

OPPORTUNITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT DURING COVID 19 CRISIS

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Abstract

At the end of December 2019, the novel coronavirus disease emerged in Wuhan city of China. It spread rapidly and affects other parts of China. To lower the risk of further disease transmission the authorities in Wuhan locked down the city on January 23, 2020. COVID-19 cases were detected in several other countries within a few weeks and it became a global threat. The main objective of this study is to know about the strategic moment for sustainable development during COVID-19 crisis and to know about the impact of COVID-19 on environment. During this COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary to modify guidelines which support going digital work such as work from home and operating conference calls instead of direct meeting like face-to-face. In the last one month there is more digital transformation than we have seen in the last 20 years. While, employees, workers and businesses are suffering from shutdowns, quarantines, and other areas like telecom, pharmacy, internet and health care etc. Human beings are principally depending on Mother Nature but they often forgot to take care of it. Humans are so reluctant to the conservation of natural resources and sustainable development that we had lost the beauty of the Earth totally. During COVID – 19 lockdowns imposed throughout the world the people realize how nature is important in our everyday life. It has made us see that our actions can very well brunt the Earth's sustainability. In India from 22 March 2020, the government imposed "Janata Curfew". Due to this, across the country there is momentous drop in air pollution levels.

KEYWORDS: Digital transformation, Environment, Online Collaboration tools, Sustainable infrastructure.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of December 2019, the novel coronavirus disease emerged in Wuhan city of China. It spread rapidly and affects other parts of China. To lower the risk of further disease transmission the authorities in Wuhan locked down the city on January 23, 2020. COVID-19

cases were detected in several other countries within a few weeks and it became a global threat. On 25 May 2020 globally the total Coronavirus cases were 5,500,607, death cases were 3,46,721, and recovered cases were 2,302,069. In India, the first Coronavirus case was confirmed on 30 January 2020 in the state of Kerala, when a university student from Wuhan travelled back to the state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced 21 days lockdown Phase 1 from 25 March – 14 April 2020 on 24 March 2020. On April 14, PM Modi extended lockdown till 3rd May 2020. On 16 April, lockdown areas were classified as “red zone, orange zone, and green zone”. The red zone indicates the presence of infection hotspots, orange zone indicates some infection and green zone indicates no infection. On 1st May 2020, the Government of India and the Ministry of Home Affairs extended the phase 3 lockdown period from 4 May to 17 May. On 17 May, the National Disaster Management Authority and Ministry of Home Affairs extended the phase 4 lockdown period from 18 May – 31 May 2020.

From 4th May 2020, the lockdown was eased with several relaxations in all zones as per the Ministry of Home Affairs guidelines. The Inter/ Intra district buses with 50% capacity were allowed in the green zone only, Taxis with 1 driver and 2 passengers were allowed in orange and green zones, Shops/e-commerce dealing essential goods, Private offices with 33% capacity, Two-wheelers without pillion rider, Four-wheelers with 1 driver and 2 passengers and Inter-state movement of goods were allowed in all zones i.e. red, orange and green zones. Several countries announced the closure of movie theatres, gyms, museums, swimming pools and large gathering places like educational institutions, to fight this invisible enemy. Preliminary evidence indicated that children are less susceptible to the virus but doctors reported a few cases of virus among children. It is very difficult to stop a sick child to play with friends and family. To reduce the spread of COVID – 19 among the younger and adult population several countries closed schools, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions.

To break the important chain of transmission to reduce the spread of infectious disease the educational institutions are closed. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a growing number of universities have postponed or canceled all campus events such as Examinations, Workshops, Conferences, and other activities. Many businesses shifted to online mode. During COVID-19 there is an increase in usage of technology day by day.

OBJECTIVES

1. To know about the strategic moment for sustainable development during COVID-19 crisis.
2. To know about the impact of COVID-19 on environment.

