The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network

FACTSHEET

DEMYSTIFYING THE GLOBAL GOALS ⬡ IN TIMES OF A PANDEMIC

May 2020

In today's interconnected world, there is growing expectation and need for businesses not only to be honest about their societal impact but to strive to do good. The UN Sustainable Development Goals – also known as the Global Goals – give a blueprint for what is needed to achieve a world without poverty and hunger, and a healthy planet with peace and prosperity for all.

Agreed by 193 countries in 2015, the Global Goals are a chance for everyone to talk a common language, create action and measure progress, giving clarity on what must be achieved together.

By the end of 2019, despite the urgency, we were not on track to meet the 17 goals.[1] This has been compounded by the current pandemic.

The impact of COVID-19

A few months in, COVID-19 is reversing progress made on reducing extreme poverty by pushing millions into poverty and hunger.[2] The World Food Programme (WPF) is alerting the UN Security

Council to large-scale famine.[3] According to the WFP, more than 320 million children around the world are now missing out on school meals due to school closures, many from poor families.

The International Labour Organization estimates that global unemployment will increase by almost 25 million. Additionally, while there are some amazing environmental gains (reduced pollution and carbon emissions), these will not be long lasting without a recovery aligned with the 1.5 degrees trajectory set in the Paris Agreement.

Businesses have responded in different ways, with some at the forefront of the relief effort and others only able to fight for survival. Looking ahead, all businesses need to be at the very heart of the recovery and reimagining process.

The Global Goals define the world we want – we need to focus the recovery in making that world a reality.

Learn more about how business can 'build back better' in our blog.

The business case for using the Global Goals

Stakeholder expectations

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[1] CSR Europe White Paper, *From Urgency To Action: Business And The SDGs* (2019) and https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24978Report_of_the_SG_on_SDG_Progress_2019.pdf

[2] UN Report on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19

[3] https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-chief-warns-hunger-pandemic-covid-19-spreads-statement-un-security-council

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Businesses are increasingly required to account for their impact,[4] with investors and stakeholders paying more attention to risks and opportunities from an Environment, Social and Governance (ESG)[5] perspective, as well as through the lens of the Global Goals.[6] By embedding the Global Goals in an organisation, perhaps signalling this within the purpose statement and incorporating them when developing their strategy, businesses can ensure they are aligned to stakeholder expectations and prepared for the future.

Strategic alignment

This enables businesses to articulate their intended impact to stakeholders, build connections to achieve the targets, and most importantly deepen their societal impact while enabling commercial success.

This will allow businesses to pre-empt regulatory change and attract investment, creating a competitive advantage, and prepare for unpredictable events involving sustainable development, for instance a crisis created by a pandemic.

Indeed, business stability depends on the fulfilment of many of the goals, such as access to resources, fair incomes and a stable climate. Failure to achieve these is likely to result in major disruption,[7] as we see today with COVID-19. If more investment and progress had been made to address some of these challenges, the consequences of COVID-19 would have been less damaging.

How can the Global Goals be used by business?

Businesses generally use the goals in two ways[8]:

As a communications network

The goals offer a set of shared aspirations that enable businesses to signal their commitment in a globally recognised way, as well as structure measurement and non-financial reporting using commonly understood themes.

As a strategic pathfinder

The goals highlight a comprehensive set of risks and opportunities against which businesses can future-proof and inform strategic choice. Businesses creating solutions for specific Global Goals can drive forward business growth by using innovation to enter new markets and provide solutions to emerging challenges. Furthermore, as a common language and set of shared aspirations, the Global Goals can facilitate new and strengthen existing partnerships within and across sectors.

At Business in the Community (BITC), we advocate using the Global Goals as a strategic pathfinder.

All businesses, no matter how big or small, can contribute to meeting the Global Goals.

Businesses have the power to translate the Global Goals into business opportunities by innovating products and services, finding new ways to source materials and run operations, and creating an inclusive and engaged workforce. As well as foster healthy and thriving communities.

