

Taking Action on the Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

This paper provides basic information on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in order to help a general audience from multiple sectors with planning and action on the new SDGs. Section 1 provides an introductory background on the goals and their key principles, and Section 2 outlines a number of steps, which different actors may consider using if they are planning to take action on the SDGs.



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Section 1: General information on the SDGs

1. Introduction

In September 2015, the world's governments agreed on 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) to guide development between now and 2030. The 17 SDGs and their associated 169 targets are premised on the belief that inclusiveness, integration and universality can bring about a more sustainable future for all.¹ The process of formulating the SDGs drew upon the views of multiple stakeholders across different sectors and countries. As such, it was consistent with the inclusiveness, integration and universality principles that underpin the SDGs. But the implementation of the goals will require engagement with more than the 'usual suspects' who participated actively in their formulation. Rather implementation will necessitate bringing in cities, businesses, and government agencies that may be relatively unfamiliar with the SDGs. Thus will require user-friendly guidance on the steps newcomers to the SDGs can take to move the goals forward. While some literature has been published to help stakeholders², it tends to be either sector specific without explaining the broader context or too lengthy to digest in one sitting.

This paper seeks to be both comprehensive but also concise, and it seeks to serve two goals for stakeholders: First, it aims to increase general understanding of the goals by discussing key characteristics of the SDGs, including the principles of inclusivity, integration and universality that call for greater stakeholder engagement; second, it outlines a nine-step engagement process that different stakeholders can take to translate the SDGs and 2030 agenda into actions consistent with the SDG principles.

The SDGs emphasise inclusiveness, integration and universality as key principles to guide development between now and 2030.

discrete human development issues. The MDGs were defined by an exclusive, expert-led process,³ and took a one-size-fits-all approach⁴. This approach proved easy to communicate, but failed to account for countries' varying national contexts in pursuit of the MDGs. In contrast, the 17 SDGs and 169 targets have been designed through an open and inclusive process.⁵

Highlighting the importance of ownership and participation,⁶ the SDGs encourage countries and stakeholders to tailor the

2. Inclusive, integrated and universal SDGs

To understand the content and positioning of the SDGs a good starting point is where they depart from previous development goals. Between 2000 and 2015 the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) focused international development aid around a limited number of

Highlighting the importance of ownership and participation, the SDGs encourage countries and stakeholders to contextualise and localise the goals on their own.

¹ This development agenda is hailed as transformative as it possesses elements that may encourage human activities to be more in line with ethical principles, human rights, equality and environmental sustainability.

² (Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2016; United Cities and Local Governments, 2016)

³ (Fehling, Nelson, & Venkatapuram, 2013)

⁴ (Vandemoortele, 2009)

⁵ (Beyond 2015, 2015)

⁶ (Schmidt-Traub & Sachs, 2015; United Nations General Assembly, 2015)

goals and targets to specific national and local development challenges and measure progress relative to their own baselines.⁷ In this process, the role of the private sector in implementation has been emphasised,⁸ recognizing that partnerships for action must span across sectors and involve systems of mutual accountability between actors.



Figure 1. The 17 SDGs⁹

Apart from being inclusive in the design and agenda setting processes, the 17 SDGs differ from the MDGs in that they are universal and integrated. The attention to universality implies that development no longer is supposed to be understood as uni-directional project where laggard countries catch up with leaders. With the 2030 agenda, development is a global matter that challenges all countries to develop in ways that can allow all segments of society to prosper equally without degrading the environment. The rich countries need to transform their economies because they need to reduce their overall consumption of natural resources, either through absolute reductions or through efficiency improvements (or both) whilst maintaining adequate levels of prosperity and well-being for their populations.¹⁰ At the same time, poorer countries have to increase their national income and its distribution whilst integrating environmental sustainability into development plans. The image below illustrates countries' different challenges and priorities in moving towards the same end goal. This end goal is a combination of living within the means of a finite planet with limited natural resources. At the same time, it requires being able to offer adequate levels of human development to people. While reality is likely to be more complicated than the conceptual image below, it is meant to illustrate the universality and differentiation of the development agenda i.e. the possibility for countries with vastly different development challenges to move towards the same final goals – the SDGs.

⁷ The SDGs are also known as 'Global Goals' for sustainable development.

