



UN75
2020 AND BEYOND



**CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDY IN
INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW**
RAJIV GANDHI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LAW

In Collaboration With

UNITED NATIONS 75 (UN75)

Presents

**UN75: STUDENT
DIALOGUE ON
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS- HOW FAR
HAVE WE COME
AND WHAT'S
NEXT?**

Event Report

Introductory Remark

Ms. Vijaya Singh, Student Convenor of CASH, Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Punjab

Moderator

Ms. Akanksha Mathur, Member, Centre for Advanced Study in International Humanitarian Law (CASH), RGNUL.

Panelists

- Mr. Sundaram Rathore, 5th year MBBS student, Uttar Pradesh University of Medical Sciences, Saifai and also the U.P Zonal Secretary of AIMS.
- Mr. Ritu Raj, 3rd year student, Dr. D.Y Patil Law College, Pune and also the Founder & Publisher of Burnished Law Journal.
- Ms. Victoria Muller, Social Worker, Pursuing Master's in Human Rights and Human Development, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, India.
- Ms. Simran Massey, Honoured Member, Harvard Business Review.
- Mr. Mohamed Goma, Judge at the Court of Appeal, Egyptian State Council. PhD Researcher in Public Law, Cairo University.
- Ms. Deeksha Sharma, 5th year student, National Law University, Lucknow, India.
- Ms. Amira Dhawan, 3rd year student, Symbiosis Law School, NOIDA.
- Ms. Ojasvi Goyal, Human Rights Advocate and a Researcher.
- Ms. Pallavi, Fellow, ONGC Foundation. Awstika Das, Faculty of Law, Delhi University.
- Ms. Vaishnavi Chaudhry, 3rd year student, Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala.
- Ms. Sakshi Srivastav, 3rd year student, Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala.
- Mr. Pranav Nayar, 3rd year student, Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala.
- Mr. Parth Prachi Shrivastava, 3rd year student, Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala.

Vote of Thanks

Dr. Sangeeta Taak

Organisers

Centre for Advanced Study in International Humanitarian Law (CASH), RGNUL in collaboration with United Nations 75.

Rapporteurs

- Mr. Kushagra Gupta, 4th year student, Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala.
- Ms. Anjali Shekhawat, 3rd year, Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala.
- Mr. Sankapla Koirala, 3rd year, Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law, Patiala.

Report Editor

- Mr. Parth Prachi Shrivastava, Team Lead, Organising, CASH.
- Mr. Kshitiz Jain, Member, CASH.

Date & Time

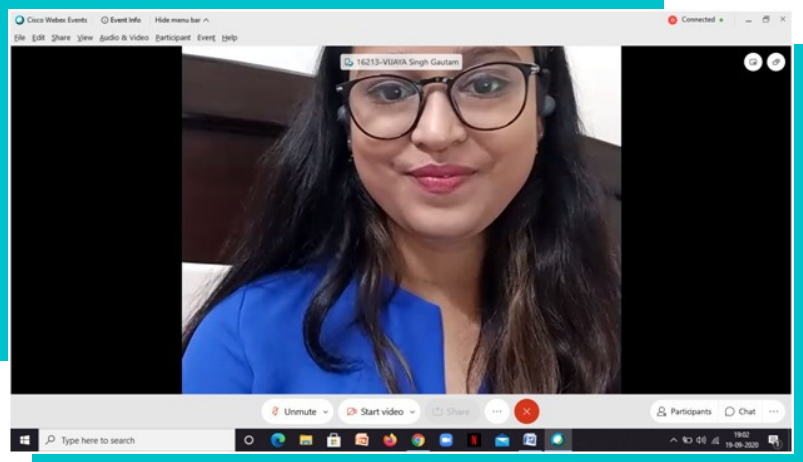
Saturday, 19th September, 2020, 6:00–8:00 PM IST on Webex

INTRODUCTION

Centre for Advanced Study in International Humanitarian Law (CASH) aims to promote the development of International Humanitarian Law by analyzing and addressing the most pressing issues. CASH in collaboration with United Nations 75 (UN75) hosted an online dialogue about the future that you want to see for our world. The said dialogue focused on how and to what extent the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) have impacted and continue to impact our world. Our theme focused over the pertinent issue of how the SDGs have contributed to the world as we know and how much remains to be done. Dialogue saw an overwhelming participation as expert panelists from around the world provided their insightful views on various SDGs. The dialogue was a student centric event keeping in mind our objectives of encouraging youth leadership and activism.

