IntegrateSDGs is an initiative of Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future ● 2 The Links ● Herne Bay ● Kent ● CT6 7GQ ● UK ● Vurehout 373 ● 1507 EC Zaandam ● NL & New York ● NY ● USA e: info@stakeholderforum.org ● www.stakeholderforum.org

Summary of the 2022-23 Webinar Series on the Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

In the countdown to the 2023 SDG Summit, Stakeholder Forum hosted a webinar series between November 2022 and June 2023 to explore where we are in SDG implementation, identify transformative actions for change, and assess what kind of disruptions they might create together with the benefits for those goals under review and for other goals with which there are interlinkages.

The series, '**Countdown to the UN SDG Summit 2023**', in cooperation with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, brought together more than 60 experts, policymakers, and practitioners with knowledge of the SDGs' interlinkages and insights on integrated approaches that can help to develop recommendations on transformative actions for the SDGs, with an emphasis on strengthening the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. The eight webinars, which resulted in more than 60 recommendations, have been summarised below.

The SDGs have been conceptualised to be interlinked, but over time this has become even more important. There is an urgent need to identify how these interlinkages can be leveraged to speed up SDG implementation. The summaries try to capture key challenges, interlinkages, solutions and recommendations for the sixteen SDGs discussed in the webinars. SDG 17 was considered in all webinars as a cross-cutting Goal.

It is also essential to identify a new context for SDG implementation in the post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery and the current geopolitical situation. These factors influence SDG implementation as well as new partnerships that need to be forged to achieve the SDGs.

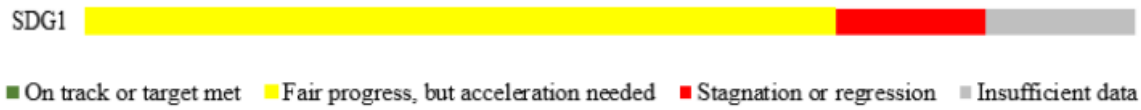
With generous support from UNEP and the EU, these webinars are part of a larger project to establish Communities of Practice (CoPs) that will continue to work on this initiative in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future in September 2024 and beyond.

Below are summaries of the 8 webinars. These summaries represent views and ideas of participants in the webinars (please see the full list of contributors in the Annex).

SDG 1 AND SDG 2

SDG 1

End poverty in all its forms everywhere



At the midpoint in implementation of the SDGs, there are quite a few setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic and crises. Poverty trends have been reversed and under current trends, 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty in 2030, and only about one third of countries will meet the target to halve national poverty levels.[1]

Introduction

The reverse trends in poverty eradication have impacted not only people traditionally left behind, but also people who previously lived above the poverty line. This has emphasised the particular importance of achieving target 1.3 on social protection systems, but unfortunately, the fiscal space for many countries has not been sufficient to finance social protection or targeted incentives.

Challenges

Lack of good governance, transparency and accountability and non-inclusive policymaking are key challenges. This is compounded by a lack of infrastructure, including digital infrastructure, to support social protection systems.

Governance is an important element as types of governance and institutions often define how we look at interlinkages, whether we develop correct synergies and how inclusive we are in our decision-making processes. It is also relevant in delivery and access to basic services. Vertical connections are especially challenging. Horizontal linkages have been well documented and most work is being done on them, but vertical links to the local level are insufficient in many countries.[2]

[1] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.
[2] Anita Breuer et al., eds., *Governing the Interlinkages between the SDGs: Approaches, Opportunities and Challenges* (Routledge, 2023).

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Interlinkages

Interlinkages between poverty and health (SDG 3) and education (SDG 4) have to be recognised and taken into account in policy decisions as they could push people into poverty, but poverty is also crosscutting and influences all other goals. Deteriorating access to health services and their increased cost has moved many people to poverty, while the inability to participate in remote learning has also deprived children of education, limiting their opportunities to obtain jobs in the future that will bring them out of poverty.

Another critical goal related to poverty is SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) as it relates to generating income, especially targets 8.5 to achieve decent work for all and 8.7 to eliminate forced labour and human trafficking. These are especially important in the case of migrant workers, as their remittances play a big role in eradicating poverty. SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) is also very relevant as the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities – not only inequality of income but also inequality of assets and consumption.

Considering the link between climate (SDG 13) and poverty, research has shown that carbon taxes can lower poverty as they can pay for essential services, but it is important that this revenue is distributed through social protection.

While the COVID-19 pandemic set back SDG 1 achievement, some positive trends emerged from this time. This includes propelling the COVID-19 vaccine as a public good (target 3.b) which is a prerequisite for achieving SDG 1, and digitalisation (for example of health services, SDG 3, and education, SDG, 4) which needs to continue to support the achievement of SDG 1.

Solutions

It is essential that at the national level, SDGs are visibly and consciously mainstreamed into development plans and that transformative policies are put in place to close the SDG gap by 2030. Obstacles need to be identified whether they be in financing, capacity building, trade regimes or governance and rule of law. It is also important to better involve local levels.

Achieving data disaggregation in all three dimensions of SDG implementation, localisation, and resource mobilisation together with citizen participation, giving political space and empowering civil society is a big but essential responsibility for an inclusive delivery of SDGs in all countries.

Forging new partnerships both at the domestic level and within the traditional development cooperation related to social protection while building resilience through trade and investment is essential. As an example, the UN Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy has been working with both developed and developing countries to build inclusivity and revenue while prioritising people and the planet. A debt services suspension initiative should be put in place to allow the fiscal space for countries to invest in SDGs. This should be accompanied by better rechannelling of unutilised International Monetary Fund (IMF) special drawing rights.

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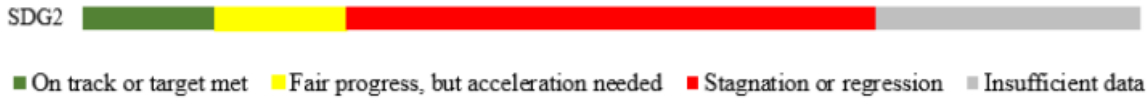
There is a need to empower poor people and their organisations, especially women, through partnerships among public, private and civil society sectors. Pro-poor and gender-sensitive strategies are needed at all levels to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions. Access by the poor to finance, especially microfinance, is important so a strong microfinance package that includes micro-credit, micro-health, micro-savings and micro-insurance should be provided. Microfinancing schemes should be inclusive and involve the underprivileged, women and youth.

New partnerships should also be extended to universities and schools to enhance curricula to raise awareness of SDGs.

Micro-small-and-medium enterprises (MSMEs) are in many countries a backbone for eradicating poverty. It is important that they have access to finance including microfinance. MSMEs also need capacity building on the 2030 Agenda to see the many benefits of using the SDGs in their business model. These efforts should be supported by governments, banking systems and NGOs.

SDG 2

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture



The number of people facing hunger and food insecurity has been on the rise since 2015, with the pandemic, conflict, climate change and growing inequalities exacerbating the situation. In 2015, 589 million people were experiencing hunger, and by 2021, that number had risen to 768 million. Projections show that, by 2030, approximately 670 million people will still be facing hunger – 8 per cent of the world's population, the same as in 2015.[3]

Introduction

Exploring SDG interlinkages has demonstrated that investing in sustainable agriculture is a way to reduce poverty and address food insecurity as people become less dependent on supply chains and food price volatility, but building resilience is essential for achieving sustainable agriculture.

Challenges

Financing and investing in sustainable agriculture are significant challenges. Access to land presents another challenge as societies are organised in such a way that often prevents

[3] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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smallholder farmers, especially women, from equal property rights. Land degradation related to climate and natural disasters also impacts agricultural productivity, so financing needs to include building resilience.

Interlinkages

Integrated solutions are essential to achieve progress and tackle food insecurity and will also help in poverty reduction (SDG 1) and fighting inequalities (SDG 10). There are linkages with other goals too: the UN Environment Programme *Measuring Progress* series has found, for example, a link between target 2.1 in malnourished and severely stunted children and indicator 6.6 on protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems.[4] It has also shown that availability of freshwater resources (SDG 6) decreases malnourishment in children.

Solutions

Mainstreaming a 'food systems approach' and identifying pathways for such approaches into national development plans is essential. There is a need to invest in decarbonised and sustainable agriculture and renewable energy so that developing countries become less dependent on supply chains and build their future on a green, circular, social and solidarity economy.

Policymakers need to rely on data analysis when identifying policies to accelerate the achievement of SDGs. The analysis could be informed by a climate-land-energy-water (CLEW) tool to advise on synergies, interlinkages and trade-offs and advocate for the use of technology in the agricultural sector. For example, the UN Country Team in Namibia uses CLEW and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) acute food security classification to look at the impact of climate change through prolonged drought in the country and its consequences to agriculture based on scientific data as well as market access. The team also uses this to advocate for the use of technology to modernise the sector.

Views have also been expressed that new models of trade and investment are needed that will reduce food prices and price disruption. In the short term, it is important to create safety nets and social protection so that shortcomings in agriculture do not further impact increasing poverty and food insecurity. For example, the World Food Programme's (WFP) home-grown school feeding programme links school feeding programmes with smallholder farmers to provide schoolchildren, especially those who are vulnerable, with safe, diverse, nutritious and local food to prevent them from falling further into poverty.

[4] United Nations Environment Programme, "Measuring Progress: Water-Related Ecosystems and the SDGs," 2023, https://www.unep.org/resources/report/measuring-progress-water-related-ecosystems-and-sdgs.

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Together with food security, it is also important to address nutritional security, which should be done through local and indigenous knowledge and requires more incentives for locally-grown produce.

It is also important to look at long-term solutions. For example, a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) programme to establish agro-systems within a community is a long-term solution applied in Namibia and is connected with financing, so that food systems support is integrated into national financing frameworks to channel more financing into agriculture. Namibia has also established an agricultural financing fund in partnership with the African Union which is advocating for agriculture as one of priority sectors.

