



The ESGmark® Guide to the UN Sustainable Development Goals

HISTORY

The UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were created in 2012 to provide an interconnected guide to a more sustainable future, by addressing the urgent environmental, economic and political global challenges we face. The ambition is to achieve the targets by 2030. They replace the Millennium Development Goals that drove a global movement for free primary education and combatting HIV/AIDS.

The goals are unique as they cover issues that are a threat to us all and lay out how humanity needs to build a safer and sustainable planet imminently so future generations do not face the consequences.

PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

The information in this paper has been collected from several UN sites dedicated to the SDGs. We aim to provide a succinct summary of what the sustainable goals are, why they are important, actionable suggestions on how to help tackle the issues and what the UN response has been to Covid-19.

There are many ways we can help all achieve these targets and we have selected a few actions points for each goal, which are by no means exhaustive.

We hope this paper acts as a solid foundation to highlight the challenges we face globally and encourages discussion and evaluation about how we might all adapt our behaviours and actions, personally and within a business environment, to help to achieve the goals.

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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Aiming for at least a 50% reduction in poverty by 2030 through implementing social protection systems. This requires the creation of strategies that make basic resources available, no matter a person's race, gender or background.

DATA

- 4 billion people (55% of the world's population) have no form of social protection or basic sanitation services (2016). 731 million (10% of the world's population) live in extreme poverty (less than \$1.90/day). In the UK, 14.5 million live in relative poverty.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Nobody should struggle to satisfy fundamental needs such as access to food, health, clean water and sanitation. Absolute and relative poverty damage social mobility, social cohesion and drive instability.

ACTION

- **Home** - Donate clothes, books, furniture, technology and support campaigns for school supplies etc. in local areas and further afield.
- **Work** - Perhaps have an initiative to collectively sponsor children's education through charitable events, organise donations, hold access events for underprivileged groups and organise volunteering to ensure cycle of poverty doesn't continue.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- UN issued an initial [framework](#) and a US\$2 bil. [fund](#) specifically targeting vulnerable families and low income countries.

Aiming to end hunger by promoting improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture. Highlighting the importance of achieving food security by investing in technology to increase resilience, genetic diversity and creating appropriate legislation in agriculture.

DATA

- Leading cause of death in the world - as 8.9% of world population are hungry, with 21.3% of children under 5 stunted in their growth, with figures only likely to increase.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Many are trapped daily by the basic need to eat, often due to circumstances beyond their control, which prohibits sustainable and social development globally.

ACTION

- **Home** - The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO) encourages spreading the word using #ZeroHunger and promoting less waste, perhaps simply by writing shopping lists, freezing nearly expired food, utilising leftovers and composting.
- **Work** - Support local farmers and markets when sourcing food and other resources for a business. Or start a regular donation to collect non-perishables that could be taken to a local food bank.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- As acute hunger is set to double at the end of 2020, UN is mitigating risk of large shocks by fast-tracking policy advice to countries in need, while encouraging temporary cash handouts and waiving fees on farmers' loans. Analysis of implications outlined [here](#).

Aiming to promote a healthy lifestyle and coordinate effective healthcare globally. Seek to tackle issues such as infant mortality, mental / sexual health, contagious and non communicable disease through supporting R&D in medicines or vaccinations.

DATA

- Less than half of the global population are covered by essential health services (2017).
- Healthcare disruptions in 2020 reversed decades of improvement, as immunisation programmes were interrupted in 70 countries, with predictions of 100% increase in malaria deaths.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Insufficient knowledge and access to services cause many preventable deaths, which has only been exacerbated in 2020, but as healthy people are indicative of a successful economy it is vital that cost efficient solutions such as immunisations continue.

ACTION

- **Home** - Consider the importance of all types of vaccination, donate blood if possible, take care of your own mental and physical health by making time to enjoy your hobbies.
- **Work** - Encourage exercise (e.g. lunchtime running or yoga clubs), discourage a culture of presenteeism, create an open environment to discussing mental health. Our ESGmark "Wellbeing in the Workplace" blog series available [here](#) provides a more detailed guide.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- The UN created a [plan](#) to advise public health measures needed to be taken collectively and set up a Solidarity Response Fund to help support the WHO's research of the virus.
- The WHO and partners are also supporting key workers and vulnerable groups with their mental health.

