

The importance of local organisations to reach UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)ⁱ were introduced in 2015 and approved by all 193 UN countries; and by 2030, the UN is set to reach 200 member countries. Similar frameworks and schemes were attempted in the past with scarce results, and with a lower level of involvement. There are 17 SDGs:



*UN Sustainable Development Goals, retrieved on 26-05-2020 from:
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/12/sustainable-development-goals-kick-off-with-start-of-new-year/>*

They are subdivided into 169 targets and several indicators as well as global, national, and local initiatives. This allows an in-depth data analysis and constant monitoring that has never been possible in the past, since now we have the technology to monitor and analyse almost in real-time. One of the main aims of the SDGs is to involve the largest amount of people in this project, ideally every person and every community globally. The key idea is to share knowledge and share the goals. Only together can we make a difference.

The goals form an overarching framework, a vision of a sustainable future. But what is meant by sustainability? It is essentially the coexistence of humanity and the environment, which are deeply interrelated.

Leaders, political and not, must embrace these goals which are crucial for our lives and for the preservation and restoration of the environment in which we live in.

Global Issues

There are some issues that might represent an obstacle for the SDGs. For example, a revamping of nationalism and the rise of populism might slow down or impede the full realisation of the goals.

Negationist leaders such as Bolsonaro in Brazil (who downplayed the extent of the fires in the Amazon Jungle), Johnson in the UK, and Trump in the US, all downplay climate change and its effect, just as they also have with COVID-19. It must be noted that COVID-19 showed us even more clearly how the world is interconnected and how local mismanagement of problems can lead to worldwide effects.

Another issue to consider is the rapid mass industrialisation and the growth that occurred in China, and on smaller scale in India. Also, phenomena like land grabbing and Belt and Road Initiatives risk to aggravate an already unideal situation.

Furthermore, the widespread use of coal as a source of energy also represents an enormous issue in terms of pollution. Many countries like ours still rely on coal, and the five top producers of this resource are China, India, the US, Australia, and Indonesia.

The Australian Situation

As mentioned above, Australia is one the largest producers of coal in the world. This obviously does not put Australia in a good position regarding achievement of the SDGs. Measures such as industrial conversion and re-training of workers has been considered recently but with no tangible results.

Programs to re-train workers that will be affected if Australia decides to reduce or completely stop mining would be costly to start but would create a positive outcome for the future of Australia. A national training plan would have to guarantee an income while the workers train for new jobs that will arise with the full or partial conversion to renewable energy. This would create jobs in the training industry at first, and then of course jobs related to renewable energy in which the competencies and transferable skills of former mining and energy workers would be a great start for their new careers.

This would be, however, part of a plan that would need to be agreed upon by the majority of Australian politics, as well as the economic and social actors. It would need a total change of vision and a politics that would have to work for the long run and not, as it is today, just for the short term: a change that it is indeed needed and overdue.

Regarding inequalities, Australia (as in most developed countries) experiences a social and cultural divide that limits the access to opportunities and a social mobility. Australia has a very diverse population and a multiculturalism that should represent an advantage. However, racism and its multi-fold facets can be seen in the Australian society. Aboriginal Australians still face challenges which often are not addressed properly, and the investments done are either scarce or misdirected. SDGs should provide a framework to solve once and for all the social and cultural problems in Australia, by focusing on helping marginalised section of the population that are often left behind. Also, Aboriginal Australia's rich history and culture should be an integral part of our national values and its livelihood should be supported. Furthermore, we need to leave behind the remnants of huge social issues caused by forced assimilation which represents the root cause of today's struggle of Aboriginal Australians.

A Brighter Future

SDGs can be achieved by 2030 only if we all act together, starting in our local communities. We are in a time where the atomisation of society seems to be the rule, in which self-interest and gain are the drive of a large number of people. To break the spell, we should try to focus on what is most important. Many organisations are trying to do so, for example our local organisation, HOPE (Householders' Options to Protect the Environment), has been working on campaigns and to spread ideas on a society that is sustainable ecologically, economically, and socially. Our motto is "Think Globally – Act Locally" intrinsically represents the importance that local initiatives have in shaping a better future and preserving the environment.

ⁱ UN SDGs can be found here: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>