Summary of key recommendations:

- Recognise that integrated approaches, localisation, vertical cooperation, good governance and strong institutions are essential to achieving the SDGs.
- Establish social protection systems and new models of investment and trade to ensure inclusive societies.
- Rely on scientific evidence and data that is reliable and disaggregated to ensure inclusion and leaving no one behind.
- Forge new partnerships for resource mobilisation and to reduce poverty and food insecurity at all levels.
- Leverage local and indigenous knowledge to improve nutritional security.
- Update financial systems to support inclusive micro-financing and MSME efforts.

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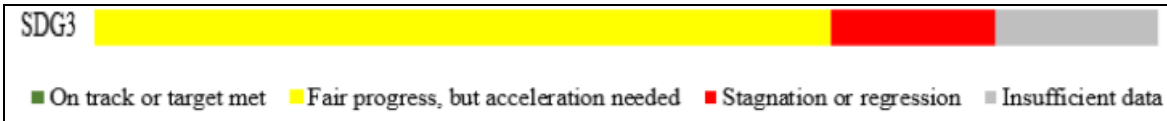
SDG 3 AND SDG 4

SDG 3

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



At the midpoint in implementation of the SDGs, there are quite a few setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic and crises exacerbating existing health inequalities and threatening progress towards universal health coverage. As a result, 25 million children missed out on important routine immunisation services in 2021, and deaths from tuberculosis and malaria increased compared with the pre-pandemic period.[5]

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for stronger global health security systems to prevent and respond to future pandemics. We also need to think about how to sustainably balance and optimise the health of people, animals, plants, and ecosystems, reduce pressures on biodiversity and decrease environmental degradation to reduce risks to health.

Challenges

A big challenge that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed is a question of equity between sectors, disciplines, and communities as all need to have access to health. Another challenge is how to include and strengthen the presence of the environment when talking about health, which has not been present previously. Another challenge is also how to collaborate in a more systematic way to find solutions before something happens and not in an *ad hoc* way when the crisis has already arisen.

Interlinkages

To build health and well-being for all, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of interlinkages such as the need for nutritious food (SDG 2), access to clean water (SDG 6), reliable access to energy (SDG 7) and dealing with impacts of climate change (SDG 13). Socioeconomic equilibrium where we look at interlinkages between humans, animals and the environment is essential alongside recognising the important role of biodiversity and that everything in ecosystems has value. Thus, implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework is essential. There needs to be connections and links among different

[5] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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sectors – not only traditional sectors but also across all forms of modern and traditional knowledge with broad representations of perspectives. Capacity building for the *One Health Approach* also links to education (SDG 4) to form a workforce that can address these issues from a multi- and interdisciplinary nature, which is connected to school-level students, but also practitioners and communities.

Solutions

It is essential that an integrated approach is applied. The *One Health Approach*, which is defined as an approach that aims to optimise and balance the health of people, animals and ecosystems, is moving us from an anthropogenic approach to looking at health holistically. It also mobilises different sectors and disciplines which was beneficial during the COVID-19 pandemic to find a vaccine. It is also important to work with communities at all levels and include their voices.

Global collaboration is important, including for implementing the *One Health Approach*. In October 2022, a Joint Plan of Action was launched by the Quadripartite – the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Organisation for Animal Health – to provide a set of activities that aim to strengthen collaboration, communication, capacity building, and coordination equally across all sectors responsible for addressing health concerns at the human-animal-plant-environment interface. They are funded by multiple actors such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), African Union, WHO, and the World Bank to strengthen multisectoral collaboration under the national health security and antimicrobial resistance plans. The Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) is another global effort to strengthen the world's ability to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease threats as are WHO's International Health Regulations.

Establishing multisectoral, multistakeholder platforms is one example of good practice to bring together different sectors and stakeholders.

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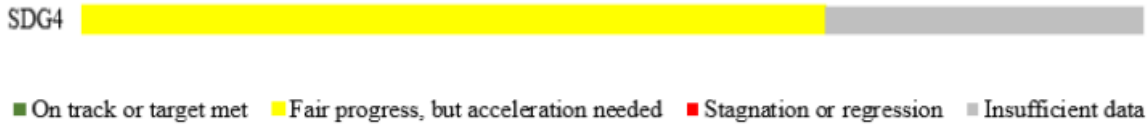
SDG 4

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was already off-track to achieve its education targets. If no additional measures are taken, only one in six countries will meet Goal 4 and achieve universal access to quality education by 2030. An estimated 84 million children and young people will still be out of school and an estimated 300 million students will still not have the basic numeracy and literacy skills they need to succeed in life. To deliver on Goal 4, education systems must be reimagined, and education financing must become a priority national investment.[6]

Introduction

Education needs to be at the heart of sustainability. New types of education based on interconnectedness and interdependency of pedagogy together with solidarity, compassion and ethics should be ingrained in how one learns. Cooperation and collaboration must be taught in practice and not only within schools, but also outside schools in communities, and assessments of students should incorporate these parameters to help students grow and learn rather than just acquire facts and skills.

Contextuality and future thinking are essential to define short- and long-term actions. While there is no one-size-fits-all for education, we all need to work together to make a systemic change in the education system to equip learners to take on more responsibility for the well-being of the planet and redefine prosperity.

There is a need for scaling up education innovation to drive transformation and to bring in both the environmental and economic dimensions when talking about education. There is still not enough progress, political will and leadership for commitments on education to be implemented. It is important to consult, co-create knowledge and share to make a more united and just world.

Challenges

Inclusive and equitable quality education is a challenge as are fragmentation and short-term project mentality. During the COVID-19 pandemic access to digital technology was a challenge especially in poor countries and rural areas. In least developed countries (LDCs) even before

[6] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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the COVID-19 pandemic, one in three children was out of school, demonstrating that there is a range of issues affecting school attendance. The biggest one is conflict, but climate change also impacts education. Literacy poverty of children and young people who cannot read or write even though they go to school is another challenge.

Access, coverage and affordability that ensure inclusiveness of education is a big challenge and should be the responsibility of the public sector. The perceived relevance of education is another one. Additionally, ensuring lifelong learning capacity and building skills to understand and interpret complexities related to sustainable development is difficult. This involves developing 'softer' skills in dealing with people rather than just focusing on technical disciplines.

Another challenge is how to restructure incentive systems to pursue education scaling and systems transformation. It is important to gather policymakers, donors and educators to establish primary purposes of education in their location, identify levers and incentives in their educational ecosystem and then encourage them to work together to achieve more functional alliances while keeping children and their families as a core priority. Furthermore, it is difficult to, in a holistic way, properly fund, adjust, track and increase system capacity for the whole machinery of the education system in that location.

A further challenge is how to redirect all the multilateral institutions, global partners and experts to focus on local needs and empower local capacity to ensure a symbiotic relationship between global perspectives and local solutions for education.

Interlinkages

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how education is linked to safety nets such as providing school meals for children to reduce malnutrition and stunting (SDG 2). Access to digital technology (SDG 9 and SDG 17), energy (SDG 7) and water (SDG 6) also influenced access to education especially remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are also links between education and peace (SDG 16), economic growth and decent work (SDG 8) and inequality (SDG 10).

Solutions

It is essential that public education is sufficiently funded by governments and that it is a good quality and inclusive education based on data. Equity progress needs to be tracked and systems require qualified and committed teachers empowered by digital technologies and intergenerational cooperation and partnerships for knowledge sharing. It is essential not only to focus on gender and rural issues of those left behind but also to consider learning disabilities, needs of ethnic minorities, religious freedom and LGBTQIA+ issues, among others.

Good governance for education should include a participatory approach to stakeholder engagement in adjusting core curricula to local contexts and labour market demands and include life-long learning for the workforce to continue acquiring necessary competencies.

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There needs to be an alignment between national education and national development plans in a way that considers not only societal voices but also economic powers and employers.

Universities can advance local implementation of SDGs by building connections and facilitating local action by a collection of stakeholders from national and local governments to the private sector. Universities can also promote leadership in sustainable development and build capacity through target 4.7. This would promote integrated system thinking for understanding synergies and trade-offs among SDGs, developing multisectoral and multistakeholder engagement skills and local to global links.

Summary of key recommendations:

- Apply an integrative approach to health such as *One Health* to ensure equitable access to health and include nature as an important element in health-related decision-making and build resilience for current and future health challenges. Establishing multisectoral, multistakeholder platforms is a good practice in this regard.
- Create inclusive and equitable quality education to ensure inclusive societies. Education systems need to be repurposed towards building skills for problem analysis drawing from multiple disciplines to deal with new challenges in an integrated way.
- Localise SDG 4 to meet local needs and workforce demands.
- Forge new partnerships including intergenerational ones, and between global, national and local institutions, the private sector and employers as well as universities to ensure the relevance of education and the link from local to global.
- Mobilise universities to advance local implementation of SDGs, build capacity and promote sustainable development leadership across a range of stakeholders.

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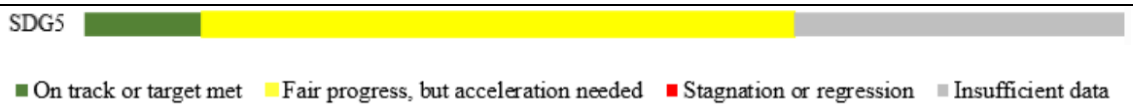
SDG 5 AND SDG 6

SDG 5

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



At the midpoint in implementation of the SDGs, the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. At the current rate of progress, it is estimated that it will take up to 286 years to close the gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws, 140 years for women to be represented equally in positions of power and leadership in the workplace, and 47 years to achieve equal representation in national parliaments. Political leadership and a comprehensive set of policy reforms are needed to dismantle systemic barriers to the achievement of Goal 5.[7]

Introduction

Cascading global crises are having a differential impact on men and women, especially in LDCs. For example, climate change and water insecurity have disproportionately negative effects on women who already face unequal opportunities and access to various facilitators of empowerment. Policies should therefore address in an integrated and joined-up way climate change issues, water issues and 'mainstream' gender issues whilst acknowledging the context and specific challenges to policy implementation. Inclusive technologies can also help to bridge the gap in equality between men and women.

