How will the UN's Sustainable Development Goals impact us, and the world?

In 2015, the United Nations launched the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the heart of this are 17 Sustainable Development Goals – the SDGs, which build on the previous 8 Millennium Development Goals.

The SDGs are like a set of value statements for the world: a guide to help us create the future we want to see. They define global priorities, spelling out our hopes for better health and education, reduced inequality, a protected environment, and economic growth.

In their detail they take in everything from lifelong learning and clean transport, to green public spaces and sustainable tourism. They take into account the common challenges we face around the world and ask all of us – individuals, non-profits, governments, and companies – to work towards overcoming them.

What are the 17 SDGs?
These are the Sustainable Development Goals in full:

Goal 1:	No poverty
	End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
Goal 2:	Zero hunger
	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
Goal 3:	Good health and well-being
	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
Goal 4:	Quality education
	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
Goal 5:	Gender equality
	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
Goal 6:	Clean water and sanitation
	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
Goal 7:	Affordable and clean energy
	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
Goal 8:	Decent work and economic growth
	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
Goal 9:	Industry, innovation and infrastructure
	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
Goal 10:	Reduced inequalities
	Reduce inequality within and among countries.
Goal 11:	Sustainable cities and communities
	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
Goal 12:	Responsible consumption and production

	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.	
Goal 13:	Climate action	
	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.	
Goal 14:	Life below water	
	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.	
Goal 15:	Life on land	
	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.	
Goal 16:	Peace, justice and strong institutions	
	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.	
Goal 17:	Partnerships for the goals	
	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.	

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To find out the history of the SDGs, more detail for each one, related topics and infographics, as well as current progress and activities, visit https://sdgs.un.org/goals

See also the SDG Tracker for open access data on the progress of the SDGs.

Pick one SDG and do some research. What areas are included? How will we know the Goal has been achieved? What's the latest progress?

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Add your notes here:

How do the Sustainable Development Goals apply to businesses?

Although the UN developed the SDGs, provides capacity-building support for implementing them and evaluates progress, it doesn't 'own' the SDGs. Every organization across the world is encouraged to consider their activities in relation to the SDGs.

For companies, the SDGs give structure and direction to strategies and plans. They're the key to the transition to a sustainable economy.

In fact, achieving the SDGs **depends** on companies and the people within them. Companies are the space where creativity meets innovation. The most progressive and forward-thinking companies are grabbing the opportunity to solve sustainability challenges and build a better future.

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In practice, companies that have integrated the SDGs most successfully have focused on the ones most relevant to them.

Which of the SDGs are relevant to your area of work?

Add your notes here:

SDG Compass

Supporting companies to integrate sustainability and align with the SDGs, the SDG Compass is a practical tool developed by the UN. It suggests five steps for companies to follow.

Step 1
Understand which SDGs are most relevant to activities.

Step 2
Define priorities, which helps to reduce risks and embrace opportunities.

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Step 3
Set targets so that everyone in the company knows what to aim for.

Step 4
Integrate and embed the targets across all functions.

Step 5
Report performance and communicate progress to all stakeholders.

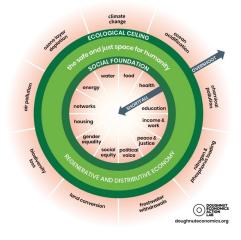Find out more detail about the SDG Compass process online and in its guide for business action.

How could you integrate the SDGs into strategy for your work area?

Add your notes here:

Connecting the SDGs and climate action

Looking at how the SDGs relate to each other in a complex system might even lead to new ideas. People are connecting the social, the economic and the environmental. One idea that's come out of this kind of systems thinking is the "doughnut economy".

Developed by British economist Kate Raworth by drawing on diverse schools of thought, the Doughnut Economy imagines a new economic system that isn't driven by endless growth at the cost of social and environmental prosperity. When she drew the model of what that might look like, she came up with this:

The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries, Kate Raworth and Christian Guthier from Raworth, K. (2017), *Doughnut Economics: seven ways to think like a 21st century economist.* London: Penguin Random House.

As explained by the Doughnut Economics Action Lab:

The Doughnut consists of two concentric rings: a social foundation, to ensure that no one is left falling short on life's essentials, and an ecological ceiling, to ensure that humanity does not collectively overshoot the planetary boundaries that protect Earth's life-supporting systems.

Between these two sets of boundaries lies a doughnut-shaped space that is both ecologically safe and socially just: a space in which humanity can thrive.

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It's a theory that's particularly being embraced on a local level. Cities like Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Portland, OR; and Melbourne, Australia are applying the model to housing, food systems and job creation. In West Cork, Ireland a grassroots network of organizations, policymakers and other stakeholders are using the model to stimulate conversations about the future they want to build.

Now that you've watched the video and found more inspiration in this guide, think about the changes you could make in life and at work. We still have the chance to change what happens next. What difference will you make?

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Glossary

complexity	The quality of having many parts that interact with each other in multiple ways, leading to a result that is greater than the sum of the individual parts.
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
sustainable development	Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
systems thinking	A way of making sense of the complexity of the world by looking at it in terms of wholes and relationships rather than by splitting it down into its parts.
UN	United Nations

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FACTOIDS/QUOTES TO PLACE HERE AND THERE

- "Business is a vital partner in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals." Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General 2007–2016. Source: SDG Compass guide
- The 17 Sustainable Development Goals include 169 specific Targets. Progress towards these Targets is agreed to be tracked by 232 unique Indicators. Source: SDG Tracker
- A 2018 estimate found that to achieve all the SDGs would require between US$2.5 and $5.0 trillion per year. Source: Basel Institute of Commons and Economics via Wikipedia
- 70% of the 169 SDG Targets can be directly supported by advanced technologies. Source: World Economic Forum