Frequently asked questions

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[4] Deloitte, *2030 Purpose: Good business and a better future* (2017). Available here.
[5] Environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues, such as climate change and human rights
[6] Principles for Responsible Investment, *The SDG Investment case.* Available here.

[7] Business call to action, Deloitte, Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development & UNDP, *Uncharted Waters: Blending Value and Values For Social Impact Through The SDGs* (September 2016). Available here.
[8] BITC, *Towards the Tipping Point: Global Goals guide for business* (October 2018). Available here.

1. Do I have to use all 17 Goals?

It is easy to panic at the prospect of digesting the whole framework[9]: 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators. No need. It is best to keep focused on the 17 goals and their targets to understand your business's impacts (positive and negatives). Then prioritise the goals and targets to really focus your business' efforts on. The beauty of the goals is that they show how all the different issues are interconnected.

The 232 unique indicators are more for governments and UN agencies.[10] For example, in 2019 the UK Government published its first review on progress towards the Global Goals, including business' contribution.

2. What exactly should I call them?

They are officially called the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Many people use the acronym SDGs (as for the Millennium Development Goals, people used MDGs). Project Everyone[11] set out to make the goals more accessible and introduced the term Global Goals, which many organisations use, including BITC.

3. How do I measure and report progress?

Businesses need to use the goals and the targets in ways appropriate for their sector, business model and where they operate. There is not one globally agreed list of indicators for businesses.

There are practical guides available to help businesses select indicators. For instance,

Integrating the SDGs into corporate reporting[12] and An analysis of the Goals and Targets.

At BITC, we used the Global Goals to create our Responsible Business Map and Responsible Business Tracker. Businesses using the Tracker get to understand how they are contributing to each of the Global Goals.

Several global surveys have showcased the increased attention companies are giving to public reporting in line with the Global Goals[13]. They are seeing the opportunity to engage with their various stakeholders including investors.

If you want to find out about the progress of the goals overall, the report that the UN Secretary General issues every year is the best starting point.[14]

4. Do I need permission to use the logo?

You can freely download the logos from the UN website. Just make sure you use the ones for non-UN agencies (see the UN brand guidelines). The more we use them the more visible they will

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[9] WBCSD, *Business and the SDGs: A survey of WBCSD members and Global Network partners* (July 2018). Available here.
[10] http://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-reports-on-system-wide-tools-for-sdg-data/

[11] Project Everyone and SDGs.
[12] www.globalreporting.org/resourcelibrary/GRI_UNGC_Reporting-on-SDGs_Practical_Guide.pdf

[13] www.spglobal.com/en/research-insights/featured/sustainable-development-goals-a-misunderstood-market-opportunity
https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/services/sustainability/sustainable-development-goals/sdg-reporting-challenge-2018.html
[14] *Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress* (2019). Available here.

become, for example including them in our communications as much as possible. Project Everyone also offers a number of brand assets.

Useful tools, websites and videos on the Global Goals

BITC's 'Own the Conversation. Drive the Change.' toolkit. Business can use this to hold conversations about how their organisation can contribute to achieving the Global Goals. It's packed with suggested questions, case studies, killer facts and examples. It also features quotes by business leaders on why they are passionate about meeting the Global Goals.

Decade of Action website: Ten years to transform our world

Global Goals Business website

The SDG Compass

Project Everyone has a number of great videos. For example, 'No point going halfway' explains the need to create the SDGs after the MDGs.

COVID-19 resources

BITC's National Business Response Network

BITC COVID-19 resources, for example a factsheet on supporting your supply chain

WHO COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund

Business Fights Poverty COVID-19 Response Centre

You can watch Paul Polman in conversation with Peter Tufano (Dean of the Saïd Business School), on how to build a more stable and just world after COVID-19 here.

UN Global Compact's 'New Leadership for a Global Crisis' webinar with Amina Mohammed (UN Deputy

Secretary General) and Alan Jope (CEO Unilever) here.

For more information about using the Global Goals in your business, please contact Maria-Jose.Subiela@bitc.org.uk.