

MOVING BEYOND GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT TO ACHIEVE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Income inequality and extreme poverty are increasing. We need a new social contract of solidarity and inclusiveness in which economic benefits are shared. Measures of progress should go beyond gross domestic product (GDP) to consider distributional impact and uphold the principle of leaving no one behind.



Food prices hit a record high in 2022. Hunger and food insecurity severely undermine well-being, risk pushing more people into poverty and increase vulnerabilities and debt levels. Fast and effective common solutions should be found.



We need metrics and policies on “well-being and agency” that put the focus on people, their health and well-being, and promote meaningful participation. The social value of care work, health, well-being and security continues to be largely uncounted.



Rather than viewed as a cost, education should be viewed as an investment in human capital and treated as a key productive capacity. Access to education is key to equal opportunities and should be considered as an element of growth and well-being.



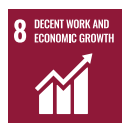
We are not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. Women’s unpaid care work reduces economic opportunities and is not accounted for in GDP, which undervalues women’s full contribution to society. Measures that go beyond GDP should consider gender-specific indicators across thematic areas that adequately measure and compare the situation of women and men in all areas of life.



Essential natural resources, such as clean water, are fundamental to well-being and meeting everyone’s right to live on a healthy planet. Data on indicator 6.1.1 show stark regional differences in access to safely managed drinking water, with significant challenges, especially in Africa. Metrics are needed to reflect these discrepancies and inform policies to address these challenges.



The world is falling short of universal access to affordable, sustainable and clean energy, while global energy demand keeps rising. We need a fundamental shift to an “innovative and ethical economy” to ensure energy efficiency and spur innovation in green technologies.



GDP does not consider what kinds of growth are achieved nor how it is achieved (for example, the working conditions involved, or the impact on climate and biodiversity). Metrics and targeted policies should assess the role of the economy in ensuring equal opportunities, personal growth, empowerment and fair pay, and should consider the contribution of the informal sector.



Innovation and technologies, including artificial intelligence, are developing rapidly. This calls for new metrics to inform policies that would harness these developments and build more resilient infrastructure, optimize food production, minimize waste, monitor pollution and curb emissions with a view to developing sustainable industry.



Inequalities in health, education, income, wealth and access to resources and opportunities persist. Metrics should inform efforts to end all forms of discrimination.



More robust, disaggregated data on rural and urban areas, population groups and local communities are essential for assessing sustainability and resilience. These are needed as a tool for urban and regional planning to tackle vulnerabilities, air pollution and improve waste management.



Our global material footprint is increasing at a faster rate than population and economic output. Measures of progress must go beyond GDP to consider income, wealth and consumption and must offer granular data on distributions to assess inequalities and provide stronger metrics on responsible use of natural resources.



An annual cut in emissions, as in 2020 during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, would move us towards the goals of the Paris Agreement. However, in 2021, the use of coal and oil skyrocketed, contributing to record high carbon emissions. New metrics that target climate action and related finance are needed to address increasing vulnerabilities and to support disaster risk reduction, adaptation and mitigation.



The chemical burden carried by the oceans is growing. Marine plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980, affecting at least 267 species. Implementing thematic metrics on a range of areas, including sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries, energy, material flows and water would support better policy decisions to address these growing concerns.



We should consider natural resource use, degradation and biodiversity in all economic decisions, including the impact of such decisions on vulnerable people. Since 1970, global populations of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians and reptiles have declined by 68 per cent, and more than a million species are at risk of extinction. Measures of progress should go beyond GDP to adequately reflect the current cost of production and economic development that has been left largely unaccounted for and unnoticed until now.



Weak rule of law and respect for human rights are increasing insecurities, with historic declines in human development. Metrics and policies should focus on “participatory governance and stronger institutions” to prevent backlashes to efforts to establish just and peaceful human and planetary conditions.



To support all decision-making related to going beyond GDP, we need stronger statistical capacity to invest in the right metrics in order to guide strengthened multilateralism and solidarity in distributing the costs, benefits, rights and burdens fairly and to help to make illicit, illegal and harmful practices visible in order to curb them.