

SDGs FOR ALL

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SDGs FOR ALL

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CLIMATIC CHANGE, SUFFICIENCY ECONOMICS AND MIGRATION



FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to our third edition of SDGs For All. A little bit late due to some unavoidable circumstances this month. Yet it's better late than never.

This month we focus on migration, sufficiency economics and the impact of climatic change in our specially commission project articles on SDGs.

The South Pacific island Fiji's health system is facing a crisis with the exodus of its trained nurses to Australia and New Zealand. This raise the question of whether peoples' right to migrate for greener pastures need to be balanced by the nation's sustainable development right to preserve its human resources.

Thailand's 'sufficiency economics' theory drawn from its Buddhist heritage is now finding converts in neighbouring Laos. Would this idea also spread far and wide to assist in the achievement of the SDGs?

While the UN adopts a historic treat on the Oceans, we have two stories written by student journalist from the South Pacific on how plastic waste and climatic change are playing havoc in the region.

From the Caribbean's we have a story of how the region is grappling with the lack of proper financial resources to address a serious problem of the availability of water for the island communities.

We also look at how three multilateral development banks have joined with the World Health Organization to launch the Health Impact Investment Platform. This is a landmark development aimed at investing in and strengthening essential, climate-resilient primary health care services in low- and low-and-middle-income countries.

In addition we have some thought provoking viewpoints and also alert you to stories and reports from non-IDN sources and regional organisations that are related to the battle to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

We hope that you find this publication useful and interesting.

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June 2023
**Bringing You Stories and Issues Relevant
To Achieving The SDGs in The
Post-COVID Era**

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Nurses at Fijis Colonial War Memorial Hospital (CWM). Photo Credit: Fijian Government website

Fiji's Health Services in Crisis As Nurses Migrate

By Pauliasi Mateboto

SUVA, Fiji — Fiji's ailing medical industry has seen another massive blow as over 800 nurses have reportedly left for greener pastures so far this year, either to the local private sector or migrated overseas, mainly to neighbouring Australia and New Zealand.

Along with the ageing medical infrastructure, neglected by past Fijian governments, low salaries and the quality of support from the Ministry of Health during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic have all contributed to the sorry state of the health sector here.

According to orthopedic surgeon Dr Eddie McCaig, nurses are leaving in droves, with over 800—a quarter of the workforce—migrating overseas in the past year alone.

Dr McCaig said that healthcare workers opted to exit because of several factors. Still, their primary concerns were poor compensation and working conditions, a challenging political environment, and seeking better opportunities for their children.

"Last year (2022), we lost 807 nurses, which equates to 26.7 per cent of 3056 nurses," he revealed, noting the standard of patient care provided by healthcare professionals had also declined because of socio-economic issues.

"We do not have the resources to provide all the care that is promoted by providers and desired and demanded by the public," he said.

Divisional medical officer (DMO) Central Fiji, Tevita Qoriniasi said the Nausori Health Centre had 37 vacant positions in the nursing department. He added the current staff were tired, and counselling sessions with Medical Services Pacific (MSP) were engaged for the team.

"Of the total 61 staff that resigned in the last three months, 16 were from Nausori (outskirts of capital Suva)," Qoriniasi said. "As far as staffing is concerned, we have 138 established positions with 39 vacancies, 37 of which are in the nursing department".

"On average, about 2500 patients are seen at our GOPD (general outpatient department) per week. This number excludes those that are seen at our SOPD (Specialist Outpatient Department) clinic and maternity unit," he added.

Qoriniasi said staff are working extra hours and that specific departments have closed. "The current staff have to work extra hours to ensure duties are covered, and shift hours have been extended to 12 hours to enable some breathing space," he complained.

Qoriniasi also pointed out that some regular services like IMCI (Integrated Management of Childhood Illness) had to be closed, and (this) has contributed to longer waiting times.

Qoriniasi said management and the Ministry of Health have the plan to mitigate the current shortage of staff issue without elaborating on it.

Australian and New Zealand healthcare sectors have aggressively recruited trained and experienced Fijian nursing staff in the last few years. Some Pacific Island nurses taking up aged care jobs in Australia must be more qualified. Experts here are concerned about the "brain drain" leaving critical gaps in the

region's healthcare systems.

Fiji Nursing Association President Dr Alisi Vudiniabola confirmed to IDN that many of the country's "very experienced and well qualified" nurses that have left to work in jobs overseas in aged care are over-qualified for it. "Some of them are midwives, some advanced clinical nurses, some are managers in primary healthcare centres," she said. "It's a big loss for Fiji when we lose such qualified nurses."

No data is available on the total number of Fijian nurses now working overseas. Still, Dr Vudiniabola estimates most have left for Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East and the United States during the past six months.



Junior Nurses being briefed before commencing their shift at one of Fiji's public hospitals. Photo Credit: Fiji Times

Despite mounting pressure on the health system, she said the Fiji government kept tight-lipped about the figures. "They just keep all the information to themselves; we are not seeing the numbers that are leaving, but we know that nurses are leaving almost every day," she said.

Dr Vudiniabola hoped that at least Pacific nurses would have opportunities to increase their skills. "I'm just hoping that ... Australia looks at pathways for professional development and does not just leave them being an aged care worker," she added.

During the pandemic, most of the COVID-19-related deaths in Australia were in aged care nursing homes, and critics there said that a contributing factor was a lack of adequately trained staff in the sector.

While the Australian and New Zealand High Commissions were not to be reached for comments on the issue, Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported in November last year that the Australian government refuted claims that the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme is causing the nursing shortage in Fiji.

The PALM scheme allows eligible Australian businesses to hire workers from 9 Pacific islands and Timor-Leste when more local workers are needed. They can recruit workers for seasonal jobs for up to 9 months or longer-term roles for between one and four years in unskilled, low-skilled and semi-skilled positions.

The Australian government's [website](#) says it allows "employers access to a pool of reliable, productive workers (while) it also allows Pacific and Timor-Leste workers to take up jobs in Australia, develop their skills and send income home".

In the Federal Government budget presented to parliament in Canberra on 9 May, the Australian government has committed to expanding further the scheme, which currently provides jobs to more than 37,700 Pacific and Timor-Leste workers.

When the scheme was first introduced the then Minister for International Development and the Pacific Pat Conroy said only a "small proportion" of Pacific workers training to work in aged care were qualified nurses.

"Australia wants to contribute to the economic development of our region. We do not want to deprive the Pacific of its health workforce," he said, claiming that the PALM scheme had been a "win-win" for Australia and the region.

"It's making a significant contribution to economic development in our region, through workers sending their Australian earnings home, and at the same time helping with worker shortages in Australia," added Conroy.

Speaking anonymously, a Fijian nurse who has been in the industry for over 30 years and plans to move to New Zealand by the end of the year said the decision to move has not been easy. Still, she has decided to journey across the Pacific Ocean for better opportunities for her and her family.

"The working condition for us (medical workers) in Fiji over the last few years has been ignored (thus), so many of us have taken the difficult decision to look for greener pastures," she added.

"Most of us nurses have to start with caregiving when we first move, then study further for a chance to join the medical industry there; it is an extra battle we don't mind fighting," she added, referring to what is in store for Fijian nurses migrating to New Zealand.

She said many of her colleagues that have migrated overseas had blended well with the lifestyle there and have been providing for their families back in Fiji, which is a bonus.

Meanwhile, as Fiji's new coalition government seeks to address numerous issues affecting its economy, reducing the mass migration of nurses is undoubtedly a top priority.

At a media briefing, Permanent Secretary for Health, Dr James Fong, told journalists that the Ministry has met with nursing stakeholders such as the Nursing Association to discuss plausible solutions. He says a working group involving all related government ministries and nursing stakeholders will formulate proposals for submission to appropriate budget forums over the next week.

Dr Fong says that whatever they do, they must maintain all parties' aspirations. The Permanent Secretary hinted that the Ministry will be able to sort something out for the nurses in the upcoming 2023-2024 national budget later this month.

[Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 13 June 2023]



Collage with pictures of products of SEP (left) and EU visitors with Chittakone Sisanonh, Director of Dongkhamxang Agriculture Technical College (right). Photo: Credit: Dongkhamxang Agriculture Technical College.

Thailand's 'Sufficiency Economy' Philosophy Bears Fruits in Laos

By Pattama Vilailert

VIENTIANE, Laos — It was at the height of the Thai Economic Crisis in 1997 that the term "sufficiency economics" came into prominence when the late King of Thailand Bhumibol Adulyadej told his people that rather than building factories to become another Asian Tiger, the important thing for Thais is to have a sufficiency economy.

"A sufficiency economy means to have enough to support ourselves," he said¹. Since then, this theory of economic development has been adopted in over 23,000 Thai villages. It is now making its mark in neighbouring Laos.

Just about 13 km from the busy "Morning Market" in Vientiane stands the Learning Center for the Development of Sustainable Agriculture Based on Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) at The Dongkhamxang Agriculture Technical College.

The Learning Center features learning stations that allow students to learn how to organically grow agricultural products, culture fish, and carry out animal husbandry.

"Vientiane is quite modern, fewer people work in the farm and agriculture area has also declined," Vitida Sivakua, a [Thailand International Cooperation Agency \(TICA\)](#) Officer told IDN.

¹ [Thailand Human Development Report 2007: Sufficiency Economy and Human Development\(PDF\)](#). Bangkok: United Nations Development Program (UNDP). 2007

Vitida's remark is in line with a survey in 2021, conducted by the Lao National Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Planning and Investment, which mentioned that the number of Lao farmers had sharply declined in the last ten years. "The percentage dropped from 77 percent of the total population [of 7 million] in 2010 down to 69 percent in 2020 because many Laotians gave up farming to become laborers in the cities."

