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- HOME GOAL 1 GOAL 2 GOAL 3 GOAL 4 GOAL 5 GOAL 6 GOAL 7
- ABOUT US ▼ CONTACT ARCHIVE SEARCH ▼ LANGUAGES ▼ GOAL 8 GOAL 9
- GOAL 10 GOAL 11 GOAL 12 GOAL 13+14+15 GOAL 16 GOAL 17 Sitemap

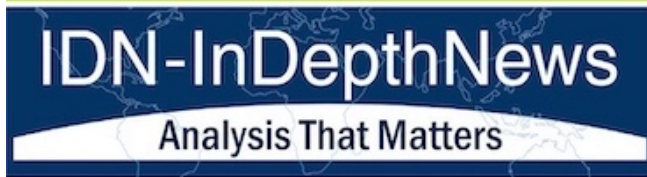


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News

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OBSERVER

A Monthly Magazine of IDN-InDepthNews in association with INPS Southeast Asia



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In Focus: Education and the SDGs

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By Kalinga Seneviratne

SYDNEY, 04 March 2023 (IDN) — Education contributes to many of the Sustainable Development Goals. It reduces poverty, drives sustainable economic growth, prevents inequality and injustice, leads to better health —particularly for women and children—and helps to protect the planet.

The COVID-19 pandemic has, more than ever, put the education of children, adolescents and young people at risk and has caused the largest education disruption ever in history. The pandemic is exacerbating pre-existing challenges in access to education and quality learning and skills, and the impacts of the crisis continue to disrupt the education of millions of children and adolescents across the globe.

As UNICEF points out, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries in the Asia-Pacific region were facing a persistent learning crisis: at least 35 million children were still out of school or did not have access to a quality education because of their socioeconomic status, geographical location, disability, ethnicity, language and gender.

Sri Lanka is one country that has overcome these challenges, with a literacy rate of over 93%. It was considered a post-independent success story and a model for middle-income developing countries in educating their population.

Sadly, this success story is gradually unravelling as the current economic crisis bites into children's education, as the article from Colombo in this issue reflects. We also bring you an article on why the world's language diversity needs to be protected and nurtured since it provides people with an identity and common heritage.

Universities are sometimes seen as ivory towers aloft from the communities they are supposed to serve. But, in reviving a sector that was badly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, universities are now taking the lead in working with the communities to achieve the SDGs by 2030. As one of our articles showcases, the higher education sector is showing enthusiasm right across the world to accelerate action for achieving the SDGs.

Our feature from Thailand reports on a unique education project called "People Academy" that allows everyone to study online and earn the degrees or certificates that the university has tailored to best fit their qualifications and professions. This is particularly opening doors for the physically and mentally disabled to access a higher education.

The Taliban in Afghanistan and their distaste for empowering women through education never goes off the international news agenda. In this issue, we have an article on why in meetings with de facto authorities in both Kabul and Kandahar, an UN delegation directly conveyed the alarm over a decree that bans women from working for national and international NGOs, and also the Taliban government's recent moves to close universities to female students across the country and banning girls from attending secondary school. [IDN-InDepthNews]

The PDF copy of Sustainable Development Observer Issue 17 can be downloaded [here](#).

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