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**POST COVID 19 SCENARIO AND ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

By : JAYANTA BORUAH*

PALLABI NATH



Abstract:

As the entire world fighting a war against the deadly Covid-19 which has caused a massive disruption of social, economic and environment aspects of humankind. Not only the pandemic called for an unprecedented health emergency, it also caused great disparities of the surrounding natural environment. At such situations, what catches our sight is the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by 193 member nations of the United Nations Organization, which is blue-print of 17 goals expected to be achieved by 2030. The acute destruction caused by the pandemic in one hand and the action plan to be fulfilled within ten years is so far sceptical. How and why the global goals with 17 holy ambitions as yet seems impossible is what this paper discusses. This paper aims to draw a brief sketch on the goals in terms of the covid-19 pandemic situation and also discusses suggestions to improve the post pandemic consequences in all aspects of life including social, economic as well as environmental, so that achieving the goals can still be possible.

Keywords : Covid-19, Economy: Environment, Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals.

Authors: Jayanta Boruah*¹

CoAuthor : Pallabi Nath²

¹ The Author is currently Research Scholar at North-Eastern Hill University. Contact no. – 8876991662 ,
Email - jayanta.boruah94@gmail.com

² The Coauthor is currently pursuing BA LL.B 10th Sem at NERIM law College. Contact no. – 9706921483 ,
Email - nathpallabi1996@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic had the entire world come to standstill and is tussling with its massive impact. The virus originated in the Wuhan city of China has left no stone unturned to make human lives miserable. It called for an unprecedented health emergency as well as social, economic and environmental haphazard. Apart from the health crisis, environment is the second largest area to get affected due to this deadly virus. Plastic wastes from PPE kits, hand gloves, masks not only contaminating the landmass but also filling the oceans and coastlines with plastic debris. In this scenario, the Sustainable Development Goals comes into play. Sustainable development basically means using the natural resources in a responsible way that the future generations can also be benefitted from them. P. Sands in his celebrated book *International Law in the Field of Sustainable Development* mentioned that, sustainable development requires the states to ensure that they develop and use their natural resources in a manner which is sustainable.³ Sustainable development as a principle developed in order to harmonize the conflict between unprecedented economic growth and environmental deterioration. It was expected to bring both intra and inter-generational equity by limiting the exploitation of natural resources and promoting indiscriminate use of resources among diverse humankind.

SUSTAITHNABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In 2015, 193 member States of United Nations family stood up together to sign the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). It was the outcome of a collective effort that the International community was determined to achieve for a better future. With an aim to succeed the Millennium development Goals, the SDGs are the compilation of 17 goals designed as an action plan to achieve better and more sustainable future for all.⁴ These global goals reaffirms to eradicate poverty, hunger, gender inequality, provide quality education etc. and committed to bring world peace, prosperity and environmental sustainability by the end of 2030. Thus to achieve this ambition, the SDGs were drafted and presented before the world. This paper aims to discuss all the 17 goals adopted under the auspices of United Nations.

³ Phillipe Sands, *Greening International Law (Law and Sustainable Development Series Book 1)*.

⁴ Sustainable development goals, united nations development programme, (Jun 02, 2020, 02:12 AM) <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>.

GOAL 1: NO POVERTY

The very goal speaks about eradication of global poverty by 2030.⁵ It is well known that no environmental protection can be achieved with extreme poverty. Thereby, attaining goal 1 becomes vital not only from anthropogenic perspective but also from eccentric perspective. In 2015, people living in extreme poverty was reduced by 10% as compared to 2010 but the pace of reduction is degrading year after year. Sources revealed that 8% of working population in the world were in extreme poverty in the year 2018 despite of having a job. Whilst 22% of world's unemployed population never received any social protection and cash benefits.⁶ However, the covid-19 pandemic made realization of the goal impossible due to obvious reasons.