To sustain the momentum of Lao agriculture and produce agricultural students to prolong the farming society, Chittakone Sisanonh, Director of Dongkhamxang Agriculture Technical College determined to set up the Learning Center.

He told IDN that the idea of establishing the center came into his mind when he studied in Thailand from 2003-2006 and visited a few SEP Learning Centers where he visualized that it is possible to have such a center in Laos because the natural resources of the two countries are similar.

The idea came to fruition when TICA visited the college in 2007. "Our teaching approach is in line with the SEP concept, so I approached TICA to provide a learning center so that our teachers, students, and people nearby could learn how to do agriculture using the SEP approach."

"The sufficiency economy philosophy (SEP) emerged to encounter (the Thai) financial crisis in the early 1990s, and the Thai government applied the sufficiency economy philosophy to revitalize the economy and subsequently, it has been included in Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plans ever since," explained Vitida.

"Thailand used to be a recipient country, we had learned a lot while receiving development aids and knowhow from other countries and adapted it to the Thai context, gradually since 1963, we turned to a giving country, (what)we are good at developing (we were) able to pass it on to neighboring countries," she told IDN with her vivid eyes.

"The SEP core working theme is 'Understand, Approach and Develop'. So, before we translate the SEP approach into projects, we hold meetings with prospective countries to understand what kind of assistance they need, once we found that, we talked with related agencies in Thailand to accommodate and develop the projects with us," said Vitida.

Sufficiency Economics has three components: moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity, with two accompanying conditions: appropriate knowledge and ethics and virtues. Moderation is applied with reason, in the sense of not too much or not too little, which is an Eastern concept based on the Buddhist middle path. Reasonableness requires that the choices we make be justifiable by using academic approaches, legal principles, moral values, or social norms. And Self-immunity emphasizes the need for built-in resilience against the risks, which arise from internal and external changes by having good risk management².

"I think, I understand what SEP is all about," Anuson Sayavong(photo on right) told IDN while looking after the cows in the center. "My family wanted me to study here rather than helping them on the farm like others and it's worth it because I learn about production planning and making the soil fertile. It is very necessary as climate change makes natural production unpredictable."

"At the Learning Center, the bridge is built to link two agricultural areas: one is for animal husbandry practice and the other is for vegetation," explained Anuson. "I am responsible for animal husbandry so I come here every morning to look after cows and if they are sick, I will give them some injections and my classmates work on the farm on the other side to take care of the vegetation."



² Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy - <https://thaiembassy.se/en/monarchy/philosophy-of-sufficiency-economy/>

Chittakone further explained Anuson's point: "Actually, we have 22 learning stations in our center, since the beginning, each station had been designed to match local agriculture like cricket and frog culture stations and over time some of the stations have been modified into the marketable products."

"We have also learned that SEP is not only about producing agriculture to make ends meet in the family but also about finding ways to live sustainably; therefore, we are gearing towards making our products saleable to a wider market," Chittakone added.

"The organic Melon is our top product, and we cannot meet market demand," Anuson added. "We can sell melons easily because people around here know that our products are chemical free and we publicize them on our webpage, once the melons are sold, our teacher would save the money to spend on the center expenses and this is how I understand SEP," he said.



Street vendors in Luang Prabang. Photo Credit: Kalinga Seneviratne

The Vision 2030 and Ten-year Socio-Economic Development Strategy (2016-2025) of Lao P.D.R states that the vision of the agriculture sector for the year 2030 aims at "ensuring food security, producing comparative and competitive potential agricultural commodities, developing clean, safe and sustainable agriculture and shift gradually to the modernization of a resilient and productive agriculture economy, linking with rural development contributing to the national economic basis".

In line with this vision, the Lao government offers 200,000 Kip (11 USD) a month to those studying agriculture, carpenters, metalwork, and buildings, but only a few teenagers want to study in these fields.

Hommala Phensisanavong, an academic at Lao National University shares her concern about the declining number of university students: "Since 2019, the number of Lao students decreased by 38% from elementary school to university levels, COVID-19 is one of the reasons and another is parents do not have enough money to support their children," she said.

Chittakone agreed with that "Currently, the cost of living in Laos is very high because of the inflation, even though World Bank and Asian Development Bank grant some loans through our governments, not many people qualify to get the loan so I have tried to make the Learning Center sustainable so that it can generate some income to teachers and students in the long run".

"Annually, we have several visitors from various development organizations, right now we are working with [Japan International Cooperation Agency \(JICA\)](#) on marketing training for our teachers, after the training, we hope to market our product online and we also approached the World Bank for the funding of our stall in front of the center and 2025 we will open the center to tourists, by doing all these, our center and our life will sustain," said Chittakone.

Dongkhamxang Agriculture College is not the only institute in Laos that conducts SEP. There are four more learning centers scattered in the country: Attapeu, Bokeo, Khammouane, and Xayaboury.

"Laos is not different from Thailand in terms of language and culture allowing the SEP approach to bear fruitful results," Vitida said and further mentioned that besides Laos, Timor also applied SEP in agriculture. "Thai farmers taught Timorese farming leaders about how to use SEP in their farms, and now they can train the farmers by themselves, this is TICA's mission to materialize development concept through cooperation."

[Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 28 June 2023]

The Caribbean: Climate Change Triggers Water Crisis, Financing Exacerbates

By Linda Hutchinson-Jafar

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad — With an estimated 4 billion people facing water scarcity around the world, a regional water conference held earlier this month addressed the unique issues small island nations of the Caribbean face in confronting this challenge. These include climate change, which is having a profound impact on the hydrological cycle in the Caribbean. (P09) JAPANESE



Public Water tap. Photo Credit: Caribbean Community Secretariat.

This, in turn, is escalating aridity and heightened water stress, increasing both the frequency and severity of droughts. At the same time, a lack of financial resources is hindering attempts to address the associated water scarcity problems.

At the recent Caribbean Water Conference held in Barbados (June 6-7) experts and speakers highlighted the urgent need for action to address the Caribbean's dire water crisis.

Barbados Prime Minister, Mia Mottley, who spoke at the launch of the conference, highlighted the injustice of forcing countries to borrow exorbitant amounts at high-interest rates for short periods to finance basic water infrastructure projects particularly in light of saltwater incursion, reduced precipitation, and increased evaporation. She asserted that the water crisis represents the “greatest challenge of our time” and poses significant problems for small island states, necessitating immediate action on various fronts. She added that the impact of climate change, coupled with limited resources and access to financing exacerbates the region's vulnerability.

Chris Corbin, Coordinator of the United Nations Environment Programme asserted that the repercussions of climate change on water resources are manifold and exacerbating existing challenges and intensifying the competition for this finite resource. He noted the state of water resources in Latin America and the Caribbean is a cause for concern. Currently, a staggering 25% of people throughout Latin America and the Caribbean lack access to safe drinking water leaving them vulnerable to waterborne diseases and other health risks while an alarming 60% of the population has no access to safe sanitation services, compounding the risks to public health and environmental well-being.

"The competition for the use of this limited resource is something that climate change is exacerbating. How do you balance the demands for water aging infrastructure, human health, and ecosystem integrity?" he asked.

Dr. Armstrong Alexis, Deputy Secretary General of the 20-member Caribbean Community (CARICOM) also emphasized that changes in climatic conditions such as increased temperatures, reduced rainfall, prolonged droughts, desertification, salination, and intensified hurricanes have a severe negative impact on freshwater resources in the Caribbean. These challenges are further exacerbated by the limited options available to small and low-lying states with limited land mass in developing their water resources. “Their very construct means that their material resources including their freshwater supply and capacity to generate the resources is by definition equally limited,” he said.

Dr. Alexis added, “We are at a critical juncture and the timeliness of this conference should serve to place the current and evolving water management needs of the region (in its proper context)”. He pointed out that global responses are often designed to respond to a scale that inadequately addresses the needs of the smaller, less endowed nations of the globe.

Roger Pulwarty, Senior Scientist, at the Physical Sciences Laboratory at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) emphasized that the lack of access to fresh water is the primary driver of water-related challenges faced by small islands in the Caribbean. “That’s the driver. It’s not hurricanes, it’s not sea level rise, it’s the lack of access to fresh water,” he said during a panel discussion. He added that understanding the movement of moisture is critical as it determines the availability of

freshwater in the Caribbean. In the face of the ongoing water crisis, he said it is evident that efforts to coordinate and take action are falling short.

“It seems like we’re playing different games and a series of paradoxes...occur. Let’s get the biggest economic value for that drop of water and protect the environment. Let’s work on how people have equitable access,” said Pulwarty, a scientist from Trinidad and Tobago who contributed to the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). He does not rule out the privatization of water to address the problem.

Describing water as the “essence of life,” Gillian Cadwell, Chief Climate Officer and Deputy Assistant Administrator of USAID said the resource has become the battleground for one of the most pressing challenges that humanity faces today. According to Caldwell, nearly 90% of climate-related disasters are directly linked to water-related issues, ranging from devastating floods and typhoons to crippling droughts that currently plague the Horn of Africa.

The severity of these challenges is only worsening, with [UNICEF](#) estimating that approximately 4 billion people worldwide facing water scarcity, and projections suggest that by 2025, at least 50% of the global population could confront severe water scarcity for at least one month per year.

Cadwell said the reasons behind this escalating crisis are multifaceted. The world is witnessing both dramatic increases and reductions in rainfall, leading to erratic water-related events that wreak havoc on the critical infrastructure necessary for water delivery and waste management systems. With rapid urbanization adding to the problem, the consequences of water scarcity reverberate throughout society, impacting various aspects of life, she said. “There are declines in productivity, increases in prices, decreases in nutrition has an impact on children, stunting of growth, intellectual and physical. Water is life and can also mean death,” she added.

