

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Sustainable Development Goal Report 2022

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why is the Sustainable Development Goals Report important for the global community?

The Sustainable Development Goals Report is the only UN official report that monitors global progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This annual progress report is prepared by UN DESA, in collaboration with the entire UN Statistical System, consisting of more than 50 international and regional agencies. Behind this report are 2.3 million data observations from over 200 countries and areas and the contribution of hundreds of thousands of statisticians and experts from countries, international agencies, academia, and civil society around the world in a truly collective effort of the entire international statistical community.

Using the latest available data and estimates, the SDG Report 2022 gives the global community a reality check on the devastating impacts of multiple crises affecting people's lives and livelihoods. It details the reversal of years of progress in eradicating poverty and hunger, improving health and education, providing basic services, and much more. The report also highlights areas that need urgent actions in order to rescue the SDGs and deliver meaningful progress for people and the planet by 2030.

Q: What are the key findings of the Report?

- **Cascading crises put the SDGs at risk.** The report shows that the SDGs are in grave jeopardy due to multiple, cascading and intersecting crises, predominated by COVID-19, climate change and conflict. They impact all the SDGs, creating spin-off crises in food and nutrition, health, education, the environment, and peace and security. This confluence of crises threatens not only the achievement of the SDGs, but our very own survival.
- **COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on the SDGs.** The adverse impacts of COVID-19 across all the Goals are becoming clearer. In addition, the world is facing a very fragile recovery and COVID-19 is still far from over. The pandemic wiped out more than four years of progress on poverty eradication and pushed 93 million more people into extreme poverty in 2020. Disrupted essential health services resulted in a drop in immunization coverage for the first time in a decade and a rise in deaths from tuberculosis and malaria. More than 24 million learners- from pre-primary to university level- are at risk of never returning to school.

- **Conflicts are destroying the lives of many and destabilizing the world.** We are witnessing the largest number of violent conflicts since 1946, with one quarter of the global population now living in conflict-affected countries. A record 100 million people have been forcibly displaced worldwide. The war in Ukraine is creating one of the largest refugee crises of modern time. In addition, it is causing food, fuel and fertilizer prices to skyrocket and fueling a threat of a global food crisis.
- **We are in the grips of a climate catastrophe and the window to avert it is rapidly closing.** Increased heatwaves, droughts and apocalyptic wildfires and floods are already affecting billions of people around the globe and causing potentially irreversible damage to the Earth's ecosystems. In order to stave off the worst impacts, global greenhouse gas emissions will need to peak before 2025—a mere three years away-- and then decline by 43 per cent by 2030, falling to net zero by 2050. But, current national commitments do not meet this requirement and point to a nearly 14 per cent increase by 2030, instead of the sharp decline required to limit warming to meet the 1.5 °C target.
- **The vulnerable are being hit the hardest.** Developing countries are battling record inflation, rising interest rates and looming debt burdens and many are struggling unsuccessfully to recover from the pandemic. Women, children and other vulnerable populations are also bearing the brunt of these crises. Women struggle with the constraints of lost jobs and livelihoods, derailed schooling and increased burdens of unpaid care work at home. Child labour and child marriage are on the rise.
- **Data and statistics can light the way.** The report also shows that we still lack timely, high-quality and disaggregate data to fully understand where we are and where we are headed. Investment in data and information infrastructure should be a priority of national governments and the international community.
- **SDGs are our roadmap out of crises and for our own survival.** The severity and magnitude of the challenges before us demand sweeping changes and accelerated action on a scale not yet seen in human history. The stakes could not be higher. The road map laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals is clear. Just as the impact of crises is compounded when they are linked, so are solutions. When we take action to strengthen social protection systems, improve public services and invest in clean energy, we address the root causes of increasing inequality, environmental degradation and climate change.

Q: What are some of the main challenges to achieve the 2030 Agenda?

In addition to the above, further challenges to achieve the SDGs that are highlighted in the report include:

- The combined crises could lead to an additional 75 million to 95 million people living in extreme poverty in 2022, compared with pre-pandemic projections.
- Projected global economic growth for 2022 was cut by 0.9 percentage point, due to the war in Ukraine and potential new waves of the pandemic.
- An estimated 147 million children missed more than half of their in-person instruction over the past two years.
- Global “excess deaths” directly and indirectly attributable to COVID-19 reached 15 million by the end of 2021.
- Anxiety and depression increased 25 per cent, impacting women and youth the most.
- Women accounted for 39 per cent of total employment before the pandemic in 2019, but made up nearly 45 per cent of global employment losses in 2020.
- Energy-related CO2 emissions rose by 6 per cent in 2021, reaching their highest level ever and completely wiping out pandemic-related reductions in 2020.
- In 2021, an estimated 17 million metric tons of plastic entered the world’s ocean and the volume of plastic pollution entering the ocean is expected to double or triple by 2040.
- The pace of progress on some of the SDGs is also hindering achievement. For example, to meet drinking water, sanitation and hygiene targets by 2030, it will require a fourfold increase in the pace of progress. At current rates, in 2030: 1.6 billion people will lack safely managed drinking water; 2.8 billion people will lack safely managed sanitation; 1.9 billion people will lack basic hand hygiene facilities.

