

**Evaluating Progress Towards the United Nations’
Sustainable Development Goal #3: Good Health and Well-Being in Ukraine**

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In 2015, the United Nations and its 193 Member States established seventeen Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets with nation-specific indicators to identify the world's heaviest burdens, track the path to resolution, and measure their progress along the way for the world's future (United Nations, 2023). In the succeeding years, nations all over the world have put their best efforts forward to achieving these goals for the sake of their citizens' quality of life and related health outcomes through a global partnership for peace and prosperity. SDGs target the root causes of poverty, climate change and planet preservation, as well as other disparities that limit global improvements to health, education, equality, and economic growth (source). Low-income and middle-income countries (LICs and MICs) confront many barriers when considering the most cost-effective, realistic, and swift approach towards achieving 2030 SDGs. Over half of the world's population lives in a MIC (World Bank, 2022). Thus, addressing the challenges that compromise MICs achievement of the 2030 SDGs is key to meeting SDGs globally. In many cases, LICs and MICs require complex financing, industrial innovation, community-level instruction, routine monitoring and evaluation, in addition to a revitalized way of life.

The premise of SDG #3, Good Health and Well-Being, is to ensure healthy living and promote the well-being of all humans, regardless of age (United Nations, 2015). The targets of SDG#3 take priority over minimizing the rates of preventable and premature mortality amongst varied populations, reducing risks and spread of communicable diseases, along with reforming health care services globally (United Nations, 2015). Much of this goal is centralized on the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) that examine the role non-medical factors play in

influencing an individual's health by "shaping the conditions of daily life" (World Health Organization, 2023). SDOHs include but are not limited to a person's income, education, job insecurity, food insecurity, housing, environment, social inclusion, and access to basic quality health services.

Ukraine, a middle-income country, has an SDG Index Score of 76.5 with 25.5% of their SDG targets worsening and 32.8% of them limited or stagnant in progress which account for over half of their targets not being achieved or on track (Sustainable Development Report, 2023). The 2023 Sustainable Development Report outline SDGs #3, #15 - Life on Land, and #16- Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions as having major challenges to overcome before being attained. Additionally, Ukraine faces challenges to achieving nine of the seventeen goals. Ukraine's biggest threats to achieving SDG #3 are the Russo-Ukrainian War, economic reliance on imports, and out-dated industrial technology that threatens industrial improvement, thus weakening defense against competing global modernization and jeopardizing the quality of life. To resolve these threats to health, Ukraine must implement mitigation efforts towards reducing the impact of war on infrastructure, civilian safety, the environment, and the economy. Adopting methods to utilize alternative energy sources and control carbon emission using modern technology to exploit natural resources present in rural Ukraine is another solution to

Context

Towards the end of the 20th century, Ukraine and its people boldly declared themselves independent to the fallen superpower of Russia. Subsequently, Ukrainians have been victims to regular shelling, skirmishes, and infrastructural cyberattacks for nearly a decade. Tensions between the nations further intensified in 2014 with Russia's illegal and covert annexation of Crimea, escalating to a point beyond return. Although an official declaration of war has yet to be

issued, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022, global alliances recognized Russia's attack as a direct violation of international law and the United Nations Charter (Council of Foreign Relations, 2022).

The Ukrainian economy primarily relies on imports for daily sustenance. The heavy reliance on Russia predates WWII when the nation was not yet a country, but a territory under the rule of the U.S.S.R.. The Soviet Union ruled over Ukraine during the prime of European industrialization, but halted their progress during WWII and, due to severe economic decline, Ukraine could not advance their industrial layout until the early 2000s (Britannica, n.d.). Even then, much of the labor force sought out employment abroad rather than in rural Ukraine (Brinttancia, n.d.)

Challenges to Sustainability

Ukraine's biggest threat to achieving SDG #3 by 2030 is undoubtedly its role in the ongoing conflict with Russia. The Russo-Ukrainian war has drained resources, damaged infrastructure, jeopardized economic stability, desecrated the environment and threatened civilian safety. Its menacing presence is a contributing factor to the severity of other threats to Ukrainian health and well-being.

Since the late 1990s, the Ukrainian people have seen a relatively constant decline in their health, especially amongst adult males and populations living in rural areas (IHME Global Burden of Disease, n.d.). The most recent conflicts in Ukraine have shown a lack of safety for civilians seeking health services of any magnitude. Russia has targeted bombings and mass destruction of major hospitals and clinics (Relief Web, 2023) which not only keeps many from seeking out care but also endangers those who do. The demand for healthcare staff has always been high, but the current daily threat of violence has shrunk the supply by hundreds (World

Health Organization, 2022). This has led to extremely vulnerable populations receiving limited supervision and a deterioration in the population's overall mental and physical health.

Of the few remaining nuclear plants and energy supply networks in Ukraine, many have deteriorated beyond use while others will soon follow. Ukraine has the capacity to generate energy on a much larger scale but remains limited by the overwhelming amount of nuclear power plants at their disposal (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2023). While this outdated industry helps the country reach SDG #13 - Mitigate Climate Change Impact and SDG#12 - Sustainable Consumption and Production, it limits their progress toward accomplishing SDG#9- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure— a significant step in reaching a higher quality of life for Ukrainians.

Currently, the war's threat on the Ukrainian environment has a tremendous impact on civilian health. The onslaught of Russian fire power on chemical plants, energy power plants, pipelines, and the general ecosystem have left Ukraine's water, air, and soil heavily polluted with toxins that can threaten long-term and short-term health of entire populations (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2022). Those of whom still have access to water are left questioning its purity and limiting its use (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2022). An arguably even worse impact on the country's environment is the outdated coal combustion based industrial regions. The severity of Ukraine's air pollution has worsened as a result of overly reduced levels of nitrogen dioxide in the air in large urban areas and coal mining regions where workers have been forced to flee out of concern for the safety of their lives (United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

Recommended Methods of Mitigation

To remedy and prevent further damage, the republic government's best course of action would be to pursue the achievement of SDG #16 Peace and Justice - Strong Institutions and end the Russo-Ukrainian War. In a post-war Ukraine, the government must carry out a developmental recovery plan that prioritizes a low-emission, green economy as it should no longer be considered a desirable goal but a necessity for the country's future. Ukraine needs to rely less on imports by tapping into their own natural resources. Their dependency on imports for natural gas, crude oil, and nuclear fuel – along with the system of power generation– make up the basis of energy insecurity in Ukraine. Until June of 2022, Ukraine had been receiving most of its nuclear fuel supply from Russia – an extremely critical source generating nearly half of the country's electricity(World Nuclear, 2022). Ukraine's consumer market is largely dependent on this steady supply to meet many of their daily needs.

Conclusion

The country of Ukraine faces many challenges to achieving the UN's SDG#3 by 2030. In addition to mitigating the damages of war, revitalizing a forgotten industry, and ending international reliance, Ukraine must address civilian safety, long-term preventative health strategies, and economic budgeting as they plan for better quality of life within the next decade.

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