Colin Young, Executive Director of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) revisited the argument put forward by the Barbados Prime Minister. He identified significant challenges faced by small countries seeking access to financing for climate resilience projects, particularly in the water sector, and highlighted the complex and fragmented process which hinders the ability of vulnerable nations to effectively address urgent climate issues.

He emphasized that the lack of access to affordable financing is a major hurdle for countries such as those in the Caribbean striving to tackle climate change impacts. “I am very confident in saying that the international climate finance architecture, it’s not serving the needs of the most vulnerable countries in the world. It is far too complex, it is far too slow, and it doesn’t deliver the financing at this scale to be able to address the urgency of the issues we are experiencing,” he said.

Various funding mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund and bilateral arrangements have been established to provide climate finance. However, he said the reality is that these donors operate with fragmented processes and differing criteria, making it difficult for countries to navigate and meet the necessary co-financing requirements. This fragmented landscape further compounds the challenges of accessing climate finance for water resilience projects. Moreover, the existing policies of the donors often fail to align with the specific needs of regions. Young pointed out that developing a water program for the Caribbean, for instance, requires navigating a country-by-country approach rather than a cohesive regional framework.

“The reality is that the world must do right by the people of the earth, the world must do right by the biodiversity that is essential for us to maintain the balance of this planet,” argued Mottley in her opening address. “For that to happen we need to ensure that countries are not forced to borrow at double-digit amounts for short periods to be able to finance basic water infrastructure to protect their people.”

[Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 29 June 2023]

** The above articles were produced as a part of the joint media project between The Non-profit International Press Syndicate Group and Soka Gakkai International in Consultative Status with ECOSOC. Our mission is the reporting the underreported about the plan of action for People, Planet and Prosperity, and efforts to make the promise of the SDGs a reality.*

200 Million Migrant Workers Sent \$647 Billion to over 800 Million Families

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS – In Asia, some of the countries dependent on remittances from migrant workers overseas include India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, China, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

At the international airport in one of the Southeast Asian capitals, there is a sign at the “arrivals” terminal for a special category of VIPs (Very Important Persons) - not royalty nor diplomats but “Migrant Workers Only”.



Migrant workers from Asia next to the QP building in the West Bay area of Doha, Qatar waiting for a bus. Photo Credit: Alex Sergeev/Wikimedia Commons

Reason: the country’s migrant workers, running into millions, are some of the biggest single foreign exchange earners, working mostly in oil-blessed countries in the Middle East, including Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Álvaro Lario, the President the UN’s [International Fund for Agricultural Development \(IFAD\)](#) says almost \$1.8 billion in remittances are flowing daily to low and middle-income countries, leveraging development opportunities.

Half of that amount \$900 million, is boosting agriculture and rural development” said Lario, speaking at the opening session of the [Global Forum on Remittances, Investment and Development \(GFRID\)](#) in Nairobi on June 14. Making the most of remittances and diaspora investments can, paradoxically, curb the need for more to migrate. These flows are great contributors to the wellbeing of millions, he said.

Organized jointly by IFAD, the [UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa](#), and the World Bank Group, the GFRID forum aims to foster a change in mindset among various stakeholders, including public and private partners as well as civil society.

The goal is to fully acknowledge and leverage the potential of remittances and diaspora investments as critical sources of socio-economic development in low and middle-income countries. A presentation of their conclusions will go before the SDG summit during the UN General Assembly sessions in September this year.

In its press release June 14, IFAD said that in 2022, 200 million migrant workers sent \$647 billion to over 800 million family members in low and middle-income countries. This is done with small transactions of \$200 on average, 10 to 12 times a year.

In these countries, the combined value of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment is substantially less than the funds sent by migrants to their loved ones.

Even in times of crisis, the hard-earned money sent home remains a reliable source of income for millions of individuals and families across the world. Remittances allow families to fight poverty, put food on the table, pay medical and education expenses and improve their housing, water and sanitation, according to IFAD.

While migrants mostly send money to cover basic needs, it is estimated that recipients manage to either save or invest 25 per cent of the money they receive. One-quarter of these savings (\$25 billion annually) goes into agriculture-related investments. This amount is four times greater than the global ODA

allocated to agriculture in developing countries.

“We need to change our perception and recognize migrant workers and diaspora investors as essential development contributors, especially when it comes to climate adaptation,” said Lario.

The President of IFAD advocates for working with the private sector to seize business opportunities, and fully supports the need to harness the potential of these financial flows to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Image credit: UN Office of the Special Adviser for Africa

Meanwhile, Africa remains of particular interest at the 2023 GFRID, as 17 out of its 54 countries rely on remittances for at least 4 per cent of their GDP. Several countries, including The Gambia, Somalia, Comoros, Lesotho, Cape Verde, and Guinea-Bissau, exceed the 10 per cent threshold.

These findings were outlined in the newly released RemitSCOPE Africa outcome report, which presents the most up-to-date and reliable data on remittances and their impact across all 54 African countries. The report sheds light on the over \$100 billion that annually flow into Africa from its migrant workforce of over 40 million individuals worldwide.

According to RemitSCOPE, the cost of sending remittances to Africa has been significantly reduced. However, with an average price of 8.85 per cent transfer fee to send \$200 last year, the continent remains the most expensive region in the world to send money to.

Africa remains far from the 3 per cent target set in the SDGs to be achieved by 2030. Sending money within Africa is even more expensive at 11 per cent transfer fee on average. Financial inclusion has significantly increased in Africa, rising from 20 per cent in 2011 to 51 per cent in 2021, driven largely by the growing ownership of mobile money accounts, says the report. South Sudan (6 per cent), Egypt (27.4 per cent) and Sierra Leone (29.1 per cent) present the lowest levels of financial inclusion.

Lario reaffirmed IFAD’s commitment to make the remittances flow faster, and safer while reducing transfer fees. IFAD continues its work to connect incoming funds to a wide range of opportunities in rural finance, benefiting both rural residents and private sector enterprises. This means boosting access to savings, credit and insurance, basic financial products that can nevertheless be life-changing in poor rural areas.

Since 2006, IFAD has co-funded over 70 projects in more than 50 countries focused on providing opportunities for remittance-receivers and their communities. IFAD has built a network of some 230 partners on the ground from the public sector, private sector and civil society, benefitting at least two million people, according to the press release.

[Transmitted by DN-InDepthNews on 15 June 2023]

UN Adopts Historic Global Treaty on Oceans

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — After years of negotiations, the United Nations has reached an agreement on a Global Ocean Treaty aimed at ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity which covers over two thirds of the world’s high seas.



A team of scientific divers assess the marine biodiversity on the top of a seamount in Porto Santo, Madeira, Portugal. Photo Credit: Nuno Vasco Rodrigues/UN World Oceans Day 2023

“You have pumped new life and hope to give the ocean a fighting chance”, said UN Secretary-General António Guterres, following the adoption of the treaty on June 19. (P07) GERMAN | JAPANESE | TURKISH

Singling out the treaty as a demonstration of the strength of multilateralism, he said: “By acting to

counter threats to our planet that go beyond national boundaries, you are demonstrating that global threats deserve global action, and that countries can come together, in unity, for the common good”.

Dr Palitha Kohona, a former Chief of the UN Treaty Section, told IDN: "As the former co- chair of the UN ad hoc working group on Biological Diversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BDBNJ), which finalized its report at about 3.00 AM on a cold snowy February morning in 2015, it gives me tremendous joy to see the formal adoption of the UN Oceans Treaty”.



Pigeon Point, Tobago. Photo Credit: Caribbean Tourism Organisation

The oceans, he pointed out, are so very important to sustain life in our threatened planet. Life began in the oceans. “Now we absolutely need to protect the oceans to sustain life. I hope that countries would go through their internal processes quickly and proceed to sign and ratify this treaty when it is opened for signature”. He said 60 ratifications will be required for the treaty to enter into force.

“It will be a major achievement for the UN as we approach the SDG targets of 2030. The Oceans Treaty will be another vital pillar of the framework being developed under the [Law of the Sea Convention](#), sometimes referred to as the Constitution of the oceans.”

UN Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters June 19 the agreement will be open for signature at UN Headquarters for two years from 20 September this year, the day after the [2023 SDG Summit](#). It will enter into force after ratification by sixty States.

“The Secretary-General urges all States to spare no effort to ensure that the Agreement enters into force and calls on them to act without delay to sign and ratify it as soon as possible,” he said.

Chris Thorne of Greenpeace’s [Protect the Oceans](#) campaign said the Treaty is a win for all life on this planet. Now those same governments which agreed, must urgently ratify and begin delivering vast ocean sanctuaries on the high seas. “The science is clear, we must protect at least 30% of the oceans by 2030 to give the oceans a chance to recover and thrive.”

He said that “2030 looms large on the horizon, and the scale of our task is vast. Less than 1% of the high seas are protected. Millions of people from all over the world have demanded change and together we have achieved this historic agreement, but we still have a long way to go”.

“We are committed to achieving 30x30. We will work day and night to ensure this Treaty is ratified in 2025, and ocean sanctuaries free from destructive human activities covering 30% of the oceans become a reality by the end of this decade.”

Meanwhile, building on the legacy of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, this groundbreaking agreement significantly strengthens the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in over two-thirds of the ocean.

The UN said the treaty provides an essential framework for cross-sectoral cooperation between and among States and other stakeholders to promote the sustainable development of the ocean and its resources and to address the manifold pressures it faces.

The effective and timely implementation of this Agreement will make crucial contributions to achieving the ocean-related goals and targets of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#). According to the UN, the Agreement addresses four key issues.

It sets up a framework for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from activities with respect to marine genetic resources and digital sequence information on marine genetic resources of areas beyond

national jurisdiction, ensuring that such activities benefit all of humanity.

It will enable the establishment of area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, to conserve and sustainably manage vital habitats and species in the high seas and the international seabed area. Such measures are critical for archiving the “30 by 30” global target to effectively conserve and manage at least 30 per cent of the world’s terrestrial and inland water areas, and of marine and coastal areas by 2030, as agreed in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

It will ensure that environmental impacts of activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction are assessed and considered in decision-making.

