

SDGs FOR ALL

A Monthly Magazine of INPS Southeast Asia in association with IDN-IN Depth News and Soka Gakkai International



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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to our new edition of SDGs For All.

From the beginning of April 2023, I have taken over the coordination of IDN/INPS project 'SDGs For All' which is supported by Soka Gakkai International of Japan. Soka Gakkai is a global community-based Buddhist organization that promotes peace, culture and education centered on respect for the dignity of life. This issue merges the *Sustainable Development Observer* and the *SDGs For All* monthly newsletter that IDN-IN Depth News has been producing for many years.

I plan to transmit this copy by the second week of every month. We would like to invite you to submit material for this publication and for dissemination in the IDN daily international cast. We welcome opinion pieces - of not more than 1500 words - on SDG issues - especially from a Global South perspective. Also "good practices" project stories and news of upcoming events are welcomed. Please email to the address given at the bottom of this.

Our project stories in April, published in this issue, includes a survey of how climatic change is threatening the Caribbean islands main livelihood - tourism - written by our Trinidad based correspondent. From Fiji we look at a recent seminar where the UN, and immigration and law enforcement officials from across the South Pacific discussed over 3 days ways to avoid the huge problems of human trafficking seen in the Asian and Middle Eastern regions - as the Pacific joins the labour migration flow. From Thailand, we have a report on how assistance to farmers to ensure their livelihood and food security for the nations, and also to pensioners - as Thailand ages - are major platform issues for the May 14th general elections. We hope to follow up on these promises as a new government settles down.

I would also like to draw your attention to a couple of other articles in this issue. For many, especially in Asia, New Zealand is an attractive destination to migrate for its clean environment, comfortable lifestyle and scenic beauty. But, as my article reflects it is facing the same problems of climatic change havoc faced by poorer island nations across the world as a wave of recent events indicate. And we carry an article - which is actually a statement - made to a recent G24 meeting by Dr Carlos Correa, Executive Director of the South Center in Geneva warning about the mounting problems of developing countries and calling for global collective action to tackle these.

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue and your feedback is greatly appreciated.

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

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Boats in Mullins Beach in Barbados. Photo Credit: Caribbean Tourism Organisation.

Climate Change Threatens Tourism Industry in the Caribbean

By Linda Hutchinson-Jafar

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad (IDN) — The Caribbean, a popular tourist destination known for its sun-kissed beaches, tranquil waters, and vibrant culture, is facing a harsh reality due to the devastating impacts of climate change.

As a critical economic lifeline for many Caribbean islands, the tourism industry is confronting an existential crisis as global warming takes its toll on the region's delicate ecosystems, infrastructure, and the livelihoods of communities.

With rising sea levels, intensifying storms, and deteriorating coral reefs, the future of Caribbean tourism is at stake, necessitating urgent action and adaptation to protect this beloved destination.

Nicola Madden-Greig, President of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association emphasized that tourism is the primary economic driver of the Caribbean and the region most reliant on travel and tourism globally. "The decline in tourism due to climate change would devastate the overall economy, directly impacting other sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, transportation and the creative industries," she said in an interview with IDN.

In 2019, eight out of the ten most tourism-dependent countries worldwide were in the Caribbean. Although the sector's average annual growth rate of 3% surpassed the regional economic growth of 1.3% between 2010 and 2019, it fell short of the global average Travel & Tourism growth of 4.2%, according to the [World Travel & Tourism Council \(WTTC\)](#).

The WTTC's current growth trajectory projects that, over the next decade, Travel & Tourism (T&T) GDP in the Caribbean will increase at an average annual rate of 5.5%, more than double the overall economic growth of 2.4%. T&T jobs are expected to grow by an average rate of 3.3% annually, generating over 916,000 new jobs by 2032.

The [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#) estimates that, on average, the tourism industry directly contributes up to 33% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 52% of export receipts, and over 43% of indirect and direct employment. In heavily tourism-dependent countries like Antigua and Barbuda, employment can reach up to 90%. In 2021, the travel and tourism sector in the Caribbean contributed over US\$ 39 billion to GDP, with the Dominican Republic and Cuba registering the highest contributions, as reported by Statista.

Madden-Greig highlighted the severe threat posed by rising sea levels and the alarming forecast from the 2018 [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#), which predicted that a 1.5-degree Celsius increase in global warming would cause between 70-90% of the world's coral reefs to vanish. "It would be catastrophic for tourism in the Caribbean region that depends heavily on its natural resources and food supply," she added. Without drastic action to reduce greenhouse emissions, Madden-Greig warned that by the early 2030s, 99% of the world's reefs would experience heatwaves too frequent for recovery.

Neil Walters, Acting Secretary General of the [Caribbean Tourism Organization \(CTO\)](#), emphasized that since climate change threatens the tourism industry's integrity and stability, initiatives to manage the industry's response and mitigate its overall environmental footprint are essential. "It is clear, however, that the tourism industry cannot address the challenge of climate change in isolation but must do so within the context of the broader international sustainable development agenda," he told IDN.



Running the rapids, Guyana
Photo Credit: Caribbean Tourism Organisation

CTO, whose membership includes governments and non-government tourism entities across Dutch, English, French, and Spanish countries and territories, along with CHTA and the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST), have signed the Glasgow Declaration for Climate Action in Tourism. Launched at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021, the declaration serves as a commitment and call to action for all travel and tourism stakeholders to accelerate climate action in tourism.

Walters stated, "The Glasgow Declaration emphasizes collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders related to the tourism industry, aligning with CTO's strategy to manage the industry's response and build partnerships for advocacy, education, and awareness to support mitigation and adaptation efforts."

Madden-Greig indicated that the Caribbean played a pivotal role in developing and ratifying both the Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Agreements. "CHTA/CAST added its support, endorsing our more than 20 regional countries in advancing global support. The Caribbean is one of the most vulnerable areas in the world to climate change, and we must be one of the world's most outspoken and exemplifying advocates," she asserted.

At the regional level, the CTO has implemented various projects and initiatives to enhance knowledge and awareness of Climate Variability and Climate Change (CVC) and its impact, build capacity for mitigation/adaptation, inform policy formulation, and disseminate best practices to mitigate CVC's impact.

The owner and CEO of Fond Doux Eco Resort in St. Lucia told IDN that the

tourism industry could play a crucial role in addressing climate change by adopting sustainable practices such as reducing energy consumption, conserving water, and managing waste. The benefits of taking action include reduced operating costs, improved resource efficiency, and increased market competitiveness.

"The political will is strong for investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency, promoting sustainable tourism practices, and raising public awareness of climate change. However, more resources are required to address the issue comprehensively," she said adding that the most effective strategies are those that balance environmental sustainability with economic viability, ensuring that businesses remain competitive and profitable.

Climate change is already having a significant impact on tourism in the Caribbean, affecting both the infrastructure and attractions that tourists come to experience, as well as the natural resources that support the tourism industry. Climate change is blamed on causing more frequent and severe weather events, such as hurricanes fueled by warmer ocean temperatures.

Dominica, a small Eastern Caribbean Island promoting itself as a 'Nature Island' tourist destination, has suffered significant damage from powerful hurricanes and storms in recent years. Hurricane Maria, which struck in September 2017, destroyed over 90% of the island's structures and severely impacted its economy. Dominica's losses, estimated at 224% of GDP by the World Bank, included damages to its rainforest and tourism, which accounted for 19% of the total losses.

To combat this, Dominica aims to become the world's first hurricane-proof country through its Climate Resilience Execution Agency for Dominica (CREAD), which leads strategic initiatives across sectors. One such initiative is revitalizing micro, small, and medium enterprises which involves providing analytical tools to assess and improve their performance, facilitating access to finance and mobilizing support for capacity building.

In 2018, the Caribbean faced a severe drought that affected agriculture and water supplies in countries such as Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago, linked to changing weather patterns caused by climate change. In 2019, the Bahamas was hit by Hurricane Dorian, a Category 5 storm that caused widespread damage and loss of life, considered one of the most powerful storms ever recorded in the Atlantic.

Caribbean islands and hoteliers are taking steps to address the effects of climate change on the tourism industry, a significant energy consumer. Sandals Resort International, the leading hospitality chain in the region, has reduced its dependence on fossil fuels through sustainable practices such as the use of solar panels and solar water heating systems at their resorts.