⁸ (Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, 2015)

⁹ (UN, 2016)

¹⁰ (Osborn, Cutter, & Ullah, 2015)

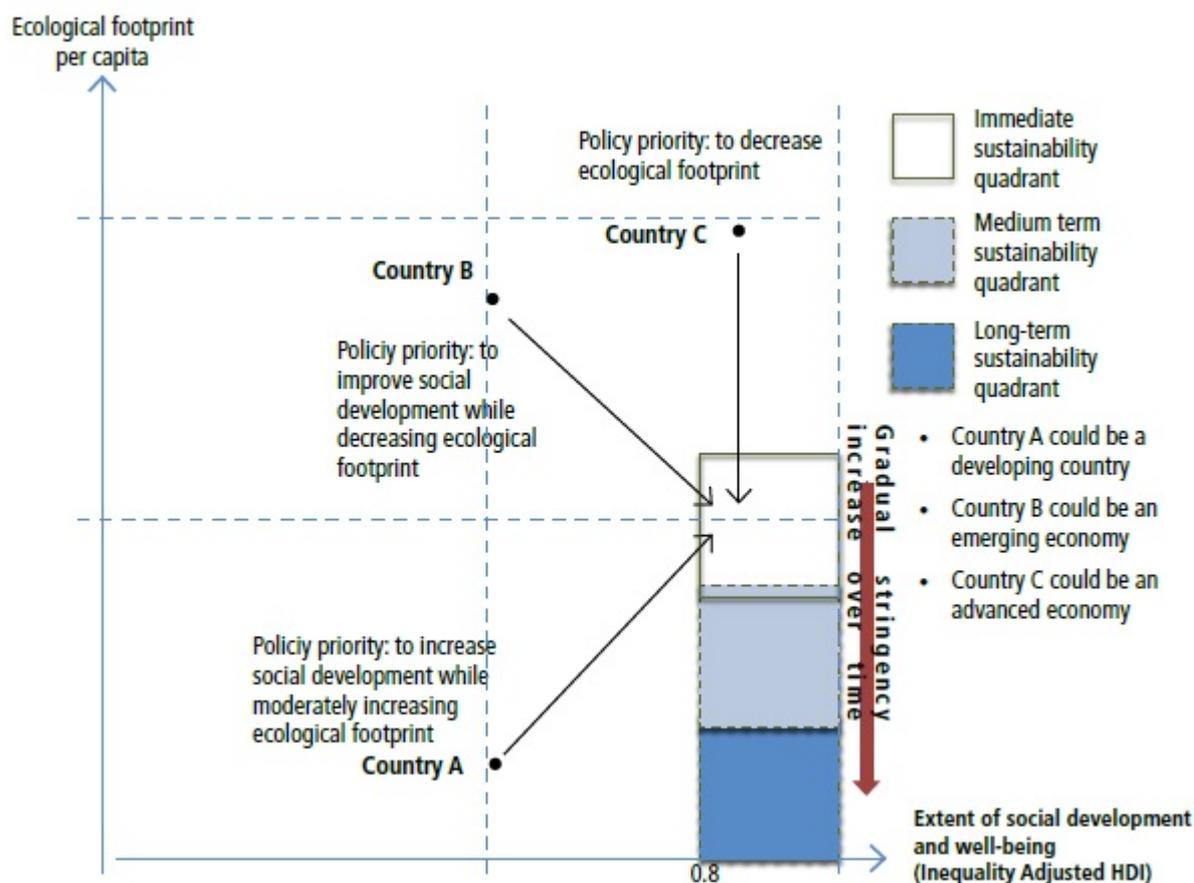


Figure 2. Concept of pathways to a global goal area¹¹

The third key characteristic – integration – has several different dimensions: firstly, the SDGs are intended to integrate and reflect the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development in a balanced manner. Moreover, the goals also reflect the connections between different sectors such as for example between food, water and energy – all of which depend on each other. Additionally, the environment receives a more balanced representation in the integrated SDGs. For example, there are SDGs dedicated to water- and land-based ecosystems (SDGs 14 and 15), climate change (SDG 13), and also goals that recognise the links between economy and environment, such as SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production. Compared to the lone goal covering the environment (MDG 7) in the past MDGs,¹² the SDGs make the environmental dimension a critical part of human development. Moreover, each of the 17 SDGs have targets emphasizing socio-economic and environmental aspects to a varying degree,

The ambitious SDG agenda cannot be implemented by national governments alone; businesses would have to integrate SDGs into their business plans, and local governments would have to reflect SDG concerns in their city development plans.

¹¹ (Asia Europe Environment Forum, 2014)

¹² The eight MDGs were: MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education; MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women; MDG 4: Reduce child mortality; MDG 5: Improve maternal health; MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability; MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development.

irrespective of whether the goal's primary focus is energy, water, health, peace or otherwise.¹³ This framing suggests that a holistic approach is necessary to protect our natural capital and avoid or minimize long-term trade-offs between environmental and socio-economic issues—such as those clearly evident in climate change, biodiversity degradation and other consequences of unsustainable economic growth.