OPENING ADDRESS

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MR. SUNDARAM RATHOR

Mr. Sundaram discussed SDG-3, i.e., 'Health and Well-being'. He started with explaining the meaning and importance of health. WHO defines health as "health is a state of physical, mental and social well-being, in which disease and infirmity are absent." Health and well-being of a person are indispensable for him to have a productive life. The three crucial dimensions of health, i.e., mental, social and physical; were further elaborated upon by Mr. Rathore. The first element, mental health is the state of mind in which the person is balanced between the surrounding and the personal life with a satisfactory emotional stability. Mr. Rathore noted that in the scenario of pandemic especially the concerns of isolation, anxiety and depression have increased. He focused on people who have a huge workload and insisted upon keeping a positive outlook and keep engaging in recreational activities. He emphasized on maintaining a cheerful environment. Secondly, the social element of health. A person must be able to connect and interact with others. In the ongoing pandemic situation, it is required of people to maintain social distance and various governments are making rules regarding the same. Mr. Sundaram pointed out that social distancing is indeed a negative and inaccurate term to use, rather it should be called physical distancing. People should stay connected and interact often using various platforms available. Social distancing, according to Mr. Rathore, means severance of interaction and connections with others which would lead to isolation. The third dimension of health is concerned about our physical health. Mr. Sundaram insisted on the importance of exercise and yoga for our physical fitness. The Health and fitness of the body are concerned with the ability to carry out functions of the body properly with appropriate nutrients composition. Fast food and junk food are more prevalent even when they are extremely harmful. He clarified that the young people don't have any apparent effects on their body except for obesity and indigestion. Rather the serious effects on the body of such junk food are seen in old age with an increase in blood pressure, being prone to heart attack, and the likes. He also mentioned that people don't usually pay attention to regular check-up. Periodical check-up helps in early diagnosis of many diseases. He further discussed ways to provide people with health and well-being such as Source of income should be good to access resources. Good housing and nutritious food must be available to everyone. Nature of Occupation and the security of health at the workplace is also a major concern. Cleanliness and sanitation must be accessible to all. He concluded with requesting to be safe and keep others safe by taking accurate measures.

MR. RITURAJ

Mr. Rituraj talked about the SDG-4 which is 'Quality education.' He started with deciphering the meaning of quality education. Quality Education incorporates in itself the ability and capacity to learn which is fundamental to our development. He pressed on learning the ability to work for the betterment of society. He emphasized on vocational learning rather than classroom learning to enhance the required skills for future rather than simply jotting down the syllabus.

He further said that the Institutions, curriculum and infrastructure are not enough to provide quality education. Especially in South Asian countries like India, Bangladesh, and others. Government Schools in India are known to give the worst quality of education, said Mr. Rituraj. Many students attend government schools to be able to have free Mid-day meals. Above all this, there is a huge difference in literacy rate of males and females. The literacy rate of males is 82% and females is only 54%. Gender inequality is another threat to the spread of quality education and literacy of children. He also talked about Pakistan and Bangladesh facing such differences in the literacy rate of men and women. He suggested that the government has to spend more resources to ensure equality in learning. Only an increase in the number of schools and colleges would not provide for a solution. A program of Vocational learning, research, etc. must be included in the education.

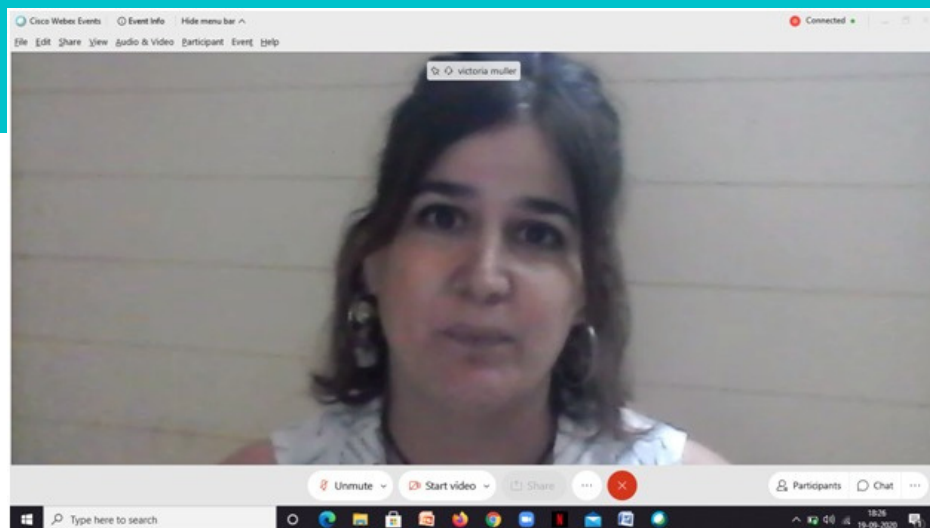
The USA, UK and many other developed countries are known for their vocational training programs and hence enhanced qualitative education. The movement of children to these countries to get proper learning has surged since many years. India has not been able to facilitate quality education and vocational learning so far. He said that there should be no barriers of poverty, gender, and the likes to gain quality education. The National Education Policy, 2020 introduced by the Government of India was highly applauded by the panellist to include the required measures and focus on the vocational training of students. He concluded with the remark that quality education can only be ensured by balancing between equality in literacy rate and enhancing the skills of deserving individuals.

MS. VICTORIA MILLER

Ms. Miller put forth her views on gender equality and the empowerment of women, the 5th Sustainable Development Goal. She elaborated upon the importance of gender equality for achieving true sustainable development. She pointed out that there are many enormous debates, marches, discussions, policies, and the likes for achieving gender equality and yet the world lacks in it by a huge margin. As it has been reported during this pandemic, domestic violence has increased and once again women have become vulnerable. Gender equality is a long ongoing, yet to be conquered battle. She opined that we should focus on policies, and program for reducing violence against women. Vulnerability factor of girls needs to be destroyed and the orthodox views about women being a weaker gender must be replaced. She also expressed concern over the fact that women are not educated or trained to do work or develop their skills as men are. The pandemic is drawing us back from developing on the positive side.

The pandemic has been hard for both the genders equally but still women in particular, are facing more difficulties.

All the nations have to work in cooperation to bring about the much-needed change in the current state of gender equality. She concluded with the remark that the inclusion of women in society has to be promoted and the psychological being of women has to be enhanced.



