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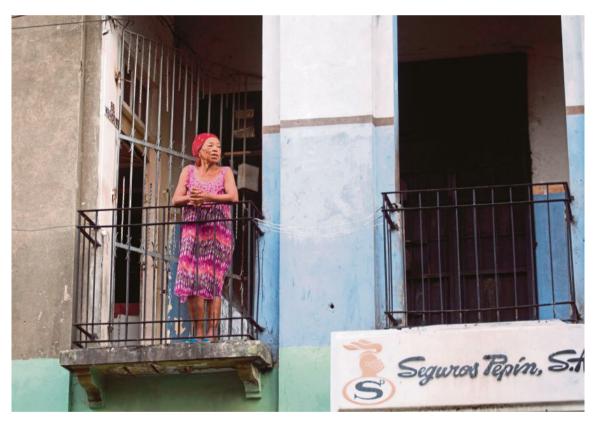
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# **Sustainable growth and Covid-19**



By Dzulkifli Abdul Razak - April 14, 2020 @ 12:20am



An elderly woman observes social isolation in her home in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic, on Sunday. AFP PIC

IN response to the coronavirus pandemic, the United Nations launched the Covid-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, a coordinated effort between several agencies led by the World Health Organisation.



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2016-2030. How is this so?

Also known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SDGs were adopted by UN member states in 2015 as a basis for shared prosperity and peace. At the heart of it all is the call for action by all countries in fostering a sustainable future.

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The more critical ones are "sustainable health", which encompasses a number of SDGs. For example, SDG 1 is no poverty; 2 is zero hunger; 3, good health and wellbeing; 4, quality education; 5, gender equality; 6, clean water and sanitation; 10, reduced inequality; 13, climate action and 16, peace and justice and strong institutions.

All these must go hand in hand in order to arrive at a state of health that is sustainable. It is not merely the "absence" of disease but beyond that as expressed by the relevant SDGs. With specific reference to the Covid-19 outbreak, SDG 6 seems to be vital as a means to "wash out" the virus, in order to achieve SDG 3. This in turn is related to SDGs 1, 4 and 5, and so on, where the lack of each can hamper the previous goal.

Ultimately, it is about establishing SDG 16 in ensuring health is institutionally sustainable, supported by SDGs 2 and 10. SDG 13 is an interesting feature given the anecdotal evidence related to the mandatory lockdown showing substantial lowering of environmental gas emissions due to reduced human activities in transportation and open burning, for instance.

However, this may be temporary depending on the duration of the restricted mobility. On the contrary, the amount of solid and clinical wastes tends to increase, many times the normal quantity given the sheer numbers of those infected. In other words, the management of the outbreak must be meticulously executed.

In relation to this, SDG 11, which is sustainable cities and communities, may have a particular impact in the context of "social distancing" and overcrowding. So is SDG 17 on "partnership", which in the final analysis is crucial to offset the dire lack of medical supplies at almost all levels.

To summarise, the role of the SDGs is greatly heightened by the pandemic

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HIOUEI KHOWH as the Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) for ESD.

This is apparent where schools and institutions of higher education are at the receiving end as "victims" of the viral attack, unable to cope with the disruptions that they are facing. It goes back to the issue of cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation — both mental and physical, an age-old precept that has fallen behind in the virtual world. In some places the IT facilities are better kept than the toilets!

Undoubtedly, the ethos of education must be revisited. This was done in 2005 at the dawn of the UN Decade on ESD (2005-2014) with the establishment of the RCEs worldwide and acknowledged by UNU as a harbinger of the "new" education.

In Malaysia, there are five such centres with the latest called RCE Greater Gombak based at the International Islamic University Malaysia. All are raring to bring forth the ESD flagship as a humane response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The writer, an NST columnist for more than 20 years, is International Islamic University Malaysia rector

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