

**Forum:** General Assembly 2

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# TOPIC 1: The Question of Secure Human Development in the Sahel region.

## Introduction

The Sahel region, where the least developed countries in the world exist, faced human development constraints. Despite the effort to improve human development and life expectancy has been increasing steadily, the human development index remains in the lowest ranking as development and transformation plans are proved to be inefficient due to the lack of government activities and idealistic decisions. It is important to refine and sustain the development to provide stability and security in the Sahel.

Most countries in the Sahel are listed in the low-income level, while a small number achieve a lower middle income. They face challenges regarding growth due to the existing structural problems, in which there is a lack of resources and governance, education is limited, high uncertainty, and violence. These factors could be both causes and consequences for the reduced growth in the region.

Today, the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine War both have struck the Sahel region. This caused the issues within the region to become acute as of the existing poor economic conditions, and it restrained Sahel's development by dragging down more people below the poverty line and further constraining development.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Human Development

According to The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development,, human development is the series of actions that expand people's needs. They have three main needs: health, knowledge and resources for a good living standard. Other needs could involve equality, social rights, political and economic freedom.

## Sahel Region

The Sahel, the vast semi-arid region of Africa separating the Sahara Desert to the north and tropical savannas to the south. The countries that the regions cover: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal (United Nations).

## Sahel Alliance

An international coalition that was created to assist and coordinate the development in the Sahel region, particularly the G5 countries. It has 26 members(including observers), of which France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme are in the alliance.

## G5 Countries

Five countries of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger in the Sahel region. These countries are amongst the world's poorest.

## Economic Security

It is when people have assurance with no uncertainty and the state when people's needs are fulfilled constantly.

## Income

The money or value received for producing goods and services or investing in a business. In Sahel, most people make income from labour work.

## Background Information

In the 1960s, most of the African territories received independence from the European nations. This was a significant time as the colonised nations were allowed to self-rule after decades of colonialism; however, this soon caused increasing insecurity within the Sahel region due to the shortage of resources and the lack of managerial experiences in the government.

The crisis in the Sahel could date back to the beginning of the 20th century. However, it was not until the mid-20th century to late-20th century that the frequency of drought started to show an upward sloping trend and a continuous decline in rainfall occasions. These climatic factors have always destroyed the livelihood of the Sahel, and in 2012 a major drought hit the region. People suffered from food shortage and economic insecurity because of the loss of agriculture, and this resulted in mass migration to seek out "better lands". It was also reported that the poor economy decreased the opportunities for formal

employment, while it increased income and gender disparities, which is also linked to the high rate of violence and crime within the regions, making the Sahel's problems worse. The Covid pandemic and the war in Ukraine made these problems worse as they failed to cope with the unexpected shocks.

Although they have received help from foreign countries' cooperation such as the United Nation and the creation of the Sahel Alliance in the past, until now, there was no significant enhancement in the region's structure. Infrastructures are still limited, education and healthcare services are not accessible for all and the quality remains low. The countries remain highly dependent on imports and aid.

## Key Issues

### Economic Insecurity in Critical Events

The number of people in poverty and informality rates in the Sahel region is high. 40% of the population lives below the poverty line and the region's level of development is among the world's lowest and 90% of the population is working in the informal sector. They are highly threatened by external factors including climate change, and social and economic inequalities, and they receive no protection from the government. Food insecurity and poor access to healthcare are also significant because of financial insecurity and infrastructure.

This issue became more significant when the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Ukraine War impacted the Sahel region, creating challenges regarding human development. The Covid-19 pandemic's restrictions disrupt the economic activities of the region, and they increase food shortages and life loss. Although there was aid from the World Bank and African Development Bank Group, the region is still vulnerable as of the Ukraine War, cutting the food supply due to the higher global food and fuel prices. This makes less important industrial goods like fertilisers and staples able to be imported into the region.

### Climate Change

An overwhelming majority of those living in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso subsist through agriculture and pastoralism. Climate change has impacted the workers in the agricultural sector by alternating the traditional seasonal pattern with a new irregular one. Workers currently are unable to predict the right time to move livestock and plant crops, making a loss in agricultural production that impacts workers' income. Along with the unpredictable patterns, drought and poor soil have made agriculture become unattractive to the population, which causes mass migration as people seek out better-secured jobs in other regions.

### Youth Employment and Education

Over the past 15 years, many more children have been able to access education: enrollment in the Sahel region

has nearly doubled in primary education and tripled in secondary education. However, there are still many children who remain out of school, and only 12% who are enrolled in school could read by the end of their elementary level (World Bank 2021). The region's education has not increased its quality significantly, though there is a high increase in the number of enrollments. This implies that the education system in the Sahel region needs restructuring and improvement for further human development.

The lack of education also decreases the job opportunities for younger people who are under 30 in the G5 countries. The lack of education reduces the capacity for innovation to create jobs, the current market of the region does not have any vacancies for these young people to be employed. This causes unemployed youth to migrate or seek informal agricultural employment, and there is also a chance for extremist groups to entice them using money bait.

### Income and Gender Inequalities

The Sahel region is one of the places with the highest rate of inequality in the world. Due to poor governance and social policies, people in the region face income inequality and gender inequality. Historically, the Sahel countries have prioritised short-term political objectives, favouring the easiest-to-collect taxes and doing little to upset the interests of corporations or the rich. The regressive taxes cause an income gap between the rich and poor, and lower-income people gain less access to social services like education and healthcare.