It also provides, for the first time, an international legal framework for the assessment of the cumulative impacts of activities and the consequences of climate change, ocean acidification and related impacts, in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

And it will facilitate cooperation in capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology to assist Parties, in particular developing States Parties, in achieving the objectives of the Agreement, so as to level the playing field for all States to responsibly utilize and benefit from marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Furthermore, the Agreement addresses several cross-cutting issues, such as its relationship with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies, as well as funding and dispute settlement.

It also sets up institutional arrangements, including a Conference of the Parties, a Scientific and Technical Body and other subsidiary bodies of the Conference of the Parties, a Clearing-House Mechanism and a secretariat.

The Secretary-General urged all States to spare no effort to ensure that the Agreement enters into force, and called on them to act without delay to sign and ratify it as soon as possible.

“This is critical to addressing the threats facing the ocean, and to the success of ocean-related goals and target—including the 2030 Agenda and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework”, he said, expressing readiness to help States make this happen.

[Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 20 June 2023]

Tonga: A 'Paradise' in the South Pacific Ocean Turns to a Plastic Landfill

By Fresh Polutele*



Collage: One time paradise (top left) turns to a plastic landfill. Photo Credits: Pacific Regional Environment Programme and Wikimedia Commons.

NUKU’ALOFA, Tonga — The kingdom of Tonga in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean was known as a “paradise” island. But not anymore. Plastic and glass waste is an ongoing problem in Tonga’s environment and it has created a dilemma for the government.

How will the government address this issue? Does it need to ban plastic and glass materials or such goods from being imported to Tonga?

Tonga was well known to many tourists for its stunning natural beauty, pristine beaches, and rich cultural heritage but nowadays some tourists and peace corps volunteers—who were here before—has said that Tonga has really changed as villages, islands and other places that were used to be beautiful are now all completely a disaster with an acute waste problem.

This is due to the fact as they witness—some people dump their rubbish everywhere, especially at beaches and public areas. Plastic bags are very helpful to many people, but after people make use of them, they don't put them in the right place like the rubbish bin.

Dr. Peter Suren, a professor from Germany who lived in Tonga 30 years ago, talked about the development he has noticed over the years compared to when he first visited Tonga in 1990.

"For us palangi foreigner—if we come here to Tonga and see all the plastic waste—we feel unwell. We think how can the people live here with their houses full of tins and whatever rubbish and then we feel unwell about it. Why? because now in the Western countries, we have the audacity to see plastic in a very bad light and we stop to produce plastic bags", he told Wansolwara.

He has also noted, the issue is common among the Pacific islands and the region should work together to address this issue. "There must be something done this way to stop this problem—especially in the small islands," Dr Suren added.

Tonga is made up of approximately 170 islands and atolls, with a total sea area of 700,000 square kilometers. Only 36 islands are inhabited, while the remainder is largely untouched. The kingdom's population is only 106,017 according to the 2021 census.

In countries like Tonga, most of the population heavily rely on the ocean for their daily meals, but as years have gone by, there has been a decline in the marine species and their livelihood due to various reasons such as littering. As such, the government and other organizations like the No Pelesitiki Campaign are working together in finding ways to solve these issues—such as recycling plastic and glass waste.

Eleni Tevi of the No Pelesitiki Campaign says that their campaign is not exclusive to picking up rubbish in coastal areas as they have now reached a milestone of transforming plastic into handicrafts for women to make earrings, dresses, handbags, and others.

"We are trying to teach women how to make use of plastic waste to make earrings, dresses, and handbags not only to help with their income but also to keep the environment and ocean free of plastic waste," she said.

One of the ways to do so is the creation of the Taphuhia landfill—most of the concern is because the landfill is full of plastic as it makes up about 90% of the rubbish at Tapuhia. The landfill 11 km from the capital here is a former quarry and it was opened as a sanitary landfill in 2007.

Aid shipments after the January 2022 volcanic eruption have also added to the plastic waste problem. The kingdom received more than 200 shipments of aid supplies which included 86,000 plastic bottles of water. Most of these bottles ended up in the Taphuhia landfill.

Even though they have provided trash bins for the public to use, the Deputy Director of the Environment Department, Mafileó Masi says, it is a pity that people continue to litter on the beaches and the coastal areas today. "There are cleaning campaigns on the way and it is not enough to keep the beaches and coastal waters clean as people continue to litter," she complains.

Masi adds: "There are also some people who use the beach for cleaning their meat products, especially beef, and leaving behind their plastic waste."

The Department wishes to carry out a public awareness programme to remind them of the reasons and importance of keeping the environment clean and so stop littering.

"People should be aware of the significance of keeping the environment clean and safe from any plastic waste as it contains toxic chemicals which will harm the marine organism for a long period of time," warns Masi.

Meanwhile, the Department of Environment is working on making a roadmap for the reusing of plastic waste as part of minimizing the littering of rubbish. Once it is completed—they will use it to find donors

to fund their projects on the reusing of plastic waste.

However, the Department is urging the people to be more responsible as their actions will not only affect them—but will also affect a lot of people and the oceans' living species.

The concern is that with such a huge amount of plastic waste, it harms the marine organism and affects the environment negatively.

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Vanuatu: People Don't See Millions Govt. Gets for Cyclone Recovery

By Josepheen Tarianga*

PORT VILA, Vanuatu — In the first week of March this year after days of cyclone warnings—it did finally come. Not one but two cyclones and a devastating earthquake—all within a week. When the cyclones came, there was already a chill in the air and dark looming clouds.



Central Market in Port Vila. Photo Credit: Josepheen Tarianga

The trees had been trimmed, the roofs secured and food had been stocked. Families were gathered to wait out the cyclones—now known as Judy and Kevin. But no one was prepared for two category four cyclones to hit the country a day apart, leaving the country devastated.

A week after the cyclones hit, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said they will provide a \$1 million grant to the Government of Vanuatu to supplement government finances following tropical cyclones Judy and Kevin, which caused severe damage to roads, schools, health facilities, homes, essential water and power infrastructure, and crops.

The World Bank chipped in with the disbursement of a \$9.5 million grant to support the Government of Vanuatu's response. The government announced that it launched an early recovery plan on 14 April, with a budget of \$ 28 million.

Three months after the cyclones, how do people see Vanuatu's cyclone recovery? I spoke with members of the Vanuatu community with different standing and socioeconomic status to find out.

"Every year from November to April we know that we have a cyclone season. People are prepared for that," Elsie Molu, a Vanuatu resident, told Wansolwara. She has lived in Vanuatu all her life and has experienced many cyclones growing up.

"When the cyclone hit in March, we didn't expect anything else. Everybody went back to cleaning up their backyards, sorting out the rubbish, and repairing their houses. People know that cyclones have hit us but we have to move on."

She described how NGOs (non-governmental organizations) involved in disaster relief would come around. "Everybody knows they are in go mode and will be coming around, to find out who needs aid, who needs support not financial aid, but tools, equipment, and things they need to rebuild and tie them over until they could find something more permanent."

While Non-Government organizations and the National Disaster Management office (NDMO) have been working as first responders, some communities feel that they have not received enough help and support for recovery.

"During the cyclones, I was with my community, and some houses were so damaged that some people were scared and they left," Isaac Viraliliu, A Chief of the Ambae Island community told Wansolwara.

"The NDMO came only once and until now they have not stepped into the community. Some of us live as if the cyclone is still here. They gave us rice and tuna. But two months later they gave nothing. For those who work it's ok, but for us who do not work, it's a challenge."

Viraliliu added that the cyclone damaged many of their houses and trees fell on their roads. "Two months have gone and the trees have been cleared but in terms of development, we are closed up. Things are green again but the people are still suffering" he said frustratedly.

Chief Viraliliu lived in the D'york Street community for over 20 years. He expressed that while the community may be green again there is still much recovery in communities to be done. The D'york Street community has been registered for the Digital cash transfer by the Government, but the community is not convinced this will help in recovery.

"We see that the UN has given a lot of money for aid and the minister of finance has talked about it, but our community does not see where the money is going", added Viraliliu. "They said they will come but I hear there is an obstacle somewhere. We are still waiting for the cash and food aid they have told us about. But D'york has only received help once."



Josephine Tarianga interviewing market vendor Tasso. Credit: Josephine Tarianga

The Government has indicated that there should be a few transactions for the Digital cash transfer by July of this year with over 6,000 households targeted, but market vendor Jaqueline Tasso raised some concerns shared by her fellow vendors.

"The cash flow is what the government of Vanuatu has promised to give to the people affected by the cyclone. The way we hear it, the amount will not be enough to cover the cost of what we have lost," said Tasso, who would like government officials to come down to the level of the grassroots people (visit communities) and hear their thoughts. "Before they limit the amount of cash to be given to the people."

"When we listen to the media, we hear the minister of finance trying to explain the cash transfer. The total to be given by the minister of climate change, we are not happy.

We feel the stimulus package is what can help us because we buy permits to operate our businesses and we pay daily for the tables we use to operate our markets," she explained.

Tasso gave Wansolwara the cost of operating a market vending business for people like herself. They have to pay 400 Vatu for the table and 200 Vatu for the floor space and if she cut flowers to sell, she has to fork out another 200 Vatu.

"That is eight hundred Vatu," she pointed out, adding, "the table permit is 13,500 Vatu (USD 114). When you calculate that amount plus 5,000 Vatu for a business license, the amount given by the government will not meet the expenses and will not solve our problem".

Though it may seem that the country is fully recovered from the cyclones, it could not be further from the truth for farmers.