Challenges

Women are underrepresented in leadership roles and there is still no equitable power-sharing in the water sector. Water insecurity disproportionately impacts women and forces them to adjust their traditional work and economic activities to ensure a continuous income stream. Women have less access to climate change information and data, which means they are less able to protect themselves from climate change effects – aggravating already existing gender effects.

Interlinkages

A variety of nexuses need to be considered in policy to empower women, reduce trade-offs and address cultural barriers. One example is the climate-water-gender nexus (SDG 5 - SDG 6

[7] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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– SDG 13) in LDCs. Women with responsibilities for household duties and sourcing water can be prevented from accessing education (SDG 4) and other forms of social and political participation. As climate change increases drought and makes water scarcer, women and girls are likely to spend more time fetching water.

Additionally, the empowerment of women depends on redirecting technological innovation to better meet the needs of women, especially in LDCs. This requires integrating the innovation-gender-health nexus (SDG 3 – SDG 5 – SDG 9) into decision-making at each stage of the innovation process.

Solutions

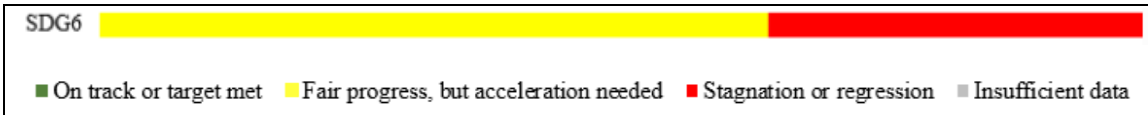
Policymakers should be aware that there are still many cultural habits that perpetuate inequalities. It is therefore essential that policymakers include women at the grassroots level to instigate, enable, and encourage changes in the current culture of inequality.

Women need to be empowered as water-leaders. The empowerment of women can be galvanised through the greater provision of gender statistics and gender-disaggregated data.

A core part of SDG 5 is ensuring sexual reproductive health for women and girls. Making diagnostic equipment more affordable and accessible and upskilling women in the use of the equipment would empower women and work to level the playing field in diagnostics. One example is the provision (by M-SCAN) of portable ultrasounds that can be plugged into laptops. These are five times cheaper than traditional machines, reducing out-of-pocket expenses for women and cutting costs for clinics.

SDG 6

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



At the midpoint in implementation of the SDGs, billions of people still lack access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, despite improvements in the provision of those basic services. Water scarcity is a growing problem in many parts of the world, and conflicts and climate change are exacerbating the issue. In addition, water pollution is a significant challenge that affects both human health and the environment in many countries.[8]

[8] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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Introduction

Water has a central role to play in facilitating human rights, reducing poverty, reducing inequality, and enabling progress towards most of the other SDGs. Understanding synergies, trade-offs or neutral associations will enable policymakers to address synergies and conflicts between policies more effectively. The content of policy options is crucial for determining the nature and extent of the synergies and trade-offs in complex water management issues.

Challenges

Understanding interlinkages can help us avoid negative consequences, however, we must always acknowledge the role of context in shaping effective policy responses. For example, a recent study of the need for freshwater in the Torres Strait highlights the trade-offs inherent in current solutions.[9] Freshwater reserves in the Torres Strait are declining because with rising sea levels they have been contaminated by salt. The desalination process requires the use of diesel which comes with pollution risks. In outdoor water storage areas, there is also faecal contamination from the local birds. In proposing solutions to these issues, it is important to consider the intersecting vulnerabilities of the population affected by water problems and ensure that the solutions are culturally appropriate and community-led. Community-led, culturally appropriate solutions will help ensure the sustainability of the solution.

Interlinkages

Water has a strong connection with many other SDGs. For example, SDG 1 (no poverty) can help improve water and sanitation and can reduce healthcare costs. SDG 2 (no hunger) can improve water management and in turn, improve agricultural productivity and food security. Improved access to clean water and sanitation can prevent the spread of diseases and promote good hygiene (SDG 3). SDG 5 (gender equality) is also key to accelerating SDG 6 because women are often stewards of water (especially at the household level).

Context has a crucial role to play in shaping synergies and trade-offs with other SDGs. In the context of the Arab region, there is conflict between SDG 6 on water and SDGs 13 on climate and 14 on life below water (amongst other goals). Desalinisation serves as an example – the discharge of highly concentrated brine into the sea from a desalination plant has the potential to kill marine organisms and damage the marine population (SDG 14). Furthermore, drawing fresh water from freshwater rivers and lakes can have a negative effect on the species living within them (SDG 15).

[9] Nina Lansbury Hall and Lucy Crosby, "Climate Change Impacts on Health in Remote Indigenous Communities in Australia," *International Journal of Environmental Health Research* 32, no. 3 (2022): 487–502, https://doi.org/10.1080/09603123.2020.1777948.

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Solutions

To better account for interactions across SDGs, there has to be true representation of stakeholders in decision-making. For example, in the context of SDG 6 and LDCs, this means empowering women as water-leaders. Women are underrepresented in leadership roles and there is still no equitable power-sharing in the water sector in many of these countries. The empowerment of women can be galvanised through greater provision of gender statistics and gender-disaggregated data. Community input can help to build in buy-in and strengthen the sustainability of the solution.

To account for these interlinkages and ensure that progress on SDG 6 does not come at the expense of the other SDGs, there are several recommendations:

1. Integrated planning;

2. Stakeholder engagement that is diverse and includes local communities;

3. Regular monitoring and evaluation;

4. Partnerships amongst government, private sector and civil society can be used to leverage expertise about SDG 6 and its interlinkages;

5. Toolkits and guidelines, e.g. the Water-Food-Energy nexus approach can also be used to assist decision-makers in identifying trade-offs and synergies.

Summary of key recommendations:

- Encourage inclusive innovation in health technology to increase gender equality by involving women in every stage of the R&D and innovation process, especially women from LDCs. Stronger representation of all stakeholders in decision-making better accounts for interactions across SDGs.
- Empower women, especially in rural areas, as water stewards. Governments should do this at all levels to combat cultural barriers to gender inclusion in certain contexts.
- Galvanise the empowerment of women through greater provision of gender statistics and gender-disaggregated data.
- Recognise the crucial role of context in shaping synergies and trade-offs with other SDGs.
- Embed community input into decision-making to help build in buy-in and strengthen the sustainability of the solution.

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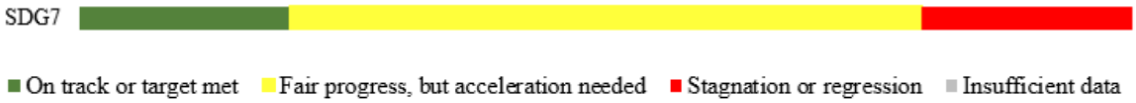
SDG 7 AND SDG 8

SDG 7

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all



Access to electricity and clean cooking fuels has improved in many parts of the world, but 675 million people are still not connected to those grids, and 2.3 billion still cook with unsafe and polluting fuels. The war in Ukraine and global economic uncertainty continue to cause significant volatility in energy prices, leading some countries to raise investments in renewables and others to increase reliance on coal, putting the green transition at risk. If the current pace continues, about 660 million people will still lack access to electricity and close to 2 billion people will continue to rely on polluting fuels and technologies for cooking by 2030. To ensure access to energy for all by 2030, we must accelerate electrification, increase investments in renewable energy sources and invest in improving electricity grids.[10]

Introduction

Energy is essential for all three dimensions of sustainability. It is a driver of development but can also be damaging, with severe health and environmental impacts. Renewable energy is on the rise but is developing too slowly, and energy projects can limit achievement of other SDGs.

Challenges

Energy is essential but can have dire negative social and environmental consequences. Funding flows for increasing access to renewables are decreasing and scaling up of efficiency is not progressing well. Financing renewable energy in developing countries is not adequately included in international conversations on energy development and funding, resulting in renewable energy being more expensive to develop for low-income countries. Skill gaps are a critical barrier to renewable energy production. A lack of technical and transferable core skills are recruitment barriers, and these skill gaps are a significant challenge for low-income countries already struggling with providing university education.

While renewable energy needs to increase there are trade-offs to consider, especially for local communities. Large infrastructure projects can hamper efforts to achieve other SDGs, from biofuels impacting food production to the socio-economic and biodiversity consequences of land loss, and energy services can impact climate change and local pollution. It cannot be

[10] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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assumed that all renewable energy projects are beneficial to sustainable development, so creating, managing and distributing this energy without negative impacts presents challenges.

Interlinkages

There are direct links between SDG 7 and at least 85 per cent of SDG targets.[11] Energy links with welfare and well-being, particularly ending poverty (SDG 1) and providing access to healthcare (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), water, and sanitation (SDG 6). Energy infrastructure (SDG 9) is required for food (SDG 2) and water systems, medical facilities and sustainable cities (SDG 11), and renewable and efficient energy will be needed to achieve environmental targets (SDG 14 and 15). Poorly managed energy production or consumption (SDG 12) could hamper achievement while promoting low-polluting energy sources and energy efficiency can improve conditions while tackling critical environmental issues.

Solutions

To ensure energy development for sustainable development, the Just Transition narrative must be connected to universal access. This can be leveraged to tackle lacking political will and boost efforts to increase financing, especially for developing countries. Focusing on targets on access (7.1), developing and sharing renewables (7.2), and energy efficiency (7.3) should guide decisions on SDG 7. There are possibly huge benefits in developing technology promoting efficiency in energy production and consumption. Small grid systems need to be enabled such as off-grid solutions to promote electrification in many rural areas.

Qualitative sustainability impact assessments are required as current assessments are insufficient and focus largely on environmental impacts. More work needs to be done to create new frameworks that enable broader analysis to determine which projects receive funding and how they are implemented. Some promising tools have already been developed.[12] New frameworks need to use global understandings of synergies and trade-offs and apply them locally. Skill and capacity gaps and ways to address them through mobilising partnerships are important, and developing countries should be prioritised in these efforts.

