



Five things you need to know about living with a disability during COVID-19

Every seventh person alive today – more than 1 billion people in total – lives with some form of disability. Despite being so numerous, persons with disabilities are still overwhelmingly overlooked in times of emergency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ahead of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, celebrated every year on 3rd December, here are five things you need to know about living with a disability during COVID-19:

1. Risk of contracting COVID-19 is higher for persons with disabilities

Washing hands, social distancing and following local health guidelines have been some of our most powerful weapons against the virus. For persons with disabilities, all of these measures are easier said than done. Too often, the life-saving water, sanitation and hygiene facilities are not accessible to persons with disabilities. Social distancing is impossible for those who rely on physical contact to get support. And too little public health information is issued with accessibility in mind.

2. Risk of severe symptoms and death is higher

Persons with disabilities are more susceptible to secondary conditions and co-morbidities, such as lung problems, diabetes, heart disease, and obesity, all of which are extremely dangerous when paired with COVID-19 infections. And although they are at more at risk, persons with disabilities find it harder to access health care. Even before the pandemic, one in three persons with disabilities couldn't afford health-care facilities and up to 42% in some countries considered their health condition as poor.

3. Living in institutions increases the risk of contracting and dying from COVID-19

Care homes, where older people with disabilities often make up the lion's share of residents, found themselves at the frontlines of the pandemic, with higher rates of infections and COVID-19 related death rates that ranged from 19% to as high as 72% in countries where official data is available.

4. Discrimination in accessibility of healthcare and life-saving procedures

In some places, especially hard hit by the pandemic, medical staff is forced to make the heart-wrenching decisions of who will receive the limited life-saving facilities, such as intensive care beds or ventilators. Too often, these decisions are not based on the patient's individual prognosis, but rather on discriminatory criteria, such as age or assumptions about the quality or value of life with disabilities.

5. The broader COVID-19 crisis affects persons with disabilities more

Despite the revolutionary surge in remote work, education and entertainment during the pandemic, persons with disabilities are losing jobs, access to education and support services at precipitous rates. They also find themselves at a higher risk of domestic violence in lockdown.

Over one billion of us, are disproportionately suffering from this pandemic. Not because of their disability, but because of discrimination, ignorance and neglect. Join us on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and raise your voice to demand that we recover better – for all!

HIGHLIGHTS



Pandemic expected to cause growth in global migration to plummet

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically affected all forms of human mobility. Around the globe, the closing of national borders and severe disruptions to international land, air and maritime travel obliged hundreds of thousands of people to cancel or delay plans of moving abroad, left thousands of migrants stranded or unable to return, and forced countless persons to return to their home countries earlier than planned.

While it is too soon to gauge the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migration, the latest data suggest that the pandemic may have caused a severe disruption in the growth of the global number of international migrants. Further, the loss of remittances in low- and middle-income countries due to COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on the lives and well-being of thousands of migrants and their families.

While high-income countries continue to attract the largest number of labour migrants, low- and middle-income countries absorb the majority of people displaced across national borders due to persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations. These inequities in global migration governance call for a more equitable sharing of responsibilities in finding sustainable solutions to the plight of refugees and have important implications for sustainable development.

In December, UN DESA's Population Division will launch *International Migration 2020 Highlights*, which will include updated estimates on the global number of international migrants.

This December also marks two years since UN Member States adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Since then, the United Nations Network on Migration, charged with coordinating United Nations system-wide support to implement the Compact, has established the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund, created a knowledge platform and connection hub, and set up regional and national networks. Currently, the Network supports the first round of regional reviews of the Compact, in close cooperation with the regional economic commissions. UN DESA is a member of the Network's Executive Committee.

The report of the Secretary-General on international migration and development, prepared for the 75th session of the General Assembly, presents an overview of the latest activities by the United Nations system to assist countries in integrating migration considerations into national development plans. The report also assesses progress in measuring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets related to migration.

On 1 December, the Secretary-General will launch the first biennial report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Call-in details to join the event can be found [here](#).

HIGHLIGHTS



In the face of danger: looking back at a year like no other

2020 has been a year like no other. COVID-19 turned our lives upside down as it tore through the world, leaving severe illness and death in its path. As New York City became the pandemic's North American epicenter in the early months of 2020, UN Headquarters was forced to shutter. But our global efforts continued apace, as we quickly shifted toward remote work and digital technologies to deliver the support that

countries needed.

