversible.

- CDP Monitoring: International bodies, led by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP), must track post-graduation outcomes for at least five to ten years after effective graduation.
- Early Warning Systems: Establishing robust mechanisms for early detection of potential setbacks, such as significant trade shocks, debt stress, or reversals in key human development indicators.
- South-South Peer Learning: Facilitating peer learning among countries that have recently graduated (e.g., Samoa advising Solomon Islands) allows for the practical exchange of successful transition strategies and policy adjustments.

5. Case Studies

1. Bangladesh (Upcoming Graduation, 2026–2030)

   1.1. Achieved high growth through textiles, remittances, and manufacturing.

   1.2. Risk: Losing EU duty-free access could cost billions in exports.

   1.3. Strategy: Pushing for diversification into pharmaceuticals, ICT, and shipbuilding.

2. Maldives (Graduated 2011)

   2.1. Relied heavily on tourism revenues.

   2.2. Hit hard by climate vulnerability and COVID-19’s impact on travel.

   2.3. Lesson: Diversification and environmental resilience are crucial.

3. Vanuatu (Graduated 2020)

3.1. Small island economy highly vulnerable to cyclones.

3.2. Graduation coincided with COVID-19 → deep economic contraction.

3.3. Lesson: External shocks must be factored into transition plans.

6. Key Takeaways for Debate

1. Graduation is a milestone but also a risk.
2. Without sustainable support mechanisms, development gains can reverse.
3. Solutions must combine international support, domestic reforms, and regional cooperation.
4. Private sector engagement and resilience to climate change are central to long-term success.

7. Questions to be Answered

1. What are the key economic and structural challenges that LDCs face during and after graduation, particularly regarding trade competitiveness, diversification, and financial stability?
2. How can the UN system and international financial institutions coordinate more effectively to ensure a smooth and sustainable graduation process?
3. What mechanisms can be introduced to prevent "reverse graduation," where a country risks falling back into LDC status due to economic shocks or external crises?
4. To what extent should graduate countries continue to benefit from preferential trade agreements, and for how long should these benefits be extended?
5. How can capacity-building programs be tailored to strengthen governance, institutional resilience, and local industries in post-graduation contexts?

6. What role can regional organizations (e.g., ASEAN, AU, SAARC) play in supporting member states transitioning from LDC status?

7. How can international donors and development partners ensure that graduation criteria go beyond GDP and reflect human development, environmental resilience, and social inclusion?

8. What innovative financing mechanisms—such as blended finance or climate funds—can help sustain progress in newly graduated countries?

9. How can technology transfer and knowledge-sharing between LDCs and developed countries support post-graduation development?

10. In what ways can global trade and investment policies be restructured to make the transition process more equitable and sustainable for all graduating countries?

8. Country Stances

Bangladesh:

Bangladesh, having graduated from the LDC category in 2026, emphasizes the importance of a smooth transition strategy that includes extended access to preferential trade schemes and concessional financing. The country advocates for a time-bound international support framework and the strengthening of regional trade cooperation among South Asian economies.

Nepal:

Nepal, scheduled to graduate from LDC status by 2026, seeks to ensure that the process of graduation does not hinder its development progress. The government calls for predictable and sustained support, particularly in infrastructure development, human capital enhancement, and climate resilience.

European Union:

The European Union supports LDC graduation as a success of international cooperation. It promotes sustainable transition frameworks and offers market access incentives for graduated countries through the GSP+ program. The EU also prioritizes technical assistance and capacity-building programs.

United States:

The United States believes that graduation from the LDC category should reflect genuine and sustainable progress. It supports targeted development aid and capacity-building initiatives while encouraging graduated countries to pursue open market reforms and transparency in governance.

Ethiopia:

As a country preparing for graduation, Ethiopia calls for post-graduation measures that safeguard access to international funding and trade preferences. It advocates for tailored development assistance focused on industrialization, education, and infrastructure development.

