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Asian Development Bank (ADB)

#Background Guide

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)

Director: Minjun Shin



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Introduction

Letter from the Dais

Dear Delegates,

My name is Minjun Shin, the committee director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). I'm a freshman at Yale College, intending to study molecular biology. Studying microbes and public health has always been my interest. My hometown is Gyeonggi, South Korea, where I was born and raised. My first Model UN was in 2017, and since then, I have been enthusiastic about debating with peers on global issues. I engaged in Model UN as a delegate, chair, secretariat, and secretary-general for 7 years. I'm continuing my passion for Model UN at Yale by joining YMUN 50 and—most importantly—YMUN China. Besides Model UN, I'm involved in club Taekwondo and club Wrestling. Martial arts keep me mentally and physically sound! I'm also a board member of Hanppuri, a Korean International Students' Association, where I organize events and cook some delicious Korean foods.

The growing importance of Asia on the global stage is a trend I found interesting. From once one of the most underdeveloped regions, Asia has become the new engine for the global economy in the last 50 years. However, economic prosperity must presuppose some fundamental elements like equity, security, and healthy politics. In this context, the committee will revolve around one overarching theme: sustainability. The first agenda will cover the reconstruction of post-war regions and sustainable security while the second agenda focuses on sustainable socioeconomic growth of rapidly industrialized countries in Asia. Throughout the conference, delegates will explore measures to achieve and maintain sustainability in its broadest sense within and among Asian countries. Delegates will not only deal with strictly economic topics but also areas that are indispensable to sustainable development like security, public health, environment, and human rights.

Every time I'm chairing or organizing Model UN conferences, I see young myself in delegates. I was an amateur, timid delegate who had a hard time speaking up. Like me, some might be first-time MUNers or might feel not courageous enough to speak up in front of a crowd of people. But please keep in mind that your voice matters! Please feel free to show your brilliant ideas because YMUNC will be the best place to do so. So delegates, ignite your passion and make a ripple of change!

Best Regards,

Minjun Shin

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Committee History

Post-colonial Asia was a toddler out of the cradle. It faced unprecedented challenges, success, and failure in the last century, making the region a leader of the global economy with robustness and resilience. In the center of dynamics, the Asian Development Bank plays the role of a leading financial institute. With 68 members (including 49 members from the region) and 50 partnerships, ADB has consistently expanded its role in the development of the Asia Pacific community since its establishment in 1966. Its principal aim upon the establishment was to eradicate extreme poverty.

Back in the 1960s, Asia was one of the poorest regions in the globe. A series of oil shocks in the 1970s and 1980s impacted the world economy significantly and ADB's job was to provide microfinance, help with urban planning, and assist basic infrastructural capacity of developing nations. It was during the second oil shock that ADB started to invest in energy projects. In the 1990s, ADB underwent an expansion of its membership and role. During the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the organization strengthened the focus on social safety and expanded loans to the most impacted nations of the crisis. In the 2000s, with the emergence of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Avian Influenza (AI), and Human Immunodeficiency Virus - Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), ADB started to pay close attention to public health concerns. The organization identifies health as an essential element of development and strives to improve sanitation in underdeveloped countries. In the 2004 Asian tsunami and the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, the Asian Development Bank also played important roles in natural disaster relief and reconstruction. Today, the Asian Development Bank has multifaceted roles. From adhering to assisting the fundamental economic health of developing nations, it is now a principal financing organ with numerous responsibilities in energy, environment, urban planning, and public health.

Committee Structure

The highest policy-making body of ADB is the Board of Governors. The board consists of one delegate from each member state. The Board of Governors appoints the Board of Directors, who directs the operation and administration of the organization, and the president of ADB. Another notable feature of ADB decision-making is that the Asian Development Bank adopts a weighted voting system, in which countries with greater capital contribution are bestowed more powerful voting power. The organization is funded by (1) loan interest (2) contributions from its member states (3) issuing bonds.