"There are widows, women leaders, and a lot of single mothers that gain their living mainly through the market. We use it for school fees, we pay for our homes and every living cost of our families through the

market," notes market vendor Tasso, who grows the crops she brings to market.

"The government is not helping us at all," she laments. "In my garden, I plant island cabbage, manioc, banana, taro, and legumes. But I have to replant because those I planted, trees have fallen on them. A lot of us you see at the market are now using only a small cleared patch of land to try and grow food, replant, and bring to the market."

"But the recovery is not complete," says Tasso. "For us farmers, there is still so much recovery to be done."

The rippling effects of the cyclone have shifted the livelihoods of the people's day-to-day life and even education. Isabella Iata, a grade 11 student at Central School here told Wansolwara that their school year has been affected by the cyclone devastations.

"After the twin cyclones, most of the schools have been damaged. We did not go to school for about four weeks," recalls Iata. "We couldn't do online learning because most of the areas did not have electricity for the entire four weeks and some even more."

She said that the school had one week break this year, though normally they used to have two weeks. "It makes us miss out on so many things at school and our workload is high," complains Iata. "Now we are trying to catch up on everything."

While the country is green and lush again and there are only a few remaining visual scars from the cyclone's visit. The people are still struggling to pick up the pieces.

While there is some support provided and talk of help, the people still feel that there is no proper consideration of the extent of the damage the cyclones have left behind. There is still a long way to go before life in Vanuatu fully recovers from the damages of the cyclones.

** Josephleen Tarianga is a journalism student at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji and this feature is transmitted as part of a contents exchange agreement between the university students' newspaper Wansolwara and IDN-In Depth News.*

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WHO Investment Platform to Boost Primary Health Care Services

By Jaya Ramachandran

PARIS — Three multilateral development banks have joined with the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) to launch the Health Impact Investment Platform. This is a landmark development aimed at investing in and strengthening essential, climate-resilient primary health care (PHC) services in low- and low-and-middle-income countries (LICs and LMICs).



Photo Credit: World Health Organisation

The Platform, launched during the [Summit for a New Global Financing Pact](#) from 22-23 June in Paris, will provide an initial €1.5 billion to LICs and LMICs in the form of concessional loans and grants to expand the reach and scope of their PHC services, particularly for the most vulnerable and underserved populations and communities.

In addition to the African Development Bank ([AfDB](#)), the European Investment Bank ([EIB](#)), the Islamic Development Bank ([IsDB](#)) and WHO, the Platform has four founding members. As this is a global challenge, the Inter-American Development Bank ([IDB](#)) is also considering joining this partnership in

order to extend this initiative to Latin America and the Caribbean.

It is WHO's responsibility to ensure that financing decisions are aligned with national health priorities and strategies as the Platform's policy coordinator, says the World Health Organization. In addition to supporting governments in developing national health plans and prioritizing PHC investments, the Platform will also aim to catalyze broader PHC investments to support government health initiatives.

PHC, according to WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, offers the most effective means of improving health and well-being, including providing essential health services to everyone. One of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) is universal health coverage, and it is a driver of it. In 2015, world leaders pledged to provide all people with access to essential health care services as well as affordable essential medicines and vaccines.

Dr Tedros highlighted the significant role played by Primary Health Care (PHC) in delivering essential health services. Up to 90% of the required interventions can be managed through PHC, which offer a range of preventive measures including screening and vaccinations administered by doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals at local clinics.

The introduction of the Health Impact Investment Platform will bolster these programs, safeguarding population health both now and in years to come. Furthermore, PHC is a critical mechanism for monitoring public health matters since it reaches right into communities.

In a statement, EIB President Werner Hoyer said the development banks were committed to supporting countries to strengthen their primary health care services, as well as protect against the impacts of future health emergencies.

Dr Hoyer noted that the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the extensive human and economic losses that ensue when investments in essential health care are not prioritized. He added that through their new Health Impact Investment Platform, multilateral development banks can facilitate countries' ability to establish enduring primary health care systems capable of dealing with future public health emergencies and protect people and economies in the long term.

Dr Hoyer also drew attention to previous collaborations between the multilateral development banks and WHO, as well as President Macron's call for greater international financial support for any countries in need. The platform will provide access to vital overseas financing for those most in need.

Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO projected that Less Developed Countries (LDCs) and Lower-middle Income Countries (LMICs) should significantly expand their health spending by 2030. This would require an additional US\$371 billion annually. This funding could be used to enable populations to have access to medical services, as well as construct new facilities and train and employ health personnel where they are most needed.

In addition, it is believed that in order to prepare for upcoming epidemics, an annual investment of US\$31.1 billion must occur—with one third coming from external sources. The Health Impact Investment Platform's catalytic finance strives to promote the mobilization of larger fiscal flows through national Primary Healthcare (PHC) investment plans.

The new Platform draws on the fruitful experience gained through collaboration between countries, multilateral organizations and development banks during the pandemic. WHO, EIB and the European Commission assisted Angola, Ethiopia and Rwanda in improving their health systems through stand-alone programs or as part of the countries' response to COVID-19. These efforts facilitated technical guidance, grants and investments with favorable terms which helped to upgrade primary health care.

According to the chairman of the Islamic Development Bank, "Nations and Development Financial Institutions (DFIs) must prioritize health investments to achieve universal health coverage by 2030." The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) is committed to working collaboratively to generate impactful results and ensure access to quality and affordable primary healthcare for all."

Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina, the President of African Development Bank Group, noted that our collaboration will work towards guidance for national governments in their investments to bolster primary healthcare

and the overall health structures. Through identification of any gaps in national health systems, implementation of interventions and investment strategies, securing of funding and monitoring the outcomes – universal health coverage will be increased, allowing nations to become better prepared for potential emergencies.

Ilan Goldfajn, President of the Inter-American Development Bank, has spoken about how good health and well-being are shared ambitions which bring the world closer together. To achieve these aims, coordination between countries and institutions is essential. The importance of harmony between nations and public and private sectors is a key part of making universal health coverage a reality. With that in mind, IDB are looking to extend the scope of these initiatives throughout Latin America and the Caribbean by engaging with other parties. All partners are invited to come together on this international investment platform.

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WHILE THE WORLD FACE A GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS INCLUDING A MENTAL HEALTH EPIDEMIC - THE WORLD LEADERS SPEND BILLION ON ARMAMENTS - THEY CALL IT ON "DEFENSE" . WHO ARE WE DEFENDING AND AGAINST WHOM? REAL "DEFENSE" SPENDING SHOULD BE ON HEALTH - NOT POURING MONEY INTO DESTRUCTIVE ARMS INDUSTRIES. HAVE WE NOT LEARNED THE LESSON FROM THE COVID PANDEMIC WHEN THIS "DEFENSE" INDUSTRY WAS SEEN TO BE USELESS IN DEFENDING THE PEOPLE AGAINST DISEASE?



Photo Credit: Freepik/Wikimedia Commons

WHEN THE MEDIA IS UNABLE TO POINT OUT THIS STUPIDITY, "WATCHDOG" JOURNALISM IS JUST ANOTHER WESTERN MYTHOLOGY



Screenshot Paris Summit closing ceremony on 23 June. Photo Credit Elysée.

US Foot-dragging at the Paris Finance Summit

By Jeffrey D. Sachs*

NEW YORK — Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley and French President Emmanuel Macron invited world leaders to Paris on June 22-23 to reach a new “global pact” to finance the fight against poverty and human-induced climate change. All kudos for the ambition, yet few dollars were put on the table.

To an important extent, the continuing global failure to finance the fight against poverty and climate change reflects the failings of US politics, since the US, at least for the moment, remains at the center of the global financial system.

To understand US politics, we should start with the history of the British empire. As Britain became an imperial power, and then the world’s leading power of the 19th century, British philosophy changed to justify Britain’s emerging empire. British philosophers championed a powerful state (Thomas Hobbes’ Leviathan), the protection of private wealth over redistribution (John Locke’s right to “life, liberty, and property”), markets over government (Adam Smith’s “Invisible Hand”), and the futility of aiding the poor (Malthus’ law of population).

When humanitarian crises arose in the British empire, such as the Irish famine in the 1840s and the famines in India later in the century, Britain rejected providing food aid and left millions of its subjects to starve, even though food supplies were available to save them. The inaction was in line with a laissez-faire philosophy that viewed poverty as inevitable and help for the poor as morally unnecessary and practically futile.

Simply put, Britain’s elites had no interest in helping the poor subjects of the empire (or indeed Britain’s poor at home). They wanted low taxes and a powerful navy to defend their overseas investments and profits.

The United States learned its statecraft at the knee of Britain, the mother country of the American colonies. America’s founding fathers molded the new country’s political institutions and foreign policies according to British principles, albeit inventing the role of president instead of monarch. The US overtook Britain in global power in the course of World War II.

The lead author of the US Constitution, James Madison, was an ardent enthusiast of Locke. He was born into slave-owning wealth and was interested in protecting wealth from the masses. Madison feared direct democracy, in which the people participate in politics directly, and championed representative government, in which the people elect representatives who supposedly represent their interests. Madison feared local government because it was too close to the people and too likely to favor wealth

redistribution. Madison therefore championed a federal government in a far-off capital.

Madison's strategy worked. The US federal government is largely insulated from public opinion. The public majority opposes wars, supports affordable healthcare for all, and champions higher taxes on the rich. The Congress routinely delivers wars, over-priced private healthcare, and tax cuts for the rich.

The US calls itself a democracy but is in fact a *plutocracy*. (*The Economist Intelligence Unit categorizes the US a "flawed democracy"*). The rich and corporate lobbies finance the political campaigns, and in return, the government delivers low taxes for the rich, freedom to pollute, and war. Private health companies dominate healthcare. Wall Street runs the financial system. Big Oil runs the energy system. And the military-industrial lobby runs the foreign policy.

