

A Brief Analysis of SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being – and its Synergies and Trade-offs with the other Sustainable Development Goals

Analiza 3 Celu zrównoważonego rozwoju (SDG 3): Dobre zdrowie i jakość życia oraz jego komplementarności z pozostałymi SDG

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Abstract

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), proposed by the United Nations in 2015, give countries around the world much to work on until 2030. The third SDG – Good health and well-being – surely cannot be pursued in isolation. Far from being a silo, it has strong synergies with other SDGs, notably Gender Equality (SDG 5), No Poverty (SDG 1), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10) & Clean water and sanitation (SDG 6). Quite counter-intuitively, it has trade-offs with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). This is a commentary on these synergies and trade-offs, which looks at Good Health and Well-being as an overarching goal on any government's agenda, impacting and being impacted, to different degrees, by the other goals.

Key words: SDGs, Good health and well-being, synergies, trade-offs

Słowa kluczowe: Cele zrównoważonego rozwoju, Dobre zdrowie i jakość życia, synergia, kompromisy

Introduction

Sustainability refers to a/the desirable state. Sustainable development is a process, which is the means towards this desirable state. Here, it is necessary that the means – the process of development and all that it entails – are sustainable, in order to justify the end. As stated by Kallio, et al (2007), the phenomenon we label as sustainable development can never be exhaustively defined; it would constantly change with time, interpreters, and their needs. We thus have an elusive, impermanent end-goal, which is pursued with a changeable set of ways and means. According to Quental, et al (2011), the introduction of sustainable development as a concept was an intellectual answer to reconcile the conflicting goals of environmental protection and economic growth.

Mundane decisions on familial and individual levels, tend to influence decision-makers at county, provincial and national levels, and vice versa. This is what one may term as a bottom-up approach to change and development. In a way, this throws the balls, so to say, into the courts of individuals and families, as far as the larger cause (sustainability) and the necessary means (sustainable development) are concerned. Not avoiding individual (or citizen) responsibilities will thus make it easier for communities and countries to adopt the desired *means* towards the desired *end* (Venkatesh, 2019) Sustainable development therefore, necessitates the understanding that the *state of the family* is intricately linked to the *fate of the planet*. As far as the geospatial aspect is concerned, we are all connected, through the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, asthenosphere, and pedosphere, and the anthropospheric constructs of trade and travel. One person's action at a particular place and time, may impact another person, adversely or favourably at another place and time – recall the *butterfly effect* of the chaos theory introduced by Edward Lorenz. What is important for happiness, to what extent, and to whom, at any given instant of time, is extremely difficult to determine. As reported in an issue of The Economist in 2019, Daniel Sgroi of the University of Warwick and Eugenio Proto of the University of Glasgow have shown that increasing national income is important to happiness, but not as important as ensuring that the population is healthy and avoiding conflict.

The Sustainable Development Goals – 2015 to 2030

The publication, in 2015, by the United Nations, of a comprehensive and extensive roadmap of targets and indicators underpinning the SDGs, was a milestone for aligning not only developing countries but also developed ones, with the right path of sustainable development, leading to sustainability. However, even before the SDGs were launched in 2015, planning and performance monitoring have been guided by several sets of indicators– starting from the UN Habitats Urban Indicator Programme (1993) to the Commission for Sustainable Development’s Sustainable Development Indicators (1995), EU’s sustainability indicators (1998) to European Common Indicators (2000) to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to OECD’s Better Life Index (2011) to ISO 37 120 indicators (Sustainable development of communities, 2014). The SDG framework, in effect, is a more comprehensive and elaborate sequel to the MDGs which had a 15-year timeframe of 2000 to 2015.

Table 1. The SDGs categorised based on the three pillars of sustainability (categorisation done by the author)

Category	SDG	Name	Targets	Indicators
Social	2	Zero hunger	8	14
	3	Good health and well-being	13	24
	4	Quality education	10	11
	5	Gender equality	9	14
	10	Reduce inequalities	10	11
Economic	9	Industry, innovation and infrastructure	8	12
Environmental	13	Climate action	5	7
	14	Life below water	10	10
	15	Life below land	12	14
Socio-economic	1	No poverty	7	12
	8	Decent work and economic growth	12	17
Economic-environmental	7	Affordable and clean energy	5	6
Socio-environmental	6	Clean water and sanitation	8	11
Encompassing all three dimensions	11	Sustainable cities and communities	10	15
	12	Responsible production and consumption	11	13
Governance/Political will	16	Peace, justice and strong institutions	12	23
	17	Partnerships for the goals	19	25

Table 1 provides a glimpse of the 17 SDGs, along with information about the number of targets and indicators within each of them. The measures for the indicators may be quantitative, qualitative or semi-quantitative. SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), in the social category, with 13 targets and 24 indicators, will be the leitmotif of this commentary. These targets and indicators are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2. The targets and indicators of SDG 3, as defined by the United Nations (United Nations, 2016)

Targets	Indicators
3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 births	3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio
	3.1.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of new-borns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1000 live births	3.2.1 Under-five mortality rate
	3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate
3.3 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases	3.3.1 Number of new HIV infections per 1000 uninfected population by sex, age and key populations
	3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 1000 population
	3.3.3 Malaria incidence per 1000 population
	3.3.4 Hepatitis B incidence per 100,000 population
	3.3.5 Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases
3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being