Student Leadership Conference on Development at the United Nations

The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Sustainable Development Goals

Monday, June 7th, 2021

Student   *Leadership*

Conference on Development at the United Nations

SLCD @UN 2021

The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Sustainable Development Goals.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Background

The Student Leadership Conference on Development is in its 11th year. Created in 2010 to support the Millennium Development Goals, the conference looks to bring students together from around the world to tackle real and pressing development issues facing our world today. This year, the conference will be on something that is not just affecting us right now but also everyone else around the globe: The Coronavirus Pandemic. For the 2021 SLCD@UN, students, leaders, and organizations will be dissecting the effects of COVID-19 keeping the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in mind. The content of this background document is grounded on resources from the United Nations, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, NGOs, and other credible sources.

Within the theme of COVID-19 and the Sustainable Development Goals, we will focus on three major areas:

1. Impact of COVID-19 on Education and Employment
2. The Psychological Impact of COVID-19
3. Refugee Camps Accommodation & Migration

Conference Objectives and Timeline

Students in participating countries worldwide will come together in **June 2021** to complete a Plan of Action that will be developed in the months leading up to the conference in each of their communities. This Plan of Action will be a collaboration across cultures with real, practical ideas that can be implemented by conference participants and their peers. This plan, if approved by a majority of the participants, will be taken back to their schools and communities and put into action. Students are recommended to do community work on May 15th, 2021. Engaging in community service provides students with the opportunity to become active members of their community and has a lasting, positive impact on society at large. Community service enables students to acquire life skills and knowledge, as well as provide a service to those who need it most.

They also will reconvene at the end of the school year (in June) to share which parts of the Plan have been undertaken in their home countries.

Conference Timeline:

- *Beginning Spring 2021:* Interactions with youth groups and
  (March-May) individuals in preparation for SLCD@UN. Preparation via online work and training with students.

- *Friday, June 4th:* Virtual Student Leadership training

- *Monday, June 7th:* Virtual Student Leadership Conference on

Development at the UN

- *Date TBD:*   (1) End of Year Videoconference to share accomplishments with each other on Plan of Action and (2) formal presentation of the Plan of Action to the United Nations in New York.

Sub Theme Selections:

Leaders and delegates start preparations by choosing one of the three sub themes and prepare to be knowledgeable about it and involved in finding solutions to problems associated with the Sub Theme.

This year's Sub Theme Topics are: (a) Lack of Education and Employment (b) Psychological Impactof COVID-19 (c) Refugee camp Accommodation & Migration. Special background documents will be available to help participants with their work.

How to Participate in the Conference:

Student Leaders are usually selected based on a school recommendation. Student Leaders can also be selected through participation in online groups, or by contacting GEM directly. Student Leaders run the conference. The roles of leaders will be determined virtually on June 4th by the student leadership team in conjunction with GEM staff.

Levels of Participation:

Students can participate at the following levels:

1. SLCD International Student Leaders representing their country
2. Regional Student Leaders and delegates
3. Virtually as voting delegates
4. Online contributors via social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)

Fee Structure:

Regional Site Fee: Donation to GEM welcomed (not required)

Student participants: $15.00 per student

Individual Student Participants not associated directly regional sites: $20.00 per student

All students are eligible to be elected student leaders.

All student participants are voting delegates.

- 2 individual scholarships are available for each regional site.
- Individual scholarships outside of the regions are also available.

  Student leaders must be in the June 4th leadership preparation.

  Leadership roles include (1) Morning or afternoon Chairperson

  (2) Morning or Afternoon Vice Chairperson

  (3) Be a joint Moderator of one of the four sessions.

  (4) Be on the Editing Team

  (Minimum of two for each subtheme)

  Remaining students are all delegates to the "UN" conference

  Everyone gets briefed on the details prior to the conference

  It is a formal meeting as if you were a leader at the United Nations

  Everyone is virtual this year in a formal session

The Sustainable Development Goals

Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the new Sustainable Development Goals "Encompass a universal, transformative and integrated agenda that heralds an historic turning point for our world. This is the people's agenda, a plan of action for ending poverty in all its dimensions, irreversibly, everywhere and leaving no one behind. It seeks to ensure peace and prosperity and forge partnerships with people and the planet at the core. The integrated, interlinked and indivisible 17 Sustainable Development Goals are the people's goals and demonstrate the scale, universality and ambition of this new agenda."