1 NO POVERTY



2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Aiming to provide equal access to free but quality primary and secondary education by 2030, with affordable pre-primary and higher education to develop people's skillsets in a safe environment.

DATA

- Predicted over 200 million children worldwide will still be out of school by 2030, with remote learning being impossible for at least 500 million students.
- Over half of the global adolescent population are not meeting minimum proficiency standards. In 2018, 773 million adults were illiterate (two thirds of which were women.)

WHY IT MATTERS

- A crucial catalyst for upward socioeconomic mobility and is key to escaping poverty and better health. As a result, increased knowledge garners more peace and prosperity. Covid-19 poses a lasting setback to this progression, with often the most vulnerable groups facing the biggest development gap.

ACTION

- **Home** - Donate books or old usable technology, take advantage of free online courses, stay involved in governmental changes or voice the importance of removing stigmas and access to education.
- **Work** - Donate old usable technology, mentor younger employees and students to support their development.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- With 90% of children globally out of school, UNESCO launched the Global Education Coalition to fill context and connectivity gaps, increase inclusive remote learning and facilitate students returning to avoid high dropout rates.

Aiming to fulfil women's potential by eradicating all forms of gender discrimination, violence, forced marriages or genital mutilation. Recognising the value of unpaid domestic labour, while also promoting leadership roles and empowerment of women.

DATA

- 1 in 5 women have experienced physical/sexual violence with their partner in the last 12 months.
- Women only represent 25% of national governments (2020) and 28% of managerial positions worldwide.
- Women earn 10% to 30% less than men for the same work

WHY IT MATTERS

- On a fundamental basis female safety and access to education should never be in question. Women represent half of the world's human resources and are therefore essential to sustainable global economic and social progression.

ACTION

- **Home** - Don't feel pressured to conform to a societal stereotype and think about sharing domestic responsibilities.
- **Work** - Provide an environment that allows equal career progression, equal pay for equal work, mentoring opportunities and flexible parental leave. Set up and support a female network that empower one another.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- The UN is encouraging that every nation's recovery plan must address the gender impact of the pandemic.
- UN Women are trying to mitigate impact on girls by ensuring they take a lead in the recovery, focusing on social protection, economic stimulus packages, equal share of care work and include gender perspectives when reporting data.

Aiming to provide increased education in hygiene and more affordable equipment to gain better access to clean water, preventing unnecessary death through improved management and technology.

DATA

- Water scarcity affects 40% of the global population.
- Globally 1 in 3 live without sanitation, with 2 in 5 healthcare facilities worldwide having no soap and water.
- 2.2 billion lack safely managed drinking water, as some countries experience a funding gap of 61% for achieving water and sanitation targets.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Demand for the basic human right of clean water continues to accelerate as the world population increases. Water is essential for all aspects of life hence interlinks with all UN goals, yet scarcity and pollution continues. Covid-19 also exemplifies the importance of sanitation.

ACTION

- **Home** - Don't waste water - think about how long taps are running when washing dishes or brushing teeth, take shorter showers. Promote sanitation - Wash your hands, filter water if necessary etc.
- **Work** - Install low flow plumbing fixtures to reduce wastage. Incorporate water responsibility initiatives into business plans, e.g. Timberland have introduced water stewardship within its raw material sourcing strategy.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- International Organisation for Migration adjusted a policy to include the prevention of disease spreading.
- UNICEF is appealing for more funds to invest in basic water, hygiene and sanitation provisions for children in remote areas.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Aiming to expand affordable access to power by implementing modern technology. A focus on renewable energy to increase its share in the global energy mix and counter some of the effects of climate change.