Natural Capital refers to the world's stocks of natural assets, which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things. Natural Capital is essential for the wide range of services, often called ecosystem services, which make human life possible.

The image below illustrates the thematic linkages between the SDGs. It shows strong links, for instance, between attaining SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 4 on education, as well as SDG 10 on equality; that is, working to achieve the targets on SDG 4 on education will yield long term benefits for labour and wages, which in turn will improve people's livelihoods if they are able to secure better jobs through more education. There is also a link to equality, in ensuring that the benefits of poverty reduction programmes leave no-one behind. This connection is especially relevant to girls, women and marginalised peoples, not only through support programmes but also by ensuring that educational programmes

are directed at those who lack access to education. The image below shows how all the 17 SDGs are linked thematically (with some links more direct and indirect than others). This is why taking an integrated approach to policy and action is especially important for the SDGs.

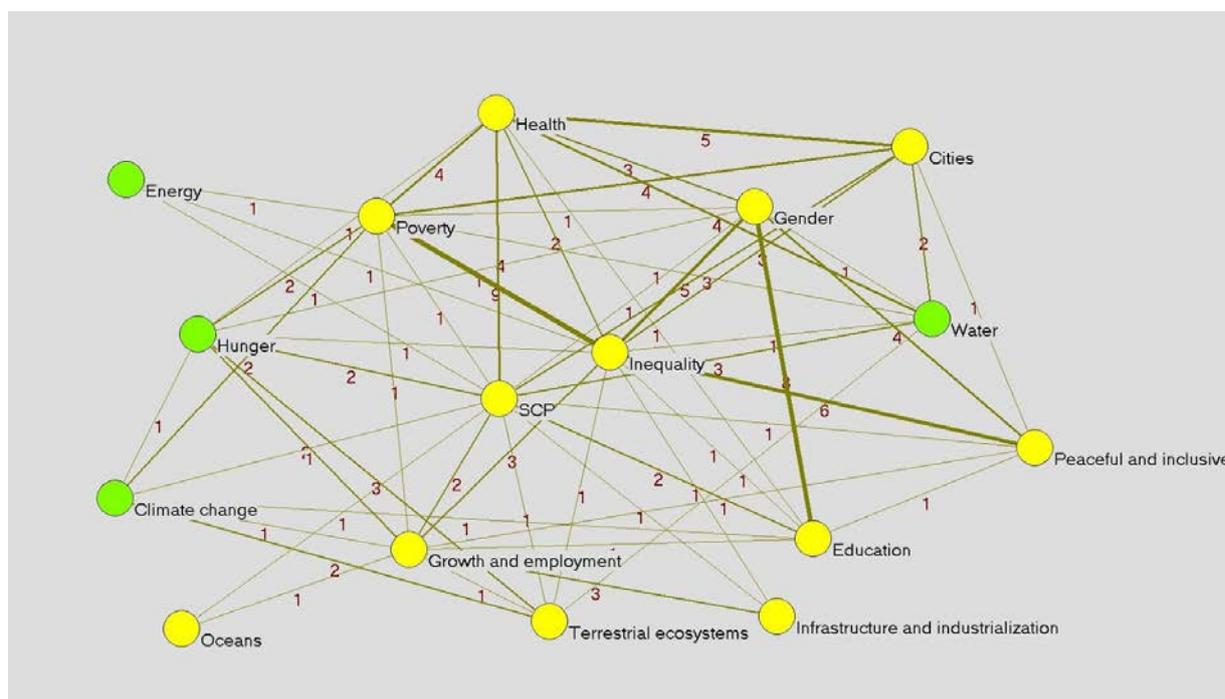


Figure 3. Linkages between different SDGs¹⁴

¹³ (Le Blanc, 2015)

¹⁴ (LeBlanc, 2016)

Secondly, integration is also important for the implementation of the SDGs. The importance of integrated approach to action has long been recognised in sustainability circles,¹⁵ and even today integration remains a commonly referenced theme in sustainability science and policy studies. But just as integration, the concept, has stayed relevant, it also has also proven challenging to realise in practice.

Part of the challenge involves trade-offs between sectors; for instance, some solutions to air and water pollution require using more energy and thereby contribute to climate change. An arguably more difficult challenge is to extend that approach to a wider segment of society as is clearly illustrated in SDG 10 on *Reducing Inequalities*.