With communities locked down, the global economy faltered. The mid-year forecast revealed in the UN's World Economic Situation and Prospects, predicted a loss of nearly \$8.5 trillion in output over the next two years, marking the sharpest contraction since the Great Depression in the 1930s. The ensuing impact on lives and livelihoods bordered on catastrophic.

“We are facing a global health crisis unlike any in the 75-year history of the United Nations — one that is spreading human suffering, infecting the global economy and upending people’s lives,” UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in these early days, as he addressed the media. “We must recognize that the poorest and most vulnerable — especially women — will be the hardest hit.”

From the start, UN DESA’s experts have closely monitored the crisis, putting a spotlight on the systemic fragilities that the crisis magnified and fielding policy recommendations to help the world navigate towards a sustainable recovery. Through some 30 policy briefs the Department targeted the most critical issues, addressing inequalities, fiscal stimulus plans to protect the most vulnerable, the role of digital government, science, and the fact that the 17 global goals are our best option to recover better.

These data, analysis and recommendations were taken to the regional and country level through capacity-building workshops and webinars and continue to be shared globally through a series of online dialogues. The dialogue series brings UN DESA’s analysis together with the views and thoughts of expert stakeholders and affected constituencies, to help foster truly inclusive solutions.

“In our darkest hours, we must strengthen multilateralism and global dialogues to rekindle the spirit of mutual trust, unity, partnership and interdependence,” said UN DESA’s Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin. “We must confront the onslaught of the pandemic with fortitude, resolve and unity, not with fear, division and despondence. The history of humanity is the history of triumph against all odds. This time will be no different,” he said.

For more information: [UN DESA Annual Highlights Report 2019-2020](#)

Photo: The Empire State Building is lit up in red in honour of first responders during the COVID-19 outbreak in New York. (UN Photo/Evan Schneider)



How do we end hunger and protect food livelihoods? Find out at our next online event!

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, UN DESA has published policy briefs and reports aimed at sharing data to help countries and organizations make informed policies to respond to the crisis. To bring the findings and recommendations to a wider audience, the Department has organized monthly online conversations as part of its Global Policy Dialogue Series. Food security will

be at the heart of the next event on 16 December. Join us and share your questions with our experts!

The focus on food security comes as the Department looks ahead to three major food events on the UN calendar for 2021. First, the Commission on Population and Development will take on a theme of food security and hunger this spring, and in July, the High-level Political Forum will showcase progress on Sustainable Development Goal 2 on ending hunger. Finally, the 2021 Food Systems Summit will be held during the General Assembly high-level period in September.

To support the UN's efforts in ending hunger and protecting food livelihoods, the Global Policy Dialogue "Advancing equitable livelihoods in food systems," will be held on 16 December. It will highlight the impact of recent population shifts and rural development on food security and consider ways to ensure sustainable food production while protecting jobs amid the pandemic.

Speakers representing Member States, the UN system, farmers and indigenous peoples will share their perspectives on the effects of COVID-19 in their communities and offer ideas for designing better food systems for the future.

The December event will also be framed as a [Food Systems Summit Dialogue](#) supporting the Summit's [Action Track 4](#) on equitable food livelihoods. The Summit Dialogues are an opportunity for all citizens to engage as stakeholders in the world's food systems. The outcome will help guide individual and collective action towards a new social contract in which the future of food is sustainable, equitable and secure.

Find out more about upcoming Global Policy Dialogues, and watch past events on critical issues like youth employment, gender equality, and science and technology, on our [dedicated website](#). All of the Dialogues are streamed live and on-demand on the UN Facebook page, as well.



The science of saving the world

Earlier this year, UN Secretary-General António Guterres appointed 15 of the most eminent scientists from around the world to write the next Global Sustainable Development Report – the world’s science-based guide to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We talk to the co-chairs of this group of scientists, **Imme Scholz** of the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) and **John Agard** of the University of the West Indies.

Congratulations on your appointment to prepare the next Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR). How will you go about preparing this seminal report?

“The 2019 GSDR gives us a very good basis to start from – it acknowledges the interconnectedness of the Sustainable Development Goals and adopts a systemic approach by focusing on entry-points for transformation that relate to several SDGs. For the new Independent Group of Scientists, it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic, its effects on human well-being, on food systems, economies, climate and the global commons will be important for our report, as will the opportunities, responsibilities and conditions for building back better.”