GOAL 2: NO HUNGER

Goal 2 aims at eradication of hunger.⁷ However there was a stiff growth of people living in hunger from 784 million in 2015 to 821million in2017. In 2018, 149 million children below the age of 5 years were reported stunted. Meanwhile, it is expected that, post Covid the number of people living in acute hunger will increase to 265 million. The FAO stated that Global hunger might become the next major issue for the humankind.⁸ In such situation, achieving zero hunger by 2030 by world fraternity is questionable.⁹

GOAL 3: HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Goal 3 talks about ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being to all persons at all age.¹⁰ The world was witnessing a steady progress where the mortality rates fell to only 39 deaths per 1000 in 2017. Whilst regarding infectious diseases like HIV, Tuberculosis, etc. the mortality rates were decreasing but the pace of decreasing was still far below than the expected level for achieving the goal.¹¹ Due to the pandemic all these processes going to be even more stagnant as it has already caused the worst health emergency. Alongside, poverty and

⁵ Sustainable Development Goal, UN (Jun 10, 2020, 01:11 AM) <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

⁶ World Employment and Social Outlook- Trends 2018, ILO (Jun 12, 2020, 02:12 AM) <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newstorm/news/WCMS-615690/lang-en/index.html>

⁷ Supra.n 2

⁸ The Global Economic Outlook during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Changed World, THE WORLD BANK (Jun 10, 2020, 01:11 AM) <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/06/08/the-global-economic-outlook-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-a-changed-world>

Fiona Harvey, Coronavirus crisis could double number of people suffering acute hunger- UN, The Guardian (Jun. 11, 2020, 01:11 AM) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/21/global-hunger-could-be-next-big-impact-of-coronavirus-pandemic>

⁹ Fiona Harvey, Coronavirus crisis could double number of people suffering acute hunger- UN, The Guardian (Jun. 11, 2020, 01:11 AM) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/21/global-hunger-could-be-next-big-impact-of-coronavirus-pandemic>

¹⁰ Supra.n2

¹¹ SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, UNDP (Jun 13, 2020, 01:17 AM) <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-3-good-health-well-being.html>

undernourishment is going to rise after the pandemic making a huge section of population vulnerable to unhygienic health condition.

GOAL 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

The goal 4 aims at providing quality education.¹² Study shows that more than 50% of the children across the globe could not receive minimum proficiency level of education. Whilst in 2016, around 750 adults remain illiterate two third of whom were women.¹³ Expecting to achieve this goal after the pandemic is unavailing as a significant damage has already been done due to the nationwide lockdown. The digitalization of education although is a good sign for the nation's progress, still a daydream for majority of Indians lying below the poverty line especially those with no access to electricity and network connectivity. Besides, a major section of population to become unemployed which ultimately push them to acute poverty. Instances of child labour will increase causing further deprivation from quality education.

GOAL 5: GENDER EQUALITY

The fifth goal talks about removing all kind of gender inequalities and empower all women and girls.¹⁴ Till 2019 there was a significant decrease in the female genital mutilation and child marriages but structural issues relating to gender inequality remained high. Discrimination against all women in all forms were always sky rocketing in numbers and in a patriarchal nation like India it will take hundreds of years to change the mind-set of the people. Study shows that, even in progressive nations like the US, majority were women who lost their jobs due to lockdown. Violence against women have reportedly increased by 25% around the world. Cases of domestic violence were also increased as women were forced to live with their partners resulting such domestic violence.¹⁵

¹² Supra. n 2

¹³ Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Jun 13, 2020, 03:43 AM) <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

¹⁴ Supra. n 2

¹⁵ Alexandra Villareal, Coronavirus pandemic exacerbates inequalities for women, UN warns, The Guardian (Jun 17, 2020, 01:12 AM) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/11/un-coronavirus-pandemic-gender-inequalities-women>

GOAL 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

As the goal 6 speaks about clean water and sanitation.¹⁶ Study revealed that accessibility of safely managed drinking water services increased from 61% in 2000 to 71% in 2015. Meanwhile use of safe sanitation services increased from 28% in 2000 to 45% in 2017.¹⁷ During the pandemic, proper sanitation and safe hygiene became two universally accepted practices to combat the spread of corona virus. Whilst in the least developed countries where water scarcity is prevalent along with poor sanitation facilities, the virus likely to have the worst affect.¹⁸ Furthermore, irresponsible disposal of PPE Kits and other medical stuffs used for treating the patients are now matter of serious concern.

GOAL 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Goal 7 aims at providing affordable and clean energy by 2030.¹⁹ The primary objective is to encourage the use and production of renewable energy by limiting the use of fossil fuel and other non-renewable sources of energy to reduce the hazardous impact upon environment. Whilst the global population accessing clean energy raised to 61% in 2017 from 57% in 2010, use of renewable sources of energy increased from 16.6% in 2010 to 17.5% in 2016. Yet such increase is far behind the expected level to achieve the climate goals.²⁰ The situation has even worsened by the pandemic. The lockdown caused severe loss to the energy sector including the oil, fossil fuels and renewable energy producing plants as it is expected that around 250000 people working in these sector will lose their jobs either permanently or temporarily.²¹

GOAL 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

It is expected to have a stable and decent global economic growth BY 2030.²² Due to the pandemic it is expected that millions of people around the world would be revert back to extreme poverty while most of the Country's GDPs is going down significantly. Furthermore, in informal sectors, a huge section of population is expected to lose their jobs which will increase the global unemployment rates.

