



Institute for Innovation
and Public Purpose

Exploring the SDGs

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22 February 2022

Outline

- Intro to the SDGs
- From MDGs to SDGs
- SDGs in Practice
- Thinking critically about sustainable development

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The Sustainable Development Goals

The Goals

Sustainable Development Goals



17 Goals

169 Targets

232 Indicators

Adopted by all UN Member States
in 2015 ('soft' international law)

Aimed at forming a comprehensive
and consensus view of the future

Origins & Evolution

The SDGs build on decades of work by countries and the UN, including the [UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#)

- In June 1992, at the [Earth Summit](#) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, more than 178 countries adopted [Agenda 21](#), a comprehensive plan of action to build a global partnership for sustainable development to improve human lives and protect the environment.
- Member States unanimously adopted the Millennium Declaration at the [Millennium Summit](#) in September 2000 at UN Headquarters in New York. The Summit led to the elaboration of eight [Millennium Development Goals \(MDGs\)](#) to reduce extreme poverty by 2015.
- The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation, adopted at the [World Summit on Sustainable Development](#) in South Africa in 2002, reaffirmed the global community's commitments to poverty eradication and the environment, and built on Agenda 21 and the Millennium Declaration by including more emphasis on multilateral partnerships.
- At the [United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development \(Rio+20\)](#) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, Member States adopted the outcome document "[The Future We Want](#)" in which they decided, inter alia, to launch a process to develop a set of SDGs to build upon the MDGs and to establish the [UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#). The Rio +20 outcome also contained other measures for implementing sustainable development, including mandates for future programmes of work in development financing, small island developing states and more.
- In 2013, the General Assembly set up a 30-member [Open Working Group](#) to develop a proposal on the SDGs.
- In January 2015, the General Assembly began the negotiation process on the [post-2015 development agenda](#). The process culminated in the subsequent adoption of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), with [17 SDGs](#) at its core, at the [UN Sustainable Development Summit](#) in September 2015.
- 2015 was a landmark year for multilateralism and international policy shaping, with the adoption of several major agreements:
 - [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (March 2015)
 - [Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development](#) (July 2015)
 - [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) with its 17 SDGs was adopted at the [UN Sustainable Development Summit](#) in New York in September 2015.
 - [Paris Agreement on Climate Change](#) (December 2015)
- Now, the annual [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) serves as the central UN platform for the follow-up and review of the SDGs.

SDGs are a product of almost three decades of advocacy

(<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>)



The MDGs

- Millennium Development Goals established in 2000
- Simple, measurable, consensus-based
- Focused on “North-South aid agenda”
- Part of “new rationale for aid in the context of post-Cold War geopolitics and neoliberal globalization” (Fukudu-Parr, 2016)



Critiques of the MDGs

- **Models:** Focused on a basic needs view of extreme poverty vs. one attentive to power relations and institutions
- **Content:** Lacking broader view of the system, including economic systems and inequality; lack of human rights or institutional reform; lots missing!
- **Process:** Technocratic approach and drafting within office of UNSG; limited consultation
- “Major distracting gimmick” (Antrobus, 2006)

Advent of the SDGs

- **Models:** Widened the scope of the goals, more systemic view of poverty and inequality
- **Content:** Much greater number of goals and indicators, emphasis on interrelationship
- **Process:** Harnessed frustrations with MDGs; driven by environmental ministers in MICs
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5nFFTnUM4w>

Consultative process

- High-Level Political Forum (est. 2011). UNSG – ‘MDGs 2.0,’ evidence-based perspective
- Open Working Group (OWG, est. 2012; GA); critical of MDGs; focus on sustainability paradigm
- Unprecedented level of participation, yet antagonistic

OWG specifically included 8 target groups: *women, children and youth, indigenous people, NGOs, local authorities, workers and unions, business and industry, science and technology community, and farmers.*

