

# Scenarios and possible medium- and long-term trends related to recovery from pandemic and achievement of SDGs

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1. First of all we need to be recognize that we are here to talk about “scenarios” when the pandemic related situation remains in a state of perceptible flux and massive uncertainty. Given that, I think we should be guided by a *decision-driven* approach, rather than a *future driven* approach. The *decision* in this regard is to be guided by the pathway to achieve the SDGs, taking note of the destructions done by the pandemic.

2. Interim appraisals including household based face-to-face survey have shown that pandemic has washed away the many SDG-related achievements in most countries of the South. Thus, a *more credible projection will require*

*not only Goal-specific, but Target-specific based assessment, based on at least four factors: direction, intensity, duration and disaggregation of the impact of the pandemic.*

3. Initial appraisals also reveal that the pandemic has exposed the existing structural fault lines of the concerned country – indicating that *initial or benchmark conditions* had been important. Thus, we have seen exacerbation of historical distortions and discriminations - concerning the *left behinds*. But we also saw emergence of new inequities and injustices – we now have a new group who have been *pushed behind*.

4. *What I am trying to say that the mid-term trend can be only understood through a disaggregated and contextualized look at the impact of the pandemic in relation SDG achievement.* Pandemic had a disproportionate impact on the disadvantaged persons and communities. The impacts had been gender, age, location, occupation and identity differentiated. This has aggravated further the prevailing inequalities in most of its manifestations. So aggregate averages should not

distract us from the SDG tagline – *nobody should be left behind*.

5. To assess the mid-term impact of the pandemic on SDGs, we also need to take into account another factor - the *coping strategy of the disadvantaged people and communities*. Income shortfall, brought about by loss of employment, has been compensated by reduction in household expenses, particularly by cutting back food intake. There had been dissaving, asset liquidation coupled with growing indebtedness. Long drawn closure of educational establishments is leading to higher level of dropouts, underage marriages and increase in child labour. One also observes higher incidence of violence against women. *The bottom line is - socio-economic consequences of the pandemic may harass us much longer than health exigencies.*

6. *My last point for today relates to public policy approach in mitigating these fallouts of the pandemic so as to attain SDGs. Obviously, the core element of this would be consumption protection and employment resumption. This would need more active and effective use of the fiscal policy – cash transfer, food assistance*

*and social protections. The second priority area turns out to be education with particular focus on enabling digital access. The obvious third is health and nutrition sector – new borns have missed, non-Covid diseases have been neglected and the disadvantaged people did not get the vaccine. Finally, international support measures (ISMs) will be critical in attaining the mentioned three priorities.* G-20's pledges have to be implemented including debt relief, flow of ODA, market access of exports, movement of migrant workers, transfer technology and know-how, and of course COVID vaccine.

7. Let me conclude by saying the following. For evolving a mid-term approach related to recovery from pandemic and achievement of SDGs - we need a robust disaggregated analysis of the multi-layered impact, understanding of the coping strategy and effectiveness of the public policies. These analyses have to relate to specific SDG targets. Policy makers and development activists have to be innovative enough to rise to this historic challenge to service the SDG commitment!