MS. SIMRAN MASSY

Ms. Simran Massy talked about SDG-8 which is to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. She pointed out that with the era of globalization and increased competition in the market, the labour class was already being ignored. The pandemic has posed a more serious problem for labour class especially. To clarify more upon this point, she quoted Joseph Stiglitz, “The rules of the game are increasingly being stacked against the workers.” She emphasized on the elephant curve method to show the income distribution and to understand the falling income of a labourer. According to the World Inequality Report, 2018, India has seen an increase in income inequality with the falling wages of workers. A report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has pointed out that 80% of the trade happens in global supply chains which are linked to TransNational Corporations. These supply chains establish monopoly and regulate markets which in turn leads to degradation of Workers condition.

Ms. Simran Massy in her presentation on SDG-8 in relation to workers and economy, presented a newspaper report by Economic Times reiterating that workers have no right, no recourse and face exploitation in the global market. To further clarify upon the SDG-8, she quoted ILO’s definition of decent work, stating that the workplace should ensure basic human dignity, minimum wages, gender equality and no child labour. ‘It’s about gender equality, equal recognition, enabling women to make choices and take control of their lives’ she quoted.

Using the inference from her study during her master’s, she pointed out the need for assistance, and infrastructure available to the labour class. She presented a graph showing the informal economy as a free-entry sector of last resort using the World Bank’s data. Females (86%) employed in the informal economy are much more than males. Further to clarify upon the situation of labour, she presented a graph of penetration of financial services to street vendors. She pointed out that most of the workers did not have Aadhar Cards or other necessary documents to access financial aid provided by the government, the lack of availability of finances, and the likes. She mentioned that barely 30% people out of all those surveyed, could actually avail the services provided by the government and this clearly shows the lacunae in the implementation of government policies. 93% vendors did not have certificates of vending that they were entitled to under the Street Vending Act. They admitted to paying bribes for getting the same. There is a need for a decent work frontier. Females were exploited at a larger scale by the money lenders or wholesalers. In this pandemic there has been dismantling of labour protection and retrenchment of social policy which has led to greater inequality.

A comparison chart of India with China, Bangladesh and Philippines, showed that India is way behind in ensuring social protection (11%). Trade Union Density is also falling in India. A balance between quality and quantity of work has to be achieved. An Increase in demand of the products can only increase both of them at the same time. The four components of decent work- opportunities for employment and income, respect for rights at work, social protection and stronger social dialogue form the backbone of ILO's approach. There should be recourse to rights that would empower people to access legal protection. The scenario of the economy before and after the pandemic has seen a vast change. Now tech platforms such as Amazon, big basket, and others are on rise. Street vendors, workers and entrepreneurs need to be protected and given a boost. There must be an intersection between economy and law. A key opportunity would be to set industry standards, employment in tech companies and a boost to the economy. Ms. Simran concluded with the comment that 'if India is to reduce poverty and inequality, it must make strides in improving the number and quality of work opportunities available for women and men in its informal economy. Providing rights to workers is what the international community's needs to aim at.

The screenshot shows a Cisco Webex meeting interface. The main window displays a presentation slide titled "Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 8) of achieving full and productive employment and 'decent work', for all women and men by 2030 in India." The slide contains two bullet points:

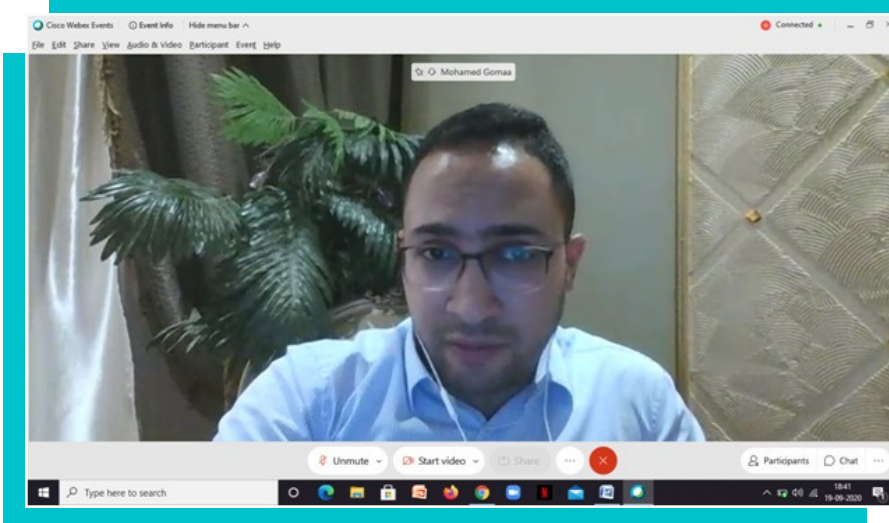
- This paper is an attempt to analyse the current context on how globalisation may seem to have increased the global wealth but the situation may not be as rosy in terms of purchasing power.
- In the era of globalization, where the production has a cross border organization, decent work for our labour is getting ignored. The essence of this paper lies in answering the question of what is informal labour and decent work and how the governance gap can be fulfilled? This paper argues for policy interventions to enhance the contribution of global supply chains to fair and inclusive growth since there is stronger coherence between economic objectives and decent work

On the right side, there is a participant grid showing several participants, including Simran Massey (who is speaking), DS, KC, Diya Seldi (Me), Kabir Chaturvedi (Host), AM, Alanksha Mathur, VM, victoria muller, and sundaram. The bottom of the screen shows the Webex controls bar with options like Unmute, Start video, Share, and a red X button. The Windows taskbar is visible at the very bottom.