Table 1. The formulation of the SDGs: a summary timeline

Date	The post-2015 process	Open working group
July 2011	SG opens consultation processes on post 2015 including: UN Task Team review of MDG experience; Global Public Consultations; HLP.	
June 2012		Rio+20 Outcome document <i>Future we want</i> - sets out mandate to establish OWG of UN GA to develop SDGs
July 2012	HLP established	
March 2013		First OWG meeting
May 2013	HLP Report <i>A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development</i> submitted to SG.	
March 2013	Reports of Public Consultations submitted	
July 2014		Final (13th) OWG meeting achieves agreement on proposal with 17 goals 169 indicators
September 2014		GA adopts OWG proposal (as proposal)
September 2015		GA adopts 2030 Agenda and SDGs

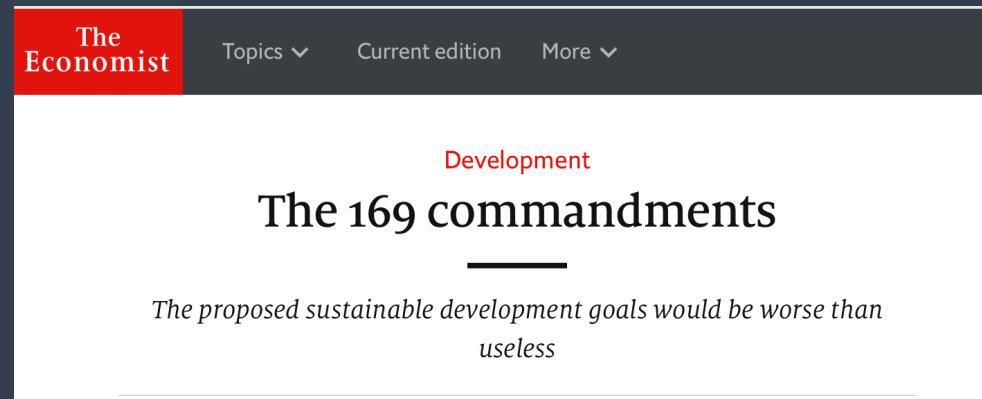
Note: This only captures key stages in the official UN process of formulation. A multitude of other activities were undertaken that served as an input to these official processes.

Advent of the SDGs

Still... some critics:

“Senseless, Dreamy, Garbled” (Foreign Policy, 2015)

“Stupid Development Goals” (The Economist, 2015)



(<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2015/03/26/the-169-commandments>)

The SDGs in practice

The Goals

Sustainable Development Goals



17 Goals

169 Targets

232 Indicators

Targets & Indicators

	sexual and reproductive health care, information and education		
5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure	C050a01	
	5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control	C050a02	
5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex	C050b01	
5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels	5.c.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment	C050c01	

Available online: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>

Targets & Indicators

SDG indicators involve a mix of the following four types:

- **Inputs:** “The human financial, and community resources a program has available toward [implementing a program]”
- **Outputs:** “Direct products of program activities”
- **Outcomes:** “Specific changes in...behavior, knowledge, skills, status, and level of functioning”
- **Impacts:** “The fundamental intended or unintended change occurring in organizations, communities, or systems”

Number of doctors
per capita

Number of nurses
trained

% of population with HIV

Reduction in the rate
of NCDs

(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5441444/>)



Consider SDG 7

In small groups, reflect on the targets and indicators.

- What surprises you?
- What is missing?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses?

- <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal7>

What makes for a good indicator?

Is this variation in how goals are tracked a positive or negative?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative indicators?

for accountability. But in reality, quantification reduces complex and intangible visions – such as development that is inclusive – into concrete measurable objectives such as all children in school. Recent literature in the sociology of knowledge theorises the distorting effects of quantitative indicators used in global governance on concepts and action by setting standards for behaviour (see e.g. Merry 2011). So global goals can lead to distorting effects, redefining the meaning of development, and shaping policy by creating incentives to over-focus on target achievement and neglect other important objectives (Fukuda-Parr 2014). A similar study of 11 MDG indicators found that the Department for International Development (DFID) had a strong influence on the design of the indicators.