COVID – 19: A STRATEGIC MOMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

To plan sustainable development the lockdown provides a strategic opportunity in the following ways:

1. Manufacturing Industry

India's manufacturing industry is highly manifold. The majority of industrial workers are employed in the millions of small-scale handicrafts. In total population, 30 percent of them in India depend on daily wages for endurance. The current lockdown has disturbed the sustenance of these people. People are migrating from larger cities to their home towns. This is the best time for the state government should focus on job creation for these people in the same sector. The government should focus on strengthening labor schemes, create local start-ups and SME's to establish employment for these migrants.

2. Digital Transformation

During this COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary to modify guidelines which support going digital work such as work from home and operating conference calls instead of direct meeting like face-to-face. From the last one month there is more digital transformation than we have seen in the last 20 years. While, employees, workers, and businesses are suffering from shutdowns, quarantines, and other areas like telecom, pharmacy, internet and health care, etc., are innovating and developing. The major threat for the entire global economy was to continue the business among lockdown, social distancing, and other challenges. Here are some of the digital transformation take place in the future are:

I. Online Collaboration tools:

Organizations should find, evaluate, and have use the best online collaboration tools to work smoothly for both employees and partners. The popular collaboration tools like Google, Cisco, Microsoft, etc., are leading market leaders, but there are a lot of niche players are operating in this domain. The decision and selection mainly depend on budget availability.

Before buying the subscription one of the important things to consider is security and scalability.

II. Revive Sales channels policy:

The consumer buying pattern has changed due to lockdown and social distancing and it may further impact in the future also. Most of the people want to continue in the same mode while some of them are want to shift back to normal mode. This field requires a well-crafted digital strategy and investments.

III. Buoyant Business Continuity Plan (BCP):

Many organizations have a manual Business Continuity Plan (BCP) over hundred pages which are proven inefficient during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Hence there is a wish to have an Agile Business Continuity Plan that should be brought out in no time and with minimum hassle. The organization should mandate 'work from home' instead of preparing half – yearly or yearly business continuity plans. Indeed, few companies have already started thinking about giving 'work from home' forever as part of their company policy.

IV. Security:

It is very important to secure data related to the company, customer, and other delicate information. During the COVID-19 period, there is a rise in security breaches mainly due to substantial development in usage by working remotely. One of the recent examples of security concerns displayed in the Zoom app. The organization should mainly focus on 'Information Security' rather than a post facto check. By using the correct set of security tools, it is very important to secure and protect all IT assets such as Servers, Computers, and Smart Phones, Etc.,

V. Industry 4.0 (Dark Factory)

Many manufacturing organizations during the COVID -19 lockdown period, had to either shutdown their production totally or operated on the lower capacity; particularly in case of essential products/goods. The supply chain is under immense pressure to match the demands in the entire globe. Hence, post COVID-19 it will become more significant to transform to Industry 4.0. Industry 4.0 is nothing but the 4th industrial revolution particularly leveraging the digital technological tools. This helps manufacturers to associate all machines, products, and services to an individual network. It also aids Machine-to-Machine communication. The

concept of 'Dark Factory' means running a fully automated factory with less or no human onsite.

3. Invest in Sustainable Infrastructure

Investment in infrastructure is important for boosting economic activity and for creating jobs. India should develop renewable energy, especially rooftop solar. Similarly, scaling up the electrification and maintenance of public transport will be gravely significant to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. Continued investment in cold storage facilities and supply chains will protect the preservation and timely delivery of agricultural products and reduce losses to farmers.

IMPACT OF COVID – 19 ON ENVIRONMENT

Human beings are principally depending on Mother Nature but they often forgot to take care of it. Humans are so reluctant to the conservation of natural resources and sustainable development that we had lost the beauty of the Earth. During COVID – 19 lockdowns imposed throughout the world; people realize how nature is important in our everyday life. It has made us see that our actions can very well brunt the Earth's sustainability. In India from 22 March 2020, the government imposed "Janata Curfew". Due to this, across the country, there is a momentous drop in air pollution levels. In India, since coronavirus lockdown, we have seen some significant changes in environment. Some of them are discussed below:

1. Quality of air is enhanced

Due to overwhelming COVID – 19 pandemics, an unusual positive has been taken place in the environment i.e. there is a significant decrease in air pollution level in the country. In May 2014, according to the WHO report stated that New Delhi was ranked as the utmost polluted city in the world. Due to lockdown, all factories and constructions were ground to be freeze, and Delhi's 11 million cars were taken off the roads. Due to this Air Quality Index (AQI), has fallen below 20 from 200. In India, after decades due to lockdown, there is no vehicular movement and industrial activity has taken place which leads to fresh and clean air. In India, air quality has been improved, and also nearly 71% of nitrogen dioxide levels are reduced reported by India's Central Pollution Control Board.

