

COVID-19 PANDEMIC & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Abstract

The recent outbreak of the corona virus pandemic has posed a threat to the human lives, global economy and well-being of billions of people worldwide. As the world begins to open up from lockdowns and enters an unparalleled state of susceptibility, or what many have called “the new normal”, it makes sense to reflect on what we have learned, revisit our fundamental assumptions, and start charting the way forward to contribute to building a sustainable world. Despite of its huge significant damage to human lives and livelihoods, the corona virus pandemic presents an excellent opportunity for the human family to act in solidarity and turn this crisis into an impetus to achieve the United Nation’s (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The purpose of the research is to find out the brief impact of covid-19 on Sustainable development Goals and further analyse the future prospects on how to regain the loss occurred during pandemic.

Keywords – Covid-19, Pandemic, Sustainable Goals, Poverty, Education, Recession, Unemployment, Economy, Health, UN, Equality, Sanitation, Peace

Introduction

The novel corona virus has created havoc across the world and this pandemic has created a severe impact on all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s). The SDG’s are a collection of 17 global goals designed to be a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all” and more sustainable future for all”. The novel corona virus has impacted millions of human lives, their livelihoods and has also affected our global economy because of which the rich and poor are forced to reconsider almost every aspect of how we live. Till Sept 17, 2020 there have been 2.9 million confirmed cases and 9, 24,000 deaths. This pandemic has come at a time where all significant number of countries was making good progress and the

SDG's were getting good traction. Millions of people are suffering as the spread of virus over whelms our bodies and economies. As the world is seized with containing the spread of the virus and addressing its negative and weakening impacts, the reality is that countries are resetting their priorities, and reallocating resources to deal with the pandemic. This certainly is the right thing to do because the priority now is to save lives, and we must do so at all costs.

Problem Statement

During the pandemic, it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has had both positive and negative impacts on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. However, the insignificance of negative impact is higher than positive results. In areas where overcrowding is the norm and access to outdoor space is limited, adherence to key public health messaging on physical distancing and handwashing is challenging, as individual sanitation facilities are virtually non-existent and access to clean water and soap is limited [3]. Most of the Governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only taken many lives but caused social, political and economic chaos around the world [4]. Social distancing, self-isolation and travel restrictions have led to a reduced workforce across all economic sectors and caused many jobs to be lost [5].

Current Scenario [6]

1. SDG₁ (No poverty) - Highly negative impact

- Increased poverty due to job losses and economic lockdown
- Disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups (e.g., the poor)

2. SDG₂ (Zero hunger) - Highly negative impact

- Food insecurity due to reduction in global food supplies and trade (Sachs, 2020)
- Hunger due to fall in incomes and reduced food availability during lockdown
- Higher food loss and waste due to transportation challenges and reduced labour availability
- Poorer nutrition due to interruption of school meals

3. SDG₃ (Good health & wellbeing) - Highly negative impact

- Higher disease incidence and mortality from Covid-19
- Higher mortality from other causes because of overburdening of health systems
- Slight decline in mortality due to reduced economic and social activities
- (e.g., traffic accidents)
- Potential short-term health gains due to lower environmental pollution
- Negative impact of confinement and lockdown on mental health
- (e.g., anxiety and depression)

4. SDG₄ (Quality education) - Mixed or moderately negative impact

- School and day-care closures
- Loss in the development of human capital
- Poorer nutrition due to interruption of school meals

5. SDG₅ (Gender equality) - Mixed or moderately negative impact

- Possible disproportionate economic impacts on women (e.g., job losses, poverty)
- Other social impacts on women from the lockdown (e. g., domestic violence)
- Higher mortality rates from the virus among men (because they suffer from more chronic respiratory diseases due to higher smoking rate)

6. SDG₆ (Clean water & sanitation) - Mixed or moderately negative impact

- Limited access to clean water among disadvantaged groups limits possibility of adhering to strict hygiene guidelines

7. SDG₇ (Affordable & clean energy) - Mixed or moderately negative impact

- Slowdown in economic growth contributing to a reduction in energy prices (e.g., oil), which might increase access to energy but reduce incentives for renewables

8. SDG₈ (Decent work & economic growth) - Highly negative impact

- Economic crisis in virtually all parts of the world
- Trade disruption
- Mass unemployment
- Business closures / bankruptcies
- Sharp decline in tourism activities
- Massive public deficits

9. SDG₉ (Industry, innovation & infrastructure) - Mixed or moderately negative impact

- Decline in industrial outputs
- Possible nationalization of some industries, and bankruptcies and closures of others
- Scientific collaboration to find treatments and vaccine
- Accelerated uptake of digital technologies, for e-health, e-education, e-governance, and e-payments