You have mentioned the negative impacts of COVID-19 on the Sustainable Development Goals? What are they?

“Negative trends in health and mortality, employment and income, food security, trade, economic production and tax revenue show how vulnerable our world is. It will be very difficult to reach the goal of eliminating extreme poverty by 2030 – on the contrary, depending on the length of the global economic crisis, and the effectiveness and scope of recovery measures, there could be a global increase of poverty again.

On top of those immediate effects on employment and income inequality, there will be long-term effects, especially due to long interruptions in schooling. And though we have all heard about the decreases in greenhouse gas emissions during the COVID-19 pandemic, these effects are transitory, and so far, very few countries are putting forward economic stimulus packages that invest in “green” technologies and infrastructures.”

Are the goals still achievable by 2030? How can science help us get there?

“First of all, science illuminates emerging patterns of vulnerability, their origins and how to change them. For many Europeans it was a shock to see that in 2020, the highest death rates were in Europe and the Americas, a fact which highlights the difference between aggregate wealth in a country and its distribution across society, as well as the unequal provision of social services. We also saw the importance of pandemic

preparedness, which was much greater in Asia and Africa, due to recent experiences with Ebola, SARS and H1N1.

Second, science can help us understand how interconnectedness in a globalized world increases vulnerability but also how it can be reshaped so that it contributes to resilience. International cooperation for the global common good is one of the strongest statements of the 2030 Agenda, and the pandemic has reconfirmed that real progress can only be made when we work together.”



Imme Scholz, German Development Institute



John Agard, University of the West Indies

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



Internet Governance Forum – virtually together

In a twist befitting its name, November’s annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) moved to an entirely online format. The change did not dampen the spirit of more than 6,000 participants who connected to the Forum from 173 countries. Speakers included some of the most authoritative voices on Internet governance, including UN Secretary-General António

Guterres, the President of the UN General Assembly, the President of ECOSOC and Under-Secretary-General of UN DESA.

Under the overarching theme, “Internet for human resilience and solidarity”, the IGF 2020 saw engaged and informed discussions about Internet policies, amplifying digital cooperation and shaping the Internet into a driver for respecting human rights, bridging the digital divide and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The IGF programme was designed to weave together the full spectrum of policies, knowledge, experiences and situations related to Internet governance. From today’s leaders to those of the future, from government officials to local community organizations, all stakeholders were given a say at the IGF.

A high-level leaders' track involved global experts and leaders from all disciplines in discussions on the role of Internet in health, economy, security, social development and environment. A parallel Youth Summit brought together young Internet leaders and influencers from different parts of the world.

Parliamentarians from around the world gathered at a roundtable to discuss trust online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

And at the grassroots level, a robust network of national, regional and youth IGF initiatives collected more than 100 contributions for the main session on the transformative potential of the Internet in emergency situations.

The year 2020 has proven beyond doubt the benefits of Internet. Had connectivity and services not been as advanced as they are, the health, social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic would have been much worse. However, much of the world remains unconnected, or poorly connected, preventing billions of people from carrying on their lives online during the pandemic. While the next year's meeting will hopefully be held in more positive circumstances, the importance of meaningful connectivity and the work of the IGF will remain as vital as ever. The messages and the recommendations emerging from the 2020 virtual IGF will be disseminated to policymakers across the world and contribute to multilateral processes.

Find out more at:

[IGF 2020 Messages \(DRAFT\)](#)

[IGF2020 Summary \(DRAFT\)](#)

[IGF 2020 Parliamentary Roundtable Outcome Document \(DRAFT\)](#)

[Transcripts and Video Recordings and other event outcomes](#)

Covid-19 and the Green New Deal

SDG BLOG



Mariana Mazzucato, Professor
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By Mariana Mazzucato, Professor at University College London (UCL)

The 21st century is increasingly being defined by the need to respond to major social, environmental and economic challenges. Sometimes referred to as ‘grand challenges’, these include the climate crisis, demographic challenges and promotion of health and well-being. Behind them lie the difficulties of generating sustainable and inclusive growth. These problems are ‘wicked’ in the sense that they are complex, systemic, interconnected and urgent, and require insights from many perspectives. Poverty, for example, cannot be tackled without attention to the interconnections between nutrition, health, infrastructure and education, as well as redistributive tax policy.