This brings us to the global climate crisis. The most powerful nation in the world has a domestic energy policy still in the hands of Big Oil. It has a foreign policy that aims to preserve US hegemony through wars. And it has a Congress designed to protect the rich from the demands of the masses, whether to fight poverty or to fight climate change.

The US leaders who attended the Paris Summit, John Kerry (U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate) and Janet Yellen (U.S. Treasury Secretary) are individuals of outstanding ethics and deep and long-standing commitments to fighting poverty and climate change. Yet they cannot deliver actual US policy. Congress and the US plutocracy stand in the way.

The leaders at the [Paris Summit](#) recognized the urgent need for a massive expansion of official development financing from the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), meaning the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and others. Yet to expand their lending by the amounts needed, the MDBs will require more paid-in capital from the US, Europe, and other major economies. Yet the US Congress opposes investing more capital in the MDBs, and the US opposition is (so far) blocking global action.

The Congress opposes more capital for three reasons. First, it would cost the US a little bit of money, and rich campaign funders aren't interested. Second, it would accelerate the global transition from fossil fuels, and America's Big Oil lobby wants to delay, not accelerate, the transition. Third, it would hand more policy influence to global institutions in which China participates, yet the military-industrial complex wants to fight China, not collaborate with it.

Thus, while developing countries need [hundreds of billions of dollars in additional MDB lending](#) each year, backed by additional MDB capital, the US and Europe are instead pressing the MDBs to lend slightly more with their existing capital. The MDBs might possibly squeeze out another \$20 billion in loans each year with their current capital, a tiny fraction of what's needed.

The exasperation of the developing world was on full display in Paris. Brazil's President Lula da Silva and several African presidents made clear that there are too many summits and too few dollars. China's Premier Li Qiang spoke quietly and courteously, pledging that China will do its part alongside the developing countries.

Solutions will finally come when the rest of the world moves forward despite US foot-dragging. Instead of allowing the US to block more capital for the MDBs, the rest of the world should move forward with or without the US. Even the US plutocrats will realize that it's better to pay the modest price of fighting poverty and climate change than to face a world that rejects their greed and belligerency.

**Jeffrey D. Sachs is University Professor at Columbia University and author of [To Move the World: JFK's Quest for Peace, Random House: 2013.](#)*

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A handout image provided by Greece's coast guard on 14 June 2023 shows scores of people covering practically every free stretch of the deck on a battered fishing boat that capsized and sank off southern Greece. Photo Credit: AP Photo/Hellenic Coast Guard via AP

Five Titanic Tourists Killed Is the Big Story, Not 500 Dead Migrants

By Azu Ishiekwene*

ABUJA, Nigeria — It doesn't make sense to weigh tragedies on a scale. How do you measure them? Leo Tolstoy got it right in *Anna Karenina* when he said whereas all happy families are alike, every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

And so indeed it was on 14 June when it was reported that a boat carrying 750 migrants had capsized near Greece in the Mediterranean killing over 500 with dozens missing.

It was one of the most horrific tragedies in recent times, claiming the lives of hundreds of migrants mostly from Pakistan, Syria, Egypt, Afghanistan and Palestine who put their lives in great danger in pursuit of the basic human instinct of looking for a better life.

A world becoming tragically familiar with migrant misery barely had time to shake its head in pity once again when news broke that a submarine, *The Titan*, operated by a US-based company, OceanGate, had exploded in the depths killing all five tourists on an expedition to the debris of the *Titanic*.

Two heart-wrenching tragedies in the space of days and yet the major global news networks could not resist reporting the tragedies on a scale of prejudice that barely disguised where their sympathy lies.

The concerned world also rallied a multinational rescue mission for *The Titan* sparing neither expense nor expertise. The press provided minute-by-minute accounts of the efforts, looking for experts from around the world who had made similar missions in the past. Others got families of some of those on board to share their fears and hopes.

How, for example, could anyone not be touched by the story of Suleman Dawood, the 19-year-old student who followed his millionaire father, Shazada, on that expedition to honour his Father's Day wish? We were touched because the press shined a light on the human angle.

Who knows how many such stories among the hundreds of the families of the dead migrants have now gone untold? Interestingly, the Dawoods whose tragic story is still travelling the world, shared a similar Pakistani heritage with some migrants whose own stories will never be heard.

As the search went on, the horrific deaths of the migrants in the Mediterranean fizzled from news flashes

to scrolls of ticker tape and soon disappeared altogether.

From the way the networks covered the two accidents, you would be forgiven to think that they had weighed both and concluded that the lives of the 750 migrants mattered less, if they mattered at all. It was not an issue that the number of migrants who died in the Mediterranean on 14 June was over one-third of the fatality when the RMS Titanic struck an iceberg on its maiden voyage in 1912.

Somehow, the unspoken message was that the migrants deserved their fate. What else did they want from Europe or the rest of the world? After all, in the last eight years or so, and long before the Russia-Ukraine war complicated things, Europe had opened its borders to an estimated 1.5 million migrant refugees. Yet, in spite of tighter border controls, controversial repatriations and deportations, the wave of migrants has been unrelenting.

Governments in Europe, especially in Italy and Greece, that spent years sleepwalking over a comprehensive plan to manage the migrant crisis have used rising domestic economic difficulties and the upsurge in right-wing groups in their countries as excuses for cracking down on migrants, sometimes, with the most cynical sea-border policing.

Since no deterrent appears to have worked so far (not unsanitary conditions, severe overcrowding, poor food and water quality, torture by guards or even reinforced barbed wires), the networks may well have deployed their own—a new set of filtering tools to cover the Mediterranean tragedy: downgrade the story if you can't help it, otherwise turn a blind eye.

Of course, it's not the fault of the five victims who died in The Titan; it's the fault of a system that treats people less than who they are because of where they are from, their skin colour—or let's be honest—because of their economic conditions.

It's improbable that if the migrant boat were some ocean liner on a summer cruise of the Mediterranean, an accident involving 750 passengers out of which 500 have been confirmed dead would be given the same shorthand coverage.

The double standard between the wall-to-wall coverage of the implosion of The Titan and the short shrift that the deaths of over 500 migrants received at the hands of the global networks reecho the Shakespearean line about beggars, comets and the deaths of princes. Only that Shakespeare could not have seen that modern networks could sometimes make comets for their own princes.

The hypocritical coverage of both tragic incidents barely hides the fact that even though the deaths touched each affected family in a different way, the material condition of the dead was also a factor in how the tragedies were reported.

Former US President Barack Obama, perhaps one of the world's most famous modern victims of right-wing calumny, called out the stark contrast, describing it as "obscene" and "untenable." It's an obscenity with a long history, one which in 1977 compelled UNESCO to set up the Sean MacBride Commission on North-South communication lopsidedness.

On 26 September 2002, for example, an overcrowded Gambia-bound Senegalese ferry, Le Joola, hit a serious storm at night, killing 1,800 passengers, including the sister and ten other relatives of the current coach of the Senegalese national football team, Aliou Cisse. Only 64 passengers survived. Cisse was saved on that day by a match for Birmingham City. It was a monumental tragedy, claiming more lives than were lost in RMS Titanic.

But that catastrophic event remained largely unreported then and remains, to date, one of the world's most famous unlisted calamities on the global calendar. Only a BBC Africa documentary produced last year, on the 20th anniversary of the disaster and the pillars of the victims' empty graves, remind us there was such a human tragedy!

This double standard sometimes plays out in how help is deployed after a humanitarian disaster. When the US sent help to Nigeria after catastrophic floods claimed over 600 lives last year, for example, it sent money—\$1 million. When a devastating wildfire impacted New South Wales in Australia in late 2019, on

the other hand, the US sent hundreds of firefighters. Sadly, three of them died helping.

To be fair, we can't blame foreign countries or the major networks forever. If these countries and their networks are hostages to blinkered lenses in understanding and telling our story, journalists in the global south, including Africa, must also invest in telling their own stories themselves.

And that does not have to be only when tragedies happen. Otherwise, neither tragedies nor heart-warming stories would have the touch, which as Tolstoy said, connects to us as humans in their own different, intimate ways.

** The writer is the Managing Director/Editor-in-Chief of [LEADERSHIP](#) newspaper based in Abuja, Nigeria.*

[Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 30 June 2023]



From 'Third World' to 'First World' in a generation. Singapore's 'boat quay' in 1978 (left) and the same location in 2016 (right)—which is now the business center of the city state. Photo Credit: Kalinga Seneviratne.

Asian Leaders Call for Unity to Confront West's "De-Risking" Strategy

Analysis by Kalinga Seneviratne

SINGAPORE — The international media may have focused on the attempts at the G7 meeting this month in Hiroshima to unite against China promoting a “de-risking” strategy, which China sees as “containment” of their economic rise. It seems many Asian leaders agree with China.

In a presentation made at the [Nikkei Asia's annual 'Future of Asia'](#) conference (May 25-26) held a few days after the Hiroshima Summit, many Asian leaders warned the West about the short-sightedness of such a policy and its dangers.

At the G7 summit, western countries talked about “de-risking” from China, a finance concept that is a diplomatic buzzword currently, that refers to a reduction of reliance on China in the economic sphere while not turning.

In a statement issued on May 20 at the end of the leaders' summit in Hiroshima, G7 countries said they would build economic resilience for themselves, based on a strategy of “diversifying and deepening partnerships and de-risking, not decoupling”.

Singapore's Prime Minister-in-waiting Lawrence Wong, Sri Lanka's President Ranil Wickremasinghe, Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Don Pramudwinai and Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister Tran Luu Quang were all critical of the West's “de-risking” policy and called on Asia to unite to preserve the peace in the continent that facilitates Asia's economic rise.

This was well expressed by Thailand's deputy Prime Minister Don Pramudwinai when he told the Tokyo forum “under looming risks of military conflicts” Asia must unite and work collectively to promote peace.