Positions

Afghanistan: Afghanistan is one of the biggest recipients of ADB funds. Currently, 15 ADB assistance operations are in power, most of them humanitarian aid.

Armenia: ADB is implementing and managing microfinance in Armenia. ADB strives to strengthen small businesses and rural areas of Armenia.

Australia: Australia is a founding member of ADB. Australia is the fifth largest contributor to ADB and makes sure the discussion and decisions of ADB are also applicable to Pacific communities.

Cambodia: Cambodia is a fast-growing economy with an annual growth rate of 7% before the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also one of the largest sources of ADB's official development assistance with average annual lending of \$368.3 million.

China: Following Japan and the US, China is the third biggest contributor to ADB. China plays an important role in the Central and East Asian economic community, especially through its Belt and Road initiative of 2013.

Japan: Japan is the largest shareholder of ADB. Japan has been a leader in the World Economy and Asian economy since as early as the 1800s. Since 1966, all ADB presidents have been Japanese.

Marshall Islands: The economy of the Marshall Islands is heavily dependent on fishery and development assistance. To date, ADB has granted USD 202 million, which is mostly utilized in sectors such as climate resilience, rural development, urban investment, and basic capacity building.

Pakistan: Pakistan was a founding member of ADB and is closely cooperating with ADB in sectors like climate strategies, water, and energy.

Republic of Korea: The Republic of Korea (South Korea), after the Korean War, was once a recipient of funds but achieved drastic economic growth in late 20C and became a donor of funds.

Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka received financial and administrative support from ADB after a civil war.

United States of America: Although the United States is not in Asia-Pacific, the nation contributes as much as Japan to the ADB. The United States played an important role in assisting Asian countries in recovering from the Second war world.

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Reconstruction of Post-War Regions



Reconstruction of Post-War Regions

Introduction

Afghanistan, India-Pakistan, Philippines ... Asia is still home to 21 armed conflicts, some being a prolonged barrier to regional development and security. In this agenda, delegates will discuss financing the reconstruction of post-war regions and ways to rebuild peace and security (in its broadest sense) in those regions.

Glossary

Non-international Armed Conflicts (NIAC) refer to armed confrontations between governmental armed forces and the forces of one or more armed groups, or between such groups arising on the territory of a State (International Committee of Red Cross, 2008).

Infrastructure means basic facilities necessary to operate the country. This not only includes roads, ports, power supplies, or water facilities but also organizational structures like hospitals, schools, or markets are considered infrastructure of the country.

Development Bank is a type of bank that specializes in medium-term to long-term investment/loans to developing countries. Just like banks lend money to people, development banks finance countries that need financial, industrial, and administrative support.

Fragile states are countries characterized by a lack of basic capacities to operate and maintain the state structure. This infers a weak ability to provide quality life to their citizens, a weak capacity to defend the borders, failures in diplomacy, or an inability to properly manage national wealth.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is a cross-border investment by foreign economic entities with lasting economic impact. FDI is an important element of a globalized economy and a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth.

Microfinance is a small loan with a low interest rate for low-income individuals and small businesses.

Topic History

Reconstruction of Tajikistan (1998~2004): The economy of Tajikistan contracted significantly due to prolonged social unrest and civil conflict after independence from the Soviet Union in 1998. ADB was requested to collaborate with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) to diagnose the macroeconomic status quo of the nation and redress the problems. As a remedy, ADB focused on removing economic restraints on Tajikistan's energy and transport sectors. Through institutional reform and the promotion of a market-based economy, ADB sought to restore the basic economic health of the nation. A USD 20 million loan accompanied by USD 1.5 million of technical assistance was delivered to Tajikistan. ADB was highly involved in the policy-making and legislation processes of Tajikistan. Although post-conflict reconstruction plans did meet the Tajikistan government and IMF's aims, ADB evaluated the program as questionable.