There are further opportunities to shift towards sustainable energy production through existing international frameworks, including the World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and agreements and climate action and adaptation efforts. These include favouring low-carbon investment, recruiting local workers, offering training, compulsory licencing of green technology, patent and knowledge sharing, and ensuring local procurements and locally

[11] Francesco Nerini et al., "Mapping Synergies and Trade-Offs between Energy and the Sustainable Development Goals," *Nature Energy* 3 (November 20, 2017): 10–15, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-017-0036-5.
[12] Jennifer Castor, Kaylyn Bacha, and Francesco Fuso Nerini, "SDGs in Action: A Novel Framework for Assessing Energy Projects against the Sustainable Development Goals," *Energy Research & Social Science* 68 (2020): 101556, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2020.101556.

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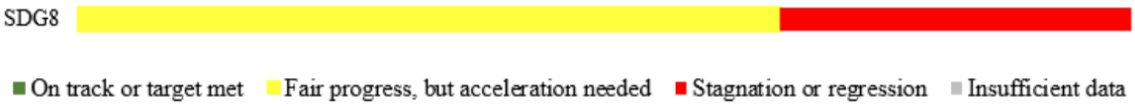
assured shares of electricity generated through renewables. Additionally, existing policy solutions such as those discussed at the UN global expert group meeting on energy (May 2023) should be implemented.[13]

SDG 8

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



Progress towards achieving Goal 8 has been challenging, and the world is far from reaching most of the targets. The lingering effects of COVID-19, cost-of-living crises, trade tensions, uncertain monetary policy paths, rising debts in developing countries and the war in Ukraine can each significantly set back global economic growth. Combined, these crises are placing the global economy under a serious threat. Growth in global real GDP per capita is forecast to slow down in 2023, putting at risk not just employment and income but also advances in equitable pay for women and decent work for young people. Achieving Goal 8 will require a wholesale reform of our morally bankrupt financial system in order to tackle rising debts, economic uncertainties and trade tensions, while promoting equitable pay and decent work for young people.[14]

Introduction

A broad shift in thinking about how to pursue and measure economic prosperity and progress is required. Ideas challenging traditional economic theories are key to SDG 8. The social and environmental elements of sustainable development are becoming more central to understandings of growth alongside the role of social and environmental measures in evaluating the well-being of people and planet.

Challenges

Most large challenges for SDG 8 are known and addressed by existing policies and agreements. The primary challenge is implementation. Social elements are often ignored in the drive for market shares, making them one of the largest challenges for fulfilling SDG 8. Economic growth does not automatically create jobs, especially decent ones, and discussions on establishing

[13] For more information and policy briefs see https://sdgs.un.org/events/global-expert-group-meeting-preparation-sdg7-review-hlpf-2023-50770.

[14] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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decent work often exclude two key dimensions – proper social dialogue and establishing social protection. Exploitative labour practices need to end, such as in the informal sector where workers often are not provided any protection, face discrimination and sometimes forced labour. Young people and people with disabilities are most exposed to unsafe workplaces, low wages and a lack of decent work standards.

Interlinkages

Sustainable economic growth is the result of the successful integration of the economic targets with the social dimensions of SDG 8 – something that is often missed in economic discussions. A lack of action on SDG 8 will prevent progress on other goals. Unsafe and unclean working conditions are often linked to poor environmental (SDG 14 and SDG 15) and human health (SDG 3). Lack of decent work conditions undermines conditions of equality (SDG 10) and has a strong negative impact on women and girls (SDG 5). Studies show increases in child labour, which perpetuates poverty (SDG 1). New contexts such as the green transition change education requirements (SDG 4). Quality and resilience infrastructure is required to accelerate the structural transformations (SDG 7 and SDG 9). Implementing targets such as 8.7 and 8.8 will reduce levels of poverty (SDG 1), promote rights-based approaches (SDG 16), and contribute to systemic changes (SDG 17). There is also a connection between labour conditions and consumption (SDG 12) and nature and the oceans (SDG 14 and 15).

Solutions

Some of the challenges in preserving jobs can be supported by pushing for green jobs. New services will need to be developed and companies will face less risk of job losses as a result of climate change (for example through damage to infrastructure or supply chain disruption). The shift in low-carbon economies must be accompanied by inclusive and sustainable production through identifying and unlocking green employment opportunities.

Integration is important – both between workers and employers and between different sectors. More integrated policy packages, responsible business management and decent labour standards are required. Compliance with the International Labour Organization's Global Jobs Pact,[15] workers' rights and international labour standards is crucial, especially for supporting workers in the informal sector. Coupling this with an immediate completion of targets 8.7 and 8.8 will drastically improve issues related to work, production and living conditions.

Work compatible with the tenets of sustainable development requires structural transformation, diversification and innovation. Long-term productivity growth requires economic gains to be more equitably distributed. Workers should control their labour environment and stronger institutional levels to protect people at work must be developed.

[15] International Labour Organization, "A Global Jobs Pact," 2022, https://www.ilo.org/jobspact/about/.

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Additionally, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) should be better recognised and integrated to drive structural transformation and finance for developing countries.

The central role of private enterprises in creating decent work and jobs within the context of sustainable development needs to be recognised. Supply chains are a key connection point that brings the informal sector and private companies together, so formalisation efforts will need to involve strong policy interventions and engagement with the private sector. Increasing pressure from conscious and informed consumers will also support these efforts.

Summary of key recommendations:

- Make universal access a focus of a just transition and focus on opportunities to expand energy efficiency and reduce consumption alongside renewable energy.
- Identify gaps to accelerate achievement and mobilise partnerships to address them.
- Build capacity on renewables, address skill gaps, and transition to a green energy supply for stakeholders at all levels.
- Look for practical and implementable ideas from the UN global expert meeting on energy.
- Seek opportunities to share technology, knowledge, and funding that are already possible within existing WTO rules and agreements.
- Develop mini-grid systems and off-grid systems that will promote electrification in rural areas in many countries.
- Generate new sustainability impact frameworks that enable broader analysis of trade-offs and synergies, and work to maximise synergies and minimise trade-offs in new projects.
- Encourage global financing networks to focus on small-scale local projects, run by local people, and integrate SMEs into regional and global value chains.
- Focus on the socioeconomic elements in SDG 8 projects.
- Develop rights for workers including safeguarding health and occupational safety, strengthen safety nets and social protection for people in the informal sector, and partner with private enterprises to progress formalisation.
- Promote compliance with the ILO Global Job Pact, workers' rights and international labour standards, coupled with an immediate completion of targets 8.7 and 8.8.
- Increase focus on work conditions and opportunities for disadvantaged groups.
- Strengthen and resource institutions protecting workers and promoting green jobs.
- Study and leverage the connection between adequate infrastructure and effective value chain integration.

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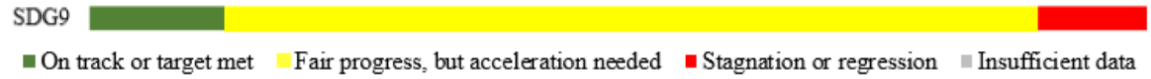
SDG 9 AND SDG 10

SDG 9

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation



The manufacturing industry's recovery from COVID-19 remains incomplete and uneven: some high-income regions achieved record-high manufacturing value added per capita in 2022 but levels in the least developed countries were not much higher than the 2015 baseline. In the aftermath of the pandemic, data show that higher-technology industries recovered faster and proved to be more resilient, pointing to the need to promote innovation and technology transfer in a way that benefits all countries. To achieve Goal 9 by 2030 it is essential to support the least developed countries, invest in advanced technologies, lower carbon emissions, and increase global mobile broadband access.[16]

Introduction

Developing quality, reliable, and resilient infrastructure promoting sustainable development - including regional and transborder infrastructure to support economic development and human well-being with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all - is essential. Infrastructure investment needs to be reoriented in a more sustainable direction, to support non-fossil-fuel local and long-distance transport and energy generation, improved supply of clean water and sanitation, and higher speed reliable internet for all.

Challenges

It is important to keep in mind that who decides the specific areas that research and development (R&D) should focus on, and the direction investment takes, depends on who participates in the decision-making process. For example, there are fewer female inventors than male inventors in medical science, and as a result, solutions are not generally women-focused. Moreover, decisions about what solutions are needed are still often actually being made in countries other than the one being invested in. This is reflected in the current low levels of R&D investment and patenting activities in lower-income developing countries.

[16] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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Interlinkages

There is a need to focus industry, innovation and infrastructure on areas that connect SDGs. Interlinkages between SDG 4 and SDG 7, SDG 9, SDG 10 and SDG 12 warrant special attention in light of the growing demand for new sets of skills related to the development of the green, digital and circular economies. There is a need to look more closely at the role of inequality (SDG 10) in how we define innovation and consider the impact that innovation has on inequality. There is still gender inequality (SDG 5) in what business as well as R&D delivers and develops – often exacerbating gender issues. This gender inequality applies not only to innovations of small products but also to innovations in infrastructure.

Solutions

Greater collaboration between the public and private sectors is essential to accelerate progress on SDG 9, especially in developing countries. The example of the First Movers Coalition serves to highlight a successful public-private partnership advancing the SDGs at scale. This is a global coalition of companies that leverages members' collective purchasing power to advance emerging climate technologies.

Capacity building is essential. Upskilling will be crucial to ensure we have a workforce with skills that are in demand and can contribute to growth in the context of sustainable development, innovation, and regional competitiveness. Education systems should take into account the need for lifetime learning as this is critical for providing a human resource base for modern industry and the development of innovation. New education programmes should be created in close collaboration with local communities. The private sector can also contribute to this.

There is a need to involve more diverse voices in research funding decisions so that we can give more opportunities to diverse actors to define the directions of innovation. Businesses also need to cooperate outside of the core value chain to ensure that they deliver what the client needs and that the infrastructure around the entire value chain is in place.

It is essential to combine policies on structural change with policies for inclusion. Businesses need to find alternative ways to meet consumer needs that are different from business-as-usual. R&D needs to be better distributed in low- and middle-income countries for all stakeholders in these countries to participate in innovation.