DATA

- Energy is the dominant contributor to climate change. It equals c.60% of greenhouse gas emissions.
- 789 million people lack access to electricity - with 1 in 4 health facilities not electrified (2018)
- 17% share are renewables in global energy consumption (2017)

WHY IT MATTERS

- A reliable and efficient energy system can hold up all parts of an economy, as electricity use continues to increase globally. However, unless there is a stable and sustainable system, less reliant on fossil fuels, countries face serious issues powering their economies now and in the future.

ACTION

- **Home** - Ensure an energy efficient house - including adequate insulation, double glazing, filling air leaks, an effective thermostat, rechargeable electronics, switching off lights and devices not in use, energy efficient light bulbs. Consider switching to a green energy supplier - a useful [ESGmark document](#) has been created to help
- **Work** - Same as above

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- The UN has outlined plan to prioritise energy to healthcare, keep vulnerable groups connected and increase reliable production for long term economic recovery while keeping on trajectory for the Paris Climate Agreement.

Aiming to achieve sustained and inclusive economic growth through meaningful job creation. Decent work means work that is productive, delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families.

DATA

- Between 2010-2018 global GDP per capita was at 2% and decreased to 1.5% in 2019. Now, we facing the biggest global recession since the Great Depression, as world GDP per capita expected to decline 4.2% in 2020.
- In 2019, 22% of world's youth were not engaged in education, employment or training.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Creating jobs that are productive and reflect a fair wage is essential for the multiplier effect within economies. Given the financial implications 2020 will bring, investment in education, security in jobs and social protection are particularly vital.

ACTION

- **Home** - Be a conscious consumer. Understand where and how your clothes and food are being made, and question whether those involved in their production have benefitted from decent work. There are also opportunities to mentor or sponsor youth employment programmes.
- **Work** - Ensuring employee safety and rights are met. Consider how non-monetary rewards such as extra training and recognition can create a more successful environment socially and economically. Consider offering paid work experience, internships and mentorships to young people at this difficult time in the jobs market.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- The UN has released socio-economic framework consisting of five streams - involving protecting health systems, social protection, supporting SMEs, guiding a fiscal stimulus and promoting social cohesion.

Aiming to industrialise areas by building sustainable infrastructure and investing in technology to foster innovation, creating wider access to financial markets and communications globally.

DATA

- Just 54% of global population use the Internet. Just less than half of the population do not have access.
- In 2019, developing countries invested more in renewable energy than developed economies. They committed \$152.2bn, compared to \$130bn for developed countries.

WHY IT MATTERS

- For continued stable economic growth, social development and action on climate change - investment in innovation and infrastructure is crucial. Recent threats to this have come through increased international trade tension between developed territories, with many developing countries still having little sustainable infrastructure.

ACTION

- **Home** - Create a hotspot map, noting areas with free wifi to get more people connected. Consider investing in ESG-focused funds.
- **Work** - Establish standards and regulations so company initiatives are sustainable long-term. Actively encourage innovation in the workplace - such as running contests to catalyse new ideas and solutions.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- The UN highlights that Government investment in infrastructure and technology are needed more than ever to accelerate economic recovery, create jobs, reduce poverty, and stimulate productive investment
- [Report](#) released highlighting the potential of future digital technology and effective use of this.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Aiming to reduce inequalities based on income, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, class, ethnicity, religion and opportunity. Fighting all forms of discrimination and promoting equality in fiscal and social policies.

DATA

- Nearly 2 in 10 people report experiencing discrimination based on at least one of the grounds established by international human rights law.
- Globally only 28% of people with significant disabilities have access to financial aid.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Long term development cannot occur if parts of society aren't given equal opportunities. Inequality breeds larger divisions by slowing eradication of poverty and harming individual self-worth. In turn, this can bring increased crime, disease and environmental degradation to name a few.

ACTION

- **Home** - Learn about discriminatory laws or practises in developing regions and spread the word. Volunteer at a local shelter or start a conversation with someone about inequalities in society.
- **Work** - Choose to work for a company which is inclusive in its recruitment policy and interactions with customers, suppliers and other stakeholders. Hold access events for people from more deprived backgrounds.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- The UN has set up a fund to support low and middle-income families/groups disproportionately affected by the crisis.