A related challenge is many of the stakeholders who may support a more integrated approach lack the knowledge and know-how to move the SDGs forward. At this juncture, it is important to remember that no one party will be able to strike an ideal balance between social, economic and environmental concerns across 169 SDG targets; ultimately, stakeholder communication and coordination will be crucial in fostering the necessary trust for finding optimal solutions to the challenges of integration. The remainder of the brief outlines a series of steps that stakeholders can use to advance the SDG agenda whilst making sure that their interests are reflected in any effort to plan action on the SDGs.

Practising integration is not simply a technical or exercise nor just a matter of 'good governance'. It is a political challenge that requires dialogue and trust building.

Section 2: Preparing for action on the SDGs

Nine Steps for taking action on integrated SDGs

A significant amount of material on the SDGs has already been produced and published. This section synthesises some of that work, as the sheer volume of advice and recommendations for taking action on the SDGs can be overwhelming. Certainly there is no blueprint for how the SDGs can be put into practice and no one can impose the way or the extent to which governments, businesses and other stakeholders adopt and take action on the SDGs. However, there are a few steps that are relevant for all stakeholders. These can be organized into nine successive steps:

1. **General information and awareness** to inform stakeholders about sustainable development and the SDGs
2. **Institutional and stakeholder analysis** to understand the existing policy and actor landscape
3. **Open consultations** to map and match existing activities (targets and indicators) with SDG areas
4. **Action planning** for the SDGs or integrating SDGs into existing plans
5. **Garner high level support** from political or institutional leaders
6. **Budgeting and capacity building** to prepare for action, and identify gaps to be addressed
7. **Means-end action hierarchy** to identify key people and projects to take action on the SDGs
8. **Taking action** and implementation
9. **Review, learning and integration of lessons learnt** into subsequent action plans

¹⁵ (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987)

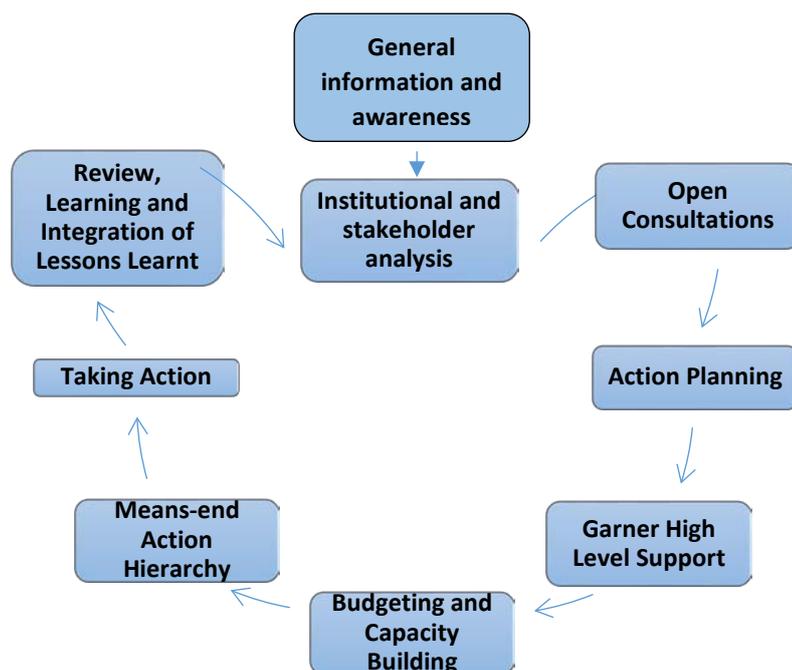


Figure 4. Nine steps for taking action on the SDGs

Step 1: General Information and Awareness

Before starting to consider how action might be taken on the SDGs, basic knowledge such as the information presented above needs to be disseminated—this will ensure all stakeholders share a clear understanding of the goals. This applies to governmental departments who want to approach the SDGs; companies who are interested in working on certain SDG targets by integrating them into their business plans; or civil society organisations (CSOs) who may wish to align their work with the SDGs or are seeking more information for an advocacy campaign. The following resources could be useful for anyone who wishes to familiarize themselves with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs:

- [Project Everyone](#) is a global campaign to raise awareness on the SDGs.
- [SDGs in action](#) is a smartphone app dedicated to the SDGs.
- [The Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform](#) is the UN's dedicated website for the SDGs and the 2030 agenda.
- The global [UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network](#) has significant amounts of information available on their website.
- Global civil society initiatives such as [Together2030](#) disseminate information on the SDGs in English, Spanish and French for civil society.
- [The Independent Research Forum](#) is a global science network focusing on the SDGs.
- The [UN Global Compact](#) also provides useful information that explains why and how the SDGs are relevant for the private sector.
- The International Institute for Sustainable Development recently launched their [SDG Knowledge Hub](#), which provides information on the 2030 agenda.

