

The SDGs in a few lines:

The origin, the state of play and the objectives

The era of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) came to an end in 2015, and the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed at the United Nations in New York in September 2015, are now being discussed at the national, EU level and global level.

TRANSITION

In 2000, 189 countries agreed under the umbrella of the United Nations on the Millennium Development Goals¹ (MDGs) by signing the Millennium Declaration². According to the UN Declaration, the MDGs were to be achieved in a timeline of 15 years and, thus, they expired in 2015.

The MDGs were composed by **eight goals**: seven social goals (namely eradicating hunger, promoting education and gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, creating a global partnership for development) and one environmental goal (ensuring environmental sustainability)³.

The MDGs reflected, indeed, the idea at that time that health and education were crucial drivers of development⁴: thus sustainability and development were to be achieved by goals mostly focused on the improvement of individuals' conditions.

In 2015, the UN published the report on the MDGs⁵ and these were the **global results achieved**:

¹ Murray, Christopher J. L. Shifting to Sustainable Development Goals — Implications for Global Health, *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 2015, Vol.373(15), pp.1390-1393

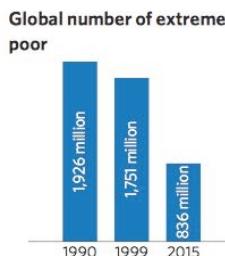
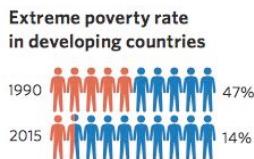
² <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

³ Lidia Brito. Analyzing Sustainable Development Goals. *Science* 15 Jun 2012: Vol. 336, Issue 6087, pp. 1396

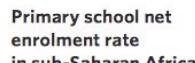
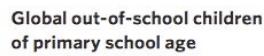
⁴ Murray, Christopher J. L. See footnote 1.

⁵ <http://www.ladder-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MDG-2015-rev-July-1.pdf>

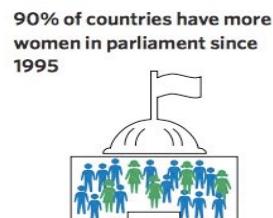
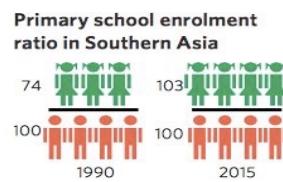
Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger



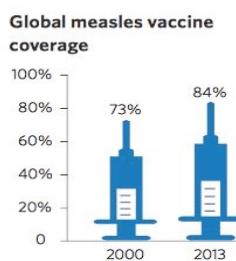
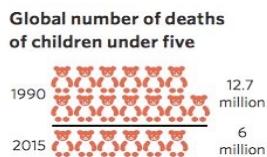
Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education



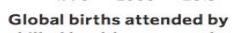
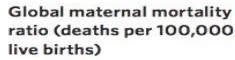
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women



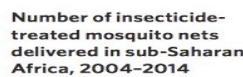
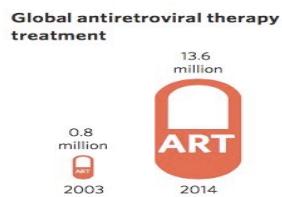
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality



Goal 5: Improve maternal health

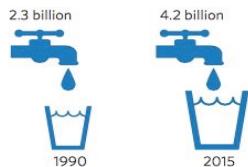


Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other Diseases



Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

1.9 billion people have gained access to piped drinking water since 1990

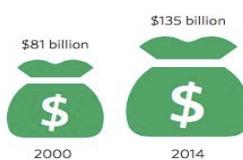


98% of ozone-depleting substances eliminated since 1990

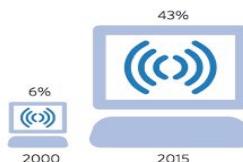


Goal 8: Develop a partnership for development

Official development assistance



Global Internet penetration



Source: The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015, UN

The SDGs' Objectives

Almost at the expiration of the MDGs, 193 countries agreed upon the new Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015, intended to be the step further to reach the overall objective of poverty eradication.