(Fukuda-Parr, 2016)

Questions and challenges

Core Questions

Are the
SDGs
'neutral'?

How do they
interact?

How do they
drive
change?

What about
context?

1. SDGs as product of *political process*

Saudi Arabia Protests Inclusion Of Gay Rights In UN Sustainable Development Goals

By Aditya Tejas [@Artejas](#)
09/28/15 AT 6:01 AM



No Room for LGBT Rights in the New UN Development Goals

May 17, 2015 by Barbara Crossette



As the articles in this special issue point out, the selection of indicators for monitoring progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda does not depend purely on technical considerations but is inherently about political questions of competing priorities between various stakeholders. The SDG indicator process itself has been beset with power struggles.

(Kapto, 2019: 134)

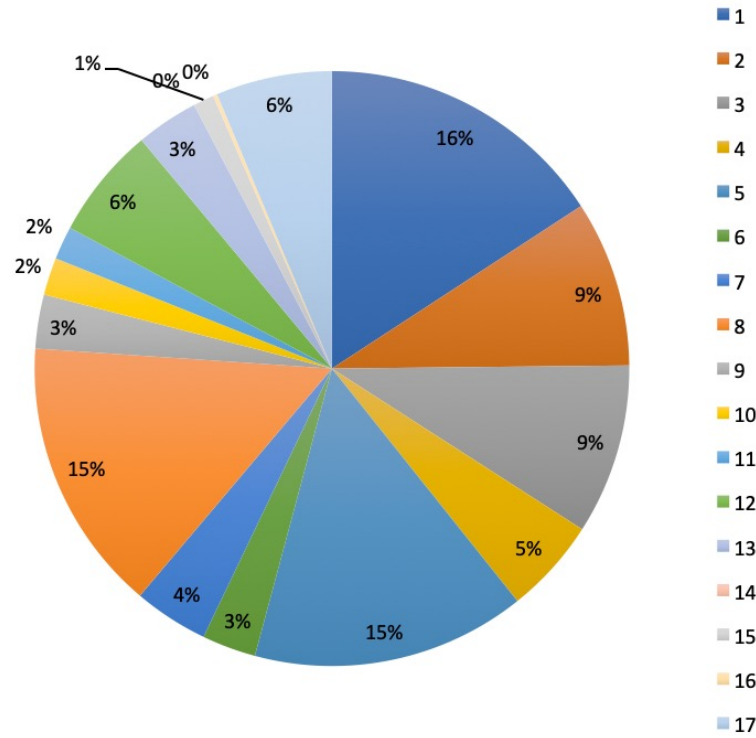
- Hot topics
- Orphaned indicators, indicator selection
- Measuring the unmeasurable?
- Role of statisticians vs diplomats
- Slippage, harmonization and who has the final say?

... and SDGs expression is *political*

Leaving Biodiversity, Peace and Social Inclusion behind
SDG preferences in the World's five major SDG reports 2019

SDG Topic	Rank	Average Rank
Health	1	3,2
Energy	2	4,0
Climate		
Water		
Education	3	4,6
Poverty	4	6,2
Food	5	7,6
Economic Growth	6	8,6
Technology	7	8,8
Inequality	8	9,2
Gender Equality	9	10,0
Hunger	10	10,6
Justice	11	10,8
Governance	12	11,6
Decent Work	13	12,2
Peace	14	12,4
Clean Energy	15	12,6
Life on Land	16	14,4
Life below Water	17	15,0
Social Inclusion	18	16,4

Firm SDG Commitment by Goal



- Concern with selectivity
- How should we think about power – particularly agenda-setting power and the SDGs?
- What power does the UN have? What are the limitations?

Breakdown of commitments by Business Call to Action firms.



2. Interactions between SDGs

“The water and land needs required from targets 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 have a constraining (–1) effect on target 6.6, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers, and lakes.