Goals 1 – 6 are a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals. Goals 7 – 16 are expanded areas of sustainable development. Goal 17 is the developed world working with the developing world to achieve the goals. Within the goals are 169 targets to be met. The proposed targets under Goal One, for example, include reducing by at least half, the number of people living in poverty by 2030 and eradicating extreme poverty (people living on less than $1.25 a day). Details on all the goals with targets and indicators can be found at the Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform. Regarding Indicators, there are 229. They are an added detail to help see where we are related to achieving the goals. For example, SDG1 looks at population, and also separately, the working poor. The Indicators look at poverty related to sex, age, employment status, and geographical location. This helps to show progress or lack of progress. It is real data to help make all of us see if we are on track to reach the goal as stated. Become more aware about these als and feel good about your world being better in the future. The SDGs are an important thing in your life. Be part of the solution to achieving them.

COVID-19

The SARS-CoV-2 Coronavirus also known as COVID-19 is a condition that is currently spreading around the world. COVID-19 has been spreading so exponentially on a global scale that it is now considered a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). According to the New York Times, at least six other types of coronavirus are known to infect humans, with

some causing the common cold and two causing outbreaks: Severe Acute Respiratory System SARS and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome MERS. (Corum, The New York Times). The COVID-19 specifically is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. (World Health Organization).

What are some of the symptoms?

The COVID-19 consists of symptoms such as difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, the color of lips of face is bluish (Center of Disease and Control-CDC). Although those are the most common symptoms seen in this condition, many patients have reported symptoms such as dry cough, phlegm, fatigue and sore-throat. Currently, research has not shown any differences among the genders. However, early information out of China, where COVID-19 first started, shows that some people are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. This vulnerable population includes older adults (ages 60+), people who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, lung disease and post-surgery such as kidney transplant. Furthermore, patients who are immunocompromised- have an impaired immune system are also at a higher risk of getting critically ill from the disease. This is because their immune system is not strong enough to fight the virus that is attacking it and ends up worsening their symptoms.

How exactly does the virus attack one's body?

When it comes to biological mechanisms, the structure of the coronavirus is named after the "crownlike spikes" that protrude from its surface. Like many other viruses, the coronavirus is enveloped of oily lipid molecules. Jonathan Corum and Carl Zimmer in the New York Times explain how this occurs. When it enters its host cell through nose, mouth or eyes, it attaches to cells in the airway that produce a protein called ACE2 (The New York Times). After attaching to the cells, it infects the cell by fusing oily membrane with membrane of the cell. Once it successfully enters the cell, it releases RNA. Then it hijacks the cell and makes proteins that will assemble new copies of the virus. As the infection in the patient is progressing, the

machinery of the cell begins making new spikes, replicating proteins, and forming more copies of the virus.

How to prevent the spread:

The immune response then causes fever in the patient because that shows it is fighting to clear the virus. (Jonathan Corum and Carl Zimmer, The New York Times). Many institutions across the globe have developed vaccines that have been approved for emergency use. The best method is to be cautious and preventative. For example, washing hands with soap for at least 20 seconds (NYC Department of Health- NYCDOH.gov). Furthermore, avoiding handshakes, high fives, hugs, or any physical contact with people. Another way to flatten the exponentially growing curve of the spread of the coronavirus is to practice social distancing which includes homeschooling, no hanging out with more than 10 people, avoiding public transportation, and much more (World Health Organization, WHO). These preventative measures can be very effective if taken seriously as we all fight and overcome the spread of this pandemic.

Progress of SDG #3 in 2020:

Major progress has been made in improving the health of millions of people, increasing life expectancy, reducing maternal and child mortality and fighting against leading communicable diseases. However, progress has stalled or is not happening fast enough with regard to addressing major diseases, such as malaria and tuberculosis, while at least half the global population does not have access to essential health services and many of those who do suffer undue financial hardship, potentially pushing them into extreme poverty. Concerted efforts are required to achieve universal health coverage and sustainable financing for health, to address the growing burden of non-communicable diseases, including mental health, and to tackle antimicrobial resistance and determinants of health such as air pollution and inadequate water and sanitation.

Subtheme A: Impact of COVID-19 on Education and Employment

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"In a world in which all problems are global, there is no way countries can handle issues by themselves; we need global responses"

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General

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Sustainable Development Goals Pertaining to this Subtheme

Goal 1.	**End Poverty in all its forms everywhere.**
Goal 2.	**End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**
Goal 4.	**Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**
Goal 5.	**Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.**
Goal 8.	**Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.**
Goal 9.	**Build a resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation**
Goal 10.	**Reduce inequality within and among countries**
Goal 13.	**Take urgent to combat climate change and its impacts**
Goal 16.	**Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.**