AGENDA ITEM TWO: Combating Youth Poverty Through Equal Access to Education and Employment

1. Topic Introduction

The persistent issue of youth poverty represents a critical challenge to global stability, economic development, and social equity, demanding urgent, coordinated action from the international community. Youth—typically defined as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24—are the essential engine for future economic growth, yet a significant portion remains trapped in a vicious, intergenerational cycle of poverty. This vulnerability is overwhelmingly driven by systemic inequalities in two foundational pillars of human development: education and employment. Where access to quality schooling is limited by economic circumstance, the corresponding lack of in-demand skills severely restricts a young person's ability to secure "decent work" that provides a living wage and social security. Addressing this crisis requires moving beyond mere poverty alleviation to forge comprehensive strategies that actively dismantle barriers, ensure equal opportunity, and invest in young people as the primary agents of their own, and the world's, transformation. This committee is tasked with formulating practical and equitable solutions to ensure every young person, regardless of their background, has the educational foundation and professional opportunities necessary to build a secure future.

Historical Context and Key Developments

The link between education, employment, and poverty is not a new concern, but its salience has shifted dramatically over the past century, evolving alongside global economic and social changes.

I. The Rise of Human Capital Theory and Post-War Development

The formal recognition of education as a tool for poverty reduction gained significant traction in the mid-20th century, particularly with the development of Human Capital Theory in the 1960s. This theory posits that investing in people's skills and knowledge—through education and training—directly increases their productivity and income, thus generating wealth for both the individual and the nation's economy. This period saw large-scale global pushes for universal primary education, embodied by international initiatives. In developed nations, this era also saw programs like the US "War on Poverty" create social programs, including early childhood development services like Head Start, explicitly designed to interrupt the cycle of poverty by boosting educational success.

II. The Challenge of Structural Unemployment and the Skills Mismatch (1970s - 1990s)

Starting in the 1970s and accelerating in the 1980s, global economic restructuring, globalization, and the decline of traditional manufacturing industries in many countries dismantled the "traditional" youth labor market that once provided entry-level work for school leavers. As the transition from school to work became more complex and prolonged, youth unemployment rates began to consistently outpace adult rates. Policymakers reacted with a raft of targeted, yet often disjointed, training and employment schemes. Crucially, the problem was increasingly framed not just as a lack of jobs (a demand-side issue), but as a skills mismatch—a realization that the education system was failing to equip young people with the competencies required by modern, changing labor markets.

III. Global Commitment and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The year 2000 marked a turning point with the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which placed the eradication of extreme poverty and the achievement of universal primary education at the forefront of the global agenda. While the MDGs led to significant progress in boosting primary school enrollment, especially in developing countries, they often failed to adequately address the quality of education and the severe drop-off rates at the secondary level, which is a key phase for youth skills acquisition. Furthermore, the global community began to recognize that poverty was more than just "material deprivation," acknowledging that the denial of opportunity—including the opportunity for education and decent work—was a core component of structural poverty.

IV. The Great Recession and the Focus on Structural Inequality (Post-2008)

The 2008 Global Financial Crisis severely amplified youth unemployment and poverty, demonstrating the vulnerability of young people to economic shocks. This crisis led to an increased international focus on the concept of the "NEET" (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) population as a central indicator of youth marginalization. In response, global bodies and regional unions, such as the European Union with its "European Youth Guarantee" (2013), began to implement coordinated, large-budget policies aimed at ensuring every young person received an employment or training offer. This era solidified the understanding that policy interventions must be integrated, tackling both the supply of skilled youth (via education) and the demand for labor (via economic and employment policy) simultaneously, recognizing that without equal access to both, youth poverty would remain entrenched. Today, the framework for action is anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which specifically target the quality and equity of education and the promotion of decent work for all.

Having examined the historical roots of youth poverty, it is equally important to explore how today's young people perceive their prospects in education and employment.

2. Youth Expectations in Work Life

First, it is important to note that Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face unique challenges due to their distinct geographical and economic structures. Despite these differences, there are commonalities in the aspirations of youth regarding their future and working life, and the realities they face.