The goal to protect ecosystems yet establish high yield agriculture that satisfies global hunger issues is challenging, especially if high yields are achieved by conventional (agro-chemical intensive) agriculture.”

(Fader et al., 2018)

Enabling or Constraining?

	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.6	6.a	6.b	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.a	2.b	2.c	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.a	7.b
6.1	1	2	2	3	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	3	3	-1	1	2	2	2	3	2	
6.2	1	1	2	2	3	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	-1	1	2	2	2	3	2
6.3	2	2	1	2	3	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	0	1	2	3	2	3	2
6.4	2	2	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	0	1	2	3	2	3	2
6.5	3	3	3	3	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	1	3	3	2	3	3
6.6	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	-1	-1	-1	0	2	2	-1	1	2	1	2	2	1
6.a	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	0	0	0	1	2	2	-1	1	1	2	2	2	1
6.b	2	3	3	3	3	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	-1	3	1	3	2	2	3	3
2.1	0	1	2	2	3	-1	0	2	1	-1	-1	0	3	1	-1	-1	1	1	1	3	-1
2.2	0	1	2	2	3	-1	0	2	-1	1	-1	0	3	1	-1	-1	1	1	1	3	-1
2.3	0	1	2	2	3	-1	0	2	-1	-1	1	0	3	1	-1	-1	1	1	1	3	-1
2.4	1	1	2	2	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	3	3	0	1	2	2	2	3	1
2.5	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	0	1	3	3	2	3	3
2.a	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	-1	1	1	1	3	3	1	-1	0	3	3	2	3	2
2.b	-1	-1	0	0	0	-1	-1	3	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-1	1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	-1
2.c	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-1	-1	-1	1	1	0	-1	1	1	1	1	1	0
7.1	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	3	3	-1	1	1	3	2	3	2
7.2	2	2	3	3	3	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	3	-1	1	3	1	2	3	3
7.3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	-1	1	2	2	1	2	2
7.a	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	1	3	3	2	1	3
7.b	2	2	2	2	3	1	1	3	-1	-1	-1	1	3	2	-1	0	2	3	2	3	1

4 = indivisible	(-4) = cancelling
3 = supporting	(-3) = restricting
2 = reinforcing	(-2) = counteracting
1 = enabling	(-1) = constraining
0 = consistent	

We can map the interactions between SDGs

Ex. 6 (clean water), 2 (zero hunger), and 7 (affordable and clean energy)