Compounding this, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how unprepared we are to react to crises of such scale and complexity. Earlier this year, the news media was full of frightening images of overwhelmed firefighters – not overwhelmed healthcare providers – and we thought this would be the story of 2020. The climate emergency may not be making the headlines, but it is still the story of 2020 – and the coming century.

COVID-19 is a product of environmental degradation, and has been dubbed “the disease of the anthropocene”. This pandemic, and the recovery we need, is a time to understand and explore how to do capitalism differently and move towards a climate-resilient, long-term and sustainable economy.

This requires a rethink of what governments are for: rather than simply fixing market failures when they arise, they should move towards actively shaping and creating markets to take on society’s most pressing challenges. The green transformation of our economies is not an expensive luxury, but rather the only way through the COVID-19 crisis that ensures resilience against future risks of the same size, scale and severity.

With less than 10 years recognized as the window of opportunity to keep global temperatures within the 1.5 degree increase, agreed in the Paris Accord, the clock is ticking to mitigate the worst outcomes of the climate crisis. But fear does not get us a green recovery. Only by turning climate change into positive opportunities for investment and innovation will a green transition come about, affecting production, distribution and consumption across the economy.

The Green New Deal plans that have been picking up traction around the world over the last few years must aspire far beyond just mitigating the climate crisis, and must be focused on new opportunities for investment and innovation – they must include finding clarity and courage in the policy arena, unlocking hoarded investment in the business sector, and supporting workers to acquire new skills. Now, these have turned into “Build Back Better” and Green Recovery plans, as, post-pandemic, the need is being recognized for an economic renewal plan for the entire economy, across different sectors and actors – public, private and civil society.

What is required is a mission-oriented innovation approach, which sets a clear direction for change and renewal, while at the same time using the full range of government instruments – from procurement to guaranteed loans, grants and prize schemes – some of which are now more fully open to experimentation in the COVID-19 response, such as conditionalities on government assistance. The change must occur at all levels – local, regional, national and international.

In the current crisis, for instance, several countries have adopted conditionalities to the bailouts related to the reduction of emissions, protection of workers’ rights and banning of financialized practices. In France, government bailouts for both Renault and AirFrance were conditional on carbon reduction commitments. France, Poland, Belgium and Denmark also denied state aid to any company domiciled in an EU-designated tax haven, while also barring large companies from paying dividends or making share buybacks until 2021.

Markets will not find the green direction on their own: there is not yet a ready-made route that will make multi-directional, experimental, green innovation profitable. Regulation and innovation will only converge a green trajectory when there is a stable and consistent direction for investment. Business does not invest unless it sees an opportunity for growth – so turning mitigation and adaptation into opportunities for investment and innovation is key. This requires more than market-fixing ‘bandages’ like tax incentives alone: it requires bold investments like those witnessed in Roosevelt’s New Deal in the wake of the Great Depression.

The 1960s moonshot mission – to get to the moon and back again in one generation – was clear on the goal, clear on the expense required, clear on the risk and uncertainty, and clear on why it is ‘worth it’. This is a good guide. Mission-oriented innovation policy defines an ambitious goal, and then uses this to create a long-term policy landscape, setting out concrete tasks that mobilize various actors for bottom-up experimentation across different sectors. In the same way that going to the moon required investments in nutrition, textiles, electronics and metals, green missions will require investments in energy, transport, nutrition, health and areas that will allow manufacturing to reduce its material content.

To battle the climate crisis, and use it as a spur for a green economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, we can transform today’s fears of uncertain outcomes into missions to be accomplished, that are as bold and inspirational as the 1969 moonshot. This will require visionary leadership, patient strategic finance, a grassroots movement and bottom-up innovation – taking the complexity and difficulty of the threat seriously, and mobilizing across the economy to meet it.

Mariana Mazzucato is Professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Value at University College London and the Founding Director of the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose. She is also a member of the United Nations Committee for Development Policy. Her new book on this topic, Mission Economy: A Moonshot Guide to Changing Capitalism, will be released in 2021.

**The views expressed in this blog are the author’s and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of UN DESA.*

SDG 13 in numbers



The climate crisis continues unabated as the global community shies away from the full commitment required for its reversal. The year 2019 was the second warmest on record and the end of the warmest decade (2010–2019), bringing with it massive wildfires, hurricanes, droughts, floods and other climate disasters across continents.