Sandals Foundation, the charitable organization of Sandals Resort International, set a target of training 100,000 people in conservation efforts and plant 30,000 coral fragments in the ocean in 2009. By 2022, they oversaw the safe hatching of 114,000 turtles, collected 63,000 pounds of trash, and trained 55,000 individuals in marine conservation awareness. The foundation's new objectives include safely hatching an additional 20,000 turtles and out-planting coral fragments that will result in up to



Stunning views from Firefly Ocho Rios Jamaica
Photo Credit: Caribbean Tourism Organisation

2,000 corals growing per year in dying reefs.

The Caribbean is also taking steps to reduce its reliance on a single type of tourism attraction that may be vulnerable to climate change.

"Initiatives to diversify the regional tourism product, such as promoting community-based tourism, efforts to preserve natural and cultural resources, banning single-use plastics,

promoting energy and water efficiency, and terrestrial and marine conservation have contributed significantly to systematically reducing the sector's carbon footprint, and have proven to be not only climate-friendly, but also profit-friendly, in several cases," Walters said. [Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 26 April 2023]



Dr Rebecca Miller of UNODC addressing the Trafficking in Persons regional Forum in Suva. Credit: Kalinga Seneviratne/INPS.

Pacific Island Nations Embark on Addressing Human Trafficking

By Kalinga Seneviratne

SUVA, Fiji (IDN) — Since opening borders after the COVID-19 pandemic, Australia and New Zealand have been aggressively sourcing for Pacific Islander workers to help fill a severe labour shortage in their countries. In the meantime, with investments from Asia, especially China and Korea, increasing in the region, Asian workers have been slowly filtering into the island nations, especially Fiji.

This month (18-20 April), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)) held a forum attended by government immigration and law enforcement officials and civil society organizations from the South Pacific region to discuss measures to enhance data and information on trafficking of persons and smuggling of migrants in the area for work. Why did UNODC organize the Forum, not the International Labour Organisation ([ILO](#)), the agency entrusted with addressing workers' rights?

"We know human trafficking and smuggling of people cannot happen on a large scale it is happening in the Asia-Pacific region without the collusion of corrupt officials and

smugglers. They are essentially criminal networks," Dr Rebecca Miller, UNODC Regional Coordinator, Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, told IDN. She added that corruption within relevant government agencies has to be addressed because that has been the driving force in Southeast Asia. "We need to start somewhere (and) we have found that governments in this region want to proactively address this."

UNODC plans to develop a concept note after this dialogue on trafficking in persons (TIP) data in the region. The UN agency entrusted with addressing drug and corruption issues around the globe believes that the role of corruption in TIP and smuggling of migrants (SOM) has been particularly overlooked and undocumented in the region.

In 2021, UNODC conducted a training course for national officers in the Pacific on TIP and SOM, and its regional office has done a report on Fiji and Palau with the assistance of national bodies such as the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBS). Preliminary results and findings were presented at the Forum—the report shed light on how corruption facilitates such crimes, the actors involved, and the context in which such bribery occurs.

A closed-door session was held on the final day with government officials from the immigration department and the police to discuss the issues. An Australian immigration intelligence officer also attended it. This process of sharing current knowledge on TIP and SOM and applying lessons learned to encourage regional action, UNODC argues, addresses Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), which is Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

FBS chief executive Maria Musudroka speaking on the Forum's opening day, said that despite the extent of these crimes, both TIP and SOM remain under-researched in the region. Referring to the problem of domestic trafficking in Fiji, she explained that researchers had to be trained to do it in a conversational manner to let the victims tell their stories.

Maria Fatiaki, Research Officer with UNODC's Crime Research Section, who coordinated the five-year research project between 2017-2021 in Fiji, told IDN that during this period, through community-based research, they detected about 5200 hidden victims of trafficking. She said most were domestic trafficking into forced labour, agriculture, forestry, construction industry, service and retail industries.

"We also found foreign workers from Bangladesh, Philippines and China who have come here with contracts", Fatiaki explained. "But, once they came here, they found that the work was not what they expected." She added that in recent years Fijian workers have travelled across borders, and the incidents of them "being in exploitative situations" has increased.

"That is why now we are talking about (trafficking of) migrant workers," she noted. "What is needed in Fiji is a training of border officials, and there is also a need for a questionnaire (to be prepared), which people leaving and coming in have to fill so that we can detect potential cases of trafficking."

The Pacific Island of Palau has had Filipino workers flying in to work there for some years. According to one of the delegates, 5000 Filipinos worked there before the onslaught of the pandemic. The numbers have come down to 2500 now. "Palau is only a

two-hours flight from Manila," he said. Fiji also had Filipino and Chinese migrants working in the sex industry before the pandemic.



Seasonal cane-harvesters in Labasa in Fiji.
Photo Credit: Kalinga Seneviratne/INPS

UNODC chose Palau and Fiji to study in TIP because both countries faced these issues earlier.

"Human trafficking is not reported as much as domestic violence (in the media)", said Ronald Ledgerwood of the Micronesian Legal Service Corporation in Palau. "This has got much to do with losing their jobs", he added, explaining that exploitation of migrant workers in Palau occurs not in the sex industry. He pointed out that a complicated issue to tackle is coercion that has happened before their arrival,

including hefty agent fees, false job promises and family connections (to trafficker).

"(When they arrive) domestic workers are exploited such as multiple jobs among families and violation of other labour laws," Ledgerwood told the Forum. "Now the government is raising awareness in the community about the exploitation of foreign workers. There are now laws against human trafficking with mandatory jail terms, which could deter people from trafficking and exploiting foreign workers". As a lawyer, he also agrees that you need to build relations with people to speak up.

During discussions at the Forum, participants from Fiji, Tonga and other Pacific Island countries pointed out that most of them have no laws against trafficking, and any cases detected have to be charged as assault cases under local laws.

Many foreign workers in the Pacific islands tend to come from China, the Philippines and Bangladesh. At the same time, in Fiji, people from other Pacific islands, such as Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, have been exploited at workplaces. But they are on student visas, usually studying here. With Australia and New Zealand opening up their borders for workers from the Pacific, there are many agents here who are demanding hefty fees to get visas for locals to go there to work.

Recently the Fiji government has begun investigating the migration of some 400 members of a Christian cult from South Korea who have come on investment visas. The church in question has set up farms, restaurants, spas, salons and manufacturing plants employing hundreds of locals, but some of the Koreans working in these businesses are suspected to be cases of TIP. It is under investigation as a corruption case where the church may have bribed certain members of the previous government to get visas.

The US government has just announced a \$10 million grant through USAID over five years for a project called 'Pacific Rise' to counter TIP in the region. US Ambassador to Fiji, Marie Damour, addressing the opening session, said what we see around the world is "modern-day slavery". She said the US government is committed to fighting this menace "because it is wrong, and it has to stop".

"We now need to go into tangible action like improve prosecution, intelligence and coordination. We need to build on that," Fatiaki told IDN when asked what the follow-up action would be. "Now we have research (data) and established a baseline that shows the type of action we have to take". [Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 22 April 2023]

Thailand: Pensions and Farmers' Subsidies Top Election Agenda

By Pattama Vilailert

BANGKOK (IDN) — With the kingdom's population ageing and the debt-ridden farmers becoming restless, Thailand's political parties are gearing up for the May 14 elections offering populist policies to woo the votes of both sectors of the population.

Over 52 million people are eligible to vote for electing 500 members to the House of Representatives. With campaigning for the election gathering momentum since December 2022, Thai political parties have announced a range of attractive policies to win their votes. These include subsidies for older generations, maternal and child benefits, and funds to support the agricultural sector.



Ning Noy, a farmer from Sri Saket province. Photo Credit: Pattama Vilailert.

In the upcoming general election, there are more than 12 million senior citizen voters, and the President of the Association of the Elderly Council of Thailand under Royal patronage and the vice chairman of the National Committee for the Elderly (KorPorSor) under has confirmed that "2022 is the year Thailand fully entered the Aging Society", that is, about 20% of the total population is over 60 years old.

The National Transfer Account (NTA) estimates that after spending to take care of children of school age and the elderly, one needs to have about 7.7 million baht (about USD 225,000) in savings for retirement if one lives until the age of 90. This is a considerable amount of money compared to Thailand's wage income.

According to the Puey Ungphakorn Institute for Economic Research, farmer households have low incomes. In addition, 42% of farmers have insufficient residual income because they have to pay off debt and have insufficient money to invest in the next round of crops. At present, 90% of Thai farmer households are in debt, with an average of 450,000 baht (USD 14,000) per household.