Reconstruction of Sri Lanka (2001~2022): 3 decades of civil war had a devastating effect on the infrastructure of the nation, especially its Northern and Eastern regions. In response, the Asian Development Bank implemented the Conflict-Affected Area Rehabilitation Project to rehabilitate and rebuild the essential infrastructure of the country including roads, bridges, schools, markets, and health centers to list just a few. ADB also focused on rural development and social mobilization. Starting with the clean water project and sanitation improvement initiatives, the organization assisted in the restoration of the basic capacity of most impacted provinces of Sri Lanka. As a result of the reconstruction effort, the average household income of Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka increased by 7% while 88% could reach out for government-funded medical care within 30 minutes, compared to 66% before the reconstruction.

Reconstruction of Solomon Island (2003~): The military coup in 2000 and the subsequent ethnic/political conflict between the government of Solomon Islands and the militia resulted in a fragile state that was devoid of the capacity to operate the country. In this context, the restoration of the rule of law was the first agenda on the table. ADB assisted the government of Solomon Islands in inviting the Regional Assistance Mission in 2003, consisting of delegates from Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands. Establishing peace and security, ADB's next mission was enhancing the institutional capacity. ADB and the government of Solomon Island agreed upon medium-term development plans including renovation of the transportation system. Heavily reliant upon marine transportation, Solomon Island benefited tremendously from rebuilding transportation. ADB provided human resources and administrative advice during the development processes.

Reconstruction of Georgia (2008~2010): Georgia's armed conflict with the Russian Federation in 2008 resulted in stunted growth from 12.4% in 2007 to 3.5% in 2008. The problem of forced resettlement of Internally Displaced People (IDP) and plummeting foreign investment impoverished the nation. In the case of Georgia, ADB adopted the interim operation strategy with the goals of rebuilding

infrastructures, transportation, and energy facilities. This immediate plan accompanied the long-term loan with an annual interest rate of 1%. According to the ADB report, the project was both “effective” and “efficient” as the Georgian government succeeded in covering the immediate incremental expenditure and the core public expenditure. As a result of successful cooperation, effective deployment of financial resources, and timely assistance to displaced individuals were possible.

Reconstruction of Kyrgyz Republic (2010~2017): In 2010, massive armed violence and ethnic cleansing occurred in the Southern Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyz Republic). Socially and politically unstable, violence pervades the region resulting in the collapse of the national economy. In response, ADB implemented Emergency Assistance for Recovery and Reconstruction (EARR) to rebuild damaged infrastructure. Different from approaches taken in the case of Solomon Island, where restoration of physical security preceded reconstruction of facilities and economic health, ADB aimed to facilitate reconciliation by aiding the country in terms of immediate fiscal challenges and the need for reconstruction of basic national capacities.

Current Situation

ADB’s projects in Afghanistan: The Afghanistan economy is still recovering from the aftermath of the prolonged civil war. Instability caused by the newborn Taliban government and its reign of terror stripped the nation of human rights and social security. During the COVID-19 outbreak, ADB also provided vaccines for Afghanistan. In 2022, ADB approved \$405 million in grants to support food security, healthcare, and education. ADB is coordinating with four United Nations agencies, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on assisting basal industries like agriculture while focusing on long-term goals like child education and macroeconomic assessment.

Regions yet to be addressed: Unfortunately, armed violence is still ongoing within and among Asian countries (Figure 1). Although ADB performed a pivotal role in post-conflict reconstruction in many affected stakeholder countries, some regions are still waiting for ADB’s assistance. Regional conflicts between the government of the Philippines and the New People's Army (NPA) rebellion were caused by disagreement over the socioeconomic conditions of the region, especially over sugar production. The conflict is still ongoing, harassing the nation by hampering the efficient allocation of the budget. India-Pakistan tension over Jammu and Kashmir is easing these days and the regional economy is recovering as an effect of Article 370. Yet, ADB's guide on foreign direct investment and policy assistance might give synergy to the regional economy. There are regions of more urgent need, too. A military coup broke out in Myanmar in 2021. The conflict between anti-junta insurgents and the military junta devastated the economy with high inflation and decreased family income. Businesses are

underperforming and the national economy is stagnant. Beyond immediate humanitarian aid, Myanmar needs sustainable maintenance of economic stability and social security.