Introduction

Unemployment and economic disparities have always been an issue since the dawn of civilization. In this era, the global labor market is weak at addressing the problem of poverty and low-income salary. In 2007, the emerging and developing countries' income was between $1.90 and $3.10 per day. Moreover, 21.2 per cent, or ⅕ of young individuals worldwide were unemployed, uneducated, and failed to meet NEET training in 2018. Finding employment became challenging ever since the global economic crisis in 2009. Young workers were contracted by more than 15% compared to the adult employed. Comparing both the young and adult employed, young workers exhibit larger working poverty rate than adults. In developed countries, unemployment is usually very low. In the United States, 3.8% of the active workforce was employed in February 2019, whereas in Canada it was 5.8%. Furthermore, Europe's unemployment rate was 6.5% which decreased from 7.2% in January 2018; contributing to the lowest rate of unemployment since January 2000. Greece had the highest rate of unemployment rate of 18% in November 2018, Spain with 14.1%, and Italy with 10.5%.

In developing countries, creating jobs for the youth is even more challenging. The youth are unable to find jobs because they lack employable skills with the labor market requirements. North Africa has above 25% of unemployment rate in comparison to Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria. While sub Saharan Africa has the highest unemployment rate in the world with 70% of its youth being unemployed. In addition, Nigeria had a 15% unemployment in 2015 which increased to 35% in 2018. This resulted in more than 55% of the young workers to be either employed or underemployed. From 2008 to 2018 most of the south Asian countries still had a high youth unemployment rate despite their economic growth. The Islamic Republic of Iran had a 30% unemployment rate in 2018.

Sources

https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/01/1000901
https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-april-2019-briefing-no-125/

Subtheme B: Psychological Impact of the COVID19 Pandemic

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"Can anything be stupider than that a man has the right to kill me because he lives on the other side of a river and his ruler has a quarrel with mine, though I have not quarrelled with him?"

Blaise Pascal, French Philosopher

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Goal 1.   **End Poverty in all its forms everywhere.**

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

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Introduction:

Sickness, and more specifically epidemics, brings about a sense of anxiety. The sense of the unknown afflicting sickness on us may give many feelings of uncertainty and some even helplessness. It is in these times that we build emotional and spiritual resilience.

As the number of cases of COVID-19 increases, so does the associated anxiety. For the general public, the mental health effects of COVID-19 are as essential to address as are the physical health effects. And for the one in five who already have mental health conditions – or the one in two who are at risk of developing them – we need to take personal, professional, and policy measures now to address them.

Sources:

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1472271/

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1472256/

https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/covid-19

https://www.who.int/news/item/05-10-2020-covid-19-disrupting-mental-health-services-in-most-countries-who-survey

Subtheme C: Refugee Camp Accommodations & Migration

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"Refugees didn't just escape a place. They had to escape a thousand memories until they'd put enough time and distance between them and their misery to wake to a better day."

— Nadia Hashimi

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Goal 1.	**End Poverty in all its forms everywhere.**
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A refugee camp is intended as a temporary accommodation for people who have been forced to flee their homes because of violence and persecution. They are constructed while crises unfold for people fleeing for their lives.

An internally displaced person, or IDP, is someone who has been forced to flee their homes but never cross an international border. These individuals seek safety anywhere they can find it—in nearby towns, schools, settlements, internal camps, even forests and fields. IDPs, which include people displaced by internal strife and natural disasters, are the largest group that UNHCR assists. Unlike refugees, IDPs are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid because they are legally under the protection of their own government. Countries with the largest internally displaced populations are Colombia, Syria, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia.

When people flee their own country and seek sanctuary in another country, they apply for asylum – the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and material assistance. An asylum seeker must demonstrate that his or her fear of persecution in his or her home country is well-founded.

Refugee camps are practical during emergencies for delivering lifesaving aid, but many refugees displaced are often living through protracted situations. The UN Refugee Agency initially delivers lifesaving emergency aid, but also transitions into long term care for refugees. This brings about a new set of challenges.

New challenges include: delivering electricity to camps in the desert, ensuring that children have access to education and helping prepare refugees for life after the camp with job and skills training. Responding to these challenges and the needs of refugees redefines what a refugee camp is and how best to respond to refugee crises. Camps are no longer simply rows of tents, they are communities filled with people preparing for brighter futures.

Additional Resources for the Conference:

- https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2020/Migrants_essential_to_recovery_of_global_development_post_COVID19.html
- https://www.un.org/en/desa/covid-19
- https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-86-the-long-term-impact-of-covid-19-on-poverty/
- https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-81-impact-of-covid-19-on-sdg-progress-a-statistical-perspective/
- https://www.un.org/en/desa/un-chief-underlines-need-protect-refugees-and-migrants-covid-19-pandemic
- https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/migration-data-relevant-covid-19-pandemic