It is also noticeable that women are treated unequally compared to men within the Sahel region, noticeably in the G5 countries. There are disparities in the three dimensions: economic, social, and representation (Alliance Sahel). Women in the G5 countries have less access to education and employment than men due to the traditional norms in the household that they have to follow. Furthermore, women are highly vulnerable to sexual violence and the average fertility rate of the countries is 5 children per woman. It is also stated that women only accounted for one-fifth of the ministerial posts in the country.

### Violence and Crimes

Over the past two decades, the Sahel has become something of a crucible for violent extremist movements. The region is stuck in a cycle of violence, filled with organised crime and terrorism, despite having support from the United States and French to remove some of the extremist groups. It is argued that this still occurs due to the lack of government efforts toward both the issues and societies. More people could follow extremist groups due to a lack of trust in the government or insecurity. Furthermore, societies living in the region as the residential area without much government interference could be taken over by the extremist groups and have their sovereignty, and if they are not controlled, they could threaten the residents outside of the region and Africa.

## Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
1975	The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established. Included: Niger, Nigeria, Gambia, Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso. Aimed for economic integration, eased regional migration and commercial trade.
1977	The first United Nations Conference on Desertification was organised. The conference was held to tackle the problem of droughts and land degradation that was becoming more significant during the period of time.
1994	The Western African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) was established. Along with other countries, it includes four Sahel countries: Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Senegal. It aimed to facilitate trade and provide economic harmony and stability.
2007	The Great Green Wall plan was established. It aimed to plant 15km wide and 8000 km long along the Sahel region.
2012	The Sahel Crisis occurs. The region faced extreme shock on food security due to the sudden drought. This leads to more adverse economic and safety consequences.
2013	The Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUMSA) was established by the United Nation. This aims to stabilise by having the government and the rebel groups have an agreement and increase the security and development within the country.
2014	The Sahel Constitution was held in response to security and development in the region. The group includes the collaboration of 5 countries: Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Mauritania.

2014	The African Union Strategy was established to provide a multidimensional long-term plan for improvement in governance, security, and development to mitigate the region's crisis. They appointed representatives to the region of Sahel.
2017	G5 Sahel Joint Force was established. This initiative was to provide more safety for their population and to ensure a good environment for socio-economic development by increasing their efforts to increase security (OHCHR).
2017	France and Germany established the Sahel Alliance. This aimed to restore the stability of the countries in the regions and sustain development and the region's order.
2019	WAEMU that includes Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger fixes its currency. It adopted a new euro tied currency with a fixed exchange rate. France no need to be on board, and countries do not need to reserve half of their foreign reserves in France.
2020	The International Development Association (IDA) allocated \$8.5 billion for the region, while the African Development Bank provided \$285 million as an emergency response. They both target the region's structural growth, providing the resources needed and supporting the population that are affected by the pandemic.
2022	Mali withdrew from the G5 Sahel Joint Force. The country stated that the group requires more effort to tackle the problem of development and security in the region.

## Possible Solutions

Multiple solutions could secure human development and mitigate the issues in the Sahel. One of the solutions is to provide foreign aid that targets short-term and long-term issues. Although this method is not suggested due to the unpaid debt by the countries (Mauritania reported the highest debt, accounting for 77.3% of the GDP, while the lowest is 24.4% for Burkina Faso), the aid could fill the short-term emergency humanitarian needs for

the population that are affected by the 2019-2022 critical events. This would also prevent any long-term unfavourable consequences caused by the current issues (violence and economic insecurity). Foreign aid for infrastructure and education is also suggested for long-run and sustainable development by mitigating the current issues and increasing people's welfare. This also attracts future foreign direct investments in the region that would benefit both stakeholders. However, foreign aid might not be effective if it is not controlled well. Funds should be managed through a practical and retrospective plan, and transparency on the financial statements and accounts is recommended.

Another solution is to re-evaluate and implement frameworks that aim to reduce inequalities in the region. The countries in ECOWAS and WAEMU could design policies emphasising youth and women empowerment and opportunities, providing them education and training to enter the labour market and boosting social protections and services. Furthermore, fiscal policies could be discussed to solve the problem of the income gap, whether there should be less regressive taxes or more subsidisation, to help the lower-income population gain more humanitarian needs.

Additional support could be the provision of technologies and renewable energy resources. The transfer of technologies that can adapt to extreme and irregular climate conditions could boost the efficiency of Sahel's agricultural sector while reducing farmers' risk and food shortages. The Sahel region is also one of the areas that provided the ability for solar power energy to be produced, which could expand the electrical power supply of the region. However, the transfer of technologies and generating energies from solar panels require high investments from foreign corporations and nations.

## Recommendations for Research

The chair recommends having some in-depth knowledge of the country's current economic conditions. This could be done by looking at reports and checking the recent news on what is happening in the country. Thorough research on the specific issues (the past and the present) mentioned in this report and any other country-specific issues is recommended, especially in the countries that are part of the Sahel. Delegates should also understand the past actions and contributions taken by the home country, and it is also recommended to know the capability and ability of intervention of the home country regarding this topic.

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