The farmers borrow from a diverse range of sources, with Specialized Financial

Institutions (SFI) as the main source of loans (65%), as well as village funds, merchant loans, relatives, investors, leasing companies, and saving cooperatives.

The Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives discloses that the number of elderly borrowers is approximately 1.4 million who do not necessarily be farmers.

It is in such a scenario that the four major parties have offered their respective party platforms for the elections. IDN investigates the four main parties' platforms.

Pirapan Salirathavibhaga, former secretary-general to acting PM Prayut Chan-o-cha, leads the United Thai National Party (UTNP). The party announced a Welfare Plus Card, where the Elderly get an allowance of 1,000 baht (USD 30)per month. They will also provide funds to support agricultural prices, including rice and rubber, and a People's Emergency Fund with a budget of 30,000 million baht (USD 872 million) for people to borrow and spend on their livelihood.

The Pheu Thai Party, founded by former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and now led by her daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra, stated that precision technology could be used to improve crop yields and find new markets for Thai agriculture, giving 10,000 baht (USD 290) of digital currency to Thai people aged 16 and over, and suspending farmers' debts for three years.

The Move Forward Party led by Pita Limjaroenrat, which was established to oppose the influence of the military junta, suggested that they would subsidize the elderly by 3,000 baht (USD 87) per month and set up a 10,000 million baht (USD 0.29 million) rights fund to settle land disputes by issuing rights documents to farmers.

The Palang Pracharath Party, led by acting Deputy PM Prawit Wongsuwan, also reveals a platform for giving allowances to the elderly. People 60 years of age would receive 3,000 baht per (USD 87) month, 70 years old would get 4,000 baht (USD 116), and those 80 years and over would earn 5,000 baht (USD 145) per month.

As the general election draws closer, most parties tend to attract voters with cash and digital handouts. But economists are worried about a post-election budget blowout.

In a recent interview with Isra News, Dr Nonarit Bisonyabut, a senior academic with Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), said, "If we assume we must pay 3,000 baht to the current elderly 12 million people, it is equivalent to having to pay 36,000 million (USD 1 million) per month".

However, he points out that in the next 5-10 years, the number of elderly people will increase to 20 million people. "Even if we can borrow to subsidize these schemes, we must keep increasing the credit limit, which will result in a fiscal burden," he warns.

Danucha Pitchayanan, Secretary-General of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDB), is also concerned about the debt moratorium platform proclaimed by political parties.

Speaking at a press conference, he argued that a debt moratorium should not be conducted. "Debt suspension does not cause the debt to go away, and ultimately has to pay the debt anyway," he says. "Debt suspension and interest suspension have a continuous impact affecting financial institutions that are the pillars of the economy,

what should be done is: the debt restructuring on an individual basis rather than for the whole system.”

“The political platforms are not reliable, farmers must depend on themselves, and a group must be formed to help them survive and they should apply the philosophy of sufficiency economy of self-reliance,” Boonmee Surakote, a Senator and the leader of the organic rice group Kasedtip told IDN.

Explaining the farmers’ problems further, he added, “Although we formed a group of over 300 members, we still cannot access funding with low-interest rates, so some farmers have borrowed from banks or loan sharks. The farmers have low incomes but bear a large amount of debt”.



Boonmee Surakote, Senator and the leader of the organic rice group. Credit: Pattama Vilailert

Boonmee also pointed out that the farmers yield the crops at the same time, so it creates an oversupply, resulting in low incomes, while they bear a large amount of debt. “Therefore, they need to sell products in a rush to pay off their debt,” he says.

As a Senator and farmer, he has proposed a ‘Large Agricultural Land Plot’ scheme, with farmer network policies for farmers to establish a community enterprise. “When the

enterprise is established, farmers can help each other and network with other communities to produce, sell and even export organic products by themselves”, argues Boonmee.

Some farmers are sceptical of Thai political parties’ short-term policies that tend to ignore the sustainable development needs of the agriculture sector.

Ning Noy, a farmer from Sri Saket province, told IDN, “As far as I am concerned, no parties have offered sustainable help”. She is thus not sure which party to vote for. “We need to stand on our own feet, I wanted to turn my farm to the organic one: it is sustainable and definitely paves the way for me to become self-reliant, but the organic fertilizer is a little costly.”

Senator Boonmee agrees that self-reliance is the way to enable farmers to become sustainable. He told IDN that “once the new government is on duty, I will pursue and push for the enforcement of the self-sufficient economy approach in the agricultural sector.” He believes that the lives of farmers do not rely on the outcome of the election but on a self-sufficient economy. [Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 20 April 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.



There are frequent shortages of food and water due to the dry harsh climate in Sahel West Africa. This picture shows Fulani herders in Mali whose interests conflict with those of farmers. Photo Credit: CC BY-SA 4.0

Experts Study Ways Out of the Food Crisis in Sahel West Africa

By Jaya Ramachandran

PARIS (IDN) — The Sahel and West Africa region is facing a chronic food and nutrition crisis, with 29.5 million people currently needing immediate food and nutrition assistance. This number could reach 42.5 million people by June-August 2023 if appropriate measures are not taken.

Furthermore, 107.5 million people currently under food pressure could fall into crisis if appropriate measures are not taken, notably in Nigeria (64 million), Niger (7.3 million) and Burkina Faso (5.1 million).

[The Food Crisis Prevention Network \(RPCA\)](#) has, therefore, stressed the need to provide immediate assistance to people threatened by the crisis and to commit to structural responses to prevent food and nutrition crises.

Some 160 government ministers, senior officials and other experts joined the three-day closed-door meeting in person at the OECD Conference Centre in Paris and by videoconference. It was held under the auspices of the Commissions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA).

The experts noted that cereal production for the 2022-2023 agropastoral season, estimated at more than 77 million tonnes, is 6% higher than the average for the past five years and 8% higher than last year. However, per capita production is 2% lower than the average for the last five years in the Sahel and Gulf of Guinea countries.

Tuber and root crop production is estimated at 212 million tonnes, 10% above the five-year average and 3% above last year. Cash crop production is also up, except for cotton, which is down 12% on last year.

Fodder availability and livestock watering conditions are relatively satisfactory. However, in some areas, access remains constrained by insecurity and the limitation or

even prohibition of transhumance in some countries.

The functioning and supply of markets are satisfactory except in the insecure areas of Liptako-Gourma, the Lake Chad Basin and some localities in the northwestern states of Nigeria. Inflation remains a concern (18% on average in the region). It is fuelled by persistence in education and health. It now extends to northern Togo and Benin.

The nutrition crisis also persists in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, where nearly 16.5 million children under the age of five are acutely malnourished. Seven countries (Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Chad) have mobilised CFA francs 663 billion (USD 1.1 million), i.e. 66% of a total budget of CFA francs 1 004 billion (USD 1.64 million).

The upward trend in needs and the scarcity of resources to finance them are considered a further reminder of the urgent need for a paradigm shift in managing food and nutrition issues.

Taking stock of the financial pledges of the April 2022 High-Level Meeting on Food Crises, Network Members welcomed the commitment of partners, which has enabled the mobilisation of EUR 4.75 billion for emergency and development actions to date, 1.8 times the initial commitment.

Reviewing the various structural response initiatives to food crises, Network Members encouraged ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS to strengthen the capacity of the reserve to play its role in stimulating the region's agri-food systems. The Members of the Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR) Senior Expert Group (SEG) commended the efforts of the Government of Guinea-Bissau in implementing its country resilience plan.

Similarly, in the face of environmental uncertainties affecting agri-food systems, the Members of the Network invited regional actors to strengthen the development of innovative risk management tools. In particular, they encouraged them to optimise and accelerate the scaling-up of adaptation strategies in the face of crises and multifaceted risks, including instruments dedicated to anticipation (observatories and other monitoring mechanisms) and prevention.

The Members of the Network welcomed the efforts made by countries on the security front to operationalise the HDP Nexus process in the Sahel and West Africa region and in Cameroon. They encouraged CILSS to strengthen its support to countries for inclusive diagnoses with a view to identifying and implementing national roadmaps.

Members congratulated Benin and Côte d'Ivoire for the progress made in the self-assessment exercises on their capacity to manage food issues. They encouraged them in the national validation of their results, as well as in the implementation of plans to improve food and nutrition governance. They also congratulated and encouraged civil society organisations in their initiatives to monitor and question the application of the Charter for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises and, more generally, on food and nutrition issues.