10. SDG₁₀ (Reduced inequalities) - Highly negative impact

- Disproportionate negative health and economic impacts on vulnerable groups (including refugees and migrants), especially in countries with low safety nets
- Loss of jobs of lower-skilled, lower-wage labour

11. SDG₁₁ (Sustainable cities & Communities) - Mixed or moderately negative impact

- Rise in urban poverty and vulnerability
- Shut down of public transport
- Lower access to public / green spaces
- Movements of population that vary across countries
- Sharp short-term reduction in pollution levels

12. SDG₁₂ (Responsible consumption & production) – Impact still unclear

- Short-term reduction in natural resource use due to reduced economic activity and consumption
- Pressure to loosen up regulations on circular economy and postpone the adoption of new measures
- Increased plastic pollution (e.g., used to produce personal protective equipment)

13. SDG₁₃ (Climate action) – Impact still unclear

- Short-term reduction in global GHG emissions
- Pressure to reduce environmental safeguards
- Lack of clarity on environmental investments
- Slowdown in economic growth contributing to reduction in energy prices (e.g., oil),
- which might increase access to energy but reduce incentives for renewables

14. SDG₁₄ (Life below water) – Impact still unclear

- Short-term reduction in threats to marine biodiversity due to reduced global economic activity and consumption
- Pressure to reduce marine biodiversity and ecosystem safeguards

15. SDG₁₅ (Life on land) – Impact still unclear

- Short-term reduction in threats to terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity due to reduced global economic activity and consumption
- Pressure to reduce terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity and ecosystem safeguards, including biodiversity and ecosystem regulations conventions (for instance, on deforestation)

16. SDG₁₆ (Peace, justice & strong institutions) - Mixed or moderately negative impact

- Increased pressure on governments to mitigate the health and economic consequences of the pandemic
- Pressure to increase accessible health care in countries that have not yet achieved universal health coverage
- Increased public deficits and debt
- Disruption of legislative processes and public debates
- Suspension of freedom-of-information laws and transparency policies

17. SDG₁₇ (Partnerships for the goals) - Mixed or moderately negative impact

- Possible reduced responsiveness of international aid community to needs of the poorest countries
- Possible reduction in international remittances and cross-border financing
- Closing of borders
- Slowdown in international trade
- Debt crisis

Literature Review

SDGs have been affected by the impact of Covid-19 pandemic and it will take years for countries to recover what has already lost. The aim of this research is to find the quantitative or qualitative result of the impact on Sustainable Development Goals. The Methodology used to find out the result is secondary quantitative and qualitative data based on published research papers, journals, articles, periodicals, websites etc. to make the data rational and logical. As the impact of covid-19 has resulted to both positive and negative results to SDGs, but the positive results were more temporary than permanent and would regain its effect after the pandemic ends. As there are 17 SDGs, analysing each one was obstructive, so we analysed only nine SDGs.

An overview of the research evidence states that partial port operations/closure of roads/air cargo has led to disrupted supply chains causing a disruption in supply and demand, and a significant impact on employment and productivity growth. Since interest rates are below zero, central banks cannot counteract effectively. Employment and economic activity are falling sharply. Companies react by cutting investment expenditure, which negatively increases productivity and can in turn lead to recession. The COVID-19 pandemic has led many governments to implement lockdowns. While lockdowns may help to contain the spread of the virus, it is possible that substantial damage to population well-being will result. SDG16 Peace, Justice & strong institutions has been affected by the political and social disturbances. In light of rising concern about the current COVID-19 pandemic, a growing number of universities across the world have either postponed or cancelled all campus events such as workshops, conferences, sports, and other activities.

Research Methodology

The need for this research was to find out on what level the covid-19 has hit the Sustainable Development Goals which were already in progress, but its impact has heavily damaged what has already been achieved and because of this, it is going to be difficult to achieve the desired goals in the desired time. In order to gain a better insight into the possibilities for improvement, a mix of both existing quantitative and qualitative data from reliable sources has been collected ranging from January-September 2020 as it was the most crucial period of Covid-19. Because not all SDGs were negatively impacted, only nine were included in the analysis. As there were many already published sources to collect data on our topic, we mainly used secondary data because of its validity and rationality. We also collected descriptive data by gathering observations.

Analysis

As per the current scenario, it is now completely transparent that all 17 sustainable goals of UN aren't affected by the covid-19 pandemic, despite its impact in all parts of human society there are still some SDGs which got impacted in a positive way. A thorough analysis of the impact on SDGs will further clarify the estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on Sustainable Development Goals.

