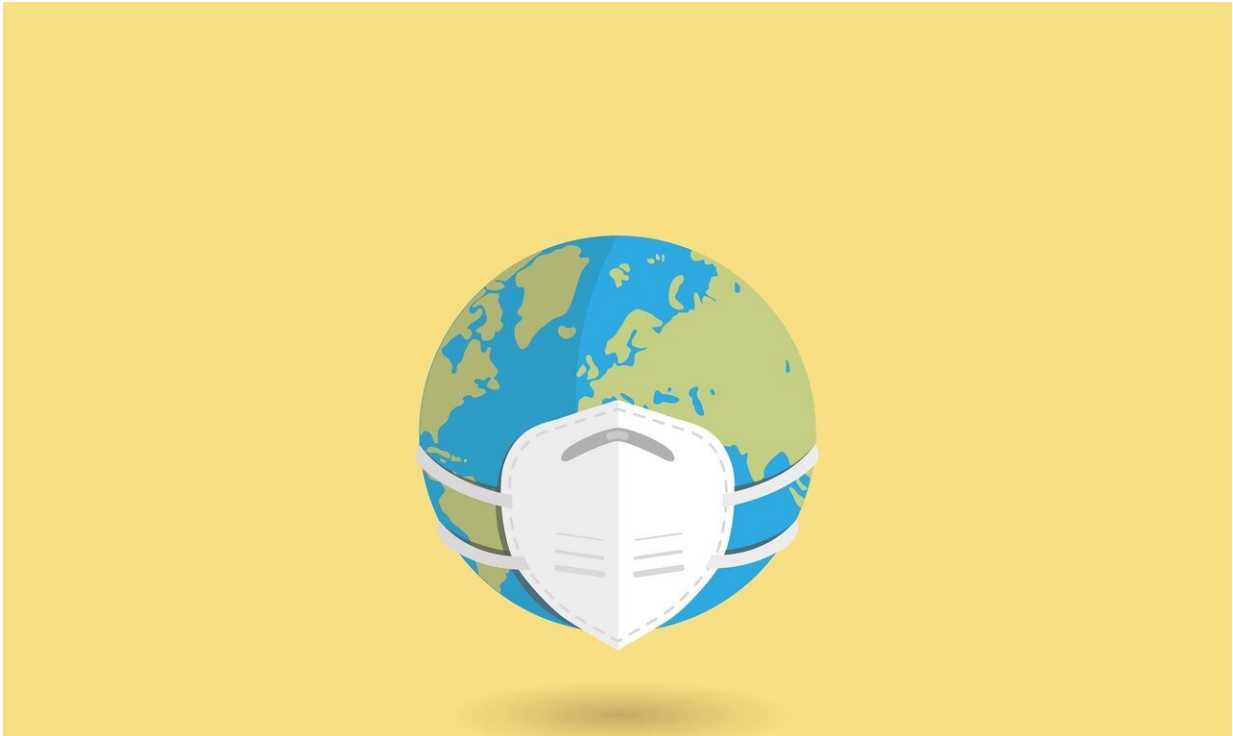


Sustainability in a pandemic

December 11 2020, by David Bradley



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

A new perspective to be published in the International Journal of Sustainable Development suggests that the current sustainable development framework is strong enough to face long-term global challenges including poverty and climate change and even, emergent diseases, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Mohan Munasinghe, Chairman of the Munasinghe Institute for Development (MIND) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, explains however that the emergence of the virus SARS-CoV-2, which led to the COVID-19 pandemic beginning at the end of 2019 has highlighted major existing unsustainabilities. Among those are potentially unhealthy interactions between ecological and socio-[economic systems](#). Such interactions where people encroach on wildlife habitats can, it seems, facilitate the transfer of pathogens from [wild species](#) to domesticated species or humans and occasionally lead to diseases that affect humanity on a global scale.

In 2015, humanity recognized sustainable development as a key objective of our future health and prosperity. The concept gave rise to the universal acceptance of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and 17 sustainable development goals by all countries. When the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a global pandemic in March 2020 those aspirations were put on hold to some degree as humanity attempted to cope with what has become an unprecedented a horrendous health crisis with ongoing socio-economic effects.

From this perspective, seven preliminary policy-relevant lessons can be gleaned that would allow us to reinvigorate our approach to [sustainable development](#) issues. This will hold under the proviso that we learn the lessons and follow their guidance.

- Protect the environmental base and avoid dangerous feedbacks
- Find integrated, globally coordinated, systems-based long-term solutions for multiple problems
- Empower individuals to act now
- Focus on social issues
- Pursue a transformative path to sustainability via balanced inclusive green growth
- Promote sustainable urban habitats and lifestyles using digital

technology

- Use better risk analysis and management.

"The pandemic does have a silver lining—it confirms that achieving sustainability is an effective but urgently needed response," Munasinghe says. "If we do not change, it will not be the end of the world," he adds. "The earth will certainly continue as it has for billions of years, but perhaps with a diminished human presence or none—a relatively minor blip in the greater scheme of things."

More information: Munasinghe, M. (2021). COVID-19 and sustainable development, *Int. J. Sustainable Development*

Provided by Inderscience

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