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The creation of guidelines and infrastructure for future pandemics in Less Economically Developed Countries

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Introduction

Throughout history, pandemics have been a leading factor affecting the capitulation of civilizations, their rough and unpredictable nature results in devastating outcomes to countries and states, especially developing ones. In fact, pandemics are so influential they often head theories describing the unknown collapses of civilizations in history. Some examples are the theories explaining the bronze age collapse or the downfall of the Old Kingdom in Egypt. Such events can be particularly devastating for developing groups or countries. Think about the native Americans, who were mostly wiped out by European settlers, not by force, but by diseases that the colonizers brought, which they had no immunity like smallpox. It is safe to say that Native Americans could be described as developing people compared to Europeans of the time. Now, compare this analogy to developing countries in the modern world and the implications that could be brought on by an impending pandemic. We are lucky to have an example of such implications during modern times due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report will outline exactly how developing countries reacted to COVID-19 and will provide adjusted techniques and guidelines that could be implemented to reduce the severity of the negative effects that could occur due to future pandemics. Pandemics are often noted for their economic devastation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 255 million jobs were erased across areas filled with developing countries like Latin America, the Caribbean, and South Asia, and as a result, was considered some of the worst years for the global economy, which lost an estimated 9 trillion United States dollars as a result. As the World Bank president, David Malpass, stated, a global recession brought on by a pandemic could “set back decades of progress in developing countries.” He also described the outcomes as not just being economically related but instead describing social effects like infant mortality or mental health problems brought upon by extreme restrictions. Supporting developing countries during a pandemic does not only rely on supporting the country itself but also depends on international support from neighboring or more developed countries. During the COVID-19 crisis, developing countries saw up to 42 percent of critical financing from other countries cut, which greatly affected their economic situation as they struggled to maintain the prices of necessities and the stability of their currency. All this is why careful and exact guidelines targeting different problems with infrastructure must be enacted to ensure that the devastating effects of COVID-19 in developing countries become a thing of the past.

Definition of Key Terms

Less Economically Developed Country (LEDC)

Less Economically Developed Country - A term used to define developing countries. Outlined by a list provided by the United Nations

More Economically Developed Country (MEDC)

More Economically Developed Country - A term used to define developed countries.

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)

An organization which is not affiliated with any government whose purpose is often to address a social or political issue

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Aims to provide sustainable development in all recognized countries by providing monetary support.

World Health Organization (WHO)

Established by the UN, it works to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Established in 1965, aimed at developing the resources available to developing countries, often by providing infrastructure

Health literacy

According to the WHO, health literacy is defined as “being able to access, understand, appraise and use information and services in ways that promote and maintain good health and well-being”

General Overview

Public infrastructure

The way a country reacts to a pandemic relies highly on social determinants of health and public health infrastructure in the country. This factor is vital as it encompasses important infrastructure projects which are quite demanding. Such projects could oversee making sure basic resources like potable water, medicine, or medical equipment are available in case of a pandemic, some major infrastructure which could include hospitals, vaccination centers, emergency care equipment, and many more. It was quite common that during the COVID-19 pandemic, many lower economically developed countries (LEDCs) did not have well-established public health systems and infrastructure. In fact, during the COVID-19 pandemic in Zambia, there was one doctor per 10000 people, and in Malawi, there were just 25 intensive care units and seven ventilators for a population of 18 million. Evidently, this lack of infrastructure, combined with the effects brought on by poverty and famine in many LEDCs, allowed the COVID-19 virus to spread easily and affect the lives of many. But why the low numbers of personnel? This is partially due to the fact that health care workers in these countries tend to be volunteers, 75 percent of which are unpaid and the majority of which are not qualified to the standard of the developed world, which hindered the rate at which people could be treated and allowed to virus to spread.