1. Poverty -

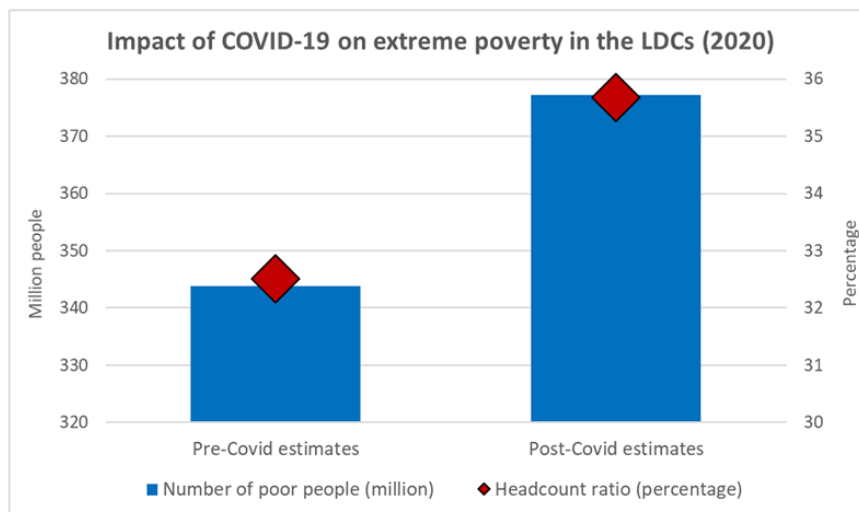


Figure 1- Source: UNCTAD.org [7]

The number of people living in extreme poverty (i.e. below \$1.90/day) in the LDCs has increased from 340 million people in 2010 to an estimated 349 million in 2018 and to more than 370 million in 2020. A large share of the new extreme poor will be concentrated in countries that are already struggling with high poverty rates and numbers of poor. Almost half of the projected new poor will be in South Asia, and more than a third in Sub-Saharan Africa. Under the baseline scenario, the number of extreme poor in IDA, Blend and FCV countries is projected to increase by 21, 10 and 18 million, respectively [8].

2. Hunger -

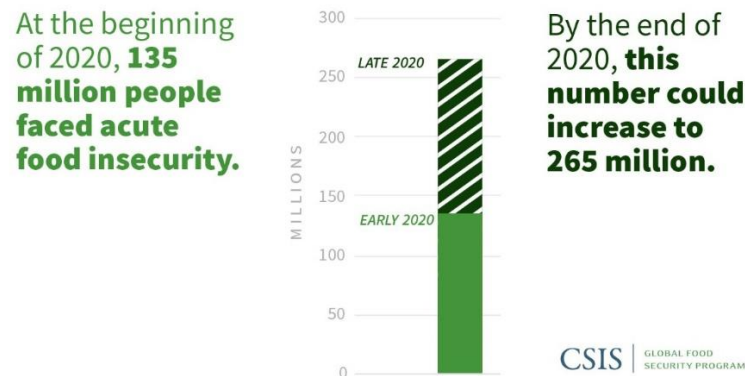
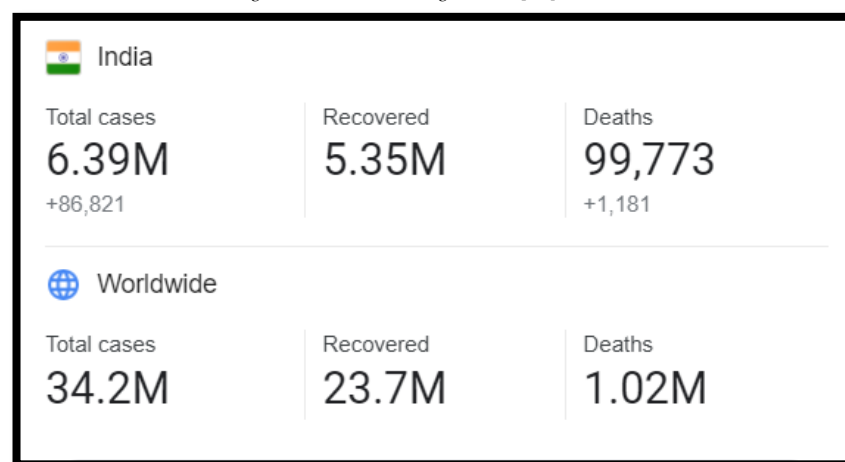


Figure 2 – Source : CSIS.org [9]

The virus has disrupted global and local food systems, and poor and hungry are being affected worse than ever. The pandemic amplified the vulnerabilities of the national food system. It has disrupted local, regional and national supply chains, adding to the impacts of the food waste problem. Small growers have had to sell their produce at a loss, if they have been able to sell it at all. Imports of food have also stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Partial port operations and the closure of roads and air cargo have hampered the movement of grains across the country.

