

Editorial Notes

Does the Covid-19 pandemic have any positive impact on SDGs?

It has been a half year after the first case of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) reported in December 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. No country in the world could escape from the spreading such deadly infectious disease. While only small countries reported a significant reduction of the new case, the outbreak is still escalating in other parts of the world. As of August 26, 2020, the global death toll from COVID-19 has reached 832,879, with 24,537,560 people confirmed cases (WHO, 2020).

All countries and international institutions have taken various actions to respond to COVID-19. Almost all people around the globe have experienced drastically their new life. Social interaction has been restricted. Schools, public works, markets dan tourist destinations have been closed. Public transportation, praying public places, sports activities, and other places are prohibited. Working activities are mainly conducted from home. It has not only changed a lifestyle, but also it might lead to economic impacts. Almost countries either developed or poor countries reported that economic growth dropped, even minus. It is predicted that it will continue until the next one even another two or three years.

From the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) context, the pandemic has impacted many issues among 17 agendas stipulated in the SDGs (United Nations, 2020). A consequences, it will also influence the achievement of the SDGs in 2030. The first impact, of course, is the “good health and wellbeing” (third goal). In contrast to the goal, the pandemic has been threatening health and well-being that affected the essential of sustainable development. The global health crisis is clearly causing human suffering and destroying the social structure of people around the globe.

The second issue that will be brought is “zero hunger”. In the short-term, Covid-19 hit the people who have work in informal sectors with low income. Many experts said that pandemic could push about million people into extreme poverty in the short and middle term. Pandemic will inevitably lessen to chance to improve “no poverty” as the first goal in the SDGs. Although all countries would share the new poor people, low and middle-income countries are significantly affected by a large outbreak. The World Bank, for example, projected that the new poor would be 23 million in Sub-Saharan Africa and 16 million in South Asia (Sánchez-Páramo, 2020).

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Address: Jalan Proklamasi 70, Central Jakarta, Indonesia 10320
Phone: +62 21 31928280/3192828
Fax: +62 21 31928281
E-mail: pusbindiklatren@bappenas.go.id

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Another agenda of SDGs that will be affected by a pandemic is the quality of education. Most governments around the world have closed schools to reduce the spreading of the Covid-19. According to UNESCO, educational closures cause more than 60% of the global student population (UNESCO, 2020). Given that some countries adopted distance learning or online learning, some vulnerable and disadvantages people are still limited to have such access to education. In some countries, internet facilities have not been provided. The inequalities are not the only issue in education, but it also applies in other aspects such as economic, social, justice, internet access, access to a better job, etc. In other words, the pandemic will mostly likely alter other goals such as gender inequality, decent work, and economic growth, peace, justice, and strong institutions.

On the other side, there has been a “positive” impact of pandemic although it is just temporary (The Jakarta Post, 2020). As major economic and transportation activities have been lockdown the environmental quality showed improving. Studies in the most affected countries such as China, the USA, Italy, and Spain concluded that the impact of COVID-19 has resulted in improving air quality, clean beaches and environmental noise reduction (Zambrano-Monserrate et al., 2020). Other indirect impacts of the pandemic have been also discussed such as improved hygiene, optimized digital transformation, collaboration across gender, race, countries, peace, and connectedness (Gbenga, 2020); (Haski-Leventhal, 2020).

As well as the negative impact of a pandemic, “positive impact” on SDGs should be explored. For example, one of the effective ways to reduce the spreading of Covid-19 is collaboration, particularly cooperation between country to country. As stipulated in the one of the SDGs, partnership meant that a successful development agenda required strong global and inclusive partnership. Another “positive” impact of the pandemic to SDGs is towards goal 7, “affordable and clean energy”. It is the time for policymakers to think seriously considering that energy is becoming more sustainable and widely accessible. We should focus on investing in developing clean energy for poor people and expanding the use of renewable energy.

As global effort focused on responding to the negative impact of COVID-19, the positive impact of the pandemic to SDGs should be started to discuss. As presented in the second edition of this journal, we explored the various themes of the topic related to SDGs. As responded to the urgent of the digital transformation, we present research papers discussing ICT in the context of prosperity. The first paper is entitled “The Role of ICT and Human Capital Development in Pursuing a Demographic Dividend and Improving Economic Welfare in Indonesia”. Meanwhile, the second paper is entitled “Impact of ICT Adoption on Inequality: Evidence from Indonesian Provinces”.

Economic themes are still dominated with current volume such as “Determining Leading Economic Sectors, by Large Distribution or Extreme Growth?”, “Strengthening Community Economy Inclusively through Literacy for Prosperity” (National Library of Indonesia’s Role to Support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and The Capacity of Government of the Kulon Progo Regency in the Efforts to Achieve Economic Self-Reliance”. Another interesting paper is related to energy titled “Sustainable Development of Energy Supply Planning for Productive Economy in Isolated Island”. The rest of the papers are “Ensuring Sustainable Urban Transformation in Indonesia: Toward Indonesia Emas 2045” and “A Review of Suramadu Regional Development Acceleration towards Sustainable Development Concept”.

Finally, while we are in the midst of historic experience that changes all aspects of our lives, the pandemic crisis should be an opportunity for global people to reshape social and economic as well as health behaviors to ensure sustainable development.

Wignyo Adiyoso, S.Sos., MA., Ph.D.

(Chief of Editor)

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