

Business Ethics

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN 2021

Abstract

This seminar work is dedicated to the Sustainable Development in 2021. The work is divided into 4 chapters. Firstly, in chapter one, there is a short introduction of SDGs. Secondly, chapter two describes the progress in all of SDGs before the pandemic situation came in 2020. In chapter three, there is a description of the covid disease (the main cause of the pandemic situation). Lastly, chapter four deals with the impact of the pandemic on the SDGs.

Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, all UN members agreed to adopt *The 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development*. There are 17 global goals (*Sustainable Development Goals* or SDGs) with the main purpose of creating a better and sustainable world before 2030.¹

The 17 goals are listed below in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2 – before the pandemic

According to the WHO, the pandemic started on March 11, 2020.² Therefore, the main material for comparing the state before the pandemic will be *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*³.

Goal 1: *End poverty in all its forms everywhere*

It is true that the decrease of extreme poverty does continue, but it slowed down rapidly. Therefore it seems like the main goal (the end of poverty before 2030) is not achievable. Implementing Social protection systems in the most relevant areas can be a solution.⁴

Goal 2: *End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*

There was a huge progress in this matter before 2014, but after 2014 the number of people suffering from hunger is rising. The recommended solutions are supporting the agriculture sector from domestic and foreign sources or empowering small-scale food producers to participate in development.⁵

Goal 3: *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*

There has been a significant improvement in this matter. The longevity is increasing globally and there has also been progress in fighting some infectious diseases.⁶

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

² <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/08/09/health/covid-19-pandemic-timeline-fast-facts/index.html>

³ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

⁴ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

⁵ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

⁶ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

However, this point is still bind very closely to the 1st goal: ending poverty. Even when the progress can be considered huge, there are still people (mostly in the poorest areas) who can not be provided even the essential health services.⁷

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Over the past 25 years, there are vast improvements in basic reading and writing skills. Women's literacy is growing faster than men's. However, in 2016, 750 million adults (two thirds of those are women) still remain illiterate. According to the survey, most of those people are from Southern Asia region (49%) and from Sub-Sahara Region (27%).⁸

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

On the one hand, we have to agree that women are in far better environment in today's world than they were in the past. There are women on manager or political sphere and there has been global progress in implementing gender budgeting. But on the other hand, women and girls are still being put to danger of harmful practices. According to the data from 2005-2017, women and girls are mostly subjected to violent behaviours in Central and Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.⁹

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

There has been a 10% increase (from 61 to 71%) of the proportion of people using safe drinking water in 2000 - 2017. In case of sanitation, there has been a 17% increase (from 28 to 45%).¹⁰

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

The number of people using electricity is on a rise. In 2017, 89% of global population had access to electricity. But at the same time, there has been 840 million people unable to use electricity in 2017 with over 80% of those people are from rural areas.¹¹

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Some countries are still in need of promoting economic diversity, but in fact the real GDP has increased in 0,6% (from 1,3 to 1,9%) in just one year (2017). In 2018, the unemployment rate is setting down globally with the highest rates in Northern Africa and Western Asia.¹²

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

⁷ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>

⁸ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

⁹ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal6>

¹¹ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

¹² <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

Global investment in research and development in 2016 is \$2trillion, up from \$739 billion in 2000. Although the growth slowed down in 2018, the global share of manufacturing value added (MVA) in GDP increased from 15.9% in 2008 to 16.5% in 2018. On the other hand, industrialization of the Least Developed Countries is far too slow to meet the 2030 Agenda target.¹³

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Progress has been made in areas like narrowing disparities of opportunity, income and power, but inequality is still an issue yet to be solved.¹⁴

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

There has been a huge progress in this matter between 1990 and 2016. The global proportion of people living in slums has decreased by half (from 46 to 23%). But according to the survey, over 1 billion people are still living in slums in 2019.¹⁵

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Economic progress goes along with environmental degradation. The lifestyles of people in the richest nations are heavily dependent on resources extracted from poorer countries. The material footprint per capita has also increased at an alarming rate. In 1990, about 8.1 metric tons of natural resources were used to satisfy an individual's needs. In 2017, that rose to 12.2 metric tons, an increase of almost 50%. In 2018, 71 countries and the European Union reported on a total of 303 policies for the transition towards sustainable lifestyle.¹⁶

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

The climate change is occurring much faster than anticipated, as greenhouse gas levels climb. The global mean temperature for 2018 was approximately 1°C above the pre-industrial baseline, and the last four years have been the warmest on record. Sea levels continue to rise at an accelerating rate.¹⁷

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

In 2019, here has been a 26% increase of ocean acidity since pre-industrial era. Even bigger increase (100-150%) is expected by 2100. On the other hand, it is acknowledged that in years 2012 – 2018, about half of 220 coastal regions improved water quality.¹⁸

The main targets for this goal for the future are: reducing marine pollution, protecting marine ecosystems, reducing the ocean acidity and implementing sustainable fishing.¹⁹

