

THE GLOBAL IMPACTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN CURRENT ERA

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, is an ongoing pandemic of coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2). The disease was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) in January 2020, and was recognized as a pandemic in March. As of 13 October 2020, there have been at least 1,080,682 confirmed deaths and more than 37,801,975 confirmed cases in the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic and response measures have contributed to social and economic recession including the largest Global Recession since the Great Depression. Around 100 million people could fall into extreme poverty and global famines. It has led to the postponement or cancellation of events and widespread supply shortages, but also decreased emission of pollutants and greenhouse gases. Educational institutions have been partially or fully closed, with various alternatives used. Misinformation about the virus has circulated through the media. There have been many incidents of xenophobia and racism against Chinese people and against those perceived as being Chinese or as being from areas with high infection rates.

KEYWORDS: Covid-19, pandemic, economic, global.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 Pandemic originated with a cluster of mysterious, suspected pneumonia cases in the city of Wuhan, the capital of Hubei, China. A Wuhan hospital notified the local center for disease control and prevention (CDC) and health commissions on 27 December 2019. On 8 January 2020, a new corona virus was identified as the cause of the pneumonia.^[5] The sequence of the virus was soon published on an open-access database.

As of October 6, 2020, the novel corona virus SARS-CoV-2 that originated in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province in China, had infected around 90,700 people and killed 4,739 in the country.^[6] Shanghai is currently the hotspot for the virus in China.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5. It went past 50 lakh on September 16 and crossed 60-lakh mark on September 28. India is now the second worst-hit nation by the pandemic after the US, having surpassed Brazil.^[7] However, India has been reporting more daily cases than the United States since mid-August. According to Worldometer, India has

6,906,151 confirmed cases and that 106,521 people have died because of COVID-19.

Latin America became an epicenter of the corona_virus pandemic in May, driven by Brazil's ballooning caseload as the number of known infections in Europe fell. Seven months after its first known case, Brazil has had at least 5 million cases — more than all of Europe — and over 148,000 deaths. In early June, Brazil began averaging about 1,000 deaths per day from Covid-19, joining the United States — and later India — as the countries with the world's largest death tolls. Between mid-September and early October, the daily death toll dropped to about 700 from roughly 800.^[8]

It was confirmed to have spread to Indonesia on 2 March 2020, The COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia is part of the ongoing worldwide pandemic of corona_virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) As of 10 October, Indonesia has reported 328,952 cases, the second highest in Southeast Asia, behind the Philippines. In terms of death numbers, Indonesia ranks third in Asia and 17th in the world. Indonesia has tested 2,283,369 people against its 269 million population so far, or around 8,469 people per million.^[9]

Iran reported its first confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 infections on 19 February 2020 in Qom. The total number of official cases surpassed 300,000 on 30 July 2020. Infections continued at a high level in August, with 2,685 tested positive for the virus on 2 August. On 12 August, Health Minister Iraj Harirchi suggested that rate of contamination from the virus had increased. On 19 August, the total number of cases had reached over 350,000, with the total number of deaths recorded exceeding 20,000. On September 19, 24,000 Iranians had died of corona virus.^[10]

The distribution of COVID-19 in Pakistan is heavily concentrated in a few key areas. The city of Karachi (as of 5 September 2020) has recorded about 84,000 confirmed cases, making up about 28% of all cases of COVID-19 in Pakistan. Meanwhile, Lahore, the country's second-largest city, has recorded (as of 5 September 2020) 49,000 cases of COVID-19, making up about 16% of the country's cases. Islamabad Capital Territory and Peshawar District have also both recorded over 10,000 cases. Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, and Peshawar account for about 163,000 cases, which make up nearly 55% of the country's total confirmed cases.^[11]

As of October 11, there have been 339,341 confirmed cases of the disease in the country. Out of these cases, 293,075 recoveries and 6,321 deaths were recorded. It has the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Southeast Asia, ahead of Indonesia and Singapore, and ranks 7th in Asia and 18th in the world. The largest single-day increase in the number of confirmed cases was reported on August 10, when the Department of Health (DOH) announced 6,958 new cases.^[12]

Impacts of Covid-19

Economic and Financial Crisis

The outbreak is a major destabilizing threat to the global economy. Agathe Demarais of the Economist Intelligence Unit has forecast that markets will remain volatile until a clearer image emerges on potential outcomes.