I. General Expectations for the Future and Working Life

The expectations of youth across these three groups of countries parallel the general optimism found among young people in the Global South, but this optimism is a mixture of aspiration and ambition that often conflicts with current challenges.

High-Hopes Optimism: Like many young people in developing nations, youth in LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS desire an educated future and a better standard of living than their parents' generation. There is a strong expectation that access to quality education will equip them with the necessary skills to break the cycle of poverty and secure "Decent Work"—jobs that offer better wages, social security, and career advancement.

Integration into the Global Labour Market: Especially among university graduates, there is a strong desire to integrate into the global labour market and not be restricted by local limitations. Developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), particularly in SIDS and LLDCs, have fueled the expectation that acquiring digital skills can help them overcome geographical disadvantages and access e-commerce or remote work opportunities.

Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment: Due to limited formal employment opportunities, a significant number of young people expect to participate in economic life by founding Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) or creating their own employment. While this often arises from necessity, it also reflects a desire for independence and innovation.

II. Realities and Challenges Specific to Each Country Group

The "aspiration-reality gap" between the expectations of youth and the realities they encounter is quite large in these countries, and the challenges differ for each group.

A. Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

LDCs are the world's lowest-income countries and are subject to the highest humanitarian risk.

Educational Reality: The primary issue is the generally low access to education and the insufficient quality of schooling. A large proportion of young people enter the labour market with inadequate skills and knowledge. Due to rapid population growth, the capacity for job creation is extremely limited compared to the rate at which young people leave school.

Employment Reality: A significant majority of employed youth work in the informal economy, often for very low wages and without social protection. This means that merely being employed is often insufficient to escape poverty. The lack of effective mechanisms for gaining initial work experience makes the transition to a first qualified job nearly impossible for many young people.

B. Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)

These countries face structural barriers such as high trade costs, logistical difficulties, and limited global market integration due to their lack of direct sea access.

Educational Reality: It is understood that investment in human capital and skills development is key to overcoming geographical constraints. Young people expect the strengthening of high-quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems that provide skills required by the digital and green economy. However, current educational outcomes often lag behind the rapidly evolving labour market demands.

Employment Reality: Due to limited economic diversification, job opportunities are concentrated in narrow sectors (typically agriculture, mining, or limited regional trade). The employment expectations of young people are often not met by the existing economic structure. Access to digital infrastructure and e-commerce opportunities boosts the hope of young people to overcome geographical limitations and participate in international value chains.

C. Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

SIDS are characterized by their small size, remote location, narrow resource and export bases, and extreme vulnerability to the climate crisis.

Educational Reality: Education must increasingly focus on developing skills in areas such as climate resilience, sustainable tourism, and the "blue economy." Young people expect their education to provide the knowledge and competencies necessary to solve their unique local challenges.

Employment Reality: The labour market is heavily reliant on tourism and the public sector, meaning jobs are highly precarious against external shocks (such as a global pandemic or a hurricane). Young people are demanding job opportunities in new, resilient sectors related to climate mitigation and environmental management. Furthermore, the youth in these nations show a strong interest in digital technologies, supporting the vision of becoming "Small Island Digital States," which represents new pathways for job creation and learning.

In conclusion, the shared and strong expectation of youth in these specific country groups is access to quality and equal education and secure and qualified employment opportunities to break the cycle of poverty. However, while the core problem in LDCs is the absence of sufficient education and jobs, the central issue in LLDCs and SIDS is the limited structure and fragility of the existing labour market. International policies must focus on these specific challenges to realize the potential of these young people.

3. Actions taken by the UN to prevent related problems in the past.

the United Nations has taken numerous actions, adopted major frameworks, and established dedicated entities to address the problems of youth poverty, education access, and employment, especially in the most vulnerable country groups (LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS).

These actions can be grouped into overarching global frameworks, dedicated youth programs, and special programs targeting the structural vulnerabilities of the three country groups.

I. Overarching Global Development Frameworks

The UN's strategy is primarily driven by successive global agendas that recognize the interconnectedness of poverty, education, and youth development.