3. Health and wellbeing –

Figure 3 - Source : Google News [10]



The first case of COVID-19 in India, which originated from China, was reported on 30 January 2020 and now 18.8% of the total cases are in India with 6.39 million total cases in the country and approx. one hundred thousand death toll. There is also increasing evidence that people who experience mild to moderate COVID-19 disease may experience a prolonged illness with frequent relapses. Experience from previous pandemics and economic shocks suggests that mental ill health will increase widely during the pandemic, although the scale is difficult to predict.

4. Education –

The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents. Closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94 per cent of the world's student population, up to 99 per cent in low and lower-middle income countries [12].

5. Gender Equality –

COVID-19 have had a greater impact on some countries and groups within countries, as pre-existing horizontal inequalities can magnify the effects of the Across several social, economic, and political dimensions, women and girls are disproportionately by the crisis simply because of their sex. The immediate of COVID-19 on gender inequality are already showing themselves in health and education, on the burden of care work and gender-based violence [13].

727 REPORTED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES DURING LOCKDOWN		
STATES	CASES	
Uttarakhand	144	crisis.
Haryana	79	
Delhi	63	
Chandigarh	50	affected effects
Tamil Nadu	48	
Punjab, UP	47 each	
West Bengal	46	unpaid
Odisha	37	
Chhattisgarh	31	
Bihar	21	
Kerala	18	
Jammu & Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram	17 each	
Maharashtra	12	
Himachal Pradesh	10	
Madhya Pradesh	8	
Tripura	7	
Rajasthan	4	
Manipur	3	
Andhra Pradesh	1	
Data till May 15		Source: NALSA

Figure 5 - Source : TOI [14]

6. Clean water & Sanitation –

The global hygiene product industry is related to the manufacturing of products that are used to maintain personal cleanliness and to safeguard one from the contagious diseases. However, with the outbreak of COVID-19 since January 2020, the demand for hygiene products has grown with an exemplary growth rate. The COVID-19 virus was novel and hence the government organizations across the globe published guidelines to maintain hygiene with the use of sanitizer and soaps more often which created a wide gap between supply and demand of hygiene products including hand sanitizer, toilet paper and so on. The global hygiene product industry is segmented based on product type into sanitizer, soap, and tissues. Out of which sanitizer segment and tissue are ascending with the fastest growth after the pandemic. The increasing share of the sanitizer segment is mainly due to the portability offered by the sanitizers as it can be used anytime and anywhere.

7. Affordable & clean energy -

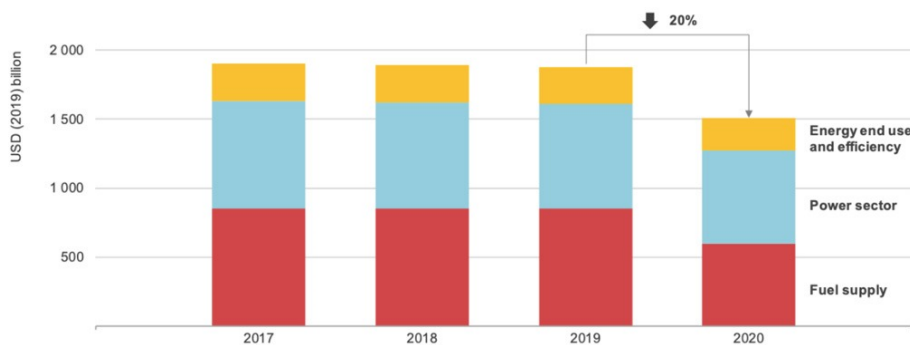


Figure 6 - Source : CarbonBrief [15]

One of the acute environmental effects of the pandemic is the sudden surge in the demand for and use of plastic products to protect the general public, patients, health and services workers. The widespread use of protective gear throughout the world as the pandemic creates massive upstream supply chain disruptions and downstream waste disposal problems. The demand trend is expected to match the global pandemic curve for various plastic products, as personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and masks for health workers, disposable plastic components for life support equipment, respirators, and general plastic supplies including syringes. Used plastic products are frequently pathogen-contaminated, and ought to be handled as hazardous waste [16].