The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge we have faced since World War Two. But the pandemic is much more than a health crisis, it's also an unprecedented socio-economic crisis. Stressing every one of the countries it touches, it has the potential to create devastating social, economic and political effects that will leave deep and longstanding scars. UNDP is the technical lead in the UN's socio-economic recovery, alongside the health response, led by WHO, and the Global Humanitarian Response Plan, and working under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinators.

As of September 2020, every advanced economy is in a recession or depression, whilst all emerging economies

are in recession.^[13,14] Modeling by the World Bank suggests that in some regions a full recovery will not be achieved until 2025 or beyond. The COVID-19 recession is a major ongoing global economic crisis which has caused both a recession in some nations, and in others a depression. It is currently the worst global economic crisis since the Great Depression. The economic crisis began due to the economic consequences of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. A first major sign of the recession was the collapse of markets during the 2020 stock market crash, which began in late February and lasted through March. From 24 to 28 February, stock markets worldwide reported their largest one-week declines since the 2008 financial crisis,^[15] thus entering a correction. Global markets into early March became extremely volatile, with large swings occurring in global markets. On 9 March, most global markets reported severe contractions, mainly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and an oil price war between Russia and the OPEC countries led by Saudi Arabia. This became colloquially known as Black Monday I, and at the time was the worst drop since the Great Recession in 2008.^[16]

Three days after Black Monday I there was another drop, Black Thursday, where stocks across Europe and North America fell more than 9%. Wall Street experienced its largest single-day percentage drop since Black Monday in 1987, and the FTSE MIB of the Borsa Italiana fell nearly 17%, becoming the worst-hit market during Black Thursday.^[17]

It is already clear that the global economy will take a massive hit from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic this year. The economic slump will affect all regions and countries. Although we do expect the global economy to grow again in 2021, even in China, Europe and the United States, this growth will not be sufficient to offset the losses of 2020.

Employment Crisis

The global economy will contract 3% in 2020, according to the International Monetary Fund, a deeper downturn than that seen in the 2008–09 financial crisis. That's likely to push unemployment up across the board, with the Fund predicting the unemployment rate will rise to 10.4% this year, from 3.7% in 2019, and to 9.2% from 6.6% in advanced European countries.

But it's not just those in formal employment that give rise to concern. More than 2 billion people worldwide working in the informal economy are among the most vulnerable, according to the International Labour Organization. "They often have poor access to health-care services and have no income replacement in case of sickness or lockdown," the ILO says in a report. "Many of them have no possibility to work remotely from home. Staying home means losing their jobs, and without wages, they cannot eat." Income losses for informal economy workers will probably be "massive", the ILO

says, with its estimates showing their earnings declined by 60% globally in the first month of the crisis.^[18]

Hunger

COVID-19 leaves some of the world's most vulnerable communities facing "a crisis within a crisis", according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Around the world, the economic downturn and rising unemployment will reduce people's purchasing power, exacerbating the global hunger problem.

The 55 countries that are home to acutely food-insecure people in need of urgent humanitarian food and nutrition assistance "may face an excruciating trade-off between saving lives or livelihoods or, in a worst-case scenario, saving people from the coronavirus to have them die from hunger," according to the Global Report on Food Crises 2020.

"The number of people battling acute hunger and suffering from malnutrition is on the rise yet again, says António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations. "And the upheaval that has been set in motion by the COVID-19 pandemic may push even more families and communities into deeper distress."

Mental health crisis

The coronavirus pandemic "has the seeds of a major mental health crisis," the United Nations (UN) warned in a policy briefing this week, calling for substantial investment in support services. Devora Kestel, director of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Use at the World Health Organization (WHO — a UN agency), said the isolation, fear, uncertainty and economic turmoil surrounding the pandemic could all cause "psychological distress."

She added that "the mental health and wellbeing of whole societies have been severely impacted by this crisis and are a priority to be addressed urgently." Kestel was presenting a UN report, issued Thursday, which highlighted that certain people, including frontline healthcare workers, the elderly, those with pre-existing health conditions, women and children were showing "high degrees of Covid-19-related psychological distress." The UN said that the Covid-19 crisis influenced where people were situated on the continuum, and "many people who previously coped well, are now less able to cope because of the multiple stressors generated by the pandemic." The UN also said that to cope with the stress of the coronavirus pandemic, people may resort to alcohol, drugs, smoking or spending more time on potentially addictive activities like online gaming. It mentioned another study that found a fifth of Canadians aged 15-49 had been drinking more during the pandemic. The UN urged countries to include mental health in their Covid-19 response, among other measures.

