



# Critical Analysis of Factors Impacting Achievement of Some Major SDGs in Current Global Scenario

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## ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development Goals are a commitment of the international community to achieving progress in a sustainable manner by 2030. These goals focus on overcoming challenges faced by the whole humanity and pledges to leave no one behind in the quest of achieving a better life for all people on this planet. Some major sustainable development goals focus on eliminating poverty, hunger, unemployment, mitigating climate change, promoting education, equality, industrialization and boosting economic growth and infrastructure. Unfortunately, the covid pandemic has impacted the progress achieved in moving towards these sustainable development goals. Also the ongoing war between America, Israel and Iran is a further threat to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This article discusses the impact of the coronavirus on some of the major Global Goals and its implications for the future. This is followed by a discussion on the impact of the America, Israel and Iran war on achievement of SDGs

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the member states of United Nations adopted 17 global goals known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve progress and prosperity at global level by 2030. These goals are a commitment of the international community to bring about development in a sustainable manner. It focuses on achieving progress, overcoming challenges faced by the whole humanity and pledges to leave no one behind in the quest of achieving a better life for all people on this planet. Some major sustainable development goals focus on eliminating poverty, hunger, unemployment, mitigating climate change, promoting education, equality, industrialisation and boosting economic growth and infrastructure. Achieving SDGs requires coordinated and integrated efforts at international level by various governments, international organisations, private bodies and citizens. According to the Sustainable Development Goals report 2019 of the United Nations, since 2015 progress has been made in some areas including decrease in poverty, decline in child mortality rate and provision of electricity to people but a lot more effort is needed to attain the goals by 2030.

The Covid-19 pandemic is one of the biggest disasters in the current times which has adversely impacted the progress made up till now in context of some SDGs. As per estimates of World Bank, the developing countries would need to invest 4.5 % of their GDP in future to achieve sustainable development goals. Also the ongoing war between America, Israel and Iran is a further threat to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Following are the adverse implications of Covid-19 and US- Israel-Iran conflict on some of the major sustainable development goals.

## 2. IMPACT ON POVERTY

The first major sustainable development goal is to eliminate poverty in various forms all over the world by 2030. The world has been moving positively towards achieving this goal as poverty has been decreasing since 1990. As per UN statistics 36 percent people in the world lived in extreme poverty in 1990. The number of people in the world living in extreme poverty has reduced to 10% (or 700 million people) by the year 2020

But the Covid-19 pandemic has adversely impacted the progress achieved till date. As per the research report by UNU - WIDER in April 2020, due to the impact of covid-19, half a billion people in the world could be pushed to poverty. As per June 2020 Global Economic Prospects report, the pandemic could push 100 million people into extreme poverty in downside scenario and 71 million people into extreme poverty in baseline scenario in 2020. This will totally wipe out the progress made in the direction of removing poverty. The number of people living below poverty lines in lower and upper middle-income countries would also rise significantly.

A Framework namely 'UN Framework for the immediate social economic response to Covid-19' has been issued by United Nations to garner international support for providing essential services and social protection to people all over the world. Financial support is also being provided to low and lower middle-income countries by the UN Covid-19 response and recovery fund to overcome the financial impact of the pandemic. As per UNDP, due to US- Israel-Iran war , an increase in prices of imported goods, energy and transport could impact the cost



of living especially for poor people in urban areas thus adversely impacting the sustainable development goal of no poverty.

**Impact on hunger**

The second major sustainable development goal is to eliminate hunger from the world by 2030. But unfortunately, the number of people who suffer from hunger has been increasing since 2015. As per United Nations, 135 million people in the world suffer from acute hunger. By the end of 2020, another 130 million people could be suffering from acute hunger due to the impact of Covid-19. The coronavirus has caused a lockdown in many parts of the world. This has disrupted the smooth passage of food items to the storage, processing and distribution systems. There has been panic buying at many places resulting in scarcity of food items. The irony is that at many places tonnes of stocks are rotting in godowns due to abrupt closure of markets while millions suffer from hunger. 80% of respondents in a recent survey in 12 countries of Sub Saharan Africa reported food insecurity and were concerned about not having adequate food in the past week. There could be a major hunger crisis if appropriate measures are not taken immediately.