As a result of their work, the Members of the Network:

» Reiterated their recommendations made at the 38th annual meeting of the Network to States on the urgency of i) accelerating the mobilisation of resources for the

financing of national response plans, particularly in Burkina Faso, Chad, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone including facilitating access to insecure or hard-to-reach areas, ii) strengthening policy instruments and measures to support the population's purchasing power in the face of persistent inflation.

»Recommend that CILSS, ECOWAS, UEMOA and the Member States (i) set up a sustainable financing system for national information systems on food and nutritional security, (ii) define and implement approaches and instruments dedicated to improving the effectiveness of the response to food crises.

»Reiterated their recommendations to ECOWAS and UEMOA on the urgent need to i) strengthen dialogue with their Member States with a view to significantly reducing barriers to regional trade and cross-border transhumance and; ii) accelerate the strengthening of the intervention capacities of the Regional Food Security Reserve and national stocks, including its sovereign financing.

»Reiterated the recommendation made to States and their intergovernmental organisations at the 38th Annual Meeting on the need to invest decisively in inclusive structural responses to reverse negative food and nutrition trends in the region, including the development of the fertiliser and irrigation.

»Called on partners to mobilise and engage in a long-term partnership with governments to address the underlying causes of chronic food and nutrition crises.

Members agreed that the 39th annual meeting of the Network would take place from 5 to 8 December 2023 in Praia, Cabo Verde, with the theme of "Transformation of Diets, Markets and Prices in the Sahel and West Africa: Implications for Agricultural and Food Security Policies". [Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 19 April 2023]

“Communication for All”—An 18th SDG is Needed

By Jan Servaes & Muhammad Jameel Yusha’u

BRUSSELS | CAMBRIDGE, USA, 13 April 2023 (IDN) — The 2030 Agenda for Development or what is known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is perhaps the most ambitious agenda collectively agreed by 193 countries in human history.



Source: The Better India

Yet, an explicit role for communication as a dedicated goal with clear targets in the SDGs remains conspicuously absent. There are only few passing targets in the SDGs, especially in SDG 16, that address this key function that drives human activity, especially in the 21st century.

Nothing has exposed this oversight more than the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic during which most countries around the world imposed a lockdown in order to suppress the spread of the virus. Vital economic activities were halted.

The airline industry came to an abrupt stop. Universities had to suspend lectures physically and resorted to online teaching. Online shopping skyrocketed. Major meetings by different stakeholders and policymakers, including preparatory meetings by G20 leaders, had to be conducted online. Global conglomerates, corporate organizations, top IT giants all closed their offices.

Just 10-20 years ago, this would have been a global catastrophe. Yet the global community survived mainly on the communication infrastructure available. The world survived on the most important SDG that the framers of the 2030 Agenda for Development had missed.

The SDGs beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine 'war of attrition' and increasing inequality

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown why communication is essential to human survival. A major lesson is the role of communication in providing support for the survival of the global economy and society as a whole.

The global community became more attached to the traditional and social media in order to understand the nature of the virus, how it spreads, and measures needed to curtail the spread of the infection.

The pandemic, which started as a health crisis and later metamorphosed into a full-blown economic crisis, is now having an impact on the possibility of achieving each of the SDGs.

The COVID-19 crisis has made people more aware of the vulnerability of global supply chains. The failure of China's [zero-Covid strategy](#) indicate that the risk of disruption to global supply chains has still not been eliminated.

If parts from the Far East are missing, assembly lines in Europe come to a standstill. The paradigm shift away from efficiency ('just in time') to greater resilience ('just in case') is accelerating the hidden trend towards de-globalization under way for some time.

The discussion about globalization has emerged again with some arguing that 'nation states' remain important. While globalization facilitates the rapid spread of viruses around the world, concerted national action by governments, the private sector, civil society, and the scientific community has led to different solutions and strategies at national rather than supranational or global levels.

In addition, [Marc Saxer](#), head of the Asia Department at the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, argues that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has upended the world order — and with it the energy, production, distribution and finance systems. It is "a war of attrition that each side believes it will win, but that both sides will lose", according to [Jeffrey Sachs](#), president of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. It is a serious setback in the realization of SDGs 16 and 17.

The pandemic also exposed major development challenges such as digital inequality ([UN World Social Report 2023](#)). Suddenly, the issue of inequality, which is the premise of SDG10, became even more apparent. According to the UN, COVID-19 forced the closure of schools in 191 countries affecting 1.5 billion students and 63 million primary and secondary school teachers.

Many developing countries do not have the digital infrastructure to move from teaching physically to online tutoring thereby bringing to the fore the question of the digital divide.

Without communication infrastructure, addressing the digital divide would be a mirage.

The leaders of the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and the International Association of Universities (IAU), representing more than 2000 universities worldwide, agreed during the United Nations High-Level Political Forum ([HLPF](#)) in 2022, that international collaboration in higher education is needed to solve the world's pressing challenges and achieve sustainable development.

Optimism gone?

However, while one of the major findings of the [2020 Sustainable Development Report](#) was that before the COVID-19 outbreak, the world was making progress towards the SDGs, this optimism has since evaporated.

Although no country was on track to achieve the SDGs, more [recent reports](#) highlight significant disparities in progress across goals and countries.

In an analysis, published in the authoritative *World Development*, [Moyer and Hedden](#) question how feasible the SDGs are under the current circumstances. They highlight difficulties for some SDG indicators (access to safe sanitation, high school completion, and underweight children) that will not be resolved without a significant shift in domestic and international aid policies and prioritization.

In addition, Moyer and Hedden cite 28 particularly vulnerable countries that are not expected to meet any of the nine human development targets without substantial international aid and financial support.

Three crucial factors

In our view, the realization of the 2030 agenda can only be achieved on the basis of the following three factors.

1- Finance

The critical question that is posed in various forums about the SDGs invariably ends with the question: who is going to fund it? Where will the money come from? How can



low- and middle-income countries generate sufficient resources to finance the 2030 development agenda.

Although each country has its own priorities, paying the bills for the SDGs remains a delicate matter. The [Asia-Europe Foundation](#) calculated in 2020 that “the total investment costs to achieve the SDGs by 2030 are between USD 5 and USD 7 trillion per year at the global level and between a total of USD 3.3 and USD 4.5 trillion per year in developing countries. This implies an average investment need of USD 2.5 trillion per year in developing countries”.

A significant effort must be made through the private sector and philanthropists. While governments and ordinary people have been hit hard by the health and economic impact of COVID-19, in a way it has been good news for billionaires, many of whom have seen their wealth grow astronomically. “Billionaires’ wealth has risen more in the first 24 months of COVID-19 than in 23 years combined.

The total wealth of the world’s billionaires is now equivalent to 13.9 percent of global GDP. This is a three-fold increase (up from 4.4 percent) in 2000”, according to the 2022 Oxfam International report, titled “[Profiting from Pain](#)”.

Profiting From Pain – Two Sides Of The Equation

James Cargill II and his family own the majority of one of the world’s largest food traders, Cargill. They have seen their fortune increase by almost US\$20m a day since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, Cargill made almost \$5bn in net income, the biggest profit in its history; the year before it paid out dividends of \$1.13bn, most of which went to members of the extended family. The company is expected to beat its profit record again in 2022.

Nellie Kumambala is a primary school teacher in the town of Lumbadzi, Malawi. She lives with her husband, two children and her elderly mother. Nellie, and millions like her, are at the other extreme end of the global food system from the likes of the Cargill family. “Prices have risen so much, even since last month. Two litres of cooking oil, last month it was 2,600 kwacha, now it is 7,500! Imagine! Yesterday I went to the shop to buy cooking oil, but I failed, I did not have the money. Every day I worry about how I will feed the household, thinking to myself, ‘What should I do today so we can eat?’
Source: ‘Profiting From Pain, Oxfam

The 2023 [Forbes](#) Billionaires' List features Bernard Arnault, president of Louis Vuitton, followed by US billionaires like Elon Musk of Tesla, Amazon’s owner Jeff Bezos; Larry Ellison of Oracle, Warren Buffett of Berkshire Hathaway, Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft; or Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook. These billionaires, along with the more than 2,000 billionaires from around the world, are wealthy enough to help make substantial progress on some of the SDGs.

2- Political will

The second important factor that can help achieve the SDGs is political will. Many countries have drawn up ambitious national development plans that look great on paper. How many of those plans end up being realized?