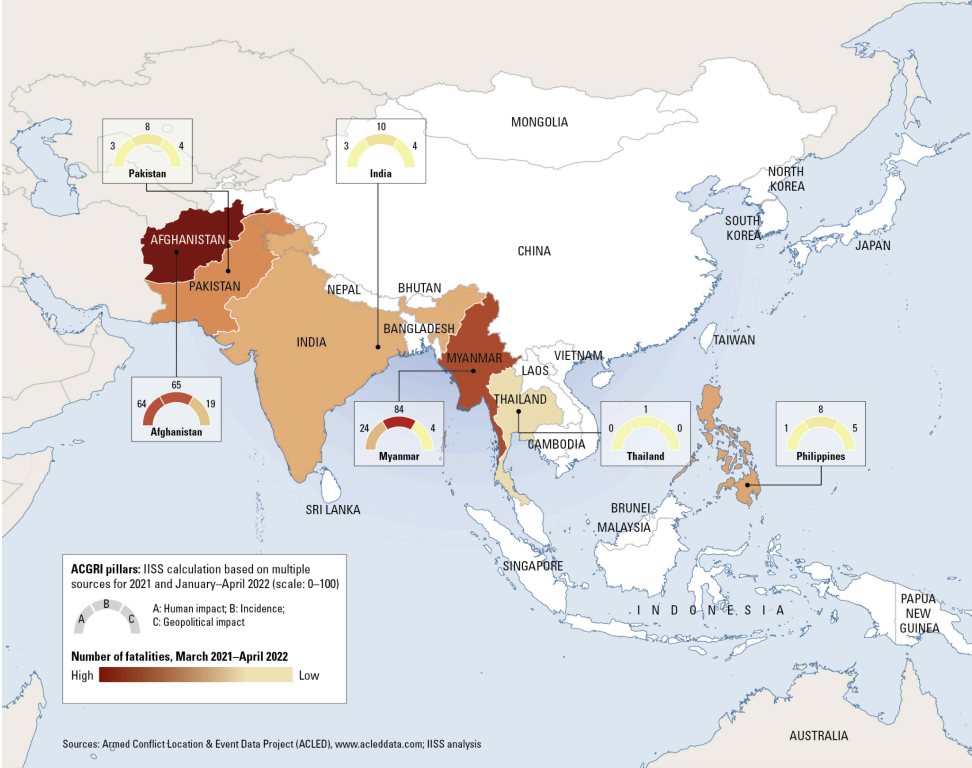


Figure 1. Ongoing Armed Conflicts in Asia, 2022
Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

Questions to Consider

1. To what extent should the committee define development and intervene in the recipient nation's socio economy?
2. How can the Asian Development Bank retain its political neutrality while financially and socially intervening in the country of need?
3. Does priority exist when it comes to development plans? Should some components (for instance, physical security) be prioritized over other components of development?
4. How can the Asian Development Bank facilitate cooperation among existing peacekeeping organizations and governmental and non-governmental bodies related to post-conflict reconstruction?
5. What are the internal/external risk factors of financing post-war reconstruction?

Additional Resources

<https://www.adb.org/what-we-do/topics/health/overview>

Introduction to ADB, its organization, roles, and history.

<https://www.adb.org/who-we-are/organization#departments>

Organization structure of ADB.

<https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts#:~:text=Asia%20is%20the%20theatre%20of,taking%20place%20in%20the%20region>

Ongoing armed conflicts around the World; 21 international and regional conflicts are happening in Asia.

<https://www.adb.org/documents/postconflict-infrastructure-program-tajikistan-loan-1651-tajsf>

Post-conflict infrastructure program in Tajikistan.

<https://www.adb.org/publications/sri-lanka-ADB-partnership-50-years>

ADB's role in reconstructing Sri Lanka from civil war.