MR. MOHAMMAD GOMAA

Mr. Gomma gave his views on the SDG 9 and 13 which are Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure and Climate Action, respectively. Firstly, he dealt with SDG 13 in which he mentioned that the main cause for air pollution and climate change is industrial activities. He stated that humans are not the only species affected by climate change, it affects species of plants and animals as well. He provided possible measures like rational use of energy, precautionary approach, prevention of trans-boundary harm, and others to prevent climate change and air pollution. He mentioned that for this purpose, the Vienna Convention on Protection of Ozone Layer, 1989, Montreal Protocol, 1989 and Kyoto Protocol, 2005 can come in handy. He stated that problems of rise are sea level, plastics in water resources and marine animals, increase in CO₂ and CHCs. A possible solution to this, can be proper waste cycle. He provided examples of how French Legislations have been made so as to protect the environment as well.

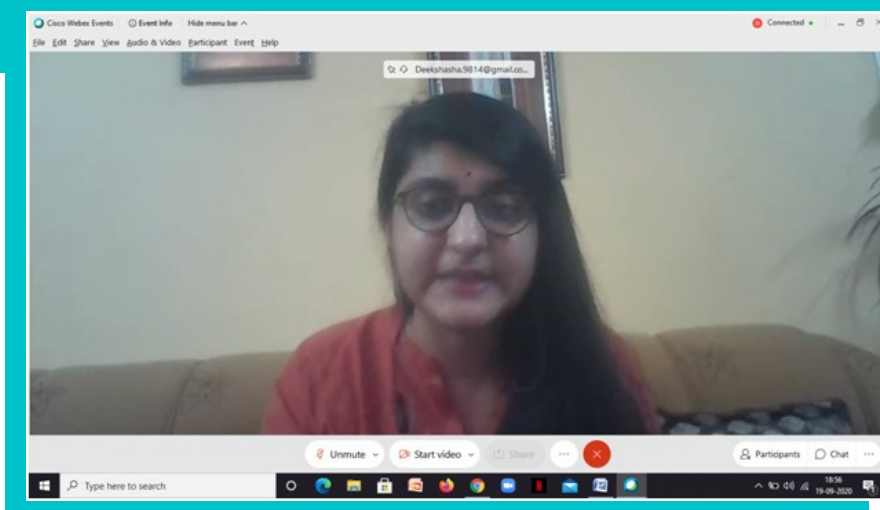
While speaking on SDG 9, he first brought attention to how the pandemic has affected execution of contracts relating to infrastructures. He further mentioned how the common law system lacks legislation to specifically deal with Force Majeure. The common law requires a contract clause on Force Majeure and in lack of such clause, a defence on the same grounds can be cumbersome. In the civil law system, he said, there are legislations to deal with Force Majeure. Mr. Gomma concluded by suggesting that in the present time, of the unprecedented pandemic, a legislation dealing with the same is of utmost importance so as to protect the goals of industries for innovation.



MS. DEEKSHA SHARMA

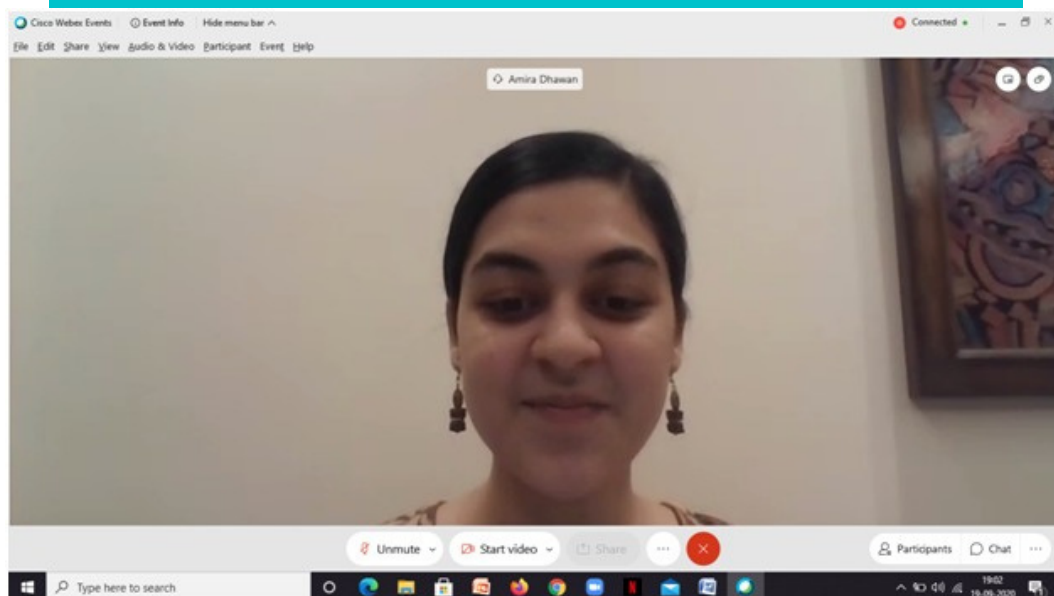
Ms. Sharma dealt with SDGs 15, 13, 12 and 6 which are Life on Land, Climate Action, Responsible Consumption & Production, and Clean Water and Sanitization, respectively. She began by mentioning the fact that International Law and Treaties on protection of the environment have increased 38 folds since the Stockholm Convention, 1978. Even the UN has addressed this fact in its Environment Program last year. However, we can observe degradation in the environment. She mentioned how the environment has been sacrificed for the profit of companies. She suggested that laws should be based on consumer consumption. The United Nation Convention on Sale of Goods (CISG) provides for trade usage and such usage should be respected among the parties for consumption and production balance. She stated that the World Trade Organization has changed its approach towards the environment and used the Vienna Convention of Law of Treaties (VCLT) to interpret age old treaties to work in the contemporary world. The WTO has used the Convention on Biodiversity to come up with environment friendly policy. She cited article 35 of the CISG which provides that the quality of the goods, as demanded by the buyer, must be met by the seller. She suggested that Sustainability Contract Clauses in contracts can help in conservation of the environment.