SDGs' Innovations

The SDGs differ in some key aspects with the previous MDGs:

1. First of all, the increased number of goals and targets: the new SDGs are now 17 compared with 8 MDGs
2. The **multidimensionality** of the SDGs: development is not considered to be achieved only through the improvement of individual conditions, i.e. development becomes to be considered as a **system** to be achieved through multidimensional and interconnected layers⁶
3. The SDGs are **universal**, meaning that every country will be involved in the implementation of

⁶ OECD Development Centre

the Agenda 2030 and its implications, whereas the MDGs, although not explicitly declared, referred only to developing countries⁷

SDGs' Targets

Every SDG has several targets⁸ to be achieved in a timeline of 15 years:

1. NO POVERTY: focusing on the eradication of extreme poverty, ensuring equal rights to the poor and vulnerable, and building resilience of the poor
2. ZERO HUNGER: the scope is ending hunger and malnutrition and ensuring sustainable food production
3. GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: ensuring healthy lives, eradication of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases, reduction of maternal mortality, reduction of premature death
4. QUALITY EDUCATION: ensuring that all boys and girls receive primary and secondary education, increasing the number of young adults with relevant skills
5. GENDER EQUALITY: improving women conditions, ending all forms of discrimination and ending all forms of violence against women
6. CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION: ensuring access to water and sanitation to all
7. AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY: ensuring universal access to clean, affordable and sustainable energy to all
8. DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH: sustaining per capita growth, promoting a global strategy to combat youth unemployment, promoting development-oriented policies
9. INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE: it promotes innovation, the development of resilient infrastructures and sustainable industries
10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES: promoting social and political inclusion and reducing the inequalities between countries
11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES: ensuring access for all to adequate and affordable housing, promoting sustainable cities urbanization
12. RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION: achieving sustainable management of natural resources, reducing waste generation

⁷ Lidia Brito. See footnote 3.

⁸ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

13. CLIMATE ACTION: including climate change measures in national policies, enhancing education and awareness-raising on climate change issues
14. LIFE BELOW WATER: ensuring a sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources
15. LIFE ON LAND: halting biodiversity loss, halting desertification, halting land degradation and managing forests in a sustainable way
16. PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS: developing transparent institutions, developing inclusive societies and communities reducing all forms of violence, ending abuses
17. PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS: reinforcing the global partnership for sustainable development

As the summary shows, the SDGs are broad and ambitious, each goal contains several targets (in total 169 targets!) to be achieved by 2030 and every goal is multidimensional, meaning that every goal implies the achievement of different aspects, which are all related and interconnected. Therefore, if the SDGs are to be achieved, an efficient definition and implementation of the Agenda 2030 is needed in order to ensure actions on the multiple aspects of the SDGs.

Hence, the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs are currently discussed at all levels and some challenges are clearly emerging towards an effective implementation of the SDGs:

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE AT THE EU LEVEL?

A clear definition of the strategy on how the SDGs will be implemented at the EU level has yet to be decided: the Council and the Commission have both welcomed the SDGs and the Agenda 2030, however responsibilities remain unclear⁹. The next months will be fundamental in order to understand how the EU will proceed.

WHAT ROLE FOR THE MEMBER STATES?

The member states are in charge of defining country strategies towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Nevertheless, this process is moving at different speeds: some countries¹⁰ have already published a survey in which they explain the country strategy on how to

⁹ http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/making-civil-society-a-driving-force-in-the-implementation-of-the-un-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-pp_en.pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42256>

translate the SDGs at the national level, and some others have also volunteered to be reviewed at the High Level Political Forum in New York in July (namely: [Estonia, Finland, Germany and France](#)¹¹), whereas other countries still need to develop their strategies.

HOW TO MEASURE THE SDGs?

This question represents a completely different challenge: the development of the indicators framework for the SDGs is supposedly technical. However, measuring achievements and reporting progress will have also political impact and thus the indicator framework will be further discussed and negotiated in the next months at the UN level¹².

NEXT STEPS

- ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum 18th-20th of April (New York)¹³
- High Level Thematic Debate on Achieving the SDGs 21st of April (New York)¹⁴
- ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in May (Geneva)¹⁵
- High level Political Forum in July (New York)¹⁶

LOCALIZING SDGs: THE ROLE OF LAs

The success of the Agenda 2030 will depend upon an effective translation at the local level of the SDGs': Local Authorities are key development actors in delivering communities services and in fighting against poverty. Hence, a decentralised development cooperation approach and a territorialisation of the national policy on development are essential to ensure the success of the SDGs.

¹¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

¹² <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>

¹³ <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd-follow-up/ecosoc-ffd-forum.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.un.org/pga/70/events/sdgs/>

¹⁵ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2016/ece>

¹⁶ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2016>

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