<https://www.adb.org/publications/reconstructing-fragile-state>

ADB's publication on reconstructing fragile states, with an example of the reconstruction of the Solomon Islands.

<https://www.adb.org/documents/georgia-emergency-assistance-post-conflict-recovery>

ADB's assessment of the post-war reconstruction project of Georgia.

<https://www.adb.org/projects/44236-013/main>

ADB's effort taken to reconstruct the Kyrgyz Republic after the 2010 ethnic conflict.

<https://www.adb.org/where-we-work/afghanistan>

ADB's ongoing projects and approved plans on the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/12/12/economic-recovery-falters-as-conflict-and-inflation-weigh>

Economic impact of armed conflict in Myanmar.

2

**Addressing
Social Maladies
of Rapidly
Industrialized
Asian Countries**



Addressing Social Maladies of Rapidly Industrialized Asian Countries

Introduction

East Asia, India, Southeast Asia, and a multitude of other Asian countries faced unprecedented economic growth in the recent century, thanks to the globalized market. In this agenda, delegates will examine what rapid economic development undermined: environmental degradation, exploitation of labor, wealth gap, and inequalities to name just a few.

Glossary

Gini coefficient is a metric of economic inequality. It shows how wealth is distributed across different income levels, with 0 indicating perfect equality and 1 indicating perfect inequality. Asia-Pacific countries have an average Gini coefficient of 0.447, a markedly high score.

Extreme poverty is a condition where an individual is surviving on less than 1.25 USD a day. Nearly 800 million people are living in extreme poverty today.

Blue-collar and *white-collar* are two types of workers in the market. Conventionally, blue-collar workers refer to those who are involved in manual, labor-intensive work like construction workers or assembly line workers. White-collar workers are mostly stationary, less labor-intensive job workers like secretaries, businessmen, or engineers.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a set of time-bound development goals set by the United Nations in 2000. The goals include eradicating poverty, redressing the devastating impacts of HIV/AIDS, and providing quality education to children. Continuing the spirit of MDGs, the United Nations implemented Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are more holistic and inclusive in nature.

The East Asian Miracle was a phenomenon in mid-to-late 20C East Asia when countries like Singapore, China, Japan, and Korea enjoyed rapid industrial expansion and unparalleled economic growth of 7~8% annual increase in GDP.

Topic History

Most Asian countries fell into the hands of colonial hegemonies in the 19th and 20th Centuries. For instance, vast parts of China and Korea were controlled by the Japanese Empire, Indochina by France, and Burma by Britain. These colonial powers arbitrarily redistributed wealth so that small elites monopolized a large share of national wealth. Such an existing colonial legacy was exacerbated by the end of the Second World War when the government's role in redistributing and reconstructing their nations through land reforms was integral. The post-war period was also when a lot of Asian countries achieved rapid growth. Strong, sometimes tyrannical governments took control of East Asian countries in this period, where the role of the state in promoting government-led industries expanded. In the 1960s~1990s, the East Asian Miracle took place, allowing some East Asian countries the leaders of not only Asian but global economy (Figure 2). During the East Asian Miracle, Japan experienced the "Izanagi" boom years by growing more than 10% a year while South Korea's GDP nearly tripled in a few decades which was later called the "miracle of the Han River". Meanwhile in Southeast Asia, countries integrated globalized markets with their comparative advantages: agriculture, tourism, and natural resources. Notable examples are Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam, where nationally sponsored industries flourished. Neoliberal economic policies adopted by many Asian governments in the late 20C amplified the impact of globalization but at the same time created an ever-competitive market. Some giant firms and generational riches (such as "Chaebols" in South Korea) benefited from the globalized market and government sponsors while small industries faced existential challenges. In the case of Indonesia, it was a few giant firms and elites that monopolized export-oriented industries like mining and oil industries. For China, it was coastal and urban industrial areas that benefited from export-based industries while inland rural areas lagged behind.