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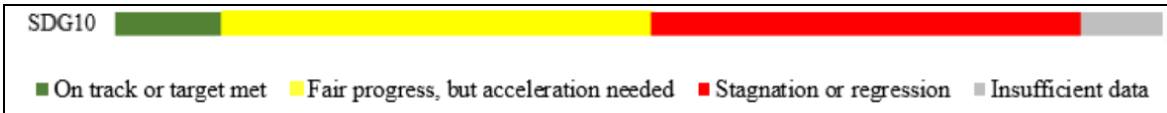
SDG 10

Reduce inequality within and among countries



Before the pandemic, the incomes of the bottom 40 per cent of the population grew faster than the national average in a majority of countries. The impacts of the pandemic and uneven recoveries in different regions of the world threaten to reverse that trend and further worsen global inequality. Record numbers are being forced to flee conflicts and economic hardship. By mid-2022, 1 in 251 people worldwide was a refugee, the highest proportion ever documented.[17]

Introduction

Reducing inequalities and ensuring that no one is left behind are integral to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Inequality within and among countries is a persistent cause for concern. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic appear to have both exposed and deepened structural inequalities.

Challenges

The capacities of many LDC governments to support the most vulnerable are very limited. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) fiscal space is linked to the ongoing debt crisis because their consolidation policies (raising energy prices, raising policy rates, and increasing austerity measures) are placing skewed and additional burdens on the poor. Social policies are often put together as residual policies to deal with the adverse impacts of economic and other policies.

Interlinkages

Deep-rooted structural inequalities like access to health, access to education, entry to the labour market, and access to social protection produce and shape income inequalities. There is also a large flow of migration that contributes to political instability and conflict. Inequalities across countries are also contributing to a "brain drain" within certain regions (for example the Arab Region) where many educated people emigrate, taking their expertise out of the country.

[17] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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Solutions

We need to move away from traditional donor funding and find a long-term strategy. Macro-economic policy frameworks should have a social element firmly embedded within them as we may inadvertently exacerbate inequalities if policies are adopted too quickly. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic digital education had to be embraced quickly but this created further inequalities, including the expansion of the digital divide.

We need to address climate justice at a more macro level. Policymakers should adopt a nexus approach that integrates the needs of the globally displaced peoples into the national policies. This is not happening at present, and we need longer-term policies that involve this integrated approach, and which are tailor-made and fit for context. This can be facilitated by global thought leaders and discussion of a global rule-based resolution/system to provide the necessary fiscal space.

We require a new framework that actively integrates various economic, social, political and climate policies into a broader economic policy framework. Governments of developing countries need to protect vulnerable groups, especially those who are likely to lose jobs permanently because their capacity to develop new skills is very limited.

Summary of key recommendations:

- Enable greater collaboration between the public and private sectors to accelerate progress, especially in developing countries. The example of the First Movers Coalition highlights a successful public-private partnership advancing the SDGs at scale.
- Focus on interlinkages between SDG 4 and SDG 7, SDG 9, SDG 10 and SDG 12 to address the growing demand for new sets of skills related to the development of the green, digital and circular economies.
- Promote synergies among SDGs through developing lifelong learning education programmes in close collaboration between universities, the private sector and local communities.
- Substantially increase R&D spending in developing countries to enable stakeholder participation in innovation and funding decisions.
- Develop new frameworks that actively integrate economic, social, political, climate and environmental policies into a broader macro-economic policy framework to protect vulnerable groups, especially in developing countries. This can help to shift away from the reliance on traditional donors and help develop a long-term strategy for inclusive sustainable development. The implementation of these frameworks should be an abiding priority of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- Address climate justice at a more macro-level, including adopting a nexus approach which integrates the needs of the globally displaced peoples into national policies.

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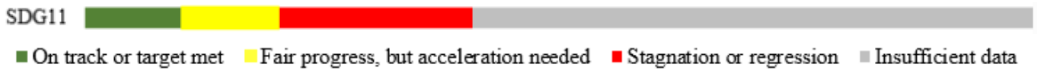
SDG 11 AND SDG 12

SDG 11

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



The pandemic has caused major shifts in migration patterns, including huge movements of people in and out of urban areas. Furthermore, climate change and conflicts tend to have disproportionate impacts on cities. These factors mean that the world is far from achieving the goal of sustainable cities. In many developing countries, slum populations have been growing, putting at risk the target of adequate housing for all by 2030. To achieve Goal 11, efforts must focus on strengthening capacities for planning urban development, improving access to public transportation and enhancing waste management.[18]

Introduction

Sustainable development objectives and a country's economic development objectives need to be pursued in tandem. Cities are engines of economic growth and essential to raising living standards, but from a sustainability and liveability perspective, it is crucial to have access to public services. These are important for cities to be both productive and climate resilient. For example, investing in waste management solutions creates jobs, improves environmental health and contributes to climate resilience.

Challenges

Rapid urbanisation particularly in Asia and Africa poses a major challenge to sustainable urbanisation and requires different models of growth to achieve SDG 11. Key challenges are the development of green construction systems, the availability of sustainably produced materials, changing attitudes, value systems that are intrinsic to sustainable development and new knowledge and skills. A lack of trained planners, government departments acting in siloes, incoherence in financing and fossil fuel-based transport systems subsidised by governments that should be redirected to sustainable transport are further barriers to realising SDG 11.

Interlinkages

There is a strong connection between sustainable urbanisation and SDG 12 (sustainable production and consumption), well-being (SDG 3 and SDG 6) as well as the potential for trade-

[18] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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offs due to inequalities in access to sustainable solutions between those who are wealthy and can, for example, afford to live near public transport and those who cannot. This trade-off can be particularly strong in sprawling cities in the Global South. Pursuing sustainable solutions for all can also help contribute to the climate resilience (SDG 13) of vulnerable groups.

Solutions

Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) are an important tool to report progress towards SDGs, set up new government structures for the SDGs, align global goals on sustainable development with local challenges and bridge siloes between local government departments and with different stakeholders. Since 2018, more than 150 local governments have completed VLRs. By using multi-stakeholder processes, local governments can localise the SDGs, develop a common vision and mobilise stakeholders for the SDGs.

To align SDG 12 with SDG 11, countries in the Global South need to have access to sustainably produced materials. Sustainable public procurement in the construction sector and building materials are crucial for the joint achievement of these Goals. In addition, there is a need for traceability of building materials in the supply chain and for systems in developing countries to monitor this. The building sector has huge potential for job creation as green construction systems will require new skills as well as the servicing and refurbishing of green infrastructure. Investments in green skills are necessary components of this.

Access to transport is an essential solution that can contribute to multiple SDGs. For example, the concept of the '15-minute city' offers potential benefits for jobs, political and civic organisations, and women's empowerment. Germany and Luxembourg are examples of successfully increasing access by reducing fares. There is also a need to change habits and perceptions and to shift to 'shared mobility' transport systems. Certain solutions promoted as sustainable such as electric vehicles reinforce a lifestyle value system (for example the idea of the right to a car) and are slowing the shift to sustainable transport systems.

It is important to create space for dialogue about less car-dependent lifestyles and advocate for the democratic shared use of public space, referencing bicycles and cycling lanes as a better alternative. The WHO health economic assessment tool *Heat* allows policymakers at local, regional and national levels to estimate the value of the health benefits of increased cycling. Furthermore, there is a need for permanent investment in infrastructures for active mobility.

There is also a need to focus on raising the incomes of the poor. The informal economy is an important sector of LDC economies and low-skilled workers will continue to exist for the next generation. It is important therefore to raise their incomes as this will help to raise their resilience to climate change.

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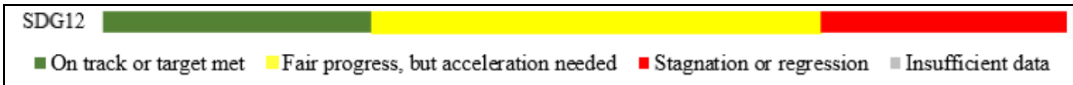
SDG 12

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns



The world is seriously off track in its effort to halve per-capita food waste and losses by 2030. The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on consumption and production patterns, with disruptions to global supply chains and changes in consumer behaviour. Responsible consumption and production must be an integral part of the recovery from the pandemic. However, the global economy also needs to speed up the decoupling of economic growth from resource use by maximising the socioeconomic benefits of resources while minimising their negative impacts. Reporting on corporate sustainability has tripled since the beginning of the Sustainable Development Goals period, but the private sector will need to significantly improve reporting on activities that contribute to the Goals. To deliver Goal 12, it is crucial to implement policies that support the shift to sustainable practices and decouple economic growth from resource use.[19]

Introduction

The wide-scale adoption of a circular economy is a potential solution to the negative impacts of unsustainable consumption and production on the SDGs, however, it is essential that we balance consumption and production systems and account for interlinkages with energy and food systems. Business has a crucial role to play in achieving SDG 12 as partnerships in facilitating long-term investment and innovation and driving cost reductions in circular economy solutions. Progress on SDG 12 is crucial for addressing the triple planetary crisis which is largely driven by what we produce and consume. The evidence is clear that there is a need to transition away from a linear economy and a need for a just transition. The way we currently consume and produce results in inequalities, particularly in the developing world.

Challenges

According to the Circularity Gap report, the rate of circularity is not increasing.[20] We are behind on SDG 12 targets partly because of a lack of finance and investment; however, we also need to broaden our understanding of the circular economy. For example, we need to move beyond the consequences of overconsumption with an emphasis on the Global North and in areas like plastics, recycling, fast fashion, textile waste and post-consumption food waste. We also need to critically examine production systems, especially in contemplating a just

[19] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.
[20] Matthew Fraser et al., "Circularity Gap Report 2024" (Circle Economy Foundation, 2024), https://www.circularity-gap.world/2024.

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transition. Companies can have very different impacts on the SDGs, and we need to recognise the impacts companies can have and channel private finance to those with the greatest net SDG contribution. There is also inequality in access to circular economy solutions and the challenge of those who are not motivated to adopt such solutions.