• The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) (1995): This was a foundational resolution that recognized youth (ages 15-24) as a major resource for development and identified ten priority areas for action, with Education, Employment, and Hunger and Poverty topping the list. This established a mandate for the UN to focus specifically on youth issues.

• The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000–2015): The MDGs set global targets that directly impacted youth poverty. Key goals included:

• Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

• Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education.

• While the MDGs succeeded in increasing primary enrollment, their limited focus on quality secondary/tertiary education and decent youth employment was a major critique, leading to the broader scope of the succeeding goals.

• The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015–2030): The current agenda explicitly addresses the "aspiration-reality gap" by linking education quality and decent work:

• SDG 4 (Quality Education): Aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, including technical and vocational training.

• SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth): Includes a specific target (Target 8.6) to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) by 2020 (a target which remains a major challenge).

II. Dedicated Support for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS (Thematic Programmes)

The UN has established specific long-term action plans and offices to address the unique structural disadvantages of these countries.

• UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS): Established in 2001, this office advocates for and mobilizes international support for all three groups, ensuring their specific needs are integrated into global development strategies and funding mechanisms.

• Decade-Long Programmes of Action: The UN holds major conferences every ten years to renew commitments to these vulnerable groups, focusing heavily on structural constraints, human capital, and resilience:

• For LDCs: The Doha Programme of Action (2022–2031) (and its predecessor, the Istanbul Programme of Action) prioritizes human and social development, with dedicated action areas for investing in young people and promoting decent work.

• For LLDCs: The Awaza Programme of Action (2024–2034) (and its predecessor, the Vienna Programme of Action) explicitly emphasizes structural transformation and investing in human capital, including strengthening vocational training to align skills with evolving labour markets and regional trade needs.

• For SIDS: The SAMOA Pathway (2014) and the recently held 4th SIDS Conference (2024) commit to supporting SIDS in building economic resilience, including through investment in youth digital skills and sustainable "blue/green" economies to diversify job opportunities beyond traditional sectors.

• ITU and Digital Connectivity: The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) runs dedicated programs for LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS to build digital infrastructure and human capacity, directly supporting the youth aspiration for digital skills to overcome geographic remoteness and access new forms of employment.

III. Direct Youth and Employment Initiatives

• **Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth (Launched 2016): Led by the International Labour Organization (ILO), this is a multi-stakeholder partnership that focuses on scaling up action to create quality job opportunities for young people, with specific programs tailored to regions with high informal employment rates.

• UN Youth Strategy (Youth 2030): This is the UN's first system-wide strategy, launched by the Secretary-General, to ensure the UN's work is fully aligned with and responsive to the needs of young people, with empowerment, participation, and economic opportunity being central pillars.

Building on these past and ongoing efforts, future strategies must evolve to address emerging challenges such as digitalization, climate change, and new labor market dynamics.

Here are some possible considerations for the future:

I. The Necessity of a Dual Transition (Digital and Green)

Future strategies must be built around the global transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy and the ongoing digital revolution.

• Integrating "Green Skills" into Education: Education systems must move beyond traditional sectors to actively integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation skills (green skills). This includes vocational training in renewable energy installation, sustainable agriculture (agritech), climate-resilient construction, and waste management, especially in disaster-prone SIDS and LLDCs.

• Closing the Digital Divide as a Poverty Strategy: For LLDCs and LDCs, digital access remains prohibitively low. Future action must treat high-speed, affordable internet as a basic utility and a prerequisite for poverty reduction, enabling youth to access global e-commerce, remote work, and online education platforms to overcome geographic isolation.

• Promoting the "Blue Economy" in SIDS: Focus on creating high-value jobs in sustainable marine management, eco-tourism, marine biotechnology, and ocean data science. This aligns youth aspirations with the primary resource of SIDS—the ocean—while ensuring long-term environmental sustainability.

II. Resilience and Climate-Proofing Human Capital

Climate change is not a future threat for these regions, but a current reality that must be factored into all development planning.