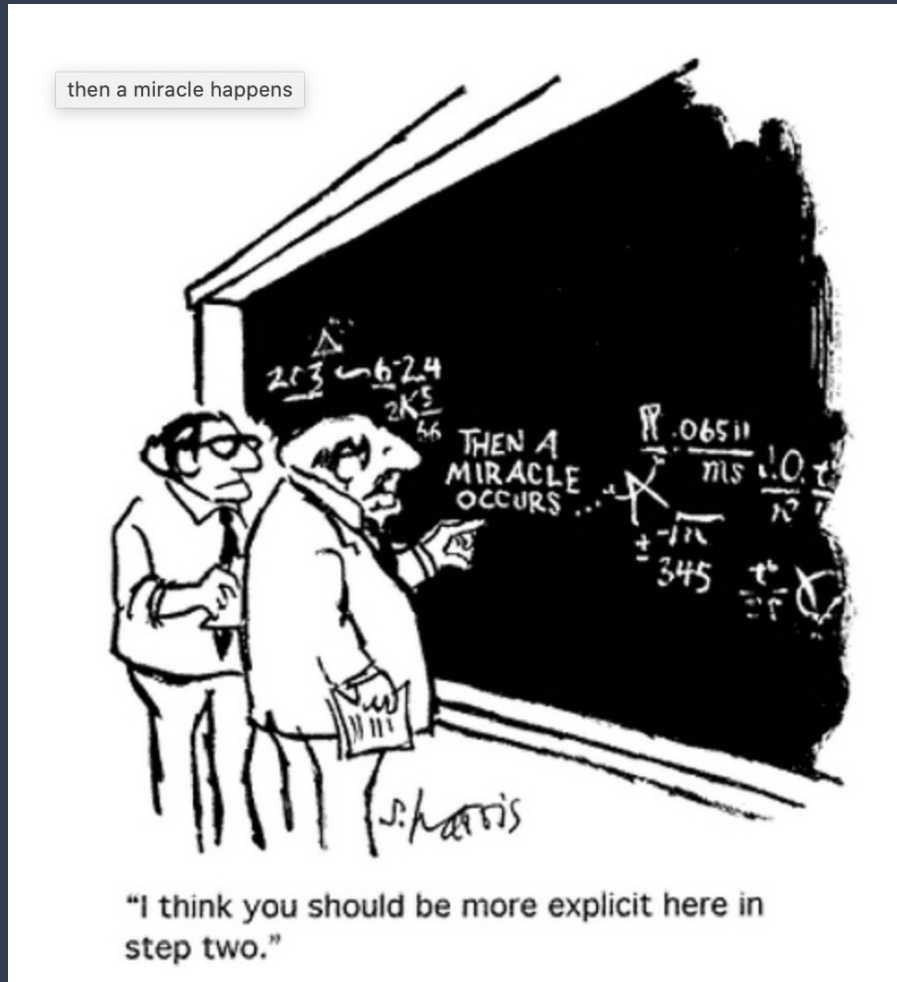


3. How do the SDGs drive change?

Who are the core audiences?

- Policy makers, particularly in low-income countries
- Citizens
- Funders and aid agencies
- Others?

How do the SDGs drive change?



What are the channels and mechanisms?

- Peer pressure (states, private sector)
- Transparency and reporting
- Civil society mobilisation
- Media engagement
- Direct funding
- Policy prioritization and target setting
- Normative change
- Methodological change

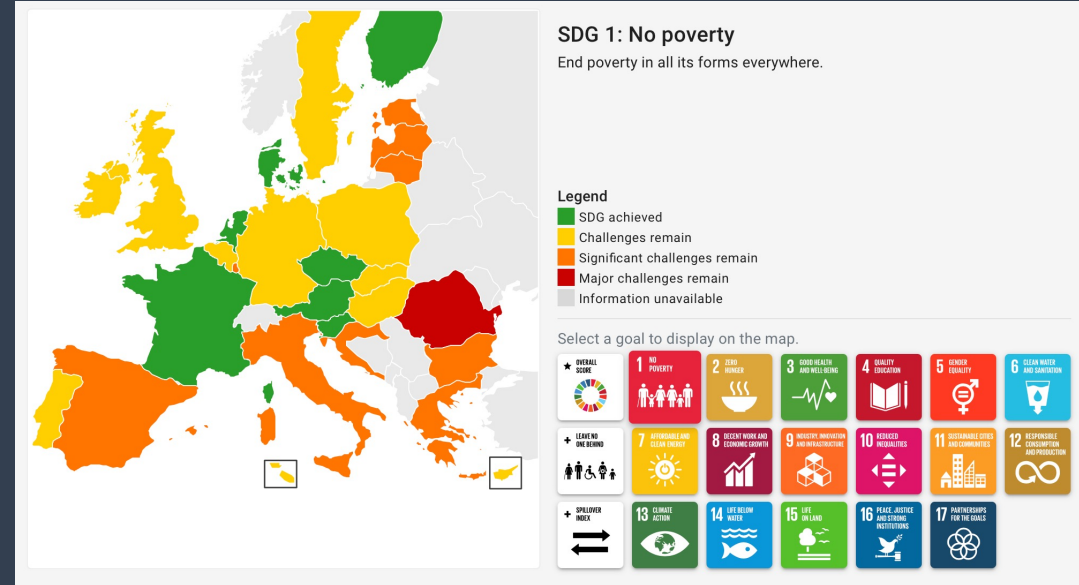
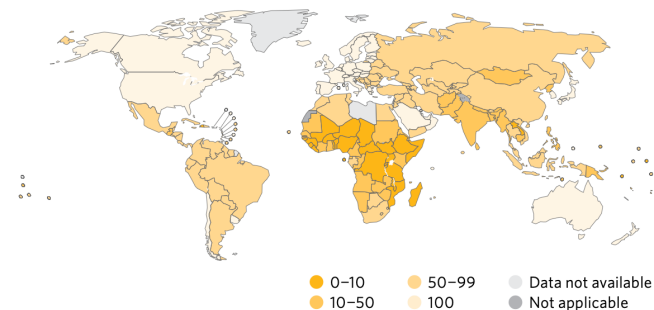
Global Reporting & Advocacy