Support from NGOs and other countries

Support from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and international cooperation plays a key role in providing support, which often consists of monetary or deployment of volunteer health teams. Examples of this type of support during the COVID-19 pandemic were the support offered by the World Bank, which provided 160 billion dollars of support to over 100 developing countries, or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which donated 500 million to 85 developing countries to combat the pandemic. However, it must be noted that these donations were sent to be used for infrastructure and social projects only, ensuring they didn't land in the hands of any corrupt governments. Many NGOs also supported LEDCs during the pandemic, mostly with volunteer healthcare personnel from other countries. An example of such organizations are Oxfam, HCR, Amref Health Africa, WHO (World Health Organization), and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). International collaboration comes heavily into play during the distribution of vaccines, which, during the COVID-19 pandemic, developing countries were one of the last to receive. Funding highlights one of the most important factors that allow for the establishment of infrastructure to prevent the effect of a possible pandemic. LEDCs often do not have the monetary funds to realize such projects.

Social and political factors

Developing countries are often riddled with some of the modern world's greatest problems like famine, lack of hygiene, lack of education, and overpopulation, which all play a role in the spread of a pandemic and can all be combatted with specific types of infrastructure. The UN currently projects that by 2050, the population in some of the most poverty-stricken countries will double, highlighting a key risk. Overpopulation and overurbanization can lead to a fast and devastating spread of a pandemic, often making it even harder to contain. Health-related factors like lack of hygiene and famine can also easily facilitate the spread of disease. Famine is currently being combatted through many methods, which, put simply, include providing clean water access and monetary support to provide crops and food. Citizen hygiene, on the other hand, is being combatted by increasing health literacy through education programs, the construction of schools, or amendments to the school systems. Health literacy was barely prevalent in some developing countries before the COVID-19 pandemic and was a key determinant for the devastating effects that ensued. Politics also plays a key role in whether or not a country is able to distribute aid or act on plans to promote infrastructure to combat a pandemic. Such governments may undermine certain populations often due to extremist political beliefs. An example is the government of Myanmar against the ethnic Rohingya Muslims. However, the key to preventing the spread of a pandemic is to allow all people the same right to treatment. This is often why aiding organizations have opted to send volunteer groups to aid these undermined groups. Corrupt politics and turbulent governments must be taken into account when aid is distributed, especially if the aid is monetary.

Developing emergency health schemes

Emergency health schemes are very important. Such a scheme could include the collection of data to monitor the spread of the disease. Such data was used extensively by more economically developed countries (MEDCs) during the COVID-19 pandemic to fully understand the gravity of the situation of the country and then rightfully administer proper precautions like quarantine or travel restrictions. This data can also be very important to contribute to global statistics and can allow countries to gauge the severity of the situation locally and possibly send aid. Such a system will require the construction of relevant infrastructure such as developed entry logging systems at hospitals or online web infrastructure which can be easily accessed by people to log their sickness.

Timeline of Key Events

Date

Event

1944	The World Bank was established, a major monetary agency which contributes large amounts of money to countries in need of development often in the form of infrastructure
1944	The International Monetary Fund was established. Another major donator to developing countries allowing them to develop their infrastructure.
1948	The WHO is founded as a branch of the United Nations. It plays a key role in supporting developing countries to develop infrastructure utilizing volunteer aid groups.
1965	UNDP is founded which works closely with the WHO to develop the resources of developing countries by providing infrastructure
September 2019	The COVID-19 pandemic begins, and represents an unorganized pandemic from the eyes of developing countries, where they lost a lot of economic power and are still recovering in 2024 reflecting how unprepared they were
2022	The EU has a major response to the way the COVID-19 pandemic was devastating the developing world. They provide aid, personnel and promote health literacy to combat problem
2050	The date at which the UN has projected population in poverty-stricken countries to double. Highlighting a key risk to the ability for a disease spread

Major Parties Involved

The World Bank

The World Bank is a major NGO that revolves around monetary funding. Since its creation has given billions of dollars to developing countries and, as a result, has aided their infrastructure. As mentioned previously, infrastructure related to health, which is vital for preventing a pandemic,

often has a basis in simple basic necessities that many developing countries lack, like potable water, proper equipment for sanitation, medical equipment, and much more. The World Bank has spent years aiding LEDCs monetarily to ensure the availability of such infrastructure. As mentioned previously, during the COVID-19 pandemic, The World Bank provided 160 billion dollars to developing countries to combat the effects of the pandemic.