Further, she specifically dealt with farmland investment. She stated that it can be observed that Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) provide for prohibition against expropriation. In case of drought, the government, as under the clause against expropriation, is bound to provide water to the investment project rather than to its own people or land to fight the drought. This is because drought in the country is an indirect expropriation of the investment project. She concluded by citing the case of Vattenfall v. Germany, which was judged before the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Dispute (ICSID) as well to support the argument.



MS. AMIRA DHAWAN

Ms. Dhawan talked about SDGs 11 and 16 which provide for Sustainable Cities & Communities, and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, respectively. She quoted Martin Luther King Jr. to put a light on the importance of peace. Her definition of peace included prevention of conflict and limitation to the consequences of conflict. She stated that resentment toward the government leads to riots and civil-disobedience which can be categorized as non-international armed conflict. To help countries out of such conflict, the International Organization should work in an unbiased manner but such acts should only be undertaken after complete breakdown of national measures. She specifically dealt with the cases of cyber warfare. She suggested two categories for such violence, the first being the one that falls under the existing law and the second being the ones that cannot fall under existing law. An example of second-category crimes can be a country hacking into the nuclear handle of another country. For the first category, she suggested the use of VCLT to increase the ambit of existing laws. Further, she concluded by suggesting that making countries comply with their domestic laws while performing their international activities can help in prevention of such crimes.

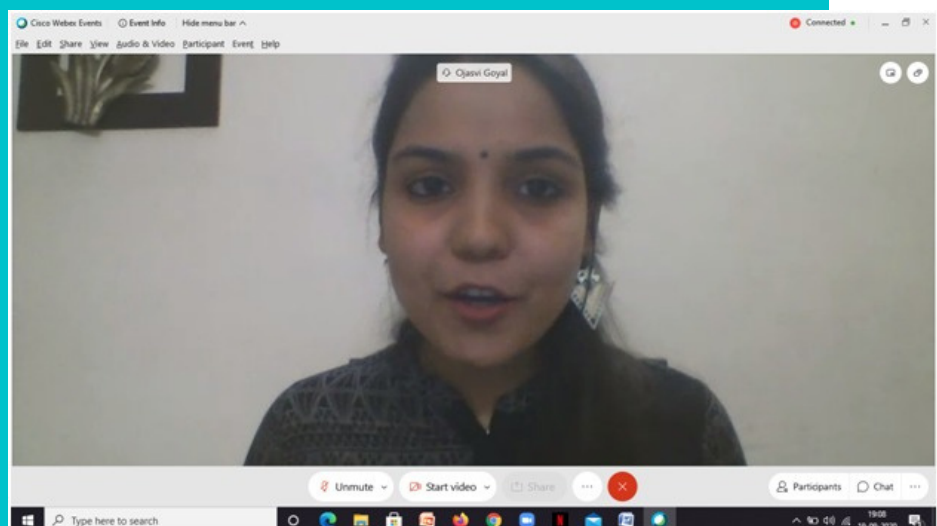


MS. OJASVI GOEL

Ms. Goel talked about SDG 8 which provides for decent work and economic growth. She started by stating that the global goal was to increase the GDP growth rate of developing countries by 7%. However, the pandemic has severely affected the goal. In the present, the Indian GDP is said to contract by 24%. Therefore, an amendment is required in the blueprint of the SDGs itself.