When one sees that the fortunes of a country have been successfully changed through the effective implementation of national plans, one cannot separate such achievements from the strong political will of the leaders. The example of China speaks for itself.

The crucial question to be asked is whether that political will is there. UN Secretary-General, [Antonio Guterres](#), responded to a mid-term review of the Sustainable

Development Goals: “It is inevitable that one crucial ingredient is still missing. Political will. Without political will, neither the public opinion, nor the stakeholders take sufficient action”.

This is where the challenge to achieve the SDGs lies, i.e. a real political will.

3- Communication for Development

The third factor is the need for robust [communication for development](#) and social change, so that political will can be conveyed to all stakeholders. Leaders who inspire change do so with the communication tools available in their time.

While the digital age disrupts social systems and drives transformation at a scale and pace unparalleled in history, the SDGs remain quite silent on the subject. Indeed, today digital technologies determine what we read and consume, how we vote and how we interact with each other and the world around us.

Many [risks and uncertainties](#) are emerging, including threats to individual rights, social justice and democracy, all amplified by ‘the digital divide’ – the differential speed of internet penetration and access to digital technologies around the world.

Communications for social change must also consider the challenge of misinformation when initiating communication strategies. Therefore, the communication strategies of the World Bank, UNICEF or WHO are not comprehensive enough.

First, they failed to take into account the challenges of infodemics and fake news in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The second shortcoming is that the strategies contain little scientific communication to make the public aware of how health professionals make decisions and advise the public about its safety.

Disinformation is a critical factor that exacerbates the challenges that communication for development and social change must address. Technology, social change and human behavior are interconnected; but their impact remains complex.

Another timeframe and main objective needed

For all these reasons, the UN and the rest of the international community need to be realistic and review the 2030 Agenda for Development by shifting the timeline from 2030 to 2050.

Some regional organizations, such as the [African Union](#), go even further. They have postponed the date for achieving their development goals to 2063.

Furthermore, the SDGs should be prioritized with SDG1 on the eradication of extreme poverty as the *main objective* for the next 10 years. Eradicating extreme poverty is likely to have implications for other SDGs also, in particular SDGs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Efforts to eradicate extreme poverty should not be based on slogans, but should be supported by governments, funding agencies, donors and philanthropists seen as the best chance to save humanity.

Serious thought should be accorded to the post COVID19 world due to the impact of the

lockdown on the global economy. Some governments, multinational institutions and private sector are hastening to institutionalize remote work. As an interim measure, working from home has contributed significantly in reducing the impact of the pandemic, but what is the impact of working from home on the future of work in a post-COVID-19 world?

Will the closure of offices, firms and other businesses for remote work accelerate or reduce the chances of achieving the SDGs? Is there sufficient data to back the policy decisions on a permanent remote work culture? How does this affect the employability of low and unskilled workers?

These are questions that policy makers must think through. The SDGs are meant to promote social inclusion and reduce inequality, not to save money and increase profitability.

Setting the timeline for the achievement of the SDGs to 2050 will allow sufficient time to re-evaluate progress made so far, complete missing objectives, such as SDG 18 on communication for all, and bridge the lost ground of the SDGs.

It will also give the global community ample time to strategize on how to deal with the potential rise of right-wing, populist and nationalist governments, which may impose limits on the SDGs through their disdain for multilateralism. And plans must also be made in advance to mitigate the next disasters that could impair the achievement of the SDGs.

The current fear of global conflict instead of global cooperation is forcing us to re-think our strategies and approaches. The COVID-19 pandemic drew attention to the fact that, in order to support those who are hit hardest and enhance their resilience for the future, our development interventions should be multidimensional.



An additional goal – SDG18: Communication for All – is necessary if we are to witness a world that is free from poverty, inequality and where issues of climate change and environmental degradation are addressed.

* Jan Servaes (PhD) is the former UNESCO Chair in Communication for Sustainable Social Change; and Muhammad Jameel Yusha'u is the Editor-in-Chief of the Africa Policy Journal at Harvard Kennedy School.

Source of original article: The Better India

[Transmitted by IDN-IN Depth News on 13 April 2023]



Women farmers work in a field in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan Photo Credit: FAO/Vyacheslav Oseledko

Gender Inequalities in Agriculture Cost the World \$1 Trillion

By Radwan Jakeem

NEW YORK (IDN) — The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is convinced that equalizing the playing field for women in the agriculture and food sectors could boost growth and feed millions.

It is estimated that more than one-third of women are employed in agrifood systems, which include food and non-food agricultural products as well as related activities such as food storage, transportation, processing and distribution.

According to a new [FAO report](#), gender inequalities, including lack of access to knowledge and resources and a higher unpaid care burden, explain a 24 per cent productivity gap between men and women farmers. In the agricultural sector, women are also paid nearly 20 per cent less than men.

“If we tackle the gender inequalities endemic in agrifood systems and empower women, the world will take a leap forward in addressing the goals of ending poverty and creating a world free from hunger”, said [FAO](#) Director-General Qu Dongyu.

Despite growing global hunger, FAO estimates that closing the gender gap in farm productivity and wage gap in agricultural employment would increase global gross domestic product by nearly \$1 trillion and reduce food insecurity by 45 million people.

Inequalities due to structural factors

The report shows that women's access to land, services, credit and digital technology lags behind men's, while a greater burden of unpaid care limits their opportunities for education, training and employment. According to FAO, discriminatory social norms hinder women from making equal contributions to agriculture and food by strengthening gender barriers to knowledge, resources and social networks.

It is still necessary to ensure that women own land in proportion to men in many countries and that legal frameworks protect their rights, the report says. The authors of the paper describe the slow pace of change in terms of women farmers' access to

livestock and essentials like irrigation and fertilizers as alarming.

In agrifood systems, women's roles are marginalized and their working conditions are worse than—irregular, informal, part-time, low-skilled, or labour-intensive.

Boosting growth and curbing hunger

According to the UN food agency, "challenges to women's full and equal participation in society". The employment in agrifood systems holds back productivity and perpetuates wage gaps. A level playing field for farm productivity and agricultural wages would add 1 percent to global gross domestic product, or almost \$1 trillion, and reduce food insecurity by two percentage points, benefiting 45 million people.

Global hunger is on the rise, making this projection striking. According to the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)), 345 million people worldwide face crisis levels of food insecurity this year, an increase of almost 200 million since early 2020. 43 million of these people are on the verge of famine.

Potential untapped

Also, the report's authors show that agricultural projects that empower women have broad economic and social repercussions.

The FAO estimates that by empowering half of small-scale producers, an additional 58 million people's incomes would be increased and 235 million would become more resilient.

A growing number of women are employed in agricultural systems in some developing countries, indicating the potential impact equality-boosting interventions could have. As an example, 71% of working women in southern Asia work in this sector (versus 47% for men).

'Making agrifood systems work for women'

FAO notes that monitoring and accelerating progress on gender equality in agrifood systems depends on "collecting and using high-quality data, disaggregated by gender, age, and other forms of social and economic differentiation", which is lacking, as well as rigorous gender research.

On a policy level, the report's authors recommend urgent action to close "access gaps related to assets, technology and resources". According to them, improving women's productivity in agriculture requires interventions that "address care and domestic work burdens, provide education and training, and strengthen land tenure security".

As the UN agency's study underscores, "when economies shrink, women's jobs go first", which was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report's foreword states, "Women have always worked in agrifood systems. It is time we make agrifood systems work for women." [Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 13 April 2023]

South Pacific: Climate Change Havoc Worries New Zealanders

By Kalinga Seneviratne

SUVA, Fiji (IDN) — It is not only the poor island countries of the South Pacific that worry about the future in the midst of climate change. New Zealand—a comparatively rich country—is worried too after devastating floods and cyclonic storms brought destruction to the islands this year.



Tornado damaged house in Auckland. Photo Credit: RNZ

“More frequent and intense rainfall should be expected across the country due to climate change; more communities will be caught in harm's way and more lives will be lost.” This was the advice given by conservationist Tom Kay to 13 members of a local council and its mayor in late March, while warning that their development model needs to change.

The former British colony, an affluent country of 5.1 million people with 72% of its population of European descent, has been a magnet for migrants in recent years in search of a quiet comfortable lifestyle. But, that perception of New Zealand may change soon if the recent natural disasters continue.

New Zealand has had a rough start to 2023. In late January and into February thousands of people in Auckland were affected by one of the worst flooding in living memory, and when they were recovering from it the nation was shaken by an earthquake measuring between 5.7 to 6.3 magnitude struck off the coast. Cyclone Gabrielle, the worst storm to hit New Zealand this century, followed this immediately.

