

COVID-19, global environmental change, and opportunities to progress towards the SDGs

The emergence of a new global pandemic had been predicted. It was a question of when rather than if or how it would occur given increased understanding of how habitat disruption and the live animal trade increase risk of zoonotic pathogens from wild animals. These human activities, compounded by the increase in international air travel and weakened public health systems, created ideal conditions for the emergence and rapid transmission of a new virus. Previous warnings went largely unheeded. As the pandemic unfolds, most societies find themselves unprepared and paying extraordinary costs in terms of lives, overwhelmed health systems, and contracting economies.

In response, we are seeing unprecedented levels of cooperation, with individuals radically changing their behavior, often despite high personal cost, to address a collective threat. This critical inflection point provides new hope: urgent, coordinated action to protect human and planetary health is achievable. The vast human suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences must not be in vain, but rather deliver a more resilient, sustainable and equitable future.

ISGlobal and the Day After (el Día Después in Spanish) platform present a series of online webinars featuring presentations from area experts and moderated discussion to foster knowledge exchange across a broad audience. The objectives of the series are to:

- 1) highlight interlinkages between global environmental change and the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2) identify near-term priorities for protecting public health in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences.
- 3) identify how the COVID-19 pandemic presents new opportunities and challenges for meeting the SDGs and the most effective communication strategies to accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

The main outputs from the webinar series include: 1) a report identifying key scientific knowledge gaps important for supporting decision making; and 2) information briefs to feed into the Day After's actions focused on knowledge translation and amplification to maximize impact in society.

Webinars will be in English and oriented to a general scientific audience.

28 April 2020 15:00 CEST

Session 1 (90 min): The day before. This session explores the proximal and distal causes of the pandemic and the complex relation between infections, climate and other global environmental change. How do global environmental changes such as biodiversity loss, climate change, pollution, and urbanization facilitate the occurrence of new epidemics or modulate their public health impact?

Moderators: Cathryn Tonne

- Introduction to the series. COVID-19 and Planetary Health – Josep M Antó, ISGlobal (10 min)
- The Day After – Oriana Ramírez (10 min)

- Global environmental pollution and resilience to infections. (15 min) David Savitz, Brown University, USA
- Land use change and biodiversity loss- Fernando Valladares, CSIC (15 min)
- Lessons from SARS, Ebola, Nipah – how our relationship with other animals got us here. (15 min) Júlia Vergara, IRTA-CRESA.
- Moderated discussion (15 min)

4 May 2020 15:00 CEST

Session 2 (90 min). The year after: The implications of the unprecedented societal and economic disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic are not easy to foresee. This session explores priorities in the near-term for protecting health in the face of societal changes due directly to the pandemic and indirectly through our response to it.

Moderator: Robert Barouki, INSERM

- Introduction (10 min) Manolis Kogevinas, ISGlobal
- Air pollution and other environmental exposures (Will we have massive deregulation, roll back of enforcement as we are seeing in the US). What can we do about it? (15 min) Joel Kaufman, Washington University, USA
- Moving towards more resilient, health promoting urban environments (15 min) Mark Nieuwenhuijsen, ISGlobal
- One size does not fit all – priorities for LMICs (15 min) Elisa Sicuri, ISGlobal
- Moderated discussion (15 min)

11 May 2020 15:00 CEST

Session 3 (90 min). The decade after: The COVID pandemic has induced radical societal change in the matter of months, a sense of urgency, and emphasized the need for coordinated international action. How can we leverage this once in a generation inflection point to create the same sense of urgency and levels of coordinated action to address the climate crisis and sustainable development? How do we create the public demand for a more sustainable future to ensure that we do not return to business as usual? What will be the lessons from the COVID pandemic about addressing social and economic inequities?

Moderators: Gonzalo Franjul, Policy Director, ISGlobal

- Intro (10 min) Céline Charveriat, Executive Director, Institute for European Environmental Policy
- How the COVID pandemic can accelerate progress towards SDGs-Eeva Furman, SYKE (15 min)
- The potential for social movements and collective action Christos Zografos, University Pompeu Fabra (15 min)
- Could COVID move the dial forward on addressing inequalities? Mauricio Barreto, Maurício L. Barreto, MD, PhD, Emeritus Professor, Federal University of Bahia, and Senior Investigator at FIOCRUZ. Director of the Center for Data and Knowledge Integration for Health (Cidacs), Fiocruz FIO Cruz, Brazil (15 min)

- Getting the message right – how to build broad support and urgency for change? (15 min) Rafa Villasajuan, ISGlobal.
- Moderated discussion (15 min)