Q: Can we point to any positive trends or Goals where the world has made progress, despite these challenges?

Crises can also serve as an opportunity to enact new ways of thinking and open up new possibilities. During COVID-19, we’ve seen responses speed up the adoption of digital technologies and innovative approaches. There are some positive trends coming out of the report, for instance:

- There has been a surge in the number of internet users due to the pandemic, increasing by 782 million people to reach 4.9 billion people in 2021, up from 4.1 billion in 2019.
- Global manufacturing production grew by 7.2 per cent in 2021, surpassing its pre-pandemic level.
- Higher-technology manufacturing industries fared better than lower-tech industries during the pandemic, and therefore recovered faster.

In addition, before the pandemic, progress was being made in many important SDGs, such as reducing poverty, improving maternal and child health, increasing access to electricity, and advancing gender equality.

Among all Goals, though, **SDG 7** on sustainable and modern energy for all, has probably made the most progress. Between 2010 and 2019, the number of people without electricity shrank from 1.2 billion to 733 million; total renewable energy consumption increased by 25 per cent; the share of renewables in the electricity sector increased from 19.7 per cent to 26.2 per cent; and energy efficiency continues to improve. Nevertheless, the current pace of progress is still insufficient to achieve SDG 7 by 2030.

Progress has also been made on some targets under **SDG 6**, clean water and sanitation. The proportion of the global population using safely managed drinking water services increased from 70 per cent in 2015 to 74 per cent in 2020. Over the same period, the population practicing open defecation decreased by a third, from 739 million people to 494 million. The world is on track to eliminate open defecation by 2030.

Q: How can data and statistics help to advance the SDGs?

To keep ahead of these crises, we must first understand where we are and where we are going and know how to shape policies and interventions. Without relevant data, even well-intentioned policymakers seeking to protect people and the planet are working in the dark. Data that are timely, high-quality, and disaggregated can help trigger more targeted responses, anticipate future needs, and fine-tune the design of critical actions. To emerge stronger from the crises and prepare for unknown challenges ahead, national governments and the international community must prioritize statistical development. Data are an indispensable tool that shed light on the path ahead.

Q: What can we do?

While this year's report demonstrates the dire impacts of the current crises on the 17 Goals, it makes clear that realizing the SDGs is exactly the remedy we need to address the global challenges. Either we fail to deliver on our commitments to support the world's most vulnerable or together we turbo-charge our efforts to rescue the SDGs and deliver meaningful progress for people and the planet by 2030 – stepping up our work to transform the international financial architecture; driving major economic transitions; renewing the social contract; and investing in data systems.

Background on the SDGs

Q: What are the SDGs?

- The SDGs focus on the three interconnected elements of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection and are a core feature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda was adopted by world leaders in September 2015 to set the world on a new trajectory to eliminate poverty through sustainable development.
- The list of the 17 SDGs, which contain 169 targets, can be found at <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.
- The SDGs offer the most practical and effective pathway to address the causes of violent conflict, human rights abuses, climate change and environmental degradation.

Q: How are the SDGs monitored?

- Progress on the 2030 Agenda is assessed and reviewed at the global level using a set of global SDG indicators. The global SDG indicator framework was developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the SDG Indicators and adopted by the General Assembly in July 2017.
- The global indicator framework is available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>.
- The follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda is informed by an annual SDG Progress Report prepared by the Secretary-General and is an integral input to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).
- The annual HLPF plays a central role in reviewing progress towards the SDGs at the global level. At each meeting, a number of countries voluntarily report on their progress (called Voluntary National Reviews or VNRs).
- Governments have also developed their own national indicators to assist in assessing progress on the Goals and targets at the country level.
- Further information on the SDGs, including the global SDG indicator database are available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>.

Q: How are the SDGs being implemented?

- Implementation and success largely rely on countries' own sustainable development policies, plans and programmes. The SDGs provide a compass for aligning countries' plans with their global commitments. Countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review, at the national, regional and global levels, with regard to the progress made in implementing the Goals and targets
- Nationally owned and country-led sustainable development strategies require resource mobilization and financing strategies, including international cooperation.
- To realize the 2030 Agenda, contributions are needed from all stakeholders: governments, civil society, the private sector, and others. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are recognised as an important component of strategies that seek to mobilize all stakeholders around the SDGs.