Vaccination programmes

Measles and polio vaccine programmes are being postponed amid fears that the contact needed to deliver them could spread coronavirus. At the end of March, the World Health Organization released guidance to help countries sustain immunization services but recommended mass vaccination campaigns be temporarily suspended, underscoring how tricky it is to balance ensuring the safety of health workers and protecting people against preventable diseases. Scientists at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) forecast carrying on with routine immunisation in Africa would prevent between 29 to 347 future child deaths for each excess COVID-19 death due to an infection. "Without vaccination these deaths could result from a range of diseases including measles, yellow fever, pertussis, meningitis, pneumonia and diarrhoea," LSHTM says on acquired during a vaccination visit.

Unintended pregnancies

The UN warns that a lack of access to family planning, coupled with lockdowns and major disruptions to health services, could result in 7 million unintended pregnancies in the coming months. Facilities are closing, women are skipping medical appointments for fear of catching the virus and it's becoming more difficult to get contraceptives due to disrupted supply chains.

Should health services remain disrupted and lockdowns continue for six months, some 47 million in these countries may not be able to access modern contraceptives, the analysis by the UN Population Fund, UNFPA, and its partners, shows. It's not just unintended pregnancies highlighted in the report – it predicts there could also be a rise in gender-based violence, female genital mutilation and child marriages, as the lockdown holds back preventative programmes. "This new data shows the catastrophic impact that COVID-19 could soon have on women and girls globally," says Dr Natalia Kanem, executive director of UNFPA. "The pandemic is deepening inequalities."

Climatic Change

The COVID-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc in countries across the globe, causing a global health crisis and forcing economies to slow down due to the strict quarantine measures. However, the outbreak has also impacted the environment in an intriguing way. As the pandemic spreads in different parts of the world, its consequences run farther than closed borders, scarce hand sanitizer, and social distancing protocols.

COVID-19 is affecting the lives of millions of people and, also, the environment. The Carbon dioxide emissions and human mobility have been reduced, which improves air quality and encourages wild animals to come out and explore the cities. Clearly, human beings are part of nature and all activity that impacts the environment also impacts us. According to Marshall Burke from the Department of Earth System Science at

Stanford University, in China, just two months of reduced pollution has saved the lives of 4000 children under the age of 5 and 73000 adults over the age of 70.[19] Perhaps, this is not a question of whether the virus is “good” or “bad” for the climate, but instead if we can create a functional economic system that supports people without threatening the life of Earth. It is safe to say that no one wanted carbon emissions to be reduced this way. COVID-19 has a dark cost to our lives, healthcare systems, and mental health of people around the world. Nevertheless, it has also shown that communities can make a difference when they take care of each other, and this could be an invaluable lesson when we face climate change.

Anti Asian Racism and Worldwide Xenophobia

On 8 May, 2020 United Nations Secretary-General said that “the pandemic continues to unleash a tsunami of hate and xenophobia, scapegoating and scare-mongering” and urged governments to “act now to strengthen the immunity of our societies against the virus of hate.” “Racism and physical attacks on Asians and people of Asian descent have spread with the Covid-19 pandemic, and government leaders need to act decisively to address the trend,” said, John Sifton, Asia advocacy director. “Governments should act to expand public outreach, promote tolerance, and counter hate speech while aggressively investigating and prosecuting hate crimes.” Since the outbreak of the pandemic, Asians and people of Asian descent have been targets of derogatory in media and statements by politicians as well as on social media platform where hate speech related to Covid-19 also appears to have spread extensively. US President Donald Trump’s use of the term “Chinese virus” and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s use of “Wuhan virus” may have encouraged the use of hate speech in the US. Although by late March Trump stepped back from using the term and issued a tweet in support of “our Asian-American community,” he has not directed any specific governmental response toward protecting Asians and people of Asian descent. Discrimination hasn’t been limited to Asians or people of Asian descent. In India and Sri Lanka, where leaders have done little to stop rising anti-Muslim discrimination in recent years, many apparent Covid-19-related cases of attacks and discrimination against Muslims have been reported. In Myanmar, ultra nationalist leaders have used the pandemic to justify threats and hate speech against Muslims.^[20,21]

CONCLUSION

We have now reached the tragic milestone of one million deaths, and the human family is suffering under an almost intolerable burden of loss. UNDP is the technical lead in the UN’s socio-economic recovery, alongside the health response, led by WHO, and the Global Humanitarian Response Plan, and working under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinators. Every country needs to act immediately to prepare, respond, and recover. UNDP will help

countries to urgently and effectively respond to COVID-19 as part of its mission to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and build resilience to crises and shocks.

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