• Climate-Resilient Infrastructure for Education: Future investments must ensure that schools and training centres in SIDS and coastal LDCs are designed and built to withstand extreme weather events (e.g., cyclones, flooding). This minimizes educational disruption and protects human capital investment.

• Addressing Climate-Induced Displacement and Migration: As sea-level rise and extreme events increase, there will be a rise in both internal and international migration. Education and employment programs must be developed to provide transferable skills and internationally recognized credentials to youth, preparing them for potential mobility while supporting receiving communities.

• Valuing Natural Capital Beyond GDP: Future development models must incorporate the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) to measure success beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This provides incentives for governments to invest in environmental preservation and climate resilience, creating a direct pathway for youth employment in conservation and ecological management.

III. Systemic Reforms for Inclusive Job Creation

Simply training youth is insufficient if the economies cannot absorb them into quality jobs. Future efforts require structural reforms to the labour market.

• Targeting the MSME Sector for Formalization: Given that MSMEs are the backbone of LLDC economies, and youth are the primary entrepreneurs, future policies should focus on simplifying registration, providing targeted micro-credit/financing, and offering technical assistance to help youth-led MSMEs transition from the informal to the formal economy, thereby guaranteeing decent work provisions (social protection, fair wages).

• Re-evaluating "Skills Mismatch" with Aspirations: Policies need to acknowledge that the "skills mismatch" is often an "aspirations-reality mismatch." Future job creation must focus on developing higher-value industries to meet the expectations of an increasingly educated youth, rather than solely trying to train youth for low-wage, precarious work.

• Integrating Social Protection with Job Training: Future social protection models (e.g., cash transfers, scholarships) should be conditional on participation in skills development programs (a "cash-plus" approach). This secures vulnerable youth during their transition and directly incentivizes human capital accumulation.

These considerations demand a coordinated, long-term, and fully financed approach that views the youth of LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS not as a burden, but as the engine for resilient and sustainable development.

4. Questions to be Answered

1. What are the primary drivers of youth poverty across different regions, and how do social, economic, and political factors interact to perpetuate it?

2. How can governments ensure universal access to quality education, particularly in rural and marginalized communities?

3. What strategies can be implemented to bridge the gap between education systems and labor market demands?

4. How can international cooperation help LDCs and developing countries expand technical and vocational education programs for youth?

5. In what ways can digital learning, remote education, and innovation hubs contribute to youth skill development in low-resource settings?

6. What policies can be developed to encourage entrepreneurship, start-ups, and small businesses among young people?

7. How can the private sector and international NGOs collaborate with governments to promote decent work opportunities for youth?

8. What targeted measures can be adopted to support vulnerable youth populations, including women, migrants, refugees, and those with disabilities?

9. How can countries ensure that youth employment policies are environmentally sustainable and aligned with the green economy transition?

10. What role can international funding mechanisms—such as the UNDP Youth Strategy or the World Bank's education programs—play in scaling up youth employment initiatives?

11. How can governments evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of youth-oriented poverty reduction programs to ensure long-term impact?

12. What approaches can be taken to prevent the "brain drain" phenomenon, where skilled young individuals migrate abroad, leading to workforce shortages in their home countries?

5. Country Stances

Norway:

Norway prioritizes inclusive education and employment programs as key tools in eradicating youth poverty. It promotes gender equality in access to education and funds global initiatives such as Education Cannot Wait and the Global Partnership for Education.

India:

India recognizes youth unemployment as a critical challenge and has launched several national programs, including Skill India and Start-Up India, to promote entrepreneurship and skill development. India encourages international collaboration to exchange best practices in youth empowerment.

Kenya:

Kenya faces high rates of youth unemployment and supports initiatives that expand vocational training and digital literacy. The government advocates for public-private partnerships to enhance job creation and promote sustainable industries for young workers.

Japan:

Japan emphasizes the importance of investing in human capital to reduce poverty. It contributes to global education initiatives through JICA and supports innovation-based economies that provide sustainable employment opportunities for youth.