As per UNDP, the current US- Israel-Iran war is causing fuel shortage and increase in transport cost. This may escalate food prices, acting as a barrier to achieving the sustainable development goal of Zero hunger.

Measures to enhance the agricultural productivity and boost sustainable food production to provide relief to millions of people suffering from hunger due to the pandemic are required. Food and Agriculture Organisation has appealed to Nations to fulfil the food requirements of their hungry citizens, ensure smooth functioning of the Global trade in food, the domestic supply chain and increase food production by providing support to farmers. The UN Global humanitarian response plan also delineates the measures to provide support to the most vulnerable people including those suffering from food insecurity.

**3. IMPACT ON ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT**

Another major sustainable development goal focuses on economic growth in a sustainable manner and decent employment for all. The pandemic has put the effort made towards this goal into the reverse gear. As per an OECD report, the direct negative impact of the pandemic will be on GDP growth, consumer spending and international trade. Another alarming estimate of the International Labour Organisation is that approximately half of the world's workforce is at the risk of losing their livelihood. International Monetary Fund further adds the grim news that the world is staring at a global recession even worse than that in 2009.

Tourism industry has been hit hard with people avoiding travel. Disruption in industrial activities leading to decrease in GDP and reduced revenues from sale of goods have decelerated economic growth. As per UNDP, due to US- Israel-Iran war, industries and institutions dependent on imports, energy and transport of goods could experience a slowdown, adversely impacting the sustainable development goal of decent work and economic growth.

The African nations have been hit the hardest. IMF has provided economic support to the poor nations and also requested the official bilateral creditors to suspend their debt payments. The UN brought out a framework for immediate socio-economic response to the pandemic to provide support to informal sector workers, protect jobs and provide a stimulus to small and medium sized enterprises and make the world economy more resilient.

**4. IMPACT ON INDUSTRIALISATION, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Another sustainable development goal focuses on promoting sustainable industrialisation along with innovation and infrastructure. Growth of manufacturing sector has been on the decline even before the present pandemic. The coronavirus has further disrupted the manufacturing sector activities. In the lockdown situation, production has gone down. There is disruption in the distribution channels, leading to goods being sold at lower prices and reduced profits. The smaller organisations are hit even more, as they have smaller profit margins and lesser retentive power. The consumers have also postponed their non-essential purchase thus lowering the demand. Also, banks are operating at a slower pace with shorter working hours leading to delay in money transactions further adding to the woes of the manufacturers. Even after situation returns to normal, the manufacturing sector will take time to bounce back to a situation of growth and profitability. To overcome losses, Companies may adopt a cost reduction strategy in future, involving reduction in salaries of employees and layoffs, which will increase unemployment and pinch the pocket of the common man.

Innovation can be brought about through research and development. But investment in research and development is less than 1 per cent of GDP in the developing countries. The pandemic is further having a major adverse impact on science based researches and innovation. Since research in science needs to be carried out in the field or in laboratories with sophisticated equipment which have been closed during lockdown, the science researchers and PhD students are the worst sufferers.

As per UNDP, the current US- Israel-Iran war may impact the productivity negatively, especially in energy intensive units, which could further reduce investments and hamper certain value chains thus, adversely impacting the sustainable development goal of industry, innovation and infrastructure. Policy options have been



provided in the Financing for sustainable development report (2020) to use the potential of the digital technologies to the maximum. Once the war is over, huge investments will have to be made in the infrastructure, especially ICT for sustaining industrial growth and boosting economic recovery. Supply chains will have to function efficiently to increase sales and profitability.

## 5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, Covid-19 and the current US- Israel-Iran war has dealt a major blow to the progress towards majority of sustainable development goals. It has reversed the progress made in the previous decades towards reducing poverty, hunger unemployment, illiteracy, diseases and the inequalities within and among the nations. The impact is not temporary and has implications for the future also. The sustainable development goals will be difficult to achieve by 2030 unless some collective measures are taken by the international community. Global solidarity and cooperation is imperative to bring the world out of the crisis situation. It is high time that mankind realizes that living in peace and harmony with nature is the only way that sustainable development and progress of humanity can be achieved.

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