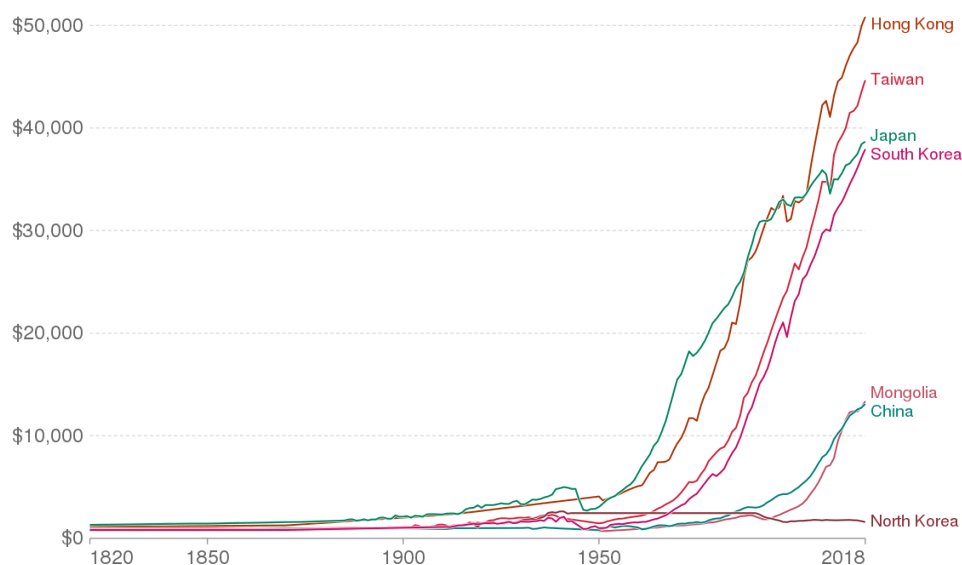


Figure 2. The Change in GDP Per Capita of 7 East Asian Countries, 1820~2018

Source: Maddison Project Database 2020 (Bolt and Van Zanden, 2020)

The wealth gap between poor and rich has widened for the last 3 decades. ADB study cites three forces behind this rising inequality: new technology, globalization, and market-oriented reform—ironically, they are also the primary drivers of Asia’s rapid growth. These forces have created enormous economic opportunities, but the opportunities have not been equally shared by all. Three groups, in particular, have benefited most. The first are the owners of capital, who, as a result of the bias of technological progress, have seen their share of national income rise while that of labor has fallen. Asia’s large pool of available labor has also depressed wage rates relative to returns on capital. The second group is made up of those living in cities and near coasts and who have gained greatly from better infrastructure and market access. For example, rural-urban and inter-provincial gaps combined account for 54% of total income inequality in China and about 32% in India. And finally, better educated graduates make up a third group which has managed to increase its income, thereby widening the gap relative to those with just a basic education.

Current Situation

Social maladies of rapidly industrialized countries mean more than just the wealth gap. A series of economic problems are acting as both the cause and effect of the wealth gap. Unpaid labor, child labor, and modern slavery are still a continuous problem in many Asian countries.

Labor Exploitation: Exploitation of labor is an act that the owner-manager, employer, or one with authority takes unfair advantage of their employees or part-time workers. This includes an unlawful extension of working hours, unpaid work, violation of safety protocols in hazardous workplaces, insufficient provision of employee education, etc. The International Labor Organization (ILO) identified groups that are particularly susceptible to labor exploitation. This includes but does not pertain to domestic workers, women, migrants, victims of human trafficking, disabled people, and ethnic minorities. ILO estimated that more than 60% of workers in Asia-Pacific are characterized as 'vulnerable'.