¹⁶ Supra. n 2

¹⁷ Supra. n 2

¹⁸ WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene) and COVID-19, The World Bank (Jun 11, 2020, 01:12 AM) <https://worldbank.org/en/topic/water/brief/wash-water-senitation-hygiene-and-covid-19>

¹⁹ Supra. n 2

²⁰ Supra. n 2

²¹ Ivan Penn, Oil Companies are collapsing, but wind and solar energy keep growing, The New York Times (Jun 12, 2020, 01:11 AM) <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/business/energy-environment/coronavirus-oil-wind-solar-energy.html>

²² Supra. n 2

GOAL 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The goal aims at inclusive, sustainable industrialization with innovation and basic infrastructure.²³ Over the decade there was a commendable growth in the global GDP shares and manufacturing sectors around the globe. Due to the pandemic, however, a shift in the consumer demand pattern and government intervention n management is expected. UNCTAD²⁴ reported that there could be a global shrink of FDI by 5%-15%. Furthermore, covid-19 is cutting of employments and services where the situation definitely will be worsened once the pandemic ends.

GOAL 10: REDUCED INEQUAITIES

The tenth goal talks about reducing inequalities within and among the countries including income disparities, plights of marginalized and disadvantages.²⁵ However, the pandemic has started enhancing its impact and worsening the existing inequalities in the world where the poverty-stricken countries with inadequate healthcare infrastructures and huge population of poor people are expected to suffer even more than ever before. It is even skeptical that whether all will be able to afford the vaccines for coronavirus whenever it will become available.

GOAL 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Population living in urban slums decreased from 46% in 1990 to 23% in 2016. Records from 227 cities across 78 countries showed that in 2018, 57% of urban residents had access to public transport. Whilst, 2 billion population across the world do not have access to waste disposal mechanism and 9 out of 10 people living in urban areas breath air that far below the quality prescribed by WHO. The situation is expected to be pathetic as due to lockdown a majority of population lost their jobs and forced to migrate back to homes mostly in rural areas. Informal sectors might face devastating consequences leading to unhygienic condition of living.

GOAL 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION²⁶

Report shows that worldwide material consumption raised to 92.1 billion tones in 2017 from 87 billion in 2015. Per capita resource extraction increased to 12 tons in 2015. Global resource extraction is expected to grow 190 billion by 2030. Whilst, the pandemic has not only brought relative change in the pattern of

²³ Supra. n 2

²⁴ United Nation Conference on Trade and Development

²⁵ Supra. n 2

²⁶ Supra. n 2

consumer behavior rather imposed new patterns with enduring effect. Studies revealed that 46% of the consumers now prefer to work from home and 57% wishes to continue watching movies, news, and entertainment even post pandemic too. It likely to create a digitalized workforce which indeed a positive sign but cut off more employments in real world since virtual workforce demands technology more than human resource.

GOAL 13: CLIMATE ACTION

It aims to take urgent climate action to combat climate change and its impact.²⁷ So far till 2019, around 1.3 billion people lost their lives due to climate related disasters. It is estimated that around 500 tons of carbon has been emitted to achieve 1 million dollar of global GDP in 2019.²⁸ All actions intending to reduce environmental damage proved underdeveloped. However, worldwide lockdown considerably reduced anthropogenic activities, resulted in significant reduction in air and other pollutants. Yet, post pandemic use of energy resources to mitigate the huge economic depreciation faced during the lockdown is alarming.

GOAL 14: LIFE BELOW WATER

Goal 14 aims at promotion of conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources.²⁹ In the past 30 years the acidity level in ocean water increased by 26% which is expected to reach 150% till the end of this century causing serious threat to the marine ecosystem. However due to the lockdown, the surface water pollution has been reduced for which a lot of endangered aquatic species have been spotted in the open water in many regions. But the question is whether humankind can preserve the pristine live forms below water while coping up with the changes to be experience post pandemic?

