



EVALSDGs INSIGHT 5: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: THE BASICS

PURPOSE:

The historic 'Millennium Declaration' - a 15-year global development compact encapsulating eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – was adopted by the global development community in 2000. Following on from this, in 2015 193 world leaders ratified a new, more complex, elaborate and ambitious 15-year compact for the period 2016 to 2030. Popularly referred to as Agenda 2030, it contains the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework. This INSIGHT 5 summarises the background principles and dimensions to foster understanding of the SDGs.

From MDGs to SDGs

In 2015, Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), describing the MDGs as the most successful anti-poverty movement in history, said that the SDGs are at the heart of the "most ambitious anti-poverty, pro-planet agenda ever agreed"¹. The success and the limitations of the MDGs are the rationale for expanding the number of goals from 8 in the MDGs to 17 in the SDGs. The SDGs, developed through a process of intergovernmental negotiations which included other key stakeholder groups and civil society organizations, are more inclusive, universal and strongly rooted in human rights principles. The current UN Secretary General [António Guterres](#), who assumed office in January 2017 is committed to the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). He affirms that human dignity will be "the core of [his] work," and believes that global challenges can be overcome and sustainable development achieved².

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – What are they?

The SDGs are 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** which officially came into effect on January 1st 2016. They provide a collective development roadmap for a universal, integrated and transformative effort for a better world. The sustainable development agenda envisions the world we want and is applicable to all nations. The principle of 'No One Left Behind' is a critical moral imperative of the SDGs which make them especially powerful for assuring inclusive development everywhere. The SDGs are also presented graphically by specific icons one for each goal. Each goal has its own targets and indicators. Although the indicators have been accepted by the international community, each country has the freedom to select from or add to them.

Brief Background: Pillars and Principles

The foundation for the SDGs is the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** which identifies five pillars, engines, drivers or dimensions for ensuring that development action, outcomes and impacts everywhere in the world are balanced. These five critical dimensions referred to as the **five Ps** are:

- **P**eople
- **P**rosperity

¹<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/06/ban-ki-moon-announces-common-ground-initiative-with-advertisings-big-six-to-support-sdgs/>

² <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/secretary-general/>

- Planet
- Partnerships
- Peace

The idea is that development everywhere ought to lead to social inclusion (of people), economic growth (prosperity) and environmental protection (planet). These '3Ps' cannot be achieved in the absence of Partnerships and most crucially, Peace.

Five of the core principles³ which underpin the Agenda 2030 framework are: Leaving no one behind; universality (i.e. applicable to all countries); interconnected & indivisible goals, inclusivity and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

SDG Implementation

An implementation framework for the 17 SDGs comprises 169 targets and 230 indicators to be used by each country to guide implementation, review and reporting of progress. Each country drives its own implementation path but reports to all others annually at a high-level political forum organized by the UN General Assembly. The 2030 Agenda calls for follow-up and monitoring mechanisms crafted by individual countries including country-led evaluations. This creates opportunities as well as challenges for the global evaluation community and presents a historic opportunity for evaluators to join the SDG action agenda. For individual evaluators and Voluntary Organization of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs) this is a call to action.

VOPES and SDG Implementation

Global, continental and national VOPEs and evaluation networks are critical partners for SDG implementation at all levels. The principle of partnership is integral to the SDGs (Goal 17) and signals a clear invitation to national VOPEs to join SDG country action agendas. They can:

- Enhance regional, national, institutional, and organizational evaluation capacity. For example, Target 18 of Goal 17, states that: *By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.*
- Engage global, regional and national partners, including government officials, parliamentarians, evaluation specialists, in understanding, articulating and operationalizing their respective roles in the SDG implementation roll-out including monitoring, documentation and reporting.
- Enhance capacities of VOPE members in skills, competencies, and creativity for evaluating all 17 SDGs as well as for sharpening and improving the indicators in order to make them more evaluable.

About EVALSDGs INSIGHTS

EVALSDGs is a global network formed to add value and learning to the SDGs, as well as support processes to integrate evaluation into global and national SDGs review systems. EVALSDGs Guidance Group is a sub-group of EVALSDGs made up of evaluators ready to walk with you to support the evaluation of the 17 SDGs which is complex and requires strong collaborations and partnerships. It provides INSIGHT publications, trainings materials, and information on opportunities to strengthen the global and national evaluation capacity. It shares good cookies around the impact and sustainability of the SDGs and tells you which competencies you need. EVALSDGs INSIGHTS are short, light and easy to digest notes on topics related to evaluation and the SDGs. They present ideas and new information, and stimulate thinking to strengthen evaluation capacity.

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³ http://www.unssc.org/sites/unssc.org/files/2030_agenda_for_sustainable_development_kcsd_primer_en.pdf