In Asia, various governments have implemented policies to combat labor exploitation, addressing issues such as unlawful extension of working hours, unpaid work, and the violation of safety protocols in hazardous workplaces. For instance, countries like South Korea and Singapore have enacted stricter labor laws that mandate maximum working hours, enforce minimum wage standards, and require employers to adhere to rigorous safety regulations. Additionally, these nations have established more robust mechanisms for labor inspection and grievance redressal to protect workers' rights effectively. Educational programs aimed at both employers and employees have also been introduced to raise awareness about labor rights and the importance of safe working conditions. These policies reflect a growing recognition of the need to safeguard workers' rights and ensure fair labor practices across diverse industries in the Asian region.

Child Labor: ILO defines child labor as labor performed by workers under the age of 15. 18.8% of children aged 5-14 are currently working in Asia-Pacific, making the Asia-Pacific the region with the largest number and proportion of working children. Child labor often leads to serious forms of child abuse, including child trafficking, sex trafficking, or hazardous child labor.

In Asia, concerted efforts to limit child labor have led to the implementation of comprehensive policies and legal frameworks aimed at protecting children from exploitation. Countries like India have enacted the "Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act," which prohibits the employment of children below 14 years in any occupation, while allowing adolescents aged 14-18 to work in non-hazardous environments under specific conditions. Similarly, Bangladesh's "Labour Act" imposes strict regulations on the employment of minors, setting clear guidelines for working hours, conditions, and the types of work permissible for children and adolescents to ensure their safety and well-being. These policies are supplemented by educational initiatives and social welfare programs designed to encourage school enrollment and retention, addressing one of the root causes of child labor by offering viable alternatives to entering the workforce at a young age.

However, the economic impacts of rapid development isn't the only problem that pervades. As traditional societies move into modern societies, several auxiliary problems emerge. Those may include but are not limited to the following.

Dehumanization: The phenomenon of dehumanization in the workforce, exacerbated by rapid economic development, has significantly compromised the quality of life for both white-collar and blue-collar workers. In the absence of stringent labor regulations, employees across various sectors are often subjected to inordinately high workloads and intense mental stress. This relentless pressure not only erodes their physical and mental well-being but also fosters an environment of social isolation. This type of isolation is not merely about being alone; it represents a deeper sense of disconnection, where individuals feel alienated and find themselves retreating from societal norms and expectations, such as forming meaningful relationships or engaging in communal activities, including marriage.

This erosion of the human aspect of work underscores the urgent need for comprehensive labor reforms that prioritize worker well-being. Policies need to be put in place that limit working hours, mandate regular breaks, and ensure a safe and supportive work environment. Additionally, there should be a concerted effort to promote work-life balance, encouraging employees to nurture personal relationships and engage in social activities outside of work. Mental health support mechanisms, such as counseling services and stress management programs, should be readily available to help workers cope with the demands of their jobs. By addressing these issues head-on, we can begin to restore a sense of humanity and dignity to the workplace, ensuring that economic progress does not come at the expense of workers' health and social well-being.

Environmental concerns: Traditional, coal-based economy is incompatible with environmental sustainability. China emitted 10.6 billion tonnes of CO₂ gas in 2022, which was more than half of the total emission in the Asia-Pacific in that year. India also emitted 2.6 billion tonnes of CO₂. Southeast Asian countries are suffering from deforestation with an annual loss of 1.2% of their forest.

In Asia, addressing environmental pollution has become a critical policy focus, leading to the adoption of stringent regulations and innovative solutions across the region. China, for instance, has implemented the "Air Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan," aiming to reduce hazardous emissions and improve air quality through measures such as upgrading industrial technology and promoting clean energy sources. India's "National Clean Air Programme" seeks to tackle air pollution in over 100 cities by setting specific targets to reduce particulate matter levels. Meanwhile, countries like South Korea have embraced green growth strategies, with policies such as the "Framework Act on Low Carbon, Green Growth" encouraging sustainable development and environmental protection through investments in renewable energy and green technologies. These initiatives reflect a growing recognition of the urgent need to combat environmental degradation and showcase Asia's commitment to pursuing sustainable development while addressing the immediate challenges of pollution. Despite these policies, the largest and third largest emitters of greenhouse gas, China and India, are both in Asia.