On a deeper level, there is a need to overcome the correlation between high consumption and how we measure progress. Countries performing well on the SDG index are also those with higher material and carbon footprints. We need to switch the narrative from one that focuses on achieving the highest material well-being within planetary boundaries to one that has everyone fulfilling their needs with as little environmental impact as possible. Lifestyle changes are important and require a change in the systems of production.

Finally, the cross-sector partnership PACE which was created to accelerate the widespread adoption of the circular economy argues that the key upcoming challenge is implementation of the circular economy. This is because it looks very different depending on geography, sectors, and locations.

Interlinkages

Addressing SDG 12 requires acknowledging interlinkages with SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 4 (quality education). This necessitates multi-pronged interventions that improve knowledge, make it easier for consumers to adopt circular economy solutions and provide end-to-end solutions.

Companies are drivers of finance. They can have positive impacts on the SDGs by supplying sustainable transport and renewable energy technologies. However, they can also have negative impacts – for example since the 1970s, one hundred companies have been identified as responsible for most of the greenhouse gases emitted.

Solutions

The 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production[21] is a key implementation mechanism for accelerating progress on SDG 12. Achieving SDG 12 requires regulatory frameworks, stakeholders working together, and policy development. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) -led One Planet Network (OPN) is an open network of 6,000 organisations that seeks to catalyse collaborations in several areas including enabling circular economy policies. The OPN has four pillars including enabling transformative changes through multistakeholder partnerships and shifting consumption choices to sustainable consumption and production.

[21] For more information, see https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/about/10-year-framework-programmes-sustainable-consumption-production.

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An important overlooked aspect of the circular economy is leadership. A unique and unusual leadership in our political system is required – one that goes against the grain. There may be expenses and risks involved in promoting these initiatives. An example of leadership is the First Movers Coalition which brings together the purchasing power of large players to facilitate long-term investment in decarbonisation and drive cost reductions. Such a partnership is also needed in the circular economy domain.

The SDG framework can be used to map companies' impacts on sustainable development and distinguish companies' net impacts. Such an approach can then be used to advise investors on investing in sustainable development and therefore better align private financial flows with SDG implementation. For example, Robeco has developed a methodology for scoring 12,000 companies based on their SDG impact and advising investors on which companies or part of companies to invest in to support their positive impacts and minimise negative spillovers.[22]

Summary of key recommendations:

- Pursue the SDGs and economic development objectives in tandem, especially in LDCs. Access to services such as public goods, waste management, and transport is crucial for cities to be both productive and climate resilient.
- Transform the construction sector, especially in rapidly urbanising cities in Asia and Africa to deliver progress on SDG 11, SDG 12 and many other SDGs.
- Encourage VLRs as an important tool to localise the SDGs, develop a common vision for the implementation and mobilise a range of stakeholders.
- Use the SDGs to develop long-term municipal development plans and to assess existing plans' alignment with sustainable development. Helsinki, the capital of Finland, is a leading example of this.
- Transform the relationship between consumption levels and measure of progress with new monitoring frameworks that give greater weight to SDG 11 and SDG 12. These metrics should focus on delivering basic needs with minimal environmental impact.
- Increase finance and investment into SDG 12 projects while broadening our understanding of a circular economy and finding ways to accelerate the adoption of a circular economy with a focus on mobilising stronger leadership, enabling more policies, and addressing gaps in current discussions (including production systems and high consumption lifestyles).
- Adopt sustainable transport system solutions based on a holistic evaluation of their interlinkages with the SDGs and critical appraisal of current value systems that are slowing the transformation.
- Map companies' impacts on sustainability using the SDG framework to better align private financial flows with SDG implementation.

[22] Robeco, "SDG Framework," 2024, https://www.robeco.com/en-int/sustainable-investing/sdg-framework.

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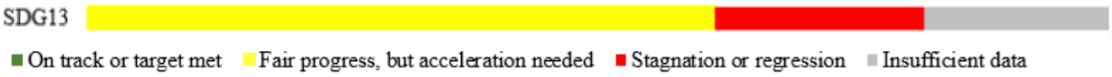
SDG 13 AND SDG 14

SDG 13

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



The world is on the brink of a climate catastrophe, and current actions and plans to address the crisis are insufficient. Without transformative action starting now and within the current decade to reduce greenhouse gas emissions deeply and rapidly in all sectors, the 1.5°C target will be at risk and with it the lives of more than 3 billion people. Failure to act leads to intensifying heatwaves, droughts, flooding, wildfires, sea-level rise and famines. Emissions should already be decreasing now and will need to be cut by almost half by 2030 – a mere six years from now (2024). To combat climate change and its impacts by 2030, urgent and transformative action is needed to meet the commitments under the Paris Agreement across mitigation and adaptation efforts.[23]

Introduction

Since the Paris Agreement in 2015, the interplay of a number of crises and wicked problems has increased the impacts of climate change. For example, there has been a global pandemic, and the invasion of Ukraine resulting in a changing power balance, with financial stress and economic crisis.

Challenges

To finance the transition to renewables, two important things need to happen: fossil fuel subsidies need to be reduced, and enhanced finance needs to be provided by institutions working to reduce climate change. However, such institutions are not functioning as expected or desired in providing the required finance, and fossil fuels continue to be subsidised.

Governance for climate change has become increasingly complex. Many multistakeholder partnerships, private initiatives and city networks have been launched. Challenges remain on how to connect these institutions – referred to as institutional interactions – to ensure that initiatives designed to support progress on SDG 13 do not undermine the achievement of other SDGs. In addition, many of these initiatives undertake similar work without knowing it, resulting in inefficiencies, and in some cases, the work of one initiative undermining others.

[23] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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Interlinkages

Climate change and all the SDGs are strongly connected, and these interlinkages should be reflected in structures working to reduce climate change. Progress on SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) will very likely contribute to addressing SDG 13, but it can also negatively affect other SDGs such as food (SDG 2) and water (SDG 6). A study of climate initiatives and their links to other SDGs found that their activities are linked to many SDGs – most strongly SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 7, and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production).[24]

Solutions

Nature-based solutions address various economic environmental and social challenges. A key issue on the ground is how solutions address the societal challenges of the community – for example how to address floods, water security, human health, and economies. Nature-based solutions provide opportunities to address these challenges using an integrated approach.

Nature-based solutions offer a great opportunity to accelerate action. For example, the ENACT partnership between the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Germany to catalyse action at scale is mobilising finance using various instruments. However, there is still a huge gap in financing these types of projects. Now that nature-based solutions are included in several Conferences of the Parties (COPs), including those for climate, biodiversity, Ramsar (wetlands), land degradation and ocean, we need to mainstream this approach in national and local policy frameworks.

The 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement provide a strong framework for aligning commitments and actions. The complexity of climate governance initiatives has its benefits as it makes it possible to compartmentalise different aspects of the climate challenge and bring together different perspectives and knowledge to facilitate innovation.

Climate initiatives should share more about their procedures to help to identify conflicts and gaps. Political cooperation needs to go beyond visiting conferences to facilitating coordination. Multilateral cooperation remains key in creating consensus, and interactions should steer towards more unconventional partners such as the fossil fuel industry and chemicals companies.

While emphasising the transition to a green economy in developing countries, we have to remember the socioeconomic contexts of these countries. We need to look at development in these countries through a wider, more holistic lens that also encompasses education, social protection, women's empowerment and employment, and gender equality. This holistic

[24] Johanna Coenen, Lisa-Maria Glass, and Lisa Sanderink, "Two Degrees and the SDGs: A Network Analysis of the Interlinkages between Transnational Climate Actions and the Sustainable Development Goals," *Sustainability Science* 17 (July 2022), https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-021-01007-9.

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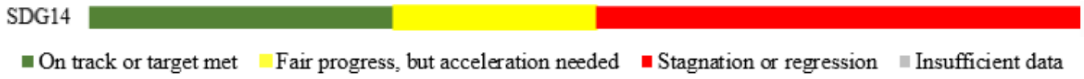
perspective will help ensure a just transition that stands on social, economic and environmental pillars.

SDG 14

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development



Destructive trends in ocean health have not abated. The ocean, the world's largest ecosystem, continues to be endangered by rising acidification, eutrophication, declining fish stocks and mounting plastic pollution. While there has been some progress in expanding marine protected areas and combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing over the years, more concerted efforts and acceleration are urgently needed. Urgent and coordinated global action is needed to continue to advance towards Goal 14.[25]

Introduction

The blue economy is central to achieving SDG 14, as it is related to most other SDGs. This SDG has great potential to be transformative, however, this will involve balancing economic growth with environmental protection and social equity and will depend on blue economies being designed in a way that explicitly takes interlinkages into account.

In recent years there has been more formal integration of the oceans into international climate change negotiations, the long-term outcomes of which it is still too early to fully know. However, we now see a significant engagement of the local community in the climate change regime. Stakeholders are becoming more integrated in their thinking, for example about deep sea mining, the impacts of climate change, and the impacts on children's rights. It remains to be seen to what extent the parties of the Paris Agreement will develop clear guidance in the area of oceans, how sustainable ocean climate actions can mitigate climate change, and to what extent climate funding will be directed towards ocean response measures.

Challenges

There is no commonly accepted definition of a blue economy. Some countries see the blue economy as a source of economic growth and innovation, involving the growth of new sectors, new technologies and renewable energy. Developed countries often have the required resources for this treatment of the blue economy. However, if the blue economy becomes too top-down or too prescriptive there is the risk of losing out on local innovations and the benefits

[25] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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of integrating local knowledge in the effective implementation of blue economies. On the other hand, the continued absence of a common understanding of the definition of a blue economy is likely to result in some cases of 'blue-washing'.

Interlinkages

An important relationship between blue economy thinking and other SDGs includes the risk of comprising advancement on environmental protection – especially in pursuit of SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) or SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure). Further, where blue economies include fossil fuel based or extractive activities – as many of them do – this will impact SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 14 (life below water). It is also worth considering the extent to which nations incorporate gender equality (SDG 5) and other equity issues (SDG 10) in blue economy development.