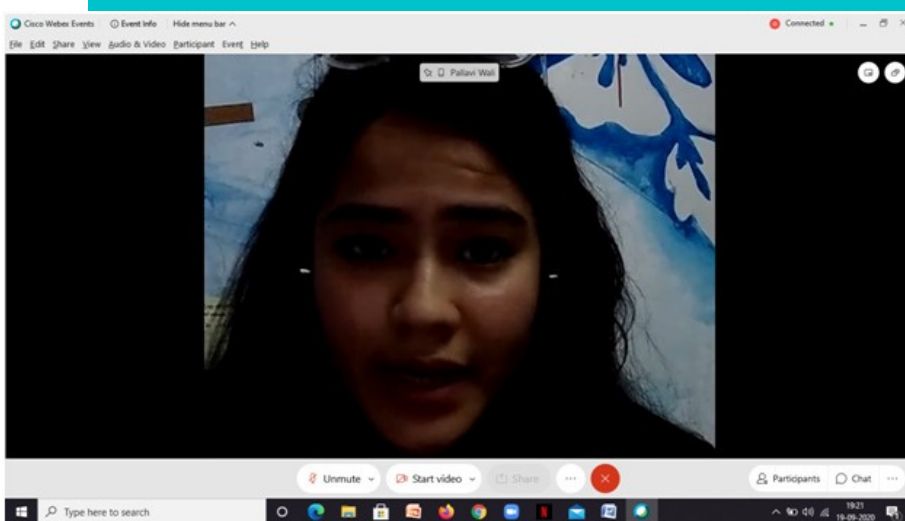
She also mentioned that the pandemic has greatly affected the employment sector. Here, she observed that a compromising situation has arisen. To save lives, livelihoods are sacrificed, and to save livelihoods, lives are sacrificed. She mentioned that the overlooked aspect is unemployability, which she stated was the “elephant in the room” but has still gone unnoticed. The problem in India is that people who are willing to work do not get work and even if there are job-opportunities, there is a mismatch of skill the person has and skill that the job requires. Further, it is observed that if a person has more degrees, it is harder to find jobs. Here, she stated that the possible solution can be creation of jobs in demand. Another solution can be migration of workers to places where job opportunities are high. She cited the example of England where old-age population is high (20% of the people above 60 years of age). There, demand for jobs like mobile phone operators is high. Another example was demand for locksmiths in Australia.

She stated that there is an inherent problem of gender bias in case of imparting skills. Women are not provided with the skills of computer training and data analysis. Her research found that people associate the job of nurse to females while male-nurses also exist. Here alignment of skills is required with the jobs in demand. India should make the most of its young population since by 2045, 1/5th of the population of India is expected to be above 60. Similar situations can be observed in many countries. Therefore, she concluded, such demographics should be noted while working for SDG 8.



MS. PALLAVI WALI

Ms. Pallavi dealt with the SDG 17 which provides for partnerships for the goals. She started by stating that SDG 17 is similar to the Millennium Development Goal no. 8, which failed in implementation. Failure of MDG goal no. 8 has helped in realization of the importance of partnerships. Further, SDG 17 is similar to Section 133 (7) of Companies Act which provides for Corporate Social Responsibility. Therefore, she used the phrase “CSR for SDG”. Partnership within and among governments, NGOs, Business and Civil Society is required for attainment of the goal. Furthermore, she stated that international cooperation among private entities and governments is required. One size fits all policy is a hindrance to the attainment of the goal. Since each country and components within the countries are different, such policy is not effective. India has observed failures in implementation of policies and attainment of goals. She stated that the reason for such failures is that policy makers are not the ones who implement the policies and the ones that should implement the policies are not working for attainment of the goals. The main reason for failure is that base-line surveys are either not done at all or not done properly before formulating the policies. She stated that since policies are for the people, it should come from the people. Such problems are not only limited to India hence the possible measures should be taken on International level. She stated that dominos effect can be seen in policies implementation; if one fails, all fail. Therefore, every SDGs are to be given focus equally. She stated that implementation of policies for the goals should start from within countries first. Lastly, she stated that the gender balance is only 44.2% and expects the number to grow, which again helps for involvement of women in policy implementation and attainment of goals.



MS. AWASTIKA DAS

Ms. Awstika acknowledged that she was a Late Speaker and would not highlight upon the definitions of SDGs for the attendees must be aware of their meaning. She started with recognising the essence of power. Her exposition was towards redefining power, from what we conventionally understand as physical strength, to allocation and distribution of resources in the form of towns, family units and villages. She raised a novel assertion that Gender and Climate Change, affect humans similarly through Power.

To substantiate the same, she began with the explanation of Climate Change by recapitulating the events of the industrial revolution, which was nevertheless a dominative success for developed nations at the cost of weaker nations and their population. Ms. Awstika reminded how Power shielded some sections and harmed some in those times, continuing till now. It was reinforced how Gender Inequality is witnessed in the form of violence, abuse, and interpersonal relationships in the family setups, where even working women are expected to undertake traditional roles.

According to Ms. Awstika's proposition and contrary to general practice, Gender Equality and Climate Change are not mutually exclusive. Despite the absence of any concrete research available, she demonstrated how; while Climate Change impacts everyone, not everyone is equally impacted as some society, owing to their privilege, comfort, and power are shielded from the effects of Climate Change.

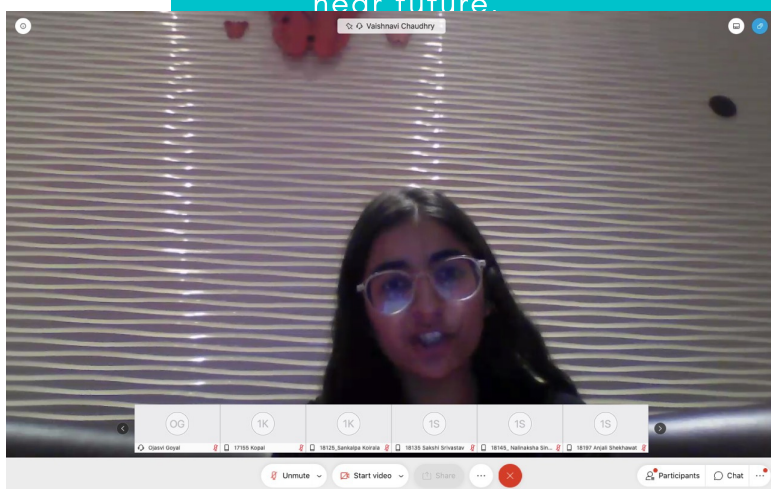
Ms. Awstika reminded us of her anecdotal experiences during the Amphan Cyclone in West Bengal during May'20. It was mentioned how because of her privilege, she faced technical shortcomings in the internet for a maximum period of a day. However, simultaneously people living in Sunderbans (a low-lying coastal area), had to part with their houses which were washed away along with their families that perished. They had to stay in government shelters at the time of pandemic, when everyone else was told to maintain social distancing. However, Ms. Awstika highlighted, even within this subset of vulnerability, women were even more vulnerable. She went on to elaborate on how during any climate disaster women are affected discriminately where they are statistically more likely to drop out of schools when climate and toil harder by walking farther distances to get fuel or other natural resources, since they are traditionally ascribed to follow such roles.