Figure 5. Key areas with more information on the SDGs

Much of the information above summarizes the origins and key features of the SDGs, offering general guidance on how different stakeholders can support their effective implementation. This kind of background information is essential for raising awareness about the SDGs. Such material can also help in securing the high-level buy-in necessary for moving implementation forward across different branches of an organization.

Expected outcome(s): Increased awareness on the SDGs for different stakeholders. This awareness can include a clearer understanding of the relevance of the SDGs for one's own work as well as other actions of peers on the SDGs.

Step 2: Institutional and Stakeholder Analysis

After sharing general information on the SDGs, many reports and briefs recommend an institutional and stakeholder analysis.¹⁶ This means someone — preferably associated with domestic or international organisations who has a track record working on the SDGs — should map the respective institutions, organisations and individuals involved in specific SDG areas. Such a mapping exercise would be valuable for national and local governments to determine which stakeholders and organisations operate in different goal areas. It would also be important for development agencies or non-state networks working on sustainable development planning in-country work but require the identification of key partners. An institutional and stakeholder analysis can also be relevant for businesses to identify key organisations or groups that are relevant for a business to contact if they want to pursue SDG targets that are related to their products or services. For example, farmers represent an important stakeholder group to consider among companies that produce water saving equipment; this equipment can lead to more efficient food production, a key area of SDG 6 and SDG 2. On the other hand, certain groups are customers or suppliers of companies that influence certain SDGs. Such a mapping can be undertaken on paper with the aid of questionnaires as well as in-person with experts trained to document who is doing what on the SDGs.¹⁷

The analysis can also reveal potential supporters of SDG activities as well as those who may be disadvantaged. Those that wish to take action would then determine the best way to engage actors and create multi-stakeholder coalitions necessary for driving change. In such a case, the mapping would not only cover concerned ministries and departments, but also key development partners, banks, major investors and private sector players that might support mainstreaming of implementation and also those who at may stand to lose from the SDGs. For the latter, it may be a good idea to implement gradual policy changes so that actors—who may struggle to adjust to more stringent environmental or social standards immediately—have a sufficient lead time to change their course of action. In building up to such transformation, it may also be good to involve local learning institutions and universities. Since these knowledge often manage data necessary to construct local baselines and targets, and engaging them early and often can be an important part of mobilising action on the SDGs.

Expected outcome(s): Relevant stakeholders and institutions are identified as necessary for subsequent steps of consultation and contextualising the SDGs. Key supporters are identified and strategies are developed to support mainstreaming SDGs in a country setting.

¹⁶ (Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2016)

¹⁷ (Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UN Habitat, & United Nations Development Programme, 2016)

Step 3: Open Consultation

After key individuals and organisations have been identified, the next step involves organising face-to-face meeting among concerned stakeholders. This step is relevant no matter whether it is conducted in by a business, NGO, a city or national government. The purpose here is two-fold. The first involves confirming whether the institutional and stakeholder mapping from the previous step provided accurate information (assuming that the previous mapping did not involve extensive meetings). Another is to agree on how existing policies, plans and activities correspond with respective SDG areas.¹⁸ This matching exercise should also aim to identify a baseline on the extent to which actions have already been taken. At the same time, a gap analysis can be undertaken to identify existing financial, technological and institutional capacities and compare them with capacities necessary for implementation.

Dealing with 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets

Some stakeholders may be hesitant to even try to take action on 17 SDGs and 169 targets. To be sure, even an inclusive consultation may not be able to effectively identify possible action points for all 17 SDGs and their associated 169 targets. Taking an integrated approach—one that involves responding to the goals and targets as a system—is frequently advised to allay these concerns. This integrated approach further ensures that advances and benefits in one area (energy for instance) are not compromised by needs and requirements in others (poverty, food, or water). Whilst it may not be possible to immediately design a response to all the system of 169 targets, stakeholders may start by identifying which goals and targets are directly relevant for them and which ones are missing in existing governmental or business strategies. It could then be useful to at least focus on a few closely interlinked sets of goals and targets such as the food-energy-water nexus that could later be expanded to include other related goals and targets.

This consultation in itself also constitutes capacity building: since it brings together different stakeholders and reveals possible areas of disagreement, challenges as well as high-impact leverage points for action; each of these points should be understood to facilitate mainstreaming and integration.