Brazil:

Brazil focuses on reducing income inequality through education reform and youth-oriented labor market policies. The government prioritizes inclusive education, social protection programs, and international cooperation to tackle youth poverty in developing regions.

VOCABULARY

A

Abrupt

Occurring suddenly and without preparation or gradual change. In international relations, an abrupt policy shift can create instability.
(Example: "an abrupt change in policy" = a sudden change)

Administrative

Related to managing or running an organization or government.

(Example: "administrative capacity" = ability to handle official tasks and rules)

Apprenticeship

A structured training period in which a learner works under the supervision of an experienced professional to gain skills in a trade or occupation. Often combines classroom learning with practical work experience.

B

C

Commodity

A raw material or primary product that can be bought and sold, such as oil, coffee, or metals.

Compete

To try to do better than others or win something in a market, contest, or activity. Countries compete in global markets to export goods and attract investment. Example: "Graduating LDCs must compete on equal terms with more advanced economies."

Cooperation

The process of working together toward shared goals, often across national or institutional boundaries. In development, cooperation can include financial aid, technology transfer, or joint training programmes.
(Example: countries cooperating to improve education) E

Economic Diversification

Expanding an economy to include many different kinds of industries instead of relying on just one or two.
(Example: adding manufacturing and services alongside agriculture) F

Funding

Financial resources provided to support activities, projects, or organisations. In development, funding may come from governments, international institutions, or private donors.
Example: “Securing sustainable funding for vocational schools is key to reducing youth unemployment.”

G

Graduating Country

A nation that is moving out of the “Least Developed Country” (LDC) category because it has improved its economic and social indicators.

H

Human Assets

The health, skills, knowledge, and abilities of a population that contribute to economic and social development. Strong human assets make a country more competitive and resilient.
Example: “Investing in young people’s education strengthens a nation’s human assets.”

I

Investment

The act of committing money, time, or resources to an activity or asset with the expectation of a return, such as profit, growth, or social benefits.
(Example: investing in schools) J

K

L

M

Migration

The movement of people from one place to another, often across borders, for reasons such as employment, education, or safety. Migration can provide opportunities but also drain skilled workers from home countries.
Example: “High youth migration to urban areas creates labour shortages in rural communities.”

Mobilisation

The process of bringing together and using resources (financial, human, or material) for a specific goal. Mobilisation often refers to collecting domestic revenues or community participation.
Example: “Effective tax mobilisation helps governments fund education programmes.”

N

O

P

Preferential Treatment

Special advantages or favourable conditions granted to a group, country, or product compared to others. In trade, it often means lower tariffs or easier access to markets for certain countries.
Example: “LDCs receive preferential treatment in exports to developed countries under trade agreements.”

R

Region / Regional

A geographic area (region) or something relating to a specific area (regional).

Rural

Pertaining to the countryside rather than towns or cities. Rural areas often have less infrastructure and fewer services than urban centres.
Example: “Rural youth may face longer travel times to reach secondary schools.” S

Shortage

A situation in which demand for something exceeds supply, creating a lack or insufficiency.

Example: “A shortage of qualified teachers undermines the quality of secondary education.”

Start-up

A newly established small business, typically innovative and in the early stage of development. Start-ups can drive job creation and new industries.
Example: “Microloans help young entrepreneurs launch start-ups in technology or agriculture.”

Sustainability

The ability to continue something over time without harming the environment, society, or future prospects.
(Example: sustainable development) T

Tertiary

Relating to third-level or higher education, such as universities, colleges, and advanced vocational institutions.
Example: “Expanding tertiary education opportunities can reduce youth migration abroad.”

Trade

The buying and selling of goods and services between people or countries. U

Unemployment

The state of being without a paid job while actively seeking work. High unemployment can cause social unrest and economic hardship.
Example: “Youth unemployment rates in some LDCs exceed 30 percent.” V

Vulnerability

The state of being at risk of harm, damage, or disadvantage. (Example: vulnerability to climate change or economic shock.

Y

Z

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