UNDP

The UNDP, or United Nations Development Programme, is characterized by its mission to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities, and build resilience in developing countries. They often work with the WHO, sharing personnel and resources, which they did extensively during the COVID-19 pandemic, where they focused on addressing issues that could affect the developing country in the longer term by supporting marginalized groups and rebuilding trust and cooperation between nations, people, and their government. They also provided short-term but vital help, ensuring the availability of resources like testing kits, protective equipment, and respirators.

WHO

The WHO, or World Health Organization, was founded in 1948 and is an international organization overseen by the UN and is often a channel that the UN uses to distribute and support all things medical or health-related. The World Health Organization is especially active in developing countries like the ones described in this report. They offer “Country Support Units,” which would be groups of volunteers to help the less fortunate people and communities combat struggles with maintaining good health by building infrastructure like wells or hospitals. They were especially active during the COVID-19 pandemic, where they worked to distribute vaccines. Their cooperation standards are aligned with the UN’s “development assistance framework,” which has allowed them to achieve coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency in delivering results.

The EU

The EU (European Union) also played a key role in promoting infrastructure and establishing guidelines in developing countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU represents one of many organizations that supported developing countries financially and physically during the pandemic. One of the key efforts they focused on was stepping up local production of medical and protective equipment, highlighting an important guideline based on supporting infrastructure in the case of a future pandemic. They have also supported the World Health Organization by providing personnel during previous pandemics, such as the Ebola outbreak or the COVID-19 pandemic, which focused

on training public health workers in epidemiological surveillance and the use of mobile labs. The EU specifically supported the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP). The EU also supported health literacy by targeting population groups and using social media to educate the general population about protective measures. The EU also ensured that in developing countries, there were free standards to manufacture COVID-19-related equipment. Above all, the EU also made substantial financial contributions to over 90 developing countries, allowing them to continue to deliver vital health services and develop local infrastructure to combat the effects of COVID-19 and any possible future pandemics. On the topic of monetary aid, the EU also offered aid via easily accessible loans and guarantees, further developing opportunities for infrastructure against pandemics.

Possible Solutions

Establishing regional and international collaboration

Developing countries are often concentrated in specific regions around the world. Examples are the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia, to name a few. Due to developing countries often having this connection, supporting each other is always a viable option to promote each other to work on preventing the effects of a pandemic. Establishing economic relationships and a strong supply chain to ensure the delivery of vital infrastructure like vaccines or medical equipment during a pandemic is not hindered. However, a solution like this is often outside the realm of reality. Strong political differences often separate neighboring developing countries, which may cause a more uneasy approach to collaboration. International collaboration is also vital for ensuring the readiness of a country in case of a pandemic. The international communities in sectors like trade need to be open to trade materials or medicine to realize infrastructure projects. International collaboration can also be done in the form of aid, whether it be monetary or in the form of volunteer groups, which can both be vital to start infrastructure projects.

International aid

International aid makes up a large part of promoting infrastructure in developing countries in case of a pandemic. Such aid could be derived from an NGO like Oxfam or The World Bank or from another country, often a more developed one. This aid could consist of monetary funding, providing expertise, or aiding with research. All three come together to promote infrastructure in a developing country to reduce the economic and social effects of a future pandemic. International collaboration

programs organized by international organizations like the WHO or UNDP can provide professional volunteers to aid with infrastructure projects to prevent the spread of disease.

Addressing education

Educational factors are linked to “health literacy,” which is vital to improve in developing countries. Many ethnic peoples, which may be in abundance in developing countries, rely on traditional remedies to cure themselves of disease. Although these may work at times, it would be more suitable if they were replaced or taken alongside real drugs that have passed scientific testing and are known to treat. Unfortunately, many people are not familiar with this style of treatment, and that’s why increasing health literacy is very important. Health literacy may also include the teaching of maintaining a good sanitary environment or hygiene-related procedures. Teaching how to differentiate between potable and non-potable water may also be a teaching point in places where potable water is scarce. Teaching on a higher level produces more knowledgeable people on treatment. All this teaching requires relevant infrastructure, too, which may consist of providing dedicated schools or learning centers for health literacy that have access to all proper materials to teach.

Further Reading

The link to the UN provided a list of LEDCS or LDCs (Least Developed Countries). When the term “developed country” is used in this report, it refers to this list of countries. This may be useful in the case that you are researching a country that is considered “developing.”

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