Participants could undertake exercises that consist of selecting an issue of concern, discuss how this issue is represented by the SDGs, how it might affect existing priorities and plans-- and identify what additional actions are needed. Once participants are comfortable with this approach, the same exercise can then be replicated for different issues under the same or corresponding to other goals. The mapping exercise can begin to identify existing policies, targets and indicators, or business plans (if it is done with the private sector). The [World Café facilitation technique](#)¹⁹ can provide an effective way to approach this consultation. Whoever facilitates the consultation would then produce a report that captures the key findings and then share them with all participating stakeholders.

Expected outcome(s): Interactive consultation identifies key challenges and ways forward for mainstreaming the SDGs. It also generates baselines and policy directions for the SDGs and has potential to generate ownership and support of the localisation process.

¹⁸ (Lucci, 2015)

¹⁹ The World Café technique describes as open setting in which groups of participants discuss and score certain options. It is highly interactive and besides producing priorities and possible consensus outcomes the process has the potential to build trust among participants.

Step 4: SDG Action Plan

The information generated from the consultation process described in the previous section should be shared among stakeholders in order to prepare for the next step. In this next step, policy areas (or components of a business strategy, in the case of private sector plans) are matched with the SDGs. A comparison of existing baselines with the SDGs serves to uncover how much work is needed to achieve relevant targets; in addition, it allows for devising targets tailored to reflect the level of ambition needed for the SDGs whilst also taking into account local realities. The set of matched existing policies with the SDGs are then either packaged into a “SDG Action Plan” or integrated into existing plans.

There is no specific method for taking this step. With regard to governments, many have already used a variety of ways to draft their SDG action plans. This can be either separately or by integrating them into existing (or updated) development plans and strategies (rather than authoring a standalone additional strategy). This guidance is based on the prior experience of countries that authored national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) or green growth roadmaps and action plans in addition to their primary development plans; many of these plans failed to be successfully implemented.²⁰

By the same token, for businesses it may sound like a good public relations exercise to draft a separate SDG strategy. However, frequently it would also be better to integrate key aspects of the SDGs into existing business plans as these are often already part of the core business strategy. Civil society organisations might prioritize relevant SDGs areas in their existing plans, much like the private sector. However, if these CSOs are active in lobbying, then they might choose key individuals and organisations to assist them in lobbying for support.

Expected outcome(s): The main policy directions and desired outcomes are worked into existing action plans along with projects to create action.

Step 5: Leadership

One aspect particularly important to moving the SDGs is high-level leadership support and buy-in. This is not only crucial for any national or local policy decision: leadership is equally important in any type of setting where organised action is expected. Governments may increase buy-in by holding a policy dialogue that presents basic information on the SDGs and includes content from Step 1. A policy dialogue that aims to generate political commitment to translate the SDGs into action requires participation from different departments of government, especially those in charge of financing and budgeting. During this process, it is especially important to consider commitment to implementation of the SDGs. This can often be inferred by understanding whether proposed actions on the SDGs are supported with adequate levels of funding. Governments should aim here to achieve not only political commitment to the SDGs, but also to help build a consensus between governmental agencies and ministries that may have different views on SDG priorities. This step is not strictly sequential with the previous steps and could be organised earlier in the process of preparing for action on the SDGs.

Expected outcome(s): Political commitment to take action on the SDGs and integrate them throughout ministries and departmental plans; a commitment to create a means-end action hierarchy (see step 7 below).

²⁰ (Olsen & Zusman, 2013)

Step 6: Budgeting and Capacity Building

Some people are concerned that achieving the SDGs could be costly.²¹ It is clear that changing today's unsustainable practices will have financial implications, but it is important to point out that not all of this cost will be additional to what is already committed to unsustainable development. Reallocating existing planned investments from less sustainable to more sustainable activities can reduce costs considerably. Additionally, because there are synergies among goals, cost effectiveness can be enhanced by taking the previously discussed integrated approach the SDGs.²²

Since 2010, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has undertaken *Climate Public Expenditures and Institutional Review* (CPEIR) as a set of qualitative and quantitative analyses of countries' public expenditures and how they relate to climate change. These experiences may provide relevant lessons for budgeting for SDGs implementation. More concretely, the CPEIR has been conducted in several countries in the Asia-Pacific region where budgets relevant for climate mitigation and adaptation have been mapped under the heading of climate finance. As a result, climate concerns have increasingly been incorporated into national planning and budgeting in support of specific national development goals. So, whilst the scope of the SDGs is much broader than climate mitigation and adaptation, countries can approach UNEP and their development partners to learn about this initiative and potentially take part in exercises to see where the SDGs can be tagged for budgeting and financing. See <https://www.climatefinance-developmenteffectiveness.org/> as well as <https://www.cbd.int/financial/climatechange/g-cpeirmethodology-undp.pdf> for more information on the methods used by CPEIR.