If all this was not enough, on Easter Sunday a tornado struck the outskirts of Auckland, blowing off roofs and windows. Radio New Zealand reported that one woman who has recently migrated to New Zealand was heard screaming from inside her home horrified by what she was experiencing.

Auckland is the largest city in New Zealand and home to 1.6 million people located in the North Island of the country. One of the worst affected suburbs by the flooding disaster was Mangere, a community of predominantly Pacific islander migrants who have come from Tonga, Tuvalu, Nieu and Cook islands. All of them have experienced increasing havoc from cyclones and rising sea levels in recent years. Now their new homes have been flooded.

New Zealand's Prime Minister Chris Hipkins declared in March that climate change was real and warned that the country's extreme weather will continue at greater frequency. He seems helpless in how to stop such devastation. “The country needs to be prepared to deal with more of these events in the near future,” he warned.

But, Climate Change Minister and co-leader of the Green Party, James Shaw pointed out that New Zealanders have been arguing for too long about whether climate change

existed and that has cost them valuable time in preparing for these disasters.

"I don't think I've ever felt as sad or as angry about the lost decades that we spent bickering and arguing about whether climate change was real or not, whether it was caused by humans or not, whether it was bad or not, whether we should do something about it or not, because it is clearly here now, and if we do not act, it will get worse," he warned.

On April 10, the tornado that hit parts of Auckland has toppled trees and damaged about 50 houses. But when it reached Kapiti coast about 20 km from New Zealand's capital Wellington, it recorded wind speeds of 96 km/h—some even say it may have been higher. This year, in March and February what is believed to be tornados have hit other parts of the country as well.

In Kapiti Coast about 20 houses had its roof ripped off. A resident in one of the houses has told Radio New Zealand (RNZ) that, she was woken up by her daughter's screaming and the winds lasted about a minute but was very scaring. Another said that everything happened so quickly, and he saw a tree falling onto the road, and pink sheeting from his roof in his backyard.

Meanwhile the Bay of Plenty Times reported on April 11 that Kiwi Fruit farms have been affected in the area. Kiwi Fruit has become a major New Zealand's agricultural export in recent years especially after its juice became popular in Asia.

The newspaper reported that a local family took shelter in a hallway as a tornado ripped past their home and significantly damaged a kiwifruit orchard. Farmer Shelley Edmiston has taken cover in her home with three daughters and saw debris flying as the tornado tore through the kiwifruit orchard, taking out tall trees and orchard poles as it neared their yard.

According to a report released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Cyclone Gabrielle has caused significant damage to homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods across northern and eastern regions of the North Island.

The cyclone is New Zealand's costliest non-earthquake natural disaster, with economic losses expected to exceed NZ\$ 2 billion (USD 1.2 billion). Primary sector exports will be largely affected, because orchards were hit hard by Gabrielle that struck the Hawke's Bay during a key harvest period. Hawke's Bay apple growers account for around 70% of New Zealand's NZ\$900million (USD 557 million) annual apple export trade.

Auckland's water utility Watercare has estimated that widespread damage to its network from floods and Cyclone Gabriel would cost between NZ\$250-450 million to repair. The Auckland council has told Watercare that with a deficit of NZ\$295 million already, they have no money to help built the damaged water network.

Bad land-use policies have contributed to New Zealand's predicament today, argues conservationist Kay. "Cyclones of some form could pass close to New Zealand with increasing frequency," warns Kay. About 90 % of the country's wetlands have been drained - often for development - and the results have been devastating, he points out.

"Wetlands are like sponges in the landscape. They basically absorb water when we have heavy rain and then they slowly let that water out when we have drought

conditions,” explains Kay. “We’ve tended to drain them in the past because we have this colonial perspective that wetlands are wastelands. We treat them as swamps.”

Kay said that when Pākehā (Whiteman) came to the country, many of them turned wetlands into pasture for livestock farming. With so much of the country's wetlands now converted into farmland and urban areas, Kay argues New Zealand has lost its intergenerational knowledge of places that “used to flood a lot”.

When it comes to finding solutions, he has a hard word for councils—stop treating the environment as a “nice-to-have”. He argues that stronger rules protecting wetlands needed to be introduced and enforced. Also, restoration remains critical.

“The environment is critical,” argues Kay, “we need to put that first, otherwise we've got nothing.” [Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 12 April 2023]



Mobile food vendor in Koh Samui island in Thailand Phot Credit: Kalinga Seneviratne/INPS

UN Pleads for Bringing Industry and Sustainability Together

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN | NEW YORK, 8 April 2023 (IDN) — Sustainable industrial transformation is essential to close the widening development gap between countries, meet climate targets and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals. The United Nations adopted 17 SDGs with 169 targets in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

The UN's [2023 Financing for Sustainable Development Report: Financing](#)

[Sustainable Transformations](#) emphasises the need for urgent, massive investments to accelerate transformations, including in electricity supply, industry, farming, transportation, and buildings.

“Without the means to invest in sustainable development and transform their energy and food systems, developing countries are falling even further behind,” United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said in the foreword to the report.

“A two-track world of haves and have-nots holds clear and obvious dangers for every country. We urgently need to rebuild global cooperation and find the solutions to our current crises in multilateral action,” said the UN Chief halfway to the 2030 deadline.

The report points out that some of the necessary changes are already taking place. For example, the energy crisis caused by the war in Ukraine has spurred investment in the global energy transition, which skyrocketed in 2022 to a record \$1.1 trillion. For the first time, energy transition investments surpassed fossil fuel system investments in

2022. But these are almost all in China and developed countries.

Unlike the developed countries, most developing countries do not have the resources for investment, finds the [2023 Financing for Sustainable Development Report](#). It explains that climate change, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, and debt payments up to two times higher than in 2019 have combined to put massive fiscal pressures on most developing countries. This limits their ability to invest in sustainable transformation.

For example, post-pandemic recovery spending in developed countries in 2020 and 2021 was \$12,200 per capita. This was 30 times higher than for developing countries (\$410), and 610 times higher than for least developed countries (\$20).

“Without delivering a reformed international financial system while scaling up investments in the SDGs, we will not deliver on our shared commitment to the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#),” said UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed. “The good news is that we know what to do and how to do it. From launching critical transformations in energy, food and education to ushering in a new green industrial and digital age—we all must quicken the pace and leave no one behind.”

The 2023 Financing for Sustainable Development Report, published on April 5, notes that industrialization has historically been a vehicle of progress, leading to economic growth, job creation, technological advancement, and poverty reduction. The report calls for a new generation of sustainable industrial policies, underpinned by integrated national planning, to scale up investments and lay the foundation for the needed transformations. Many opportunities for inclusive growth exist in agroindustry, green energy, and manufacturing.

The recent rapid uptake in technology points to the possibilities for an equally rapid transition to sustainable industrialization and growth. Between 2021 and 2022, 338 million more people used the Internet regularly. This was an increase of approximately 38,600 additional people every hour. Besides, in regions with high-quality connected services, 44 per cent of all the companies are exporters, in contrast to only 19 per cent of firms where Internet services are weaker.

However, manufacturing capacity remains uneven. In the least developed countries in Africa, manufacturing value-added, instead of doubling as per the SDG target 9.2, fell from around 10 per cent of GDP in 2000 to 9 per cent in 2021. It will take targeted policies to build the domestic productive capabilities to achieve low-carbon transitions, create decent jobs, and boost economic growth—all while ensuring gender equality – which is essential for productivity.

The 2023 Financing for Sustainable Development Report pleads for necessary resources for the transformation. It calls for a combination of strengthening tax systems, enabling and catalyzing private investment, and scaling up international public investment and development cooperation.

The UN report finds that sufficient resources can be raised by bringing about changes to international financial architecture.

The report notes that the international system is currently undergoing the biggest

rethink across international finance, monetary, trade, and tax systems since the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944. But warns that if reforms are piecemeal, incomplete, or fail to take the SDGs into account, sustainable development will be unachievable.

A reformed, effective international financial architecture to deliver for sustainable transformation must include revised frameworks for:

- International tax norms, including rules for taxing digitalized and globalized business that meet the needs of developing countries;
- Policy and regulatory frameworks to better link private sector profitability with sustainability;
- Evolving the scale and mission of the development bank system;
- A loss and damage fund on climate change, which needs to be operationalized quickly;
- Debt relief and a major improvement to the international debt resolution architecture – given that 60 per cent of low-income countries are in or at risk of debt distress;
- Multilateral trade rules to revise the approach to and resolve current tensions on green subsidies.