Global temperatures are on track to rise as much as 3.2°C by the end of the century. To meet the 1.5°C – or even the 2°C – maximum target called for in the Paris Agreement, greenhouse gas emissions must begin falling by 7.6 per cent each year starting in 2020. However, despite the drastic reduction in human activity due to the COVID-19 crisis, the resulting 6 per cent drop in emissions projected for 2020 falls short of this target, and emissions are expected to rise as restrictions are lifted.

If the world does not act now, and forcefully, the catastrophic effects of climate change will be far greater than the current pandemic. Governments and businesses should use the lessons learned and opportunities arising from this crisis to accelerate the transitions needed to achieve the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, redefine our relationship with the environment, and make systemic shifts and transformational changes to become low-greenhouse-gas emission and climate-resilient economies and societies.

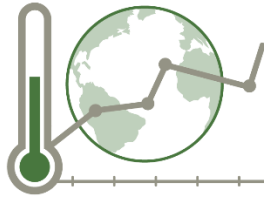
Access more data and information on the indicators for SDG 13 in the [SDG Progress Report 2020](#).



TAKE URGENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS

BEFORE COVID-19

GLOBAL COMMUNITY SHIES AWAY FROM COMMITMENTS REQUIRED TO REVERSE **THE CLIMATE CRISIS**



2019 WAS THE SECOND WARMEST YEAR ON RECORD

GLOBAL TEMPERATURES ARE PROJECTED TO RISE BY UP TO 3.2°C BY 2100



ONLY **85 COUNTRIES** HAVE NATIONAL **DISASTER RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES** ALIGNED TO THE SENDAI FRAMEWORK

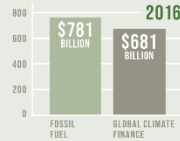
COVID-19 IMPLICATIONS



COVID-19 MAY RESULT IN A **6% DROP IN GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FOR 2020**

STILL SHORT OF **7.6% ANNUAL REDUCTION** REQUIRED TO LIMIT GLOBAL WARMING TO 1.5°C

CLIMATE FINANCE: **INVESTMENT IN FOSSIL FUELS** CONTINUES TO BE HIGHER THAN INVESTMENT IN CLIMATE ACTIVITIES



CLIMATE CHANGE CONTINUES TO EXACERBATE THE FREQUENCY AND SEVERITY OF **NATURAL DISASTERS**



MASSIVE WILDFIRES



DROUGHTS



HURRICANES



FLOODS

AFFECTING MORE THAN **39 MILLION PEOPLE** IN 2018

No, the pandemic did not help climate action



As the deadly COVID-19 pandemic brought the world to a standstill, greenhouse gas emissions plummeted by a record amount. Yet, in the grand scheme of climate change, this historic reduction was but a blip with little impact on atmospheric carbon dioxide levels.

Despite the postponement of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26) to next year, momentum for greater climate action continues during the COVID-19 crisis. On 12 December 2020, the United Kingdom (host and President of COP26), the United Nations and France, in partnership with Chile and Italy, will co-host the Climate Ambition Summit 2020 to mark the fifth anniversary of the Paris Agreement for climate change.

The world registered a record reduction of energy-related CO₂ emissions in the first half of 2020. Energy demand plunged amid widespread restrictions on economic activities and movement of people. By September, however, the CO₂ emissions recovered to the previous year's level as lockdown measures were relaxed and economic activities rebounded. The carbon dioxide emissions reduction this year is projected to remain a one-time dip with negligible impact on the buildup of atmospheric CO₂.

This year's reduction in emissions was a result of painful behavioral changes forced upon the global population to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. On top of the risk of infections and widespread social anxieties, the unprecedented plunge in economic activities resulted in massive economic losses with rapid surge in bankruptcy and unemployment in most countries.

The experience this year clearly demonstrates that restraining economic activities, with its painful consequences, will not slow down CO₂ build-up and global warming. Austerity cannot lead to a zero emissions economy. The green transition needs a new mode of production and consumption and post-crisis investments must accelerate economic transformation to ensure that we "recover better together".

The December Monthly Briefing is available [here](https://www.bit.ly/wespbrief).

UPCOMING EVENTS

As a preventive measure amidst the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, some of the high-level meetings organized by UN DESA worldwide have been postponed, cancelled or are taking place virtually in a scaled down format. Others are still being reviewed. Find out the latest information about the affected events: [UN DESA Calendar](#): [UN DESA Calendar](#).

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