Ms. Awstika suggested an effective resolution to the problem, by quoting Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "women should be brought to power where decisions are made". This in Ms. Awstika's opinion is the way forward towards mainstreaming gender issues and ensuring equality. She highlighted how in our current statistical scenario, only 1% of Nationally Determined Contributions are oriented towards Gender Equality. Ms. Awstika concluded on a hopeful note towards the future batch of policy makers who need to be more sensitive and empathetic to ensure the ideals set out in the SDGs are met.

MS. VAISHNAVI CHAUDHRY

Ms. Vaishnavi outlined the 9 targets mentioned to end all forms of discrimination in achieving SDG Number 5. She further talked about how, in the context of conflict zones, violence becomes extremely frequent and the situation in Afghanistan, specifically, is evidence for the same during active hostilities. Ms. Vaishnavi then highlighted how women are targeted in these conflict situations through acts like forced marriages, selective killings, genital mutilation and skyrocketing discrimination. In Afghanistan, the patriarchal structure is very strong and there is a difference in perception and consequent action based on the gender of an individual.

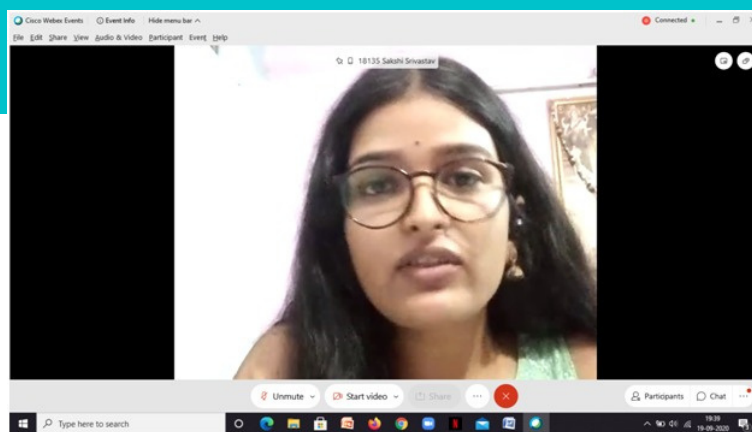
Ms. Vaishnavi raised higher concerns over areas under ISIS and Taliban rule which are worse of due to the advent of Sharia Law, where punishments ensue for “moral crimes” supplemented by higher statistical indicators of violence against women in the form of rape, and other crimes of a sexual nature. She highlighted how it is commendable that NGOs and UN organisations are working with political leaders in these areas to ensure healthcare for women protected under the SDGs. Ms. Vaishnavi concluded by emphasising on how Religion is a highly determinative factor in ascertaining rights in certain conflict areas, making the US-Afghan peace deal extremely relevant in the near future.



MS. SAKSHI SHRIVASTAVA

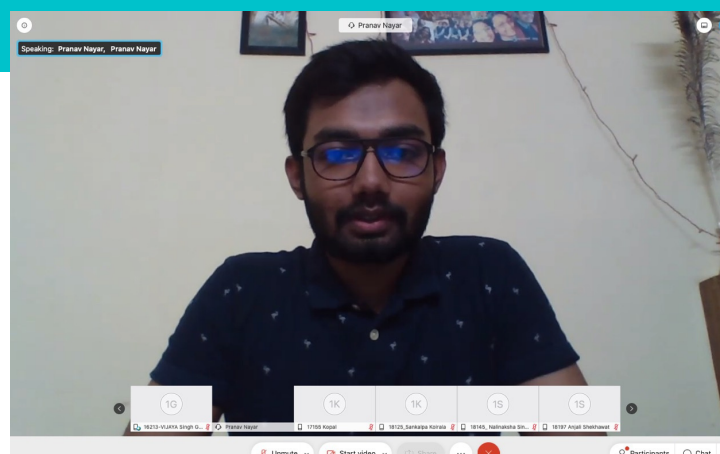
Ms. Sakshi commenced her speech with harrowing statistical figures by UNESCO which pointed out that 258 Million school-going aged children were out of school in 2018. She opined that the figures have been aggravated further during COVID 19, having a potential to deteriorate school education for 1.6 billion students affected worldwide. According to Ms. Sakshi remote learning is a privilege, where more than 30% of students worldwide don't have access to the same. This fact applies specially for students in conflict ridden areas, who face the most marginalization. The factors outlined by Ms. Sakshi are the Supply and Demand for education in conflicted areas, which riddle away an opportunity of education for these children. She firstly explained the barriers to supply of education which are: 1. Damage to infrastructure and other resources by way of attacks and demolitions, which impair adequate facilities for learning. 2. High intensity of internal displacement in armed conflict, severely affects children, teachers, and prevents the establishment of institutionalised frameworks for learning. Secondly, the Barriers to demand enumerated were: 1. The instance of higher rate of poverty in conflict zones, impacts in increasing child labour to sustain the family, reducing the need for education. 2. A severely deteriorated economy and destroyed job opportunities is prevalent, indicating that education is not feasible investment, due to absence of any opportunities the same may be converted into. 3. Children are generally recruited as soldiers in armed groups and thus are not able to go to school as militant leaders suggest otherwise. 4. The rampant targeted attacks on educational infrastructure and administration breed a constant fear within parents, children and teachers they may get attacked.