“We have the solutions to avoid a lasting sustainable development divide, and prevent a lost decade for development,” said UN Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua, head of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which led the production of the inter-agency report.

He adds: “We must find the political will to overcome the rising political tensions, splintering of inter-country alliances, and worrying trends towards nationalism and seize the moment now to urgently invest in our common future.” [Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 8 April 2023]



Yemen: Three years of UK arms to Saudi coalition has contributed to 'enormous harm' to civilians (Amnesty International) Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Is Climate Change a Threat to Australia's National Security?

By Tobias Ide*

PERTH, Australia — From climate protestors to the new [Teal](#) political movement to [leading intelligence experts](#), Australians are increasingly expressing concerns about the security implications of climate change. This might not be surprising given the long coastline of the country and the frequent occurrence of bushfires, cyclones, droughts, and most recently some of the [worst floods](#) in Australia's history.



After the worst-ever bushfires in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales in 2019.
Photo Credit: Kalinga Seneviratne/INPS

A

[new study](#) provides a comprehensive answer to the question of whether and how climate change undermines Australia's national security. Previous academic work was mostly scattered across different studies (many behind paywalls and inaccessible to the public). Various NGOs and government institutions stepped up to fill the gap and did some ground-breaking work, but only selectively drew on scientific research. A recent government report on the topic remains [classified](#).

To start with: Already by 2050, average temperatures are predicted to be 1.1°C to 1.5°C higher than today in Australia, weather conditions prone to bushfires will be 8% more likely, flood risks are set to increase considerably, and droughts will undermine [agricultural productivity](#). Taken together, these developments pose a serious threat to human security in terms of human health

and economic wellbeing.

Sea-level rise and higher risks of floods, fires, droughts and heatwaves across the country also have serious national security ramifications. According to [recent research](#), two threats are particularly acute.

The first threat refers to climate change disrupting key infrastructure, particularly in the transport and energy sectors. Australia has thousands of kilometres of road, rail and powerlines running along the coast and in areas with high flood or fire risks.

By 2050, coastal erosion alone will threaten over 300 police stations, fire stations and healthcare facilities. High demand for air conditioning and fire-induced destruction of energy infrastructure during heatwaves will strain the power grid. More intense tropical storms can destroy multiple forms of infrastructure, as recently witnessed when [cyclone Gabrielle](#) hit New Zealand. The list could go on.

Furthermore, the [new study](#) identifies the disruption of military capabilities as the second main threat climate change poses to national security. The Australian Defence Force frequently depends on the same infrastructure as civilians, resulting in shared vulnerabilities. The Tanami Road (connecting Alice Springs to the Kimberley), for instance, could be a key strategic asset should Australia need to engage in an international conflict in the Indo-Pacific. However, the road is highly vulnerable to heat and flood damage.

Dedicated military infrastructure is under threat as well. Even though information on this remains partially classified, the Department of Defence considers several of its coastal bases as highly threatened by floods and sea-level rise. On top of that, the Australian Defence Force will need to devote more resources and personnel to disaster responses in a climate-changed world.

After extreme events, both domestically and in the Asia-Pacific region, the Australian military is often a key relief provider. When occurring simultaneously or during a time of very high international tensions, these climate change impacts could seriously strain the capabilities of the Australian Defence Force.

[Research](#) points to a number of additional threats to national security. While climate change will not cause international wars, it may well increase the risk of political instability in Australia's neighbourhood. Large-scale disasters can fuel anti-government sentiments and result in desperate survivors turning to extremist groups for help and income.

Experts have also linked disaster-induced migration to communal conflicts in some Pacific Island states. [Evidence](#) shows that climate-related disasters are most likely to trigger violent unrest in countries with large populations, political discrimination towards ethnic groups, and low levels of human development. These three factors are quite prevalent in South(east) Asia and the Pacific, including in India, the Philippines, and Papua New Guinea.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed how many countries are heavily reliant on

global supply chains. If climate change would facilitate political instability in major oil-producing countries like [Nigeria](#) or [Iraq](#), the Australian society, economy and military would need to deal with higher fuel prices.



Environmental activists in Channon in Northern New South Wales. Photo Credit: Kalinga Seneviratne/INPS

Furthermore, Australia is a major importer of several goods key to its economy and infrastructure, including vehicles, electrical components, and medical products. Many of those goods are produced in southwestern China, where a major [heatwave](#) recently disrupted industrial production for several days. Such

heatwaves, along with floods and storms, will become more frequent in a climate-changed future and can interrupt the supply of goods crucial to civilian, military and economic infrastructure.

The study discusses other national security threats posed by climate change, such as large-scale migration or international fishing disputes, but considers them unlikely or of minor relevance. That said, it is quite clear that already in the coming three decades, climate change will undermine various aspects of Australia's national security. In order to deal with these impacts, policy makers would be well-advised to pursue a threefold strategy: ambitious climate change mitigation, conflict-sensitive and sustainable adaptation to inevitable climatic changes, and cooperative international peace and development policies.

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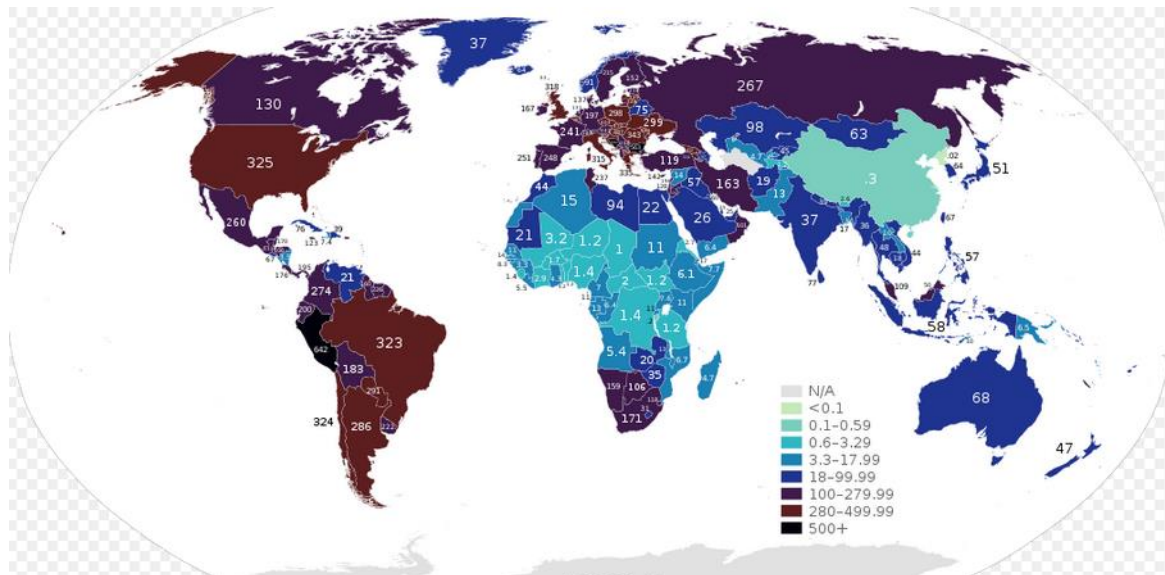
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[Transmitted by IDN-InDepthNews on 18 April 2023]

Developing Countries' Problems Are Mounting – Glocal Collective Action Needed

By Dr Carlos Correa

Geneva, Switzerland – The year 2023 has already shown signs to be another difficult year, especially for developing countries. Inflation is rising worldwide, but grew in double or even triple-digits for many developing countries. Global GDP growth in 2023 is projected to be around 2.9 percent, which is still weak by historical standards and lower than that for 2022 and below pre-pandemic levels.



COVID-19 Outbreak World Map Total Deaths Per Capita. Source: Wikimedia Commons

It will take time for developing countries to fully recover from the scarring effects of the pandemic and other parallel shocks. Measured by output losses relative to pre-pandemic trends, COVID-19 wiped out about 6 percent of GDP for emerging and low-income economies while advanced economies lost less than 2 percent.

The negative impact of the pandemic, together with the new parallel crises including the conflict in Ukraine, associated rise in food and energy prices, climate-change induced extreme weather events, among others, have resulted in very weak fiscal positions in most of the developing countries. Many governments are not in a position to provide much needed fiscal relief to the poor and vulnerable who are most affected by the cost-of-living crisis. An additional 75 to 95 million people were pushed into extreme poverty in 2022.