Referring to the Ukraine conflicts he noted that some countries have responded by increasing defense spending and weaponizing currencies and trade. “Eye for an eye, tit for tat, is turning everyone blind,” he

warned. “The on-going re-shoring and friend-shoring of the supply chains reflects the insecurity of major powers that put more emphasis on national security”.

Speaking at the Nikkei forum, Zhu Min, a former deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned Asian countries from “de-coupling” from the Chinese economy. He pointed out that the Chinese economy has soared in the past 4 decades with its GDP (gross domestic product) steadily increasing from USD 149.5 billion in 1978 to USD 17 trillion in 2022.

Min said that China is now transforming from a “export country” to an “import country” thus increasing domestic consumption as the “centerpiece of its growth model”. He said while China would build strong and resilient supply chains, it would also welcome everyone to sell to China.

Wong, who is expected to take over the leadership of the ruling Peoples Action Party soon, reminded the world (especially the West) that very soon Asia’s GDP “is likely to exceed the rest of the world combined”.

While Asia’s future is full of promise, “there are multiple storms ahead” he warned. He listed the first big challenge as the U.S- China rivalry that has implications for peace and stability in Asia. “Between the U.S and China there is deep mutual suspicions and fundamental mistrust” he noted. “They believe the other to be a strategic danger”.

“For the past 50 years since the end of the Vietnam war, we have experienced and enjoyed relative peace and stability in the region. We know from painful experience what happens when the region becomes an arena for great power rivalry,” Wong said, adding, “no one wants to see a repeat of this. Unfortunately, great power rivalry has now returned to Asia”.

Pramudwinai pointed out that the world need to realize that the U.S and Western Europe are no longer capable of imposing their economic will unilaterally on major powers in Asia. He pointed out that Asia’s economic rise in the past 3 decades has given Asia “assets” that can be used to better position the region to solve global problems without resorting to force.

“The convening power of Asia should be used to bring together diligence, to devise political alternatives to military conflicts” he argues, perhaps in making a dig at western policy he said, “rhetoric of moral authority on superiority and sanction policies,” must be rejected and Asia would be doing itself a “tremendous favor” by tamping down a dangerous “war mentality” that could destroy all Asia’s hard work over decades and centuries.

Speaking at the same event, Sri Lanka’s President Ranil Wickremasinghe said that his country was the worst effected by the twin shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis that created soaring inflation and shortages of daily necessities.

Despite its current economic ills, Wickremasinghe believes that Asia has the potential for continued growth that could pull up countries like his. “China’s recovery, together with a healthy domestic demand in India, will be the main supports of growth for the region. Asia also has the advanced economies of Japan and South Korea contributing to the region’s development, through foreign investments and technology” he noted. “Asia has become the global economic powerhouse of our age, and the most dynamic region, it is also on an unprecedented upward trajectory”.

In a veiled reference to the West’s double standards, especially on a so-called ‘rules based order’, Wickremasinghe said: “If the West wants a rule based order, the West must adhere to these rules all the time”.

“The US–China rivalry has given rise to a number of responses by the West especially to economic coercion and weaponizing of economic vulnerabilities. Yet some of these responses—contrary to WTO (World Trade Organization) rules - may result in a setback to trade integration in the region” he noted.

“Needless to say that we in Sri Lanka and many other Asian nations are opposed to economic coercion: whether it be by one country coercing another using its economic power; or by indirect methods such as de-coupling, or friend-shoring—manufacturing and sourcing only from geopolitical allies—contrary to

the WTO,” Wickremasinghe argued.

“The WTO system put in place three decades ago should not be by-passed for short term geo-strategic gains. The rules of the game cannot be changed arbitrarily. The losers will be the middle-income Asian countries (like Sri Lanka),” he warned.

The Sri Lankan President also pointed out that pressure to take one side or the other, in many conflicts between the U.S and China, is resisted by many Asian countries.

"Many of us cannot make that choice because we have already made our choice," he told the delegates arguing that "we want an Asia that can accommodate" not only the West and its allies who call for a free and open Indo-Pacific but also China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Sri Lanka, he stressed is "committed to multi-layered connectivity in the Indo-Pacific."

Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister Tran Luu Quang also called for Asian unity to counter increasing geopolitical tension in the region. He argued that the "rules-based order" touted by some for the region need to be based on the "U.N. Charter placed at its center."

Vietnam is facing tension with China regarding over-lapping claims in the South China Sea. But Quang said: "Asian countries, especially the major ones in the region, need to overcome their differences, look for common denominators of cooperation, and contribute to peace and stability in the region and the world."

Wong warned about the "de-risking" idea being taken too far. "We will end up with a more fragmented and decoupled global economy," he said. It is "hard to see how de-risking, at its current ambition and scale, can be strictly confined to just a few 'strategic' areas without affecting broader economic interactions," he noted.

Under these circumstances, Wong emphasized the importance of ASEAN to take the lead in promoting regional cooperation across geopolitical divisions to promote mutual trust and understanding. "ASEAN's approach today is not so much passive non-alignment, but more about active multi-engagement," he said, echoing a sentiment expressed by Wickremasinghe.

Wong argues that Asia is no more "just bystanders" and that Asia has an opportunity "to develop its own regional mechanisms rather than to rely solely on global institutions. He believes the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) could take a lead. But at the same time, he said it is important to "recognize that (these institutions) cannot substitute for resilient global institutions" and that Asia's efforts "must complement the wider reforms to strengthen the global economic order."

[Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 28 May 2023]



Taking aim, but Photo Credit: Politico/Blitz Weekly.

Global South Unites to End Western Ambitions for Hegemony

Viewpoint by Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury*



DHAKA — When analysts ask, what does the Ukraine war have to do with Bangladesh or Brazil, most of the people may say, perhaps not much. But in reality, Western sanctions on Russia following the outbreak of the Ukraine war is causing tremendous suffering to all countries in the world—even to the United States and

its Western allies. Meanwhile, leaders of the Global South, pleading to an end to the ongoing war. But in vain.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been repeatedly calling for an end to the Ukraine crisis, also requesting the United States to lift sanctions on Russia arguing that such sanctions are causing

tremendous sufferings to the people of Bangladesh and several countries in the world. During her recent phone call with Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called for resolving all disputes peacefully, saying this principle should be followed universally.

Sheikh Hasina mentioned that Bangladesh which believes in the principle of peace also emerged through a war, but war does not bring welfare for any side.

Commenting on Western sanctions on Russia, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina [in July last year said that](#) no country should be “controlled or punished” by imposing sanctions as people around the world are suffering due to Western sanctions against Russia.

“When people suffer because of serious disruptions in commodity supply and rising prices, including fuel and fertilizers, this is a kind of violation of human rights... I don't really know what rationale there is for making people suffer like this. In a way, this is another violation of human rights”, said Sheikh Hasina.

“I think that it is justified to retreat from the act of punishing one country which is hurting the people across the world”, Bangladesh Prime Minister [said](#), stressing the need for an end to the sanctions that the US and its allies have imposed on Russia.

Again, in September, during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), [Sheikh Hasina said](#), “We want the end of the Russia-Ukraine war. Due to sanctions, and countersanctions, not a single country, rather the entire mankind including women and children is punished”.

She said children suffer the most in particular and their future sinks into darkness. “My urge to the conscience of the world community: stop the arms race, war and sanctions. Ensure food and security of the children. Establish peace”.

She wanted to see a peaceful world with enhanced cooperation and solidarity, shared prosperity and collective actions. “We share one planet, and we owe it to our future generations to leave it in a better shape”, she said.

Sheikh Hasina noted that all believe that antagonism like war or economic sanctions, countersanctions can never bring good to any nation. “Dialogue is the best way to resolve crises and disputes”, she added.

Meanwhile, in his six months in office, Brazilian President—Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, now in his third non-consecutive term—has expended much effort trying to bring [peace to the conflict in Eastern Europe](#). This has [included his interactions](#) with US President Joe Biden, [Chinese President Xi Jinping](#) and his [teleconference call with Zelensky](#).

It has also seen “shuttle diplomacy” by Lula’s chief foreign policy adviser —and former foreign minister—Celso Amorim, who has visited Russian [President Vladimir Putin in Moscow](#) and welcomed his foreign minister, [Sergei Lavrov, in Brasília](#).

One reason Bangladesh and Brazil have been in a position to meet with such an array of parties involved in the conflict is because the nations have made a point of [not taking sides in the war](#). By this, a foreign policy approach in which countries from the Global South—Asia, Africa, and Latin America—refuse to take sides in conflicts between the great powers and focus strictly on their own interests. It is an approach that The Economist [has characterized as](#) “how to survive a superpower split”.

The difference between this new “nonalignment” and a similar approach adopted by nations in decades past is that it is happening in an era in which developing nations are in a much stronger position than they once were, with rising powers emerging among them.

For example, the gross domestic product in regard to purchasing power of the five BRICS countries—Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa—has overtaken that of the G7vgroup of advanced economic nations.

This growing economic power gives active nonaligned nations more international clout, allowing them to forge new initiatives and diplomatic coalition-building in a manner that would have been unthinkable before. For many countries in the Global South, maintaining good relations with both Washington and

Beijing has been crucial for economic development, as well as trade and investment flows. It is simply not in their interest to take sides in this growing conflict.

Meanwhile, the majority of the nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America have refused to side with NATO, as it is seen as a Western war-machine, thus posing threat to peace and stability of the world. Most prominent among them has been India, which despite its closer ties with the United States in recent years and its joining the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue—or the “Quad”, a group sometimes described as an “Asian NATO”—with the US, Japan and Australia, refused to condemn Russia’s “special military operation” in Ukraine and has significantly increased its [imports of Russian oil](#).