Aiming to create cities that are inclusive, safe and sustainable in the long run by providing affordable homes, transport systems, green spaces while also protecting their heritage.

DATA

- Since 2007 over 1/2 of the world's population has been living in cities, with 24% share of the urban population living in slums (2018).
- 9 in 10 people in urban areas were breathing air that did not meet WHO's air quality guidelines.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Cities are often the most vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters due to high density and location, which will ultimately have a ripple effect on the whole population. Covid-19 has proven how important it is for urban areas to be adaptable and with the 1 billion people living in densely populated slums being hit the hardest, it is clear vast improvement of global cities are needed.

ACTION

- **Home** - Utilise and look after local services, try and use public transport where possible. Try and build a bigger community network to help contribute and care for area you live.
- **Work** - Consider creating a communal area or green space that employees can take enjoy. More indoor plants to increase air quality. Collaborate with other companies or the council to ensure sustainable investment and progression. Commute in a sustainable way - walk, bike or public transport.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- UN-Habitat working with national and local governments. Also created a [plan](#) to support community-driven solutions, provide urban data and mitigate the economic impact to start a recovery.

Aiming to create a 10 year framework surrounding sustainable consumption and production patterns. There is a clear need to manage natural resources and chemicals, halve global food and land waste, while also educating people about a responsible lifestyle.

DATA

- Global population could reach 8.5bn in 2030 and 9.7bn by 2050. The equivalent of nearly 3 planets' worth of natural resources are needed to sustain the current pattern of lifestyles.

WHY IT MATTERS

- As we pollute water faster than nature can repurify, and consume more than our planet can cope with, there is desperate need for permanent change. The rebuild required in 2020 provides the opportunity to shift patterns to more sustainable trends for prolonged economic progression.

ACTION

- **Home** - Shop locally. Freeze or donate leftovers to minimise food waste. Accept 'funny fruit' that has been rejected by supermarkets, buy minimally packaged products and plan ahead. Consider buying second-hand and choose reusable products (e.g. shopping bags, water bottles, coffee cups)
- **Work** - Integrate sustainability reporting into your company's agenda - identify areas where intervention would have the greatest improvement environmentally and socially. Promote a paperless culture and recycle.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- Opportunity for systematic change - encouraging the need to reevaluate and rebuild a society that transitions to more sustainable practises in our production and consumption.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Aiming to take urgent action on climate change by strengthening resilience to disasters, integrating climate measures into policies, continuing to raise awareness and increase capacity for management.

DATA

- 2010-2019 was the warmest decade ever recorded.
- To limit global warming to 1.5°C (agreed in the Paris Agreement), greenhouse gas must begin falling 7.6% annually. In 2020 they are predicted to drop by only 6% and mainly due to Covid-19.

WHY IT MATTERS

- In recent years we have all witnessed increased extremity in weather patterns, as much of the global community still fails to commit to targets. Ultimately, failure to act will damage economies and ecosystems irreversibly.

ACTION

- **Home** - Buy eco-friendly products, consider consuming less meat, recycle (paper, glass, metal, old electronics), choose re-usable products, bike/walk/take public transport where possible, offset your carbon emissions.
- **Work** - Offer adequate facilities for recycling in the workplace, encourage colleagues to use green modes of transport, target a paperless culture, take steps to make your workspace energy efficient - see our ESGmark blog about [workplace energy efficiency](#) for tips. Make your targets public, clear and achievable.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- UN Secretary General proposed [six climate actions](#) for governments to integrate into the rebuilding of economies - involving decarbonising the economy, green jobs, preparation and cooperation.

13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



Aiming to conserve and utilise the ocean's different resources sustainably by implementing necessary laws, as well as reducing marine pollution and ocean acidification.

