The 2030 Agenda
IN ACTION
What does it mean?
With support from The Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Korea
The 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was adopted in 2015 by all countries of the United Nations. It is a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

This is an ambitious plan and the greatest chance we have to improve life for current and future generations.
Previous development agendas have mainly focused on progress in developing nations. But the 2030 Agenda is universal, requiring all nations to take climate action, reduce unemployment, strengthen gender equality and promote peaceful societies, to name a few, if the world is to eradicate poverty and shift into more sustainable development pathways.

Tourists visiting Montenegro are mesmerized by the country’s pristine nature and rich culture. But that is only one side of the story. An average tourist emits 6.5 kg of carbon-dioxide equivalent per day. That’s why UNDP helps festivals throughout the country go completely green, supports local authorities to create sustainable urban mobility plans and has developed a web-based carbon calculator where tourists can measure the environmental impact of their holidays.
Traditional development efforts have often focused on one issue at a time, i.e. first hunger, then clean energy, then inclusive institutions, for example. The SDGs recognise that development must balance economic, social and environmental sustainability – and that interventions in one area will affect outcomes in others.

Gregoria Cruz has left the waste dumps of Arequipa, Peru, to find employment as a formal recycler. UNDP supports Peruvian recyclers’ associations, which aim to strengthen this marginalised group through proper job opportunities while contributing to the green economy, better air quality and more efficient waste management. “We are official recyclers, we help to take care of the environment we live in. What we do is for the future” says Gregoria.
Leaving No One Behind

Development gains have often been measured in terms of improved average income and lowered poverty rates. The 2030 Agenda is clear: we need to do more. That is why the SDGs are designed to bring the world to several life-changing ‘zeros’, including zero poverty, hunger, preventable child deaths, AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, discrimination against women and girls and human trafficking. Leaving No One Behind means targeting development efforts and investments at those furthest behind first.

Abida is training to be a nurse in Jalalabad, Afghanistan – a country which has one of the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the world. “One of my neighbours gave birth,” Abida recalls. “After delivery, she didn’t stop bleeding. She died on the way to town”. UNDP is supporting Afghanistan to train a new generation of female healthcare workers, like Abida. Along with 200 classmates, she will graduate from nursing school to bring much needed health care to women in the country’s most remote and disadvantaged areas.
Development must be smart – if it’s not risk-informed, it’s not sustainable

1.2 million people died in disasters between 2002-2012, erasing hard-fought development gains. Achieving the SDGs requires risk-informed action to boost resilience against environmental disasters, degradation, pandemics, financial shocks, conflict and war. By preventing, mitigating and preparing, countries and communities will save money, resources and most importantly – lives.

Case in point

Aysha Feyso is a smallholder farmer in central Ethiopia. When harsh weather and drought struck her village, she used to sell off livestock to make ends meet. But after El Niño in 2015, Aysha received a weather-based index insurance through a UNDP supported project. This allowed farmers to keep their children in school, save money, purchase weather-resilient seeds and avoid selling off assets. UNDP also helps smallholder farmers diversify holdings, protect natural resources and create more sustainable businesses across the board to reverse the cycle of risk for good.
10 million people from all walks of life helped create the SDGs. Making them a success can only come from partnerships and multi-stakeholder coalitions. The 2030 Agenda needs the bright minds and relentless dedication from all of society – Governments and the UN cannot do it alone.

Case in point

Khaled from Egypt has developed the Esmaany (‘Hear me’) project which aims to improve communication with deaf-blind people and reduce inequalities, using technologies such as smart gloves and bracelets. UNDP supports young people in all Arab countries who are putting their creativity to the service of their communities. Khaled and eleven other change-makers joined UNDP’s delegation to the 2018 ECOSOC Youth Forum in New York to share their visions for how young people can help achieve the SDGs.
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