The decrease in air pollution reduces the risk of COVID-19 and also climate change. To reduce the spread of coronavirus the government implemented many methods like quarantines, travel bans, social distancing, etc., due to this in china the carbon emission is

reduced by 25% reported by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air. The European Space Agency reported that there is a vital decline in nitrous oxide emissions which is obtained from vehicles, power plants, industries, and factories in the Po Valley region in Italy. In China, during COVID-19 pandemic how nitrogen dioxide gases dropped naturally in the initial stage is monitored by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and European Space Agency (ESA). In China especially in cities like Wuhan, the pollution level lowered by 20-40 Percent.

2. Quality of Water is improved

In India, due to the shutdown of industrial units during the lockdown period, there is a vital decline in water pollution levels in the Yamuna river. In these 21 days lockdown period the Yamuna river is looking so clean. The water quality is improved due to industrial pollutants and waste stoppage. In our country not only the Yamuna river has witnessed improvement in the quality of water but also the Ganga river.

In Venice, the canal's water is cleared, there is a greater flow of water and visibility of fish. The water quality is increased due to the settling of sediment which is often disturbed by boat traffic reported by Venice mayor's office.

3. Wildlife

Due to lockdown and restriction for travel, people are staying at home, some animals have been spotted in cities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand and cost of fish have decreased and around the world fishing fleets sit idle. German Scientist Rainer Froese said that due to reduce in fishing, the fish biomass will largely increase and protected that in European waters. Some special fish like herring could multiply their biomass.

4. Reduction in Carbon emissions

In May 2020, a study published that during the lockdown period the daily global carbon emissions decline by 17 percent. This led to an annual decrease of up to 7 percent. The decrease in carbon emission is especially due to the decline in the usage of transportation and industrial activities. On the other hand, due to lockdown people are doing work from home and they shifted to online technology and virtual conference technology. They may have a more sustained impact beyond the short-term reduction of usage of transportation.

5. Increase in retail and food production

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, online grocery deliveries have increased effectively. Small farmers are using digital technologies to sell their products. They sell mainly organic and more local food, and delivering weekly groceries is a better choice than individual trips to a store.

6. Dolphins spotted near Kolkata Ghats

After 30 years Ganges Dolphins is popularly known as South Asian River Dolphins spotted back due to the decrease in water pollution in different Ganga Ghats of Kolkata.

7. Upraised flamingos in Mumbai

In the city of Navi Mumbai, nearly ten thousand flamingos have stacked as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown. Generally, every year a huge number of flamingos come to Navi Mumbai, but this year there is an increase between 25% to 30%. Because air is so clean, there is no air pollution, and mainly there is no human activity carried on like construction activity around the place.

8. In Haridwar Ganga fit for drinking

The effluent of industrial wastes into the river water has stopped due to lockdown and this brought a vital change in the quality of water. The Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board Water has tested water in Haridwar. The test results show that the first time after decades the water is perfectly fit for drinking after chlorination.

CONCLUSION

To heal from COVID-19 pandemic, it is vital to revisit our sustainable development. COVID-19 is not the last of viral infections that the world has to face so with the right foresight and effective action we can assure that we are better prepared for the future. Hence, it is crucial that we not only make sure to prioritize our social, economic and environmental concerns while fighting the pandemic but also ensure that sustainability post COVID-19 encompasses healthy living for all. With hope in our hearts to beat the hard times, we shall move to a future of refined lifestyle choices to protect Mother Nature and hope to be working

cumulatively to restore our planet earth from the destruction that had been caused over the several years.

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