GOAL 15: LIFE ON LAND³⁰

Research shows that from 2000-2015 more than 1/5th of the earth's land surface was degraded due to urbanization, deforestation, etc. causing a serious threat to the biodiversity. The pandemic has however brought relief to most of the living species on land but it has also caused a great concern as the virus is suspected to have transmitted through animals. Furthermore, the faunas on land have humanized themselves,

²⁷ Supra. n 2

²⁸ Supra. n 2

²⁹ Supra. n 2

³⁰ Supra. n 2

meaning, they immune themselves in a way that dependent on the humankind for survival and now, isolation made their survival extremely difficult.

GOAL 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS³¹

It is aimed to provide access to justice for all and promote peaceful as well as inclusive societies for sustainable development. Whilst, report shows that, across the globe the rate of homicide per 10000 people increased from 6.0% in 2015 to 6.1% in 1017. Furthermore, in 83 countries, 8 out of 10 children between 1-14 years age have subjected to either physical or psychological aggression, mostly of whom belongs to developing nations. Human trafficking increased to 58% in 2016 from 43% in 2014, 70% of the victims were women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation. Even human rights activists, journalists who were stood out to be odd were killed and rate of such killing increasing day by day. Study shows that, most of the victims of such hatred were frontline warriors demanding equality, voiced against tyranny. Whilst during the pandemic, the pattern of such crimes shifted to other kinds of offences. Furthermore, women are still facing gross human rights violations since the rate of domestic violations increased from 10% to 20 % during first few weeks of lockdown.

GOAL 17: PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS³²

Goal 17 aimed at making trade and environment mutually supportive through liberalization of trade for achieving sustainable development. The outcomes of Rio+20 and agenda 2030 held that, trade is a vital element for promoting sustainable economic growth and enhancing welfare of the people by creating jobs and raising income. However, humanity is struggling hard to cope with effects of the pandemic and is likely to be much difficult in the coming years, making achievement of the goals impossible by 2030. The International Monetary Fund stated that Global growth is likely to fall by -3% which is even worse than the great economic depreciation of 2008-09. All these elements will deviate investments of domestic resources in financing the SDGs. It is established that the global poverty likely to be double after the pandemic. Trade and other industrial developments are also expected to suffer huge loss. In such situations, attaining the global goals by 2030 is really skeptical.

³¹ Supra. n 2

³² Supra. n 2

CONCLUSION

The unprecedented global pandemic caused by covid-19 has made humankind gripping with terror and uncertainty. Meanwhile, due to the lockdown imposed in several countries to restrict human movement, the ecosystem began to revive which is indeed a positive sign to a better future. Many intellects argued that, covid-19 despite of its deadly impacts proved to be a boon to the nature rather than a curse. However, considering destructive attitudes of humankind, it can be assume that, soon everything will be back to the earlier stage once the antidote is invented. Yet the damage the pandemic caused to the humanity, might bring new threat to the natural ecosystem since in need of mitigating the economic deficiencies mankind will strive harder than ever. Analyzing the impact of the pandemic impeding achievement of the global goals, it is so far obvious that it is impossible to achieve the goals by 2030 by most of the nations. A greater threat is expected to upon the environment. In such situation, all nations much stand together despite of all disparities and consolidate strategy to combat the consequences. The concept of capacity building through technology transfer shall be made more feasible. Furthermore, trade restrictions on imports to some extent is required so to protect the local industries from developing nations being the victim of competitions of developed countries. On the other hand, such countries shall withdraw restrictions of foreign direct investments to greatest possible extent and investments in share market by general public shall be encouraged more. These initiatives will bring stability to the economic breakdown which will help in addressing the issue of increasing poverty. The government shall bring national policies to mitigate with the loss suffered by migrant workers and those who lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Incentives for trade practices are to be designed in such a way that all private, public and joint ventures shoulder each other's burden after the crisis with proper managerial policy.

Nonetheless, these are mere suggestions, where question of its viability is dubious. The covid-19 pandemic brought before humanity a great unpredictable future to even draft a feasible action plan. In such situation, the Global goals and its expectancy to achieve by 2030 is a distant dream. Impact upon the environment will be remarkably adverse since without welfare, protecting natural ecosystem is a myth considering the situation for which anthropogenic sentiments and development matters the most. Whilst, mankind must acknowledge that, if such anthropogenic activities are not stopped or altered today, humanity might not survive to see the better future, and this pandemic can simply be treated as a warning.