Clearly the world is not on track to eliminate extreme poverty by 2030. Rapid and still continuing interest rate hikes in major advanced economies have triggered strong spillover effects across the world. Capital outflows and currency depreciations have been widespread in developing countries. Some 90 developing countries have seen their currencies weakened against the dollar in 2022 – over a third of them by more than 10 percent.

Rising interest rates together with currency depreciation have increased massively the debt servicing burden of developing countries and also led to much higher cost for raising money at the international capital market for rolling over the old debt.

Meanwhile, an increasing number of developing countries are facing balance of

payment difficulties. Quite a number of developing debtor countries are facing a perfect storm and 60 percent of low-income countries are either in or at high risks of debt distress. Many middle-income countries are also facing increasing debt vulnerabilities. A number of countries have already defaulted and are undergoing debt restructuring.

The recent financial instability in the advanced economy banking sector can only make things worse and also lead to less liquidity for the developing world. Amid all these crises, climate change induced extreme weather has become more frequent.

Climate impacts are deteriorating the fiscal position and impairing credit ratings of highly indebted countries leading to increasing probability of default. The G20 Common Framework should be reformed and strengthened. One dimension of such reform could be based on proposals that integrate debt relief with national climate change adaptation and mitigation policies and measures, providing fiscal space for much-needed investments in building climate resilience.

The world is going through an important stage of economic transformation and transition to a sustainable and green economic development model. Unfortunately, this transition has been influenced by geo-political considerations and also tinted with protectionism and nationalism.

Sweeping green-industrialization policies with massive government financial incentives to re-shore production, and use materials produced domestically, carry the threat of further marginalizing those developing countries which do not have the capacity to provide substantive amount of state aid to support climate change adaptation.

The global minimum tax of Pillar Two of the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework is now under various stages of implementation by developed countries and tax havens. It is imperative that developing countries begin to institute a minimum effective tax of 15% in their countries, else under the Pillar Two rules the untaxed income will be taxed by the developed countries where most in-scope Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) are headquartered.

The minimum tax also provides a welcome opportunity for developing countries to review their tax incentive regimes such as tax holidays and tax breaks for MNEs, which may have been over-generous with questionable efficacy in bringing in more foreign investment.

On the “digital tax” of Pillar One, it is expected that a Multilateral Convention (MLC) codifying the solution (the so-called ‘Amount AMLC’) will be ready by July and placed before members of the Inclusive Framework for signature. The design of the OECD solution means that unless developed countries agree to it, developing countries cannot get any tax revenue. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that developing countries wait until developed countries, where the in-scope MNEs are headquartered, first sign and ratify the OECD solution.

The United Nations Tax Committee is preparing a UN Fast Track Instrument with the objective of speeding up implementation of the UN’s solution for digital taxation, Article 12B of the UN Model Tax Convention. Work is also underway in the UN on an alternative version of the global minimum tax, the ‘Subject to Tax’ rule.

Regarding the institutional framework of international taxation, the UN General Assembly's historic resolution on 'Promotion of inclusive and effective international tax cooperation' at the United Nations opens the pathway for reform of the governance of international tax architecture.

All these efforts in the UN require the full support of developing countries.



UN General Assembly: Can the Developing Countries fill the seats and make their voices heard? Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

In the face of these global challenges, international solidarity and cooperation is needed now more than ever. However, the world is becoming increasingly divided owing to the forces of geo-economic fragmentation. Trade protectionism and use of restrictive measures, including barriers to technology transfer, have been increasing massively in recent years, which negatively impact trade, capital flows, and sharply reduce international cooperation.

With multiple external shocks and high levels of debt in developing countries, liquidity relief is badly and urgently needed, especially at concessional terms. A new issuance of SDRs (special drawing rights) can be considered to increase the policy space of countries facing balance of payments and fiscal deficits as well as overburdened by debt servicing.

The quota and governance reform of the IMF must enhance the voice and representation of emerging market and developing economies to reflect and acknowledge their growing weight in the global economy. There are strong headwinds to building back better and more equitably from the multiple shocks.

Global collective actions should be strengthened and cooperation must be enhanced to address the multiple challenges that disproportionately affect developing countries.

** Dr Carlos Correa is the Executive Director of the South Center. This article is based on a statement made to the Ministers and Governors Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four (G24).*

The South Centre is the intergovernmental organization of developing countries that helps developing countries to combine their efforts and expertise to promote their common interests in the international arena. The South Centre was established by an Intergovernmental Agreement which came into force on 31 July 1995. Its headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland. According to the South Centre's mission statement: "Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly poverty eradication, requires national policies and an international regime that supports and does not undermine development efforts. The South Centre is an intergovernmental policy research think-tank composed of and accountable to developing country Member States. It conducts policy-oriented research on key policy development issues, and supports developing countries to effectively participate in international negotiating processes that are relevant to the achievement of SDGs. The Centre promotes the unity of the South in such processes while recognizing the diversity of national interests and priorities.

Leveraging South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Reducing Poverty and Hunger, and Promoting Rural Development

The world is experiencing unprecedented global multidimensional crises that have increased poverty, hunger and food insecurity, with the sharpest impacts being felt among rural areas and communities. Deepening international cooperation is essential to help developing countries face economic headwinds and recover from lasting scars of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change-induced natural disasters. In this scenario, scaling up of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) can play a critical role in catalyzing sustainable development initiatives in developing and least developed countries.

This policy brief therefore considers how SSTC can be effectively leveraged for undertaking initiatives on poverty alleviation, hunger reduction and rural development through strengthening of national SSTC institutional setups. It also explores how SSTC can facilitate increased coordination among stakeholders, and considers areas for fostering mutually beneficial initiatives between developing countries. This brief then focuses on the institutional setup for SSTC in some selected countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America, and considers their role in mainstreaming of SSTC. It further considers some recent experiences from developing countries that use SSTC modalities, outlining important initiatives which could be shared with partners to support poverty alleviation, food security and rural development efforts. Finally, the brief provides some important conclusions and lessons learned which can support developing countries' efforts to achieve the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

Authors: *Yuefen Li, Daniel Uribe and Danish* of the South Centre, Geneva

The Brief could be downloaded from - <https://www.southcentre.int/policy-brief-118-21-april-2023/>

Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report - Championing Sustainability Despite Adversities

The year 2023 marks the mid-point of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and an opportune moment to reflect on progress in the Asia-Pacific region towards achieving the SDGs and be reminded of the significant work that remains to be done. Produced by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the report shine a spotlight on countries that have demonstrated commitment and progress towards the 17 global goals. Their strong performance deserves recognition, and their experiences provide important lessons in the years ahead.

Download Report from -
<https://www.unescap.org/events/2023/launch-asia-and-pacific-sdg-progress-report-2023>

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC SDG PROGRESS REPORT

Championing sustainability despite adversities

2023



Preserving Regulatory Space for Sustainable Development in Africa

By Roslyn Ng'eno

Investment has an important role for achieving sustainable development in developing countries.

Although international investment agreements (IIAs) can serve as instruments to promote such objective, protection oriented IIAs have undermined the ability of States to regulate in the benefit of the community. Likewise large financial reparations imposed by arbitral tribunals have increased the threat of regulatory chill in the face of major global challenges. Strengthening the right to regulate of States and addressing regulatory chill are key matters to consider in the reform of IIAs and the international investment regime.

The paper could be downloaded from - <https://www.southcentre.int/southviews-no-246-5-april-2023/>

UN Secretary-General's Report Outlines Rescue Plan for People and Planet

The UN has released an advance unedited version of the UN Secretary-General's annual report on SDG progress. This year's "special edition" report updates on progress made since 2015 against the global SDG indicator framework. It will inform discussions during the July 2023 session of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the SDG Summit in September.

Produced at the mid-way point towards 2030, the report is titled, 'Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet.' It warns that "many of the SDGs are moderately to severely off track" and offers five recommendations to "rescue" the Goals by the 2030 deadline.

The report reveals that according to a preliminary assessment of around 140 targets with data, only about 12% are on track. Nearly 50% of the targets are moderately or severely off track and approximately 30% have either stagnated or "regressed below the 2015 baseline."

The report could be accessed from - <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-secretary-generals-report-outlines-rescue-plan-for-people-and-planet/>



Food distribution queue in West Bengal, India. Photo Credit: SDG Knowledge Hub

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