Generally, governments and the private sector assign budget to their envisioned strategies ahead of any activity, as do NGOs and other organisations. This is where resources are made available to implement assigned plans and policies and where such resources can be linked with progress or achievement of specific SDG targets.

In this respect, the SDGs represent a common-sense approach to balance environmental sustainability, social equity and economic development in terms of their costs and benefits. Investing in development guided by these goals has the potential to deliver greater returns than subsidising fossil fuels or undertaking mining that degrades rivers or pollutes areas where people live. This is especially true when the concept of 'costs and benefits' is widened to include non-economic benefits such as a healthy ecosystem or a vibrant community.

Expected outcome(s): Necessary financial (and other) resources are identified and committed to the action plan. Existing financial commitments are reallocated from unsustainable activities to support the SDGs.

Step 7: Means-end Action Hierarchy

Once awareness has been raised and political support has been garnered, the intended directions of the action plan need to be articulated and concretised. In other words, the means required to achieve a certain 'end' must be identified. Stakeholders (mostly governments and businesses in this case) should identify the level of necessary resources for achieving a determined goal or target, as this constitutes the 'end'. It might include, to take the private sector for example, increased sales of water-

²¹ (The Economist, 2015)

²² (Elder, Bengtsson, & Akenji, 2016)

saving washing machines, corresponding to SDG 6.4 on increasing water use efficiency as a case for action. Similarly, for governments an end goal could, for instance, be SDG 7.2, which involves substantially upscaling the production of renewable energy. Such action could equally be deemed necessary for SDG 12.2 on achieving sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources. If these SDG targets are synergistic, meaning that attaining one of them equally has benefits for the others, they could be combined together as mutually achievable ‘ends’.

At this point, it is possible to use a method of backcasting so as to identify which interventions and policies might support the stated goal (in this example the SDGs 6.4, 7.2 or 12.2). Such backcasting should aim to identify 1) the different types of means (financial, institutional etc.); 2) the key actors and their roles and responsibilities; and 3) required inputs and desired outcomes. The means in this case could be a policy to support the installation water saving equipment, a feed-in tariff to promote decentralised renewables, or numerous other related policy measures.²³

A means-end action hierarchy (Figure 5) can help specify specific points of action required to achieve a certain end-result. At the base of this hierarchy, the main means – financial, human resource etc. - (ministries, departments, development partners, CSOs and others) should be identified. Next, necessary outputs towards a policy outcome can be determined based on the capacity of responsible actors and available budget. Further towards the top of the pyramid envisioned outcomes related to appropriate SDG targets should be identified as measurable results towards a certain goal or target.

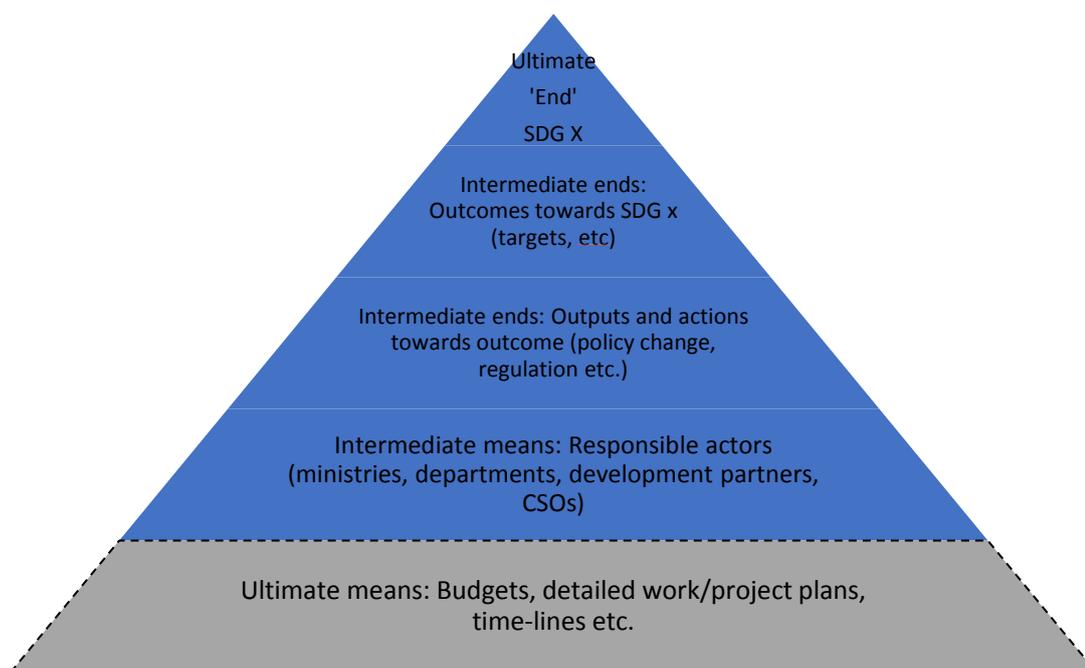


Figure 6. Means-end Action Hierarchy (author)

Expected outcome(s): Detailed work plan and identified key persons and actors responsible to take action to produce outputs and outcomes in pursuit of the SDGs.