Ms. Sakshi mentioned how 121 million of children aged for primary and secondary school do not go to school. Previous shutdowns during COVID show that if students, especially girls, are out of school, they are unlikely to return. Ms. Sakshi appealed to the audience and warned that if nothing is done to redress these concerns, everything will deteriorate as education forms the baseline of any society. Finally addressing the Goal of partnership under SDG 17, Ms. Sakshi recommended that stable countries must come together, form stable partnerships to ensure inclusive and quality education to all.



MR. PRANAV NAYAR

Mr. Pranav highlighted how SDG 16 is one of the most rarely tested SDGs as compared to the others, but is nevertheless fundamentally crucial. He analysed SDG 16 to take a top-to-down, one-size fits all approach which policy makers expect would apply unilaterally and equally to all countries. However, Mr. Pranav asserted that Policies in the US cannot work in Russia and the opposite is true, too. Thus, in his opinion, the SDGs do not consider socio-cultural institutions but only political ones. He argued on how incidents are generally considered in their socio-cultural contexts taking the example of police brutality in George Floyd's death, which may have had different impacts in a country like Nigeria, than it did in the United States. Mr. Pranav highlighted how India currently faces the same communal issues as it did in 2002 due to the stagnancy in the socio-cultural institutions in the country leading to the conclusion that if the socio-cultural context does not change the SDG would not have any effect, as multiple countries are experiencing a regressive curve in this regard. Moreover, Mr. Pranav expressed disappointment over the heavy reliance of 'misrepresented' data which is required to update the SDGs. He referred to a personal survey which was conducted by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) on the level of safety felt by individuals when getting out late at night in Indian cities. Mr. Pranav highlighted how this statistic was only gathered from participants in metropolitan cities like Mumbai and Delhi, and thus do not afford a full picture of circumstances that may really prevail in the country, at the most underdeveloped levels. Therefore, Pranav suggested that there must be a bottom-to-top approach instead, to give full effect to the goal of strengthening institutions, by ascertaining the plight down-trodden people in the country are facing. According to Mr. Pranav, till perspective is not shifted, the goals cannot even be fulfilled by 2045 let alone the set target of 2030. He concludes by suggesting that the goal needs statistical revisions by taking into consideration the socio-cultural spectrum by an analogy that real safety will be guaranteed when it is the members of the lower strata in the society which can move out at night.



MR. PARTH PRACHI SHRIVASTAVA

Mr. Parth strongly critiqued the binary take on Gender Equality under SDG 5 which by incorporating specific terminology like “all women and girls” disregards the discrimination and lived experiences of other genders and gender non-conforming communities, thereby excluding the pride community. Mr. Parth regarded this to be a testament of the archaic approach adopted by the international community to ignore the LGBTQI+ community which face even higher levels of social and institutional discrimination.

Substantiating the same, Mr. Parth elucidated upon the appalling standards of safety for members of the LGBTQI+ which are more likely to be discriminated against. This analysis was substantiated by the distressing factual scenario reflecting 1 in 5 hate crimes in the United States were committed by anti-LGBTQI+ sentiments. Moreover, Mr. Parth highlighted how these groups face institutional discrimination where 20% of LGBTQI+ members surveyed by the T.H. Chan School of Public Policy Research (Harvard University), faced a disadvantage in securing a job, moreover 53% faced ridicule in the form of gay/lesbian jokes, and the substantially impacted 22% are refused equal pay.

Mr. Parth advocated for gender-neutral behaviour and policies, acknowledging nevertheless, the opposition against such moves who fear an “undue benefit” may ensue under the veil of such policies. Parth dismissed such claims as imprudent and regressive, explaining the need for the incorporation of gender-neutral terms which have multifarious effects on the LGBTQI+ community including, but not limited to a progressive cycle of: 1. Recognising a sense of recognition within society; 2. Translating such recognition into acceptance; 3. Affording a right of being heard to the community; 4. Inculcating inter-community familiarity. 5. Reaffirming the importance held by the community within society. 6. Ensuring that the community or its members are not left behind in any sphere of discourse. 7. Striving to change for the good of society. Mr. Parth concluded by setting out goals of inclusivity which must be our priority to secure a better future for all, and not ‘some’.



CONCLUSION

The event saw a warm number of participants from all over the streams and the panelists spanned from over 3 countries with backgrounds as diverse as medical science to policy scholars. Event proved crucial for the propagation of the views of the younger generation of leaders and activists. A myriad of perspectives were presented over the panel by various speakers highlighting, critiquing, and applauding the SGDs. The said event proved to be a crucial platform where the reality of goals was intersected with what remains over paper. The dialogue in general highlighted the shortcomings which the countries are facing in order to implement the set benchmarks.

