

Global issues, impacts and proposed solutions for them

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Abstract. A global issue is a matter of public concern worldwide. This list of global issues presents problems or phenomena affecting people around the world, including but not limited to widespread social issues, economic issues, and environmental issues. Organizations that maintain or have published an official list of global issues include the United Nations, and the World Economic Forum.

Keywords.

Global problems are not just important problems, or problems that affect many people. Rather they are those problems that affect the whole of the planet, and potentially all of the people who live on it. Climate change is one clear example that springs to mind quickly. This is because the consequences of humanly-generated changes in the atmosphere will, albeit in different ways according to region, affect everyone on the planet. In other words, the consequences are universal. Moreover, unless we profoundly change our collective behaviour, climate change may well result in irreversible changes in the climatic conditions of life – a measure of the deep vulnerability of human society in the face of this issue. And it is easy to see that there will be no easy solution to the problem: the causes of the present situation are clearly related to our economic system, our attitudes to nature, our political organisation, our technological capacities and preferences, and our uses of resources. Solutions will involve not just all communities and every country, but solutions will necessarily involve cooperation between all, rather than individual approaches. In other words, the example of climate change suggests that global problems are complex, intractable, and make human society as a whole very vulnerable.

Other examples of global problems of this scale and with these characteristics would include weapons of mass destruction; the violation of the human security of several billions of the world’s poor, and the consequences of the conditions of their lives for the rest of the world; failures and deficits of global governance, especially

when set beside the largely unregulated pressures of economic and cultural globalisation; resource depletion, especially that of energy resources, on a scale and in a manner that both unsustainable and profoundly inequitable; the degradation of natural environments as a result of economic activities, including the oceans, forests and soils; the physical, social and psycho-cultural consequences of unprecedented and still accelerating development of megacities; and cultural collisions within and across national borders generated by globalisation and claims to the primacy or universal superiority of one version of reason and ethics.

Global problems are highly interdependent, often in non-linear ways. Their character and interdependence is such that they can only be solved jointly and simultaneously. These include climate change and energy insecurity, infectious diseases and the cultural dislocations of uneven, unequal and structurally contradictory processes of globalisation, apparently rapidly escalating nuclear proliferation, the destruction of habitat and biodiversity and the rapid deepening of chemical pollution, illegal drugs, increasing and deepening poverty across particular regions, and the failings of our global institutions of governance and finance, just to take a subset of the whole. Clearly they are interactive, most likely in ways we have hardly begun to think about.

The salient key characteristics are inherently transnational in both their causes and their consequences; that they are set to interact in ways we may well not anticipate – such as climate change and infectious disease; and that they are already giving rise to perceptible new forms of threat to both societies.

In our view, global problems exhibit characteristics which make them global rather than national or local in nature. Global problems may exhibit linkage between cause and effect across societal levels from global to local. Global problems also reveal a disjuncture between cause and effect when the driving forces are highly centralized and concentrated both institutionally and spatially (and therefore are exogenous to most of humanity who nonetheless experience the effects of this change). Other global problems are the result of highly distributed and decentralized driving forces so diffuse yet cumulatively powerful that the resulting overall impact is qualitative even though it passes unnoticed except at the local level.

Often, global problems are multi-dimensional, and drive pervasive change driven by interrelationships across superficially segmented problems or disparate issues or levels of governance. Global problems may be the result of multi-

directional causes that erupt suddenly from below or fall without warning from above, or both at the same time. Sometimes, events in one society arc for a moment around the planet to another, thereby dramatically changing both their trajectories.

The impacts of some global problems may not be felt for years or decades whereas decision-making time horizons are very short. Such enduring global problems may set severe limits on solving interrelated, medium-term global problems. Some solutions may turn out to generate further problems.

Some global problems are short term, such as the recent recession caused by the credit crunch and related banking crisis. Most global shocks are relatively short term and may be self-correcting. Other apparently short run events can have long lasting effects, such as the oil shocks of the 1970s, which permanently altered the global market for oil.

Other global problems are longer term, and may require a strategic approach to finding solutions. These problems include global inequality and unequal economic development, global poverty, the exhaustion of non-renewable resources, depletion of the environment and global warming, and systemic problems associated with inadequate regulation of financial markets.

Types of shock:

Temporary shocks, such as a terrorist attack, or a one-off change in a commodity price, like a rise in wheat prices, which quickly return to the ‘normal’, long run trend.

Permanent shocks, such as an oil shock, which permanently alters the market for motor vehicles. Some economists argue that the financial crisis of 2008-09, and the resultant impact on the motor industry, will kick start a more carbon neutral approach to vehicle design.

Policy induced shocks, such as reducing interest rates or increasing the money supply too quickly, creating an inflationary shock.

Asymmetric shocks, which are those affecting one region or one industry more severely than another. For example, the collapse of the Argentinean peso on the 1990s affected Spain more than the rest of Europe.

Symmetric shocks, which are shocks which affect all regions or industries in the same way.

Financial shocks, which are those starting in the financial markets, such as a sudden change in the exchange rate, or the collapse of a major credit bank.

Supply side shocks, which may be related to costs, such as a sudden increase in commodity prices, or related to changes in physical supply, such as labour strikes, or crop failures.

Demand side shocks, which are sudden changes affecting aggregate demand (AD), such as a collapse in consumer confidence leading to a fall in household spending, or a sudden fall in house prices creating a negative wealth effect.

One of the major problems on our planet is linked to the global temperatures that are continuously rising. By 2100, studies show that there is a 50% likelihood of facing global warming that is higher than 3.5 degrees Celsius and a 10% probability of witnessing warming higher than 4.7 degrees Celsius (relative to temperatures registered between 1850 and 1900). This would result in more severe shifts in weather patterns, food and resource shortages, and the more rapid spread of diseases.

Possible solutions:

A cut in greenhouse gas emissions and increased awareness of the necessity of turning green are among the solutions that can make a significant difference. In addition, proposing strategies to cut carbon emissions and opting for replanting are effective ways to advance climate change.

Global poverty represents one of the most serious problems in modern society. The world's poorest people frequently experience hunger, have limited access to proper education, often go without light at night, and face serious health problems. It has been estimated that around 60% of the world's population lives on less than US\$10 per day and around 10% on less than US\$1.90 per day.

Possible solutions to poverty:

- End marginalization by ensuring equality and representation for all
- Provide preventative education and treatment assistance during an epidemic
- Offer recovery interventions during climate disasters
- Help refugees and internally displaced people in terms of health, nutrition, and shelter
- Improve education
- Increase the level of food security and clean water access
- Put an end to conflicts



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