Solutions

There is no one-size-fits-all solution for the implementation of blue economies. However, there can be mutual learning from different countries' experiences of implementing the blue economy, regarding what has worked well in specific contexts, and what has resulted in a lack of equity or a lack of environmental protection. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have played a role in formalising the priorities around which blue economies are built, in that these island states face issues pertaining to SDG 1, SDG 2, and SDG 3, alongside 14.b (food security, livelihoods, community-led actions and poverty eradication), and have pushed a focus on ocean equity and innovations. It is worth noting that blue economy activities and aspirations are different between countries in the Caribbean.

A database of implementation case studies and analysis of those case studies could be a helpful longer-term resource, from which blue economy implementation guidance and principles could be developed. A fundamental shift also needs to occur in how we view and value the oceans, and this includes more intangible values – positive and equitable social impacts should be included in blue economy outcomes.

The recognition of the human right to a healthy environment has been embedded in the Global Biodiversity Framework and the importance of a healthy ocean needs to be recognised as part of this connection.

There is a very complex landscape of pre-existing and new international fora that discusses SDG 14 in which there have been significant developments in recent years. For example, there is now a new international agreement looking at areas beyond national jurisdiction – ranging from the high seas to the deep-sea floor. The new agreements present opportunities for thinking about regime interaction and examining the effectiveness of those efforts for respecting ocean biodiversity across the various regimes.

One Ocean Hub is an international sustainable development programme that builds fair partnerships between coastal people, researchers, decision-makers, civil society, and international organisations to value and learn from different knowledge systems and voices.

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It connects 126 researchers (from marine and social sciences, law and the arts) from 21 research institutions in the Global South and North. They engage in local and national learning in Ghana, Namibia and South Africa, cross-regional learning (University of West Indies and the South Pacific) and local to global learning (UN, international and regional organisations, and international and local NGOs). Networks like the *One Ocean Hub* are important for finding new and creative solutions.

Summary of key recommendations:

- Better manage the socio-economic and environmental impacts of increasingly frequent and intense climate change events as well as their interplay with other crises and disasters - including the COVID-19 pandemic, wars, water stress, and floods – and the resulting economic and financial distress.
- Accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels by developing and adopting integrated approaches.
- Unlock the transformative potential of the blue economy by envisioning, operationalising and developing solutions in a way that explicitly takes interlinkages and context into account drawing on indigenous knowledge and perspectives of local communities.
- Create a database of implementation case studies and analysis of those case studies as a helpful longer-term resource from which blue economy implementation guidance and principles could be developed. The One Ocean Hub is a frontrunner example of building fair partnerships between coastal people, researchers, decision-makers, civil society, and international organisations to promote and learn from different knowledge systems and voices.
- Integrate different environmental issues, values and perspectives and recognise the human right to a healthy environment in international policy processes for climate and the oceans.
- Engage communities from different policy processes (such as climate, human rights, and oceans) and support dialogue between them to achieve greater coherence in global responses.
- Change how science is produced to enable greater levels of co-production – including with vulnerable groups, women and children, and between the Global North and Global South at the research stage. We need to allow sufficient time and opportunities to develop platforms for co-creation and co-production.

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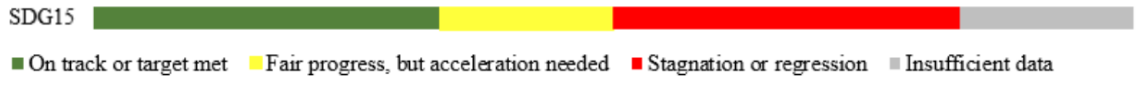
SDG 15 AND SDG 16

SDG 15

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss



The world is facing a triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. The trend in forest loss, land degradation and the extinction of species is becoming worse, posing a severe threat to the health of the planet and people. Goal 15 will not be met without a dramatic shift in our relationship with our natural environment.[26]

Introduction

SDG 15 sets out the land-based environmental and nature elements of sustainable development, reaching all the other SDGs, and through its focus on international agreements pushes intergovernmental processes to come together. SDG 15 brings together nature and humans into the policy space, is the impetus for nature-based initiatives and solutions, and challenges decision-makers to incorporate environmental and nature-based values into all sustainable development action. Increasingly, biodiversity is also being recognised as a development issue and the new global biodiversity framework has taken a human rights approach, emphasising the centrality of SDG 15 to the sustainable development agenda.

Challenges

One challenge is that the connection between biodiversity and the environment and human health is not a part of current systemic thinking. This is compounded by a lack of knowledge in critical areas. Deeper systemic problems such as power imbalances and equity issues are part of how to better protect nature and are often missing in conversations on this topic.

Another challenge is land-based investments, which are currently often locked in a false dichotomy of progressing either investments or protecting biodiversity. Land use is a bigger threat to biodiversity than climate change. Another structural impediment is existing laws and regulatory systems that favour industrially based agriculture or forestry, and make small-scale, bottom-up regenerative efforts to restore nature difficult and sometimes impossible.

[26] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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Interlinkages

When taken together with all its targets and indicators, it is clear that SDG 15 is crucial to realising all other SDGs. Implementing SDG 15 will have a positive effect on the patterns of production and consumption (SDG 12). SDG 15 is a precondition for the other SDGs – current negative trends will undermine progress towards 80 per cent (35 out of 44) of SDG targets related to poverty (SDG 1), hunger (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), water (SDG 6), cities and urban areas (SDG 11), climate (SDG 13), oceans (SDG 14) and land.[27]

Full enjoyment of human rights depends on biodiversity and ecosystem services, providing the grounds for taking a strong human rights approach (SDG 16). This can be seen through recent developments in international biodiversity issues which provide concrete guidelines on how to put human rights standards into practice in environmental governance.[28]

The dependence on good systems and governance to achieve SDG 15 demonstrates that opportunities for real progress hinge on SDG 16. SDG 15, SDG 16 and SDG 17 seen together allow for a greater set of synergies, as we can combine policy coherence, biodiversity science, rights-based approaches and systemic thinking to build alliances across sectors.

Solutions

To strengthen policy and drive success, different strands of thinking need to be integrated. An important area is the interconnections between human rights and biodiversity. Some progress has been made in understanding how indigenous people and other communities' human rights are intrinsically linked to ecosystem health, but this needs to be broadened. A human rights approach would provide procedural guarantees nationally and internationally. It requires bringing together international biodiversity law, international human rights law, and economic law to identify minimum obligations, place limits on states' discretion, and provide access to remedies when states and the private sector fall short of their obligations.

New concerns need to be embedded into decision-making about land alongside a bigger transformation in international economic law. Additionally, collaborative local networks and community initiatives should be enabled and scaled up. One example is ecosystem restoration. Often, boosting local initiatives requires changes in economic systems and thinking – including challenging market systems that prioritise monocultures, short-term financial investments that are at odds with regenerative practices, and donors that focus on scaling up rather than

[27] See for example the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, 2019.
[28] See for example decisions from COP 15 (available at https://www.cbd.int/conferences/2021-2022/cop-15/documents); United Nations General Assembly, "The Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment," 2023; and relevant multilateral environmental agreements.

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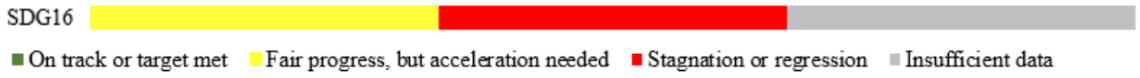
out – alongside shifts in education, planning, and other regulatory areas. Removing barriers to local innovation and responses is key and will involve multistakeholder cooperation.

The right to good health demonstrates interdependencies across different areas, providing opportunities to collaborate. This requires taking a proactive approach to seek out new partnerships. Examples of valuable new partnerships include women, health and children's experts and indigenous communities.

The realisation of SDG 15 is dependent on science but also requires better engagement with indigenous and local knowledge. This has implications for governments as funders of science as well as research institutions and researchers themselves in project design. These partnerships are developing in some spaces but need to be integrated more broadly and new research must continue to be funded.

SDG 16

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels



Ongoing and new violent conflicts around the world are derailing a global path to peace and the achievement of Goal 16. One quarter of humanity lives in conflict-affected areas and, as of mid-2022, more than 100 million people had been forcibly displaced worldwide – more than double the number a decade ago. Citizens also face challenges gaining access to justice, basic services and legal guarantees, and are generally underrepresented owing to ineffective institutions. Moreover, structural injustices, inequalities and emerging human rights challenges are putting peaceful and inclusive societies further out of reach. To meet Goal 16 by 2030, action is needed to restore trust and to strengthen the capacity of institutions to secure justice for all and facilitate transitions to drive sustainable development.[29]

Introduction

SDG 16 makes it clear that the multilateral system must embrace transitional justice, require institutions to work together, embed civil society into systems of good governance and justice, and recognise that the construction of peace requires the protection of the planet. Peace is a basic requirement for the complete fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

[29] United Nations General Assembly, "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet - Report of the Secretary-General," 2023.

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Challenges

Sound policy and effective, good governance are needed by states to achieve the SDGs, but public administration and governance need a political, financial and intellectual boost. Expert knowledge often sits outside governments, hampering states' ability to answer big and complicated questions. This is compounded by a conflict in approach to SDG 16 policy issues: these are complex and require slow, careful planning, but are often viewed through a short-term, crisis management lens. Additionally, good governance is often not well understood or ignored in institution building, including the way institutions carry out their mandates. This often leads to the exclusion of civil society in decision-making processes.

A further problem lies in research, which often does not link SDG 16 with other SDGs. This misses many opportunities for policy coherence and results in multilateral and national institutions not being held to account. So far, attempts at accountability have largely reinforced power structures and have not delivered substantial or sustainable change.

Finally, communities are often not consulted, and their voices are not embedded in addressing the various targets of SDG 16. Groups such as women and indigenous communities often bear the brunt of ineffective policies and become targets of misinformation campaigns when they raise issues. Poor governance structures exacerbate this situation.