Three billion people still lack clean cooking fuels and technologies, posing a grave threat to human health and the environment

Access to clean and safe cooking fuels and technologies has increased since 2010 at an annual rate of 0.5 percentage points, reaching 61 per cent of the global population in 2017. This is far too slow to meet the SDG target and still leaves nearly 3 billion people dependent on inefficient and highly polluting cooking systems, resulting in nearly 4 million premature deaths each year. The lack of cleaner fuels and technologies remains a major contributor to poor health and environmental degradation in low- and middle-income countries.

In sub-Saharan Africa, advances in the use of clean fuels (such as liquefied petroleum gas, natural gas and electricity) and fuel-efficient stoves have not kept pace with population growth, in contrast to other regions. Tackling the problem will require concerted action on the part of policymakers to address key barriers, including availability, affordability, reliability, limited financing and consumer awareness.

Proportion of population with access to clean cooking fuels and technologies, 2017 (percentage)



(<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf>)

(<https://eu-dashboards.sdgindex.org>)

Normative change

Norms (*shared expectations, what is 'right'*):

The SDGs “re-conceptualized development as a universal aspiration for human progress that is inclusive and sustainable, displacing the MDG driven notion of development as a North-South project to meet basic needs to end poverty.”
(Fukudu-Parr et al. 2019)

The SDGs thus provide a window of opportunity to connect policies to a broader, legitimised, sustainable development agenda.

Methodological change

Methods:

The SDGs “brought about a methodological shift, namely the use of global goal setting to generate norms, moving toward ‘governance by numbers’. Until the SDGs, development agendas were qualitative statements of important social and political priorities.” (Fukudu-Parr et al. 2019)

