How sustainable are the SDGs?

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formerly with UNICEF, UNDP, ILO
& co-architect of the MDGs
(8 goals, 18 targets, 48 indicators)

(17 goals, 169 targets, 231 indicators)
Achievements since 1990

• 18,000 fewer cases of U-5 deaths/day
• Malnutrition: from 1/4 to 1/7 children
• 72% of births now assisted by skilled health personnel
• Measles, malaria & polio cases down
• 14m receiving antiretroviral therapy
• 98% of ozone-depleting substances phased out
• Near gender parity in primary schools
• Parity in secondary and tertiary education at global level, but not at national levels
• Increase in paid work for women, but still much lower than for men; and pay gap remains
• Globally, share of women in parliament doubled, but still only 1-in-5
• Deforestation decelerating but still high
• Overfishing growing
• Species at risk of extinction:
  ➢ 41% of amphibians
  ➢ 33% of corals
  ➢ 26% of mammals
  ➢ 13% of birds
• Eco-systems and oceans under stress
• Greenhouse gas emissions: +50%

Progress for people, regress for planet
1. Poverty & hunger
2. Basic education
3. Gender equality
4. Child mortality
5. Maternal health
6. HIV/Aids, malaria & TB
7. Environment & water
8. Global partnership
MDGs in retrospect

✓ No counterfactual + attribution impossible = no meaningful conclusions
✓ Helped to demystify ‘development’ for general public, journalists, teachers…
✓ Need for adaptation – VDGs/CDGs
✓ Concise list of priorities, not an agenda for development
Holistic
Comprehensive
Participatory

Two major challenges

• Sustainability

• Equity

Progress for people, regress for planet
Thomas Piketty
Le capital au XXIe siècle

Joseph E. Stiglitz
Winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics
The Price of Inequality
How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future

Anthony B. Atkinson
INEQUALITY
What can be done?

The Spirit Level
Why Equality is Better for Everyone
Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett

Inequality and the 1%

Angus Deaton
The Great Escape: Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality

AN ECONOMY FOR THE 1%
How privilege and power in the economy drive extreme inequality and how this can be stopped

www.oxfam.org
High inequality = less empathy
Less empathy = more discrimination
“We should be particularly indignant at the enormous inequalities in our midst.”

They “become a seedbed for collective selfishness … people become self-centred and self-enclosed.”
Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

10.1: By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average.

“we need to consider the distribution as a whole.”
Targets need 3 elements:

1. Numerical outcome
   3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.

2. Specific deadline
   17.2 Developed countries to implement fully their ODA commitments, including the commitment to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of ODA/GNI.

3. Clearly defined domain
   16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.
4.7 By 2030 ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.

5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices.
Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

- 29% Well developed
- 54% Should be more specific
- 17% Require significant work
ACUTE MALNUTRITION GLOBALLY

Countries with the highest incidences of acute malnutrition.

This MUAC measuring tape is used to measure a child’s “middle upper arm circumference,” a key estimate in determining child’s state of malnutrition and risk of death.
• Global prevalence of diabetes
  ➢ 4.7% in 1980
  ➢ 8.5% in 2014

• Number of adults living with diabetes has quadrupled

WHO, 2016
SDGs comprise a set of ideals & noble intentions, generalities & oddities, repetitions & omissions, ends & means; sprinkled with a few concrete aims.

not dissimilar from the MDGs
Points to remember

- SDGs = reboot; ≠ sequel
- SDGs ≠ equity, ≠ universal
- 169 items; <30 concrete aims
- Complexity and fuzziness make take-up difficult
- Woolliness creates leeway for non-objective assessments
To measure the immeasurable constitutes an elaborate method of moving from preconceived notions to foregone conclusions.

(Refusing to deal with numbers rarely serves the interests of the least well-off)

(1973)

(2013)
“A reliable way to make people believe in falsehoods is frequent repetition, because familiarity is not easily distinguished from truth.”
SDGs: what to do?

✓ At country level
  • Select and adapt targets most relevant to national context

✓ At global level
  • Aggregate narrative differently
  • Select indicators to fix some targets
  • Avoid target 1.2 remains an orphan

‘1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of people living in poverty according to national definitions.’