DATA

- More than 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihood.
- By 2100 a 100-150% increase in ocean acidity is expected, affecting half of all marine life.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Oceans cover 70% of the planet and humans rely on them for food, energy and water. They are vital to regulate the global climate system and provide livelihoods to millions. However vast exploitation, pollution, overfishing and lack of investment for protection means this resource is at serious risk.

ACTION

- **Home** - Question whether the seafood/fish you buy or are served has been sourced responsibly. Organise or participate in a cleanup project for local rivers or beaches. Reduce use of single use plastics, much of which ends up in the oceans.
- **Work** - Encourage employees to use reusable water bottles to avoid buying single use plastics.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- UNESCO claims oceans can help against Covid-19, as bacteria from the ocean is being used to detect presence of the virus and diversity of species could bring pharmaceutical solutions.

Aiming to protect, restore and encourage sustainable use of terrestrial resources by halting deforestation, desertification and land degradation, all while promoting integration of government policies and further research.

DATA

- 2 billion hectares globally (the UK is 24 million hectares) of land are degraded. 74% of the poor are directly affected by land degradation.
- Each year 10m hectares of forest are destroyed.
- Over 1 million animal and plant species are threatened with extinction.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Forests are home to 80% of terrestrial species, yet biodiversity is declining faster than any time in history as extinction upsets the natural balance of ecosystems. Lost forests mean the disappearance of livelihoods in rural communities, increased carbon emissions, diminished biodiversity and the degradation of land. Increased exploitation of wildlife and climate issues are both driving the increase of zoonotic diseases.

ACTION

- **Home** - Consider adopting a pet instead of buying one. Don't buy products tested on animals. Recycle paper, glass, metal and old electronics, volunteer to clean up local parks and green spaces.
- **Work** - Target a paperless culture, provide proper recycling facilities.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has laid out a recovery plan to help countries to "build back better".
- UN launched a [Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) (2021-2030).

15 LIFE ON LAND



Aiming to promote inclusive societies, where there is access to justice, institutions are reputable and there is a commitment to peace. Focus on reducing crime, child exploitation, forms of corruption and promoting representative decision making, all key to building a positive global foundation.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



DATA

- 50% of the world's children experience violence every year.
- Approximately 28.5 million children of primary school age not in school live in conflict-affected areas.
- In 2019, people fleeing war, persecution and conflict exceeded 79.5m, the highest level ever recorded.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Everyone should be free from fear of violence and feel safe to go about their daily lives. Ensuring people have a legal identity, access to justice and strong institutions is key to sustainable development. Every country to some degree still faces corruption, crime and human right violations.

ACTION

- **Home** - Ensure you vote at every level, sign petitions or speak up about injustices you are passionate about.
- **Work** - Develop strong governance within your organisation, including a clear communication of objectives, responsibilities, incentives and reporting lines. Encourage collaboration and open and honest dialogue without fear of reprisal to build a productive and honest community.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- UN Secretary General urged governments to be transparent, responsive and accountable in their management, as well as creating a cease-fire appeal, which has over 2 million signatures online.
- UN refugee agency and UN Peacekeeping Missions both stepped up their services.

Aiming to meet the global goals through strong global partnerships and co-operations.

DATA

- Global foreign direct investment is expected to decline by up to 40% in 2020.
- International funding for data and statistics was \$690 mil. in 2017 - only half the level it needs to be.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Covid-19 highlights the importance of global governance and cooperation, as these goals are based around universal issues and need to be supported, even in times of financial strain to provide a sustainable future.

ACTION

- **Home** - Take time to read and understand the goals, and see how you can adapt to become a positive force for change. Volunteer at NGOs working towards these Global Goals and stay informed on the progress of these targets.
- **Work** - See how your organisation can adapt to better align with and advocate for one or more of the goals. Join the ESGmark community and let us help and support you in this regard.

COVID 19 RESPONSE

- UN calling for Special Drawing Rights, targeted debt relief to developing countries to avoid a new crisis.
- To improve access to critical data, UN set up a [portal](#) where global statistical community can share guidance and launched [Verified](#) to tackle Covid-19 misinformation.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





**SUSTAINABLE
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