Change to policy processes

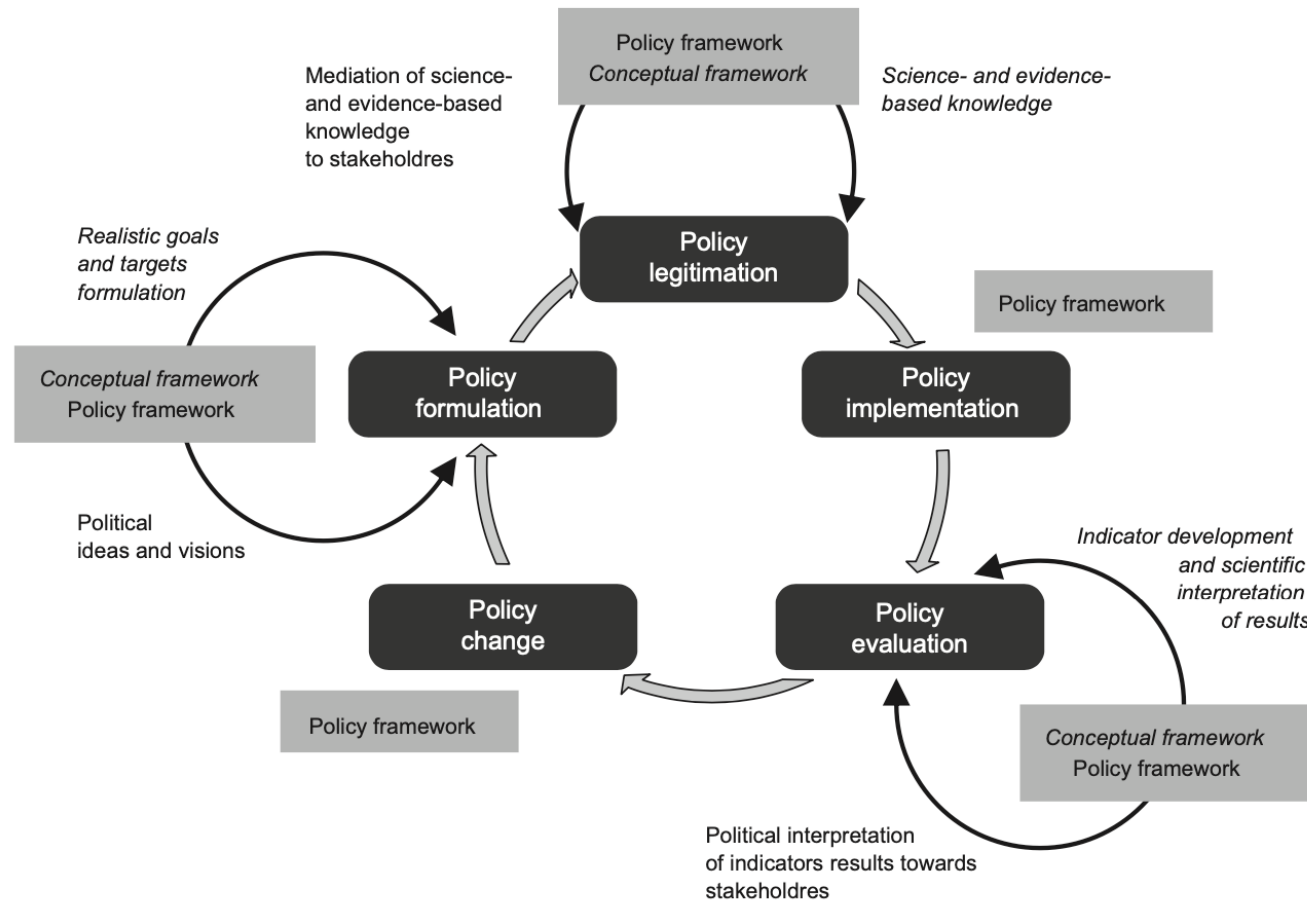


Fig. 1. A policy cycle linked to policy and conceptual frameworks.

Goals, targets and indicators feed into the policy cycle at multiple junctures

1. Legitimate policy goals
2. Policy evaluation
3. Interpretation and communication
4. Adjustments of goals and measures in policy development

(Hak et al, 2016)

ToC and indicators



	and/or control	
5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex	C050b01
5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for	5.c.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public	



4. The issue of context

Increased focus on localisation

- Means of taking broad goals and connecting them to local needs
- Example: Biscay region, concerned with aging population and obesity
- But does this enable goals to be captured by local interests?

Localisation in South Africa

ALIGNMENT: NDP & SDGs

NDP

SDG

Chapter 11: Social Protection

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere in the world
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Chapter 9: Improving education, training and innovation

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Chapter 10: Promoting Health

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Chapter 3: Economy and employment

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Chapter 6: An integrated and inclusive rural economy

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns



What role are SDGs playing in political processes in South Africa?

Core Questions

Are the
SDGs
'neutral'?

How do they
interact?

How do they
drive
change?

What about
context?

What other issues would you raise?

Which of these poses the greatest challenge?

Summing up

Summing up

- The SDGs have a history – not born fully formed!
- The SDGs are contested, imperfect, and political
- The SDGs (and MDGs) contain normative ideas and models of change, development, etc.

Q&A

Thank you!