Aging society: Highly industrialized countries, especially Japan and Korea, face a dramatic decrease in fertility rate and an imminent threat of demographic collapse. Rapid industrialization is both a cause and an effect of an aging society. Problems related to an aging society include generational conflicts, healthcare, or conflicts in the moral values of the community.

In response to the challenges posed by an aging society, Asian countries have been proactive in formulating and implementing a variety of policies aimed at addressing the needs of their elderly populations. Nations like Japan, with one of the world's most pronounced aging populations, have adopted comprehensive elder care programs, including the "Long-Term Care Insurance" system, which provides broad access to eldercare services. Similarly, Singapore's "Action Plan for Successful Aging" encompasses initiatives that promote active living, lifelong learning, and an inclusive society, alongside financial security measures such as the "Central Provident Fund" for retirement savings. South Korea has introduced the "Elderly Welfare Act" and "Basic Old-Age Pension" to ensure financial stability and access to welfare services for its senior citizens. These policies collectively aim to enhance the quality of life for the elderly, ensure their active participation in society, and mitigate the economic and social impacts of an aging demographic, demonstrating a holistic approach to the complexities of an aging population. However, despite these steps, the demographic structure in industrialized Asian countries is still dangerously imbalanced.

Social inequalities: Addressing social inequalities, particularly those manifesting in the workplace, and the pervasive stereotypes and stigmatization faced by women, children, disabled individuals, and sexual minorities, is a complex challenge deeply rooted in entrenched social norms and customs. These inequalities not only hinder the personal and professional development of affected groups but also impede societal progress by limiting diversity and inclusivity. To dismantle these barriers, a multifaceted approach is essential. Long-term strategies aimed at transforming societal attitudes and beliefs are crucial and can be achieved through comprehensive educational programs that promote equality, diversity, and inclusion from an early age. Such initiatives should be complemented by immediate policy reforms and direct interventions that safeguard the rights of marginalized groups, ensure equal opportunities in the workplace, and provide support systems for those subjected to discrimination. Additionally, the empowerment of affected individuals through targeted programs can facilitate their active participation in economic, social, and political life, further contributing to the eradication of social inequalities. This dual approach, combining awareness-raising with tangible actions, is pivotal in fostering a more equitable society where every individual is valued and respected.

Questions to Consider

1. Are development and equality mutually exclusive? If not, what's the balance between quantitative growth and qualitative growth?
2. How did globalization affect developing countries and developed countries respectively? Who's benefiting from the deal and who's not?
3. How do sustainable environments, diversity, and socioeconomic equality impact economic development? What's the relationship?
4. What's the difference in approaches we take to address inequalities (1) within a country and (2) among countries?
5. How can we change socially embedded norms (for instance, a stereotype against disabled workers) without significant backlashes?

Additional Resources

<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-02/UNDP-RBAP-Inequality-and-Social-Security-in-Asia-Pacific-2022.pdf>

Economic Inequality in Asia-Pacific. The report reviews the quantitative measurement of gini coefficients of Asia-Pacific countries.

<https://iap.unido.org/articles/east-asian-miracle-through-industrial-production-and-trade-lenses>

Industry analysis and statistics relevant to economic development in Asia.

https://www.boj.or.jp/en/about/press/koen_2015/data/ko150424a1.pdf

Economic history of Asia: past, present, and future of development and inequality.

<https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/addressing-poverty>

United Nations' definition of poverty and extreme poverty.

<https://www.oecd.org/forum/asia-challenges.htm>

Diagnosis of wealth gap in Asia.

<https://www.ilo.org/asia/areas/equality-and-discrimination/lang--en/index.htm>

Equality and discrimination at work in Asia and Pacific.

<https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Regionsandcountries/Asia/>

Child labor in Asia and Pacific.

<https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/areasofwork/child-labour/>

Child labor in South Asia.

<https://www.adb.org/publications/asias-wicked-environmental-problems>

ADB's research on four major environmental challenges developing Asian countries face.

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