8. Industry, innovation & infrastructure –

In the US, famous companies such as Sears, JCPenney, Neiman Marcus, Hertz, and J. Crew are under enormous financial pressure. The travel industry is deeply affected; 80% of hotel rooms are empty (Asmelash & Cooper, 2020), airlines cut their workforce by 90%, and tourism destinations are likely to see no profits in 2020. Furthermore, expos, conferences, sporting events, and other large gatherings as well as cultural establishments such as galleries and museums have been abruptly called off. Consulting in general and personal services, like hairdressers, gyms, and taxis, have also come to a standstill due to lockdowns. Finally, important industries like the car, truck, and electronics industries have abruptly closed (although they started to open up two months after their closure) [17].

9. Climate Action –

Major cities	AQI (March 2019)	AQI (March 2020)
Delhi	226	62
Pune	134	63
Mumbai	97	62
Ahmedabad	251	87
Lucknow	303	63
Chennai	75.67	48.67
Hyderabad	134	80.67

Figure 7 - Source : Business Insider [18]

Satellite images have shown dramatic improvements in air quality in every country affected by the pandemic, as industry and transport shut down. Shipping has declined worldwide and reduced impacts on marine systems might be expected. This year will very likely see a global decline in greenhouse gas emissions, as well as large reductions in other drivers of global warming, such as the contrail cirrus from high-flying aircraft. These may be short-term improvements, but they dramatically underline the pervasiveness and severity of anthropogenic impacts worldwide [19].

Future Prospects

The novel corona virus has created havoc across the globe, impacted human lives, livelihoods which is very painful and also has affected our global economy and sustainable development goals. The pandemic has shown how the prevalence of poverty, hunger, health, lack of education, unemployment, economic growth and lack of global cooperation has exacerbated the crisis.

This pandemic has hit at a time when the sustainable development goals were gaining traction and many of the countries were making good progress. The spread of virus has created a negative impact on our living so the countries are resetting their priorities, and reallocating resources to deal with the pandemic.

That is why we must all support the call by the United Nations to scale up the immediate health response to suppress the transmission of the virus, end the pandemic and focus on people particularly, women, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises, the informal sector and vulnerable groups already at risk. Working together we can save lives, restore livelihoods and bring the global economy back on track.

Achieving the SDGs will put us on a firm path to dealing with global health risks and emerging infectious diseases. Even at this stage in the pandemic, we cannot deny the fact that the crisis is teaching us, as global citizens, the utmost value in being each other's keeper, in leaving no one behind, and in prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable.

What is acutely needed is enhanced political will and commitment. Our world has the knowledge, capacity and innovation, and if we are ambitious enough, we can muster the resources needed to achieve the Goals. Buoyed by the spirit of solidarity, Governments, businesses, multi-lateral organisations and civil society have in the shortest possible time been able to raise billions, and in some cases, trillions to support efforts to combat this pandemic. If we attach the same level of importance and urgency to the fight against poverty, hunger, and climate change, we will find success in this Decade of Action on the SDGs. While some SDG gains have been eroded, this should not deflate our energy. They should rather spur us to accelerate and deepen our efforts during this Decade of Action to 'recover better', and build a healthier, safer, fairer and a more prosperous world [20].

Conclusion

The manifold damages posed by the COVID-19 epidemic to the world economy, and the social well-being of millions of people, means that it will take many years to recover. Even so, it may only reach 80% of the pre-COVID-19 levels, due to the uncertainty ahead. Without an effective vaccine in place, economic activity will continue to be hampered. It should be acknowledged that, even though some countries have managed to curb the spread of the virus, the COVID-19 pandemic still currently poses a major threat to the well-being of people and nations worldwide. Indeed, the fact that health security capacities in the context of the outbreak are rather fragile means that many countries are not able to handle it effectively. Moreover, there is overall a danger that the developed economies will turn their attention inwards and overlook the fact that there is not only an economic interdependence but that they also share public health challenges with the developing world. Current trends suggest that the process of the implementation of the SDGs might be delayed: the many socio-economic pressures and set-backs are lowering the level of priority given to the SDGs. Further, the potentials and opportunities offered by the SDGs, such as fighting poverty or eradicating hunger, may be at least partly undermined by COVID-19. It is thus wise to issue a note of caution, warning about the need to continue to put an emphasis on the implementation of the SDGs, so that the progress achieved to date is not endangered. Indeed, the global crises triggered by COVID-19 mean that pursuing and implementing the SDGs are more important now than they were before, since they represent some of the means via which quality of life can be restored and the many problems associated with the lack of water, food or poor health conditions may be addressed. In doing so, the momentum created by the pandemic may lead to a transformation from what currently is regarded as a global threat, to a global opportunity, providing a new impulse leading to the realization of the UN Agenda 2030 as a whole, and of the SDGs in particular.

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