During the upcoming Washington visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country's nonalignment will possibly be on the table of discussion when Biden and Modi meet to discuss a number of important issues. For India, being the world's largest democracy, it is extremely significant that leading nations in the Global South are unwilling to support Western hegemony on any nation in the world—particularly in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Meanwhile, some of the most populous democracies in the world in addition to India—countries like Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, and South Africa have refused to side with NATO, while almost no country in Asia, Africa, and Latin America has supported the diplomatic and economic sanctions against Russia. None of these nations wants to make what they consider to be a European war into a global one.

Washington has [seemingly been caught by surprise](#) by this reaction of the Global South, having portrayed the war in Ukraine as a choice between good and evil—one where the future of the “rules-based international order” is at stake. Similarly, during the Cold War with the Soviet Union, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles referred to nonalignment as “immoral”.

Meanwhile, Russia is becoming an important player in the anti-war strategy of the Global South while China in turn is pushing forward its de-dollarization policy by enhancing the role of the yuan. Arguing that the weaponization of the US dollar against Russia only confirms the dangers of relying on it as the main world currency.

During a [recent interview](#) with Russian television channel RT about possibility of China using the path of the United States once its yuan replaces the dollar in the international transaction, my opinion was—China has never shown tendencies of hegemony or aggression on any country in the world, and there is no reason to think—China will use its yuan strength in cow-towing any nation in the future.

**Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury is an internationally acclaimed multi-award-winning anti-militancy journalist, writer, research scholar, and Editor, Blitz, a newspaper publishing from Bangladesh since 2003. He regularly writes for local and international newspapers. Follow him on Twitter [@Salah_Shoaib](#)*

[Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 21 June 2023]



Time to Change Policymakers' Perception of Public Debt

More and more developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region are struggling under mounting public debt, making it difficult for them to invest in sustainable development. External debt servicing burdens in several Asia-Pacific countries have doubled or tripled, reaching a high of 10 per cent of GDP in 2022 in some countries. This requires moving away from the conventional view that higher public debt is necessarily bad for economic growth and stability and that there is a common 'optimal' debt level applicable to all countries even though they may be in different circumstances.

Source: UNESCAP Blog - <https://www.unescap.org/blog/time-change-policymakers-perceptions-public-debt>



Will EU Deforestation Law Save Trees or Marginalise Poor Palm Oil Farmers?

Southeast Asian politicians have been locking horns with the EU over a law they say will disenfranchise smallholder palm oil farmers. Environmentalists support the law but worry about a just transition for the smallholder farmers who supply 40 per cent of the market.

Source: Eco-Business - <https://www.eco-business.com/news/will-eu-deforestation-law-save-trees-or-marginalise-poor-palm-oil-farmers/>

Cambodian Social Enterprises Tackles Challenges Faced By Women

In Cambodia, roughly 60 per cent of businesses are run by women, among which, 26 per cent of businesses classified as small or medium, and 62 per cent of those classified as micro-sized, are women led. One of the greatest challenges Cambodian women micro-entrepreneurs face is understanding and accessing finance, with limited collateral, low digital literacy and few financial records. Against a backdrop of widespread over-indebtedness, these business owners face an uphill battle to success. In addition to a lack of access to formal credit, many women entrepreneurs in Cambodia face educational and social barriers, and a lack of business support and training. SHE Investments, the first gender-focused, culturally tailored incubator for women-owned micro-small businesses in Cambodia, is seeking to tackle these obstacles.



Source: UNESCAP Blog - <https://www.unescap.org/story/cambodian-social-enterprise-tackles-challenges-faced-women-owned-micro-and-small-enterprises#>



African 'Superchickens' Spark Debate Among Food Security Experts

Researchers are developing superchickens they say will boost Africa's poultry exports but some food security experts warn that the gene-edited varieties will colonize food systems and endanger human health and the environment.

Source: Devex - <https://www.devex.com/news/african-superchickens-spark-debate-among-food-security-experts-105694>

America's \$886 Billion Military Budget. No Money for Student Loans and Poverty Alleviation

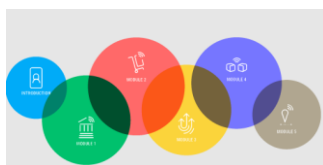
Rep. Ro Khanna on Wednesday was the only member of the House Armed Services Committee to vote against legislation that would authorize an \$886 billion military budget for the coming fiscal year, a sum the California Democrat decried as outrageous amid cuts to social spending and attacks on aid programs for vulnerable Americans.

Source: Global Research - <https://www.globalresearch.ca/america-886-billion-military-budget-no-money-student-loans-poverty-alleviation/5823715>



Challenges Of Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) In The Post-COVID Era

RECENT REPORTS FROM INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS



Gov4women

Online

Toolkit

The EGov4Women Toolkit is an innovative public resource related to the design and implementation of gender-responsive E-Government institutional ecosystems in the Asia-Pacific region. The toolkit represents the first region-wide toolbox to support the gender-mainstreaming of E-Government. Through a set of 5 comprehensive

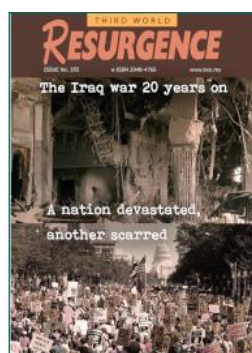
modules, it provides key pointers for policymakers on gender-responsive design of e-service delivery, e-participation and connectivity initiatives, and introduces a capabilities-based approach to outcome evaluation of E-Government for women's empowerment.

Source: UNESCAP - <https://egov4women.unescapsdd.org/>

The 2023 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report

Although the number of hungry people has stabilized from highs during the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is being pushed further away from meeting the UN's near hopeless goal to eliminate hunger by 2030. The U.N. flagship global food security report found that in 2022 between 691 million and 783 million people were hungry, 122 million more than in 2019 before the pandemic. Globally 2.4 billion people, or 29.6% of the population, did not have regular access to food. Of those, an estimated 900 million faced severe food insecurity.

Source: FAO - <https://www.fao.org/publications/home/fao-flagship-publications/the-state-of-food-security-and-nutrition-in-the-world/en>



Third World Resurgence

The latest copy of the Third World Resurgence by the Malaysia-based Third World Network explores the devastation brought to Iraq by the US Invasion 20 years ago. It also look at the 'big corporate power grab' and the scope for a new regionalized global order that could challenge US-led hegemony; and why Peru's "president for the poor" was overthrown.

Source: Third World Network -

<https://www.twn.my/title2/resurgence/2023/355.htm>

Strengthening Efforts Towards Fulfilling the Human Right to Food and the Right to Clean, Safe and Healthy Environment

In the face of the unprecedented global crises that the world is currently facing, upholding and fulfilling the human right to food and a clean, safe and healthy environment have become critically important. The Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted two important resolutions on these issues in its 52nd Session, held from 27 February to 04 April 2023. The present policy brief discusses the implications and scope of these resolutions to strengthen and advance fundamental human rights, building resilience and promoting the role of multilateralism as a tool to face the triple planetary crises and recover better from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: South Center - https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PB119_Strengthening-efforts-towards-fulfilling-the-human-right-to-food-and-the-right-to-clean-safe-and-healthy-environment_EN.pdf



The Road To Decent Work For Domestic Workers

Domestic workers play an invaluable role in many societies, providing essential direct and indirect care services to private households. As care workers, they work at the foundation of our families, societies and economies. However, their contributions have often been undervalued. This report serves as a concise summary of the in-depth research conducted in 2021. It presents key findings, country-level good practices, and detailed methodological advice.

Source: ILO - https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/domestic-workers/publications/WCMS_883181/lang-en/index.htm



The Rise of Popular Protests Around the World

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN — Over 400 significant anti-government protests have erupted worldwide since 2017. More than 132 countries were directly affected. Of these, 135 were significant economic anti-government protests. 23 percent of major protests lasted more than three

months, according to the [Global Protest Tracker of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#) last updated on May 5, 2023.

It is indeed true that popular protests have been on the rise globally in recent years. These movements have taken place in various regions and have been driven by a range of factors, including economic concerns, political corruption, demands for democratic reforms, and opposition to systemic racism and state violence. The advent of new communication technologies and media platforms have played a significant role in the globalization of these protests, allowing movements to inspire and learn from one another.

The World Political Review ([WPR](#)) points to the influence of pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, which inspired and guided demonstrators in other parts of the world. Similarly, the [Black Lives Matter](#) protests that originated in the United States resonated with people across continents who connected the movement to their own experiences of racism and state violence. WPR is of the view that the ability to share protest methods and tactics quickly and easily has facilitated the spread of these movements, creating a sense of global solidarity.

However, there is a concern that the ease of sharing protest methods might overshadow the challenges and organizational efforts required to sustain effective movements. While new technologies enable rapid dissemination of information, they do not replace the need for careful planning, coordination, and resilience in the face of government repression. Governments, particularly repressive regimes, have responded to protests with various tactics, including violence, arrests, and the use of pandemic-related restrictions as a pretext to suppress demonstrations.

However, unprecedented protests are putting Laos in uncharted waters. In the past year, Laos has witnessed more popular unrest than it has in decades. Under normal circumstances, the regime would typically respond to any public displays of dissent by cracking down on protesters and circling its wagons. But amid severe economic distress, many citizens are increasingly undaunted by the fear of repression.

Looking ahead, key questions remain regarding the response of governments to protests driven by global energy and cost-of-living crises. Additionally, specific movements, such as Israel's protest movement against a controversial judicial reform and the protests in France against President Emmanuel Macron's pension reform, are being closely watched to see if they can achieve their objectives.

Meanwhile, even as new waves of protest have erupted in authoritarian countries like Iran and more recently China, developments since 2019 in Algeria and Sudan, where protesters ousted individual leaders but have so far been unable to dislodge the entrenched military elites that really hold power, have exposed the limitations of civil resistance.

[Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 7 June 2023]

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