



Three Institutions and their contributions: SDSN, SRC and SDG Academy



By

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Dear Friends,

This month, I plan to briefly connect you with 3 institutions, all of them being my source of studies in the field of sustainable development, through MOOCs. First, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) <https://www.unsdsn.org/>



1. Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) was set up by the then Secretary General of UN, Ban Ki-moon in 2012. He invited Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Founder of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, New York to lead the SDSN as its Director, a role Professor Sachs plays till present. This was done 3 years before the SDGs were formally adopted by the 193 nations of the world in September 2015. As a matter of fact, SDSN and SRC joined hands to propose the first draft of the SDGs containing 10 goals that formed the basis of global consultations by the members of the UN General Assembly, and evolved into the 17 SDGs. My first introduction to sustainable development was through the MOOC on 'The Age of Sustainable Development' taught by Professor Jeffrey Sachs.

The principal role of SDSN is to promote the implementation of two most important global agreements at the UN: The SDGs adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in December 2015. They try to do so 'through education, research, policy analysis, and global cooperation'.

A Leadership Council comprising of eminent personalities from all segments of society: government, business, NGOs, and civil society constitutes the apex body for running the SDSN.

The SDSN has opened several national and regional SDSNs, and for India, it is the regional Office for the entire South Asia, with its headquarter at **The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)** in New Delhi, India, website: <https://www.unsdsn.org/south-asia>.

The SDSN South Asia focuses on raising awareness on the SDGs, with special emphasis on:

- Poverty Reduction
- Food Security
- Health
- Education
- Air and Water Pollution
- Energy and Climate Change
- Urbanization
- Sustainable Consumption and Production
- Building Partnerships for the Achievement of the SDGs

The SDSN South Asia was represented by TERI SAS and SDSN Youth at the 2019 ECOSOC Youth Forum at the UN Headquarters in New York from April 8-9, 2019. A report reviewing SDSN Youth activities for the year 2018-19 was also launched at the same time. The Youth network coordinated and engaged in various seminars, conferences, school activities, sensitization and awareness program around SDGs and their implementation. The SDG coordinators from TERI SAS & from Kathmandu University represented the network in various programmes and initiatives. Additionally, in April 2019, SDSN South Asia presented a paper by Ranjula Bali Swain, Professor at Misum, Stockholm School of Economics and Södertörn University, Sweden on, “Modeling Interlinkages between Sustainable Development Goals Using Network Analysis”

Who can join the SDSN?

Membership in the Sustainable Development Solutions Network is free and open to not-for-profit institutions (not individuals). Institutions must be knowledge-generating, i.e. they must conduct research, analyses, and/or data collection, and can be universities, research institutions, foundations, or civil society groups. Member institutions should have deep expertise in one or more areas related to sustainable development and commit a substantial amount of their own work towards finding and/or implementing solutions for the SDGs.

The SDSN and its members work closely with businesses and governments, particularly around the development and scaling up of new solutions. Businesses can become SDSN Business Partners in recognition of their contributions to the work of SDSN. For more information please contact info@unsdsn.org.

2. Stockholm Resilience Center (SRC),

The second important actor in framing the SDGs is the Stockholm Resilience Center (SRC), which is a constituent unit of the Stockholm University. Professor Johan Rockstrom was the Director of SRC till recently, and my second MOOC course: ‘Planetary Boundaries and Human Opportunities’ was led primarily by Professor Rockstrom and his colleagues at the SRC. Professor Rockstrom is a member of the SDSN Leadership Council, and is one of the principal authors of the famous article first published in 2009, describing the scientific findings on the Planetary Boundaries. This was updated and revised in 2015. Everything I have written on the nine planetary boundaries, have been based upon this course.



Stockholm Resilience Centre was founded in 2007 as a collaboration between Stockholm University and the Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. The centre offers undergraduate, post-graduate and doctoral programs in interdisciplinary subjects dealing with environment, sustainability and resilience. It's Director, Prof. Johan Rockstrom was the lead researcher who proposed the concept of Planetary Boundaries in 2009 and 2015. This concept formed the foundation for the formulation of the

SDGs, together with the concept of the Doughnut Principle. The vision and mission of the centre is quoted below:

“SRC vision and mission

“The vision of the centre is a world where social-ecological systems are understood, governed and managed, to enhance human well-being and the capacity to deal with complexity and change, for the sustainable co-evolution of human civilizations with the biosphere. The mission of the centre is to advance research for governance and management of social-ecological systems to secure ecosystem services for human well-being and resilience for long-term sustainability. The centre applies and further develops the scientific achievements of this research within practice, policy and academic training”.

The centre believes firmly that humanity must re-connect with Nature, for our own survival. We quote:

“We must stop considering nature as something separate from society because people and nature are truly intertwined in what we refer to as social-ecological systems. Development can no longer be done without an increased understanding of nature’s role for our own survival and well-being”.

“In 2011, former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urged the global society to stand behind the science on planetary boundaries:

“Help us defend the science that shows we are destabilizing our climate and stretching planetary boundaries to a perilous degree

“UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Leaders’ Dialogue on Climate Change, New York, 20 September 2011”.

3. SDG Academy

The third source of my own education in sustainable development is the SDG Academy, the educational wing of SDSN. They run several MOOC courses

under the banner of EdX <https://courses.edx.org/login?next=/courses/course-v1%3ASDGAcademyX%2BEIA001%2B3T2019/courseware/97dcabe6fe9046c6ac0045806c11cf79/0e1b19004adc49d787ce328191591646/%3Fchild%3Dfirst>

SDGacademy

As I am interested in the role of spirituality in sustainable development, I was drawn to take a recent (started on September 26, 2019, and will remain open for 1 full year) MOOC titled ‘Ethics in Action’. This course reinforces my earlier blog that spirituality can play a very constructive role in the implementation of the SDGs.

Source: Most of the contents in this blog has been extracted from respective web sites of SDSN, SRC and EDX.