²³ It should be noted that these examples are highlighted for the sake of explanation, and that any other goal or target could constitute the ‘end’ at the top of the pyramid.

Step 8: Taking Action

Successful implementation depends on strong leadership and commitment from highest tier of government or management. It also relies on the availability of budgets and level of required expenditures: without these necessary resources progress is likely to be quite limited. Due to the integrated nature of the SDGs, governments may divide targets across ministries and departments. In most cases, ministries of finance or planning are likely to take a central role in preparing for action on the SDGs. Then targets and goals could be distributed across different agencies. For example, targets under SDG 3 on health may be shared between ministries of health and of environment. Again, other targets pertaining to economic development might be allocated to ministries of industry. Meanwhile, targets regarding climate and energy can go to ministries of energy and natural resources. The exact distribution of responsibilities will vary from country to country and organisation.

Having a lead agency oversee the distribution of goals and targets across governmental or organisational departments can ensure a whole-of-government approach. Such an approach can help create mutual accountability and encourage cooperation among traditionally separate sectors, especially if there are regular meetings to assess progress and build mutual accountability between actors working on the same goal area and who are subject to the same reporting mechanisms. Doing this effectively requires returning to the political nature of integration: Addressing the politics of integration is not easy and there is no blueprint for doing that. But building trust and consensus through open consultations and by having open reporting sessions that can facilitate discussion between stakeholders of diverging views can go a long way in creating a conducive environment for collaborative action on sustainable development.

Expected outcome(s): After awareness and political will are mobilised, action is detailed along with needed resources. Necessary interventions at key leverage points are identified toward desired outputs and outcomes to contribute towards a certain goal, target, or 'end.

Step 9: Review, Learning and Integration of Lessons Learnt

The final step in this process focuses on stocktaking and determining whether progress has been made according to the targets and indicators that were identified during the stakeholder consultation and action-planning phases. Timely monitoring and evaluation systems allow for the identification of what is working well and where gaps remain; thus lessons learned can be incorporated into future iterations of development strategies and action plans. Stakeholders, be they governments, NGOs or private businesses, should seek opportunities to publicize their progress either nationally or internationally. For example, at the United Nations High Level Political Forum is tracking global progress on the SDGs at its annual meetings for chiefly governments. But there is no reason why key non-state actors would be excluded from sharing their experiences with the SDGs directly at this forum or associated events.

Expected outcome(s): Progress towards the goals is documented; lessons recognised and incorporated into subsequent actions.

Section 3: Final thoughts

This brief has sought to summarise essential background and outline a set of pragmatic action-oriented steps that different stakeholders can take to advance the SDGs. To appeal to various audiences, the brief does not offer details on what will be needed at the sectoral level to integrate the SDGs or discuss in depth how different levels of government might collaborate to promote sustainable development. A more rigorous treatment of these issues is necessary but would have to be tailored in specific training or dialogue activities between concerned sectoral stakeholders.

Unquestionably, balancing and integrating action on the entire suite of SDGs is going to be challenging both governments and non-state actors from the private or civil society sectors. But a holistic and integrated approach to planning and action is now necessary to ensure that the momentum gained on the SDGs in their design phase is maintained and carried forward during implementation. The SDGs will influence planning and budgeting over the next decade and a half; thus no matter whether readers come from the business sector, civil society or governments, it is very likely that the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda will influence some aspect of their work. It is equally important that more than simply government but also other stakeholders from business and civil society possess the knowledge and skills to actively participate in planning and implementation. If they do, then the 2030 agenda and the SDGs will have the potential to be truly transformational.

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Web links for further reading:

Project Everyone: <https://www.project-everyone.org/>

SDGs in action: <https://sdgsinaction.com/>

The Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network: <http://unsdsn.org/>

Together 2030: <http://www.together2030.org/en/>

The Independent Research Forum: <http://www.irforum.org/>

Un Global Compact: <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/our-work/sustainable-development/sdgs/17-global-goals>

The SDG Knowledge Hub: <http://sdg.iisd.org/>

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