¹³ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal10>

¹⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>

¹⁶ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>

Goal 15: *Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss*

There is a biodiversity deprivation happening in a rapid pace. In 2015, over 23,000 different species had high probability of extinction.²⁰

But there has also been some progress done in protecting biodiversity and ecosystems. The deceleration of the forest loss can be considered the most impactful one.²¹

Goal 16: *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*

The progress in this matter is still very held back. There has been no advance in this goal over the last years.²²

Goal 17: *Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development*

Many people in the world have access to the internet, which means people around the world are capable of searching and finding ways of implementing those matters. But more data for development planning and international statistical plans are still needed.²³

Chapter 3 – The pandemic

As stated above, the pandemic officially started on March 11, 2020. Globally there are 275 162 398 coronavirus cases, 5 373 012 people died and 246 936 074 people recovered.²⁴

„*Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.*”²⁵ Infected people will mostly experience respiratory illness and most people recover without any special treatment. However, some people can be in need of special treatment because of the difficult course of the illness. Some people can even develop serious illness or die.²⁶

Most common symptoms are: fever, cough, tiredness, loss of taste or smell. Less common symptoms are: sore throat, headache, diarrhoea.²⁷

As a prevention, there are precautions we can do: self-isolate if feeling any of the symptoms mentioned above, get vaccinated, wear a mask, and many others.²⁸

¹⁹ <https://www.globalgoals.org/14-life-below-water>

²⁰ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/goal-15/>

²¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal15>

²² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>

²³ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>

²⁴ <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

²⁵ https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

²⁶ https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

²⁷ https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_3

²⁸ https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_2

Chapter 4 – The Impact of the pandemic

Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic is closely related to many environmental issues and cannot be left unaddressed. IGES published 3 types of Measures that should be taken – Short-Term, Medium-Term and Long-Term.²⁹

Short-Term ones are addressing urgent concerns, such as Medical Waste, Air Quality, Sustainable Lifestyles. Medium-Term ones include Green New Deal, and Long-Term ones include Integrated, Approaches, Sustainable Cities, Climate Adaptation Planning and Management of Global Risks.³⁰

The covid pandemic has vastly influenced the SDGs. It has led to the first rise in extreme poverty in a generation – 119-124 million people were pushed back into extreme poverty in 2020.³¹

It has also worsen world hunger – as a result of the pandemic, there are additional 70-161 million people experiencing hunger. In 2020, 2.3 billion people are without food or unable to eat a balanced diet on a regular basis.³²

Surely, the biggest impact was on the 3rd goal: shortly said, a decade of progress can be stalled or reversed by covid-19. The pandemic has also shortened life expectancy and most of the countries are still reporting more disruptions to essential health services.³³

In 2020 9% or additional 101 million children fell below minimum proficiency levels.³⁴

Goal 8 was also highly affected: the pandemic has led to the loss equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs, which is 4x more than during the global financial crisis (2007-2009). Economic recovery is under way, but at the same time for many countries, economic growth is expected to return to the pre-pandemic levels in 2022 or 2023. In tourism, international tourist arrivals fell from 1.5 billion in 2019 to 381 million in 2020.³⁵

When it comes to goal 9, there are some good influences pandemic had, for example Manufacture of medium and high-tech products had 4% growth in 2020 compared to 2019; the investment into Research and development also increased. On the other hand, global manufacturing production decreased in 6.8%. For air travel demand, the air passengers dropped from 4.5 billion in 2019 to 1.8 billion in 2020.³⁶

²⁹ Institute for Global Environmental Strategies. *Implications of COVID-19 for the Environment and Sustainability*. Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep24951>.

³⁰ Institute for Global Environmental Strategies. *Implications of COVID-19 for the Environment and Sustainability*. Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep24951>.

³¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1>

³² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal2>

³³ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>

³⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

³⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>

³⁶ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal9>

The pandemic is likely to reverse progress made in reducing income inequality since the financial crisis. Since 2010, the proportion of the global refugees population has more than doubled. In 2020, for every 100 000 people, 311 are refugees.³⁷

The pandemic has also worsen the plight of people living in slums. The majority of people living in the slums is in Eastern and South-eastern Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central and Southern Asia.³⁸

In 2020, there were reported 331 cases of killing human right defenders in 32 countries, which is an 18% increase from 2019. There are also more cases of trafficking and child labour.³⁹

³⁷ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal10>

³⁸ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>

³⁹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>

Conclusion

Even before the pandemic, we had still some problems with implementing some of SDGs, but at some points we were on a good path towards sustainability. However, during the pandemic situation, I dare to say, we took quite a few steps back.

Coronavirus situation had indeed huge impact on most of SDGs, but there is always a hope. Letting the measures mentioned above alone, for example Elon Musk stated that he is willing to donate 6 billion dollars to fight world hunger.⁴⁰ Of course, there are some conditions and the process seems to be complicated, but if it was to happen, the impact would be huge.

⁴⁰ <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/elon-musk-says-willing-spend-6-billion-fight-world-hunger-one-conditio-rcna4301>

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