Interlinkages

The SDGs are reliant on transformative change and robust and effective institutions. All SDGs require public delivery, which cannot be achieved without SDG 16. Each requires transparency, participation, accountability and oversight, resources and the ability to capture success stories.

Solutions

To boost public administration and good governance, governments need to introduce systems to measure quality and progress, increase and encourage in-house expertise, and find ways to combine crisis and complexity problems. Principles of good governance should be embedded in the eight dimensions of policy creation of sustainable development.[30]

There is an urgent need for debt justice, which includes debt cancellation and allowing governments the fiscal space to invest in their people. The global system of wealth taxation currently allows corruption and companies to skirt tax obligations, which could be addressed by redistribution and collaboration at the global level.

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[30] These are Political commitment and leadership; Strategic long-term vision; Policy integration; Whole of government coordination; Subnational engagement: Stakeholder engagement; Policy and financing impacts; and Monitoring reporting and evaluation. From Louis Meuleman's presentation, available at https://stakeholderforum.org/stakeholder-forum-webinars/countdown-to-the-un-sdg-summit-2023-webinar-series/.

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SDG implementation requires a bottom-up approach with active participation from local communities, alongside a global overview that can manage limited resources, raise awareness, and develop capacity and infrastructure. This requires ensuring transparency, identifying vulnerabilities in the system, tackling common gaps, and intervening at different levels. The creation of a governance quality infrastructure that can generate and track data to support a more scientific policy approach is key here. This can ensure coordination across functions and policy dimensions, policy coherence and alignment, representation of stakeholders, and safeguarding the individual right to development. Quality foresight institutions can be created, and audit institutions can take a proactive role in monitoring sustainable development efforts.

Finally, valuable solutions are located in policies and resolutions produced by the UN and Human Rights Commission. While there are many opportunities for new and transformative thinking, it is also important that existing ideas are properly implemented. The UN 2.0 initiatives can provide guidance here.[31]

Summary of key recommendations:

- Integrate separate strands of thinking, such as bringing together human rights, biodiversity, and economic laws to provide procedural guarantees nationally and internationally.
- Encourage and enable the scaling out and up of local community initiatives.
- Update land-use systems to enable the protection of biodiversity over short-term investment.
- Promote partnerships with increased financial and systemic support, especially involving initiatives from local and indigenous communities.
- Study the connection between human health and biodiversity and initiate projects that protect this interconnectedness.
- Incorporate the principles of good governance into all decision-making processes, at national and local levels.
- Strengthen the global accountability system to measure decision-making quality and progress, create governance quality infrastructure and increase in-house expertise to enable governments to reduce reliance on short-term solutions and combine crisis and complexity decision-making.
- Develop foresight institutions under the auspices of the UN system that are properly positioned and provided with the necessary resources and authority.
- Transform the global finance system to facilitate debt justice and wealth taxation that prevents corruption and enables governments to invest in their people.
- Implement, assess, and adequately resource existing initiatives and institutions before generating new resolutions and recommendations.

[31] United Nations, "UN 2.0 – Quintet of Change," 2023.

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Annex

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Stakeholder Forum is grateful to Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Board Member and Senior Adviser on Governance at Stakeholder Forum for introductions to all webinars, to David Horan and David O'Connor, Fellows of Stakeholder Forum, for preparing and moderating the webinars, to Charles Nouhan, Chair of the Board of Stakeholder Forum for organisation and conduct of the webinars, to Irena Zubcevic, Director of Stakeholder Forum for her contributions and support, and to Helen Loveridge for editing this document.

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Webinar on SDG 1 and SDG 2

- Dr. Friedrich Soltau, Chief, Intergovernmental Policy and Review Branch, Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development, UN-DESA
- Jamil Ahmad, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme, New York
- Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh
- Chantal Line Carpentier, Chief at UNCTAD New York, Office of the Secretary-General
- Eunice Ajambo, Economist, United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, Namibia
- Dr. Daniele Malerba, Senior Researcher, German Institute for Development and Sustainability
- Hanaa El Hilaly, Chairman at Aspire Capital Holding Company, and Executive Director at Al Kheir Microfinance Company

Webinar on SDG 3 and SDG 4

- Dr. Wanda Markotter, Co-Chair, One Health High-Level Expert Panel, and Director of Centre for Viral Zoonoses, University of Pretoria
- Mr. Landry Egbende, public health specialist at the Kinshasa School of Public Health
- Dr. Katey Pelican, Director, Co-Lead, PI and Developer, One Health Systems Mapping and Analysis Toolkit at the University of Minnesota
- Ms. Elizabeth Moses-Mullard, Principal Advocate at AlphaZULU Advocates; Former Member of the Independent Education Appeals Panel, London Borough of Hillingdon
- Prof. Victoria Thoresen, Former UNESCO Chair for Education for Sustainable Lifestyles, Collaborative Learning Centre for Sustainable Development, Inland Norway University
- Prof. Lichia Saner-Yiu, Organisation Development & Institutional Learning, President, Centre for Socio-Eco-Nomic Development (CSEND)
- Mr. Angus Mackay, Director of the Division for Planet at the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and Head of the UN CC: Learn Secretariat
- Dr Karen Brown, Director, Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change, University of Minnesota

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- Mr. Brad Olsen, Senior Fellow, Center for Universal Education in the Global Economy and Development program, Brookings Institution
- Mr. Gervais Nzoa, Development Specialist, Coordinator, Caald, and Former Member, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Webinar on SDG 5 and SDG 6

- Maria Mercedes Kuri, United Nations International Federation of Youth for Water and Climate (UN1FY)
- Dr. Nina Lansbury, Senior Lecturer at the School of Public Health, University of Queensland
- Ms. Carmen Capriles, Founding Member of Reacción Climática and Global Facilitator Women's Major Group UNEA/UNEP
- Mr. Innocent Menyo, Team Lead & Co-Founder, M-SCAN
- Dr. Grace Oluwasanya, Senior Researcher: Water, Climate and Gender at the United Nations Institute for Water, Environment, and Health
- Dr. Ali Karnib, Senior Water and Sustainable Development Expert
- Ms. Marisha Wojciechowska-Shibuya, Lead Writer of the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water & Sanitation's final report on water and sanitation, and author & publisher of My Globetrotter Book
- Ms. Tove Lexén, Programme Officer, International Policy, Swedish Water House

Webinar on SDG 7 and SDG 8

- Prof. Raymond Saner, University of Basel and Centre for Socio-Economic Development (CSEND)
- Dr. Minoru Takada, Sustainable Energy Team Leader & Head, UN-Energy Secretariat, UNDESA
- Dr. Francesco Fuso-Nerini, Assoc. Prof., Division of Energy Systems & Director of KTH Climate Action Centre at the Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden
- Mr. Kari Tapiola, Former Deputy-Director General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)
- Mr. Ivan Idrovo, CEO, SDCASIA; External Consultant at International Labour Organization (ILO)

Webinar on SDG 9 and SDG 10

- Ms. Stine Lise Hattestad Bratsberg, Partner/Head of strategy and transformation in EMA ESG Hub KPMG, Norway
- Dr. Tommaso Ciarli, Senior Researcher, UNU-MERIT, United Nations University and SPRU – Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex Business School
- Dr. Lidia Stępińska-Ustasiak, Area Leader, International Cooperation & Partnerships
- Ms. Andrea Ordonez, Director, Southern Voice in Ecuador, Dr. Sajid Amin, Deputy Executive Director and founding head of the Policy Solutions Lab at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan
- Ms. Radia Sedaoui, Chief of the Energy Section, Climate Change and Natural Resource Sustainability Cluster, UN Economic Social Commission West Asia (UN ESCWA)

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Webinar on SDG 11 and SDG 12

- Assistant Secretary-General Michal Mlynar, Deputy Executive Director, UN-Habitat
- Juliana Oliveira Cunha, Policy Economist, International Growth Centre, London School of Economics
- Maruxa Cardama, Secretary General, Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon Transport (SLoCaT)
- Fernando Ortiz-Moya, Policy Researcher, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, Japan
- Zeenat Niazi, Sr. Vice-President, and Chief Knowledge Officer, Development Alternatives Group, India
- Ramona Liberoff, Executive Director, PACE (Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy)
- Gemma Scott, Recycling & Circular Economy Specialist
- Jan-Anton van Zanten, SDG Strategist, Robeco: The Investment Engineers, The Netherlands
- Dr. Luca Coscieme, Programme Lead Sustainable Lifestyles, Hot or Cool Institute, Berlin
- Fabienne Pierre, Programme Management Coordinator, One Planet Network, UNEP

Webinar on SDG 13 and SDG 14

- Charles Karangwa, Head, Nature-based Solutions Team, IUCN, on Nature-based Solutions
- Dr. Lisa Sanderink, Assistant Professor, Energy Transition and Climate Governance, University of Twente, The Netherlands
- Dr. Fahmida Khatun, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh
- Fredrik Myhre, Marine Biologist and Team Leader Oceans at WWF-Norway
- Dr. Marjo Vierros, Head of Science-Policy Research at the University of Edinburgh-Nippon Foundation Ocean Voices Programme
- Oliver Wragg, Commercial Director at Orbital Marine Power Ltd, and Member of the Board of Ocean Energy Europe
- Dr. Elisa Morgera, Professor of Global Environmental Law and the Director of One Ocean Hub, University of Strathclyde Law School

Webinar on SDG 15 and SDG 16

- Dr. Elisa Morgera, Professor of Global Environmental Law and the Director of One Ocean Hub, University of Strathclyde Law School
- Dr. Emlyn Koster, Director Emeritus, Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology, Alberta, Canada
- Pieter van der Gaag, Executive Director, Ecosystem Restoration Communities and Chairman of the Board, Ecosystem Restoration Foundation
- Dr. Louis Meuleman Vice Chair/Member United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration and Senior Adviser on Governance
- Dr. Pooja Balasubramanian, German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)
- Mr. David Kode, Advocacy & Campaigns Lead, CIVICUS, South Africa
- Professor Lichia Saner-Yiu, President of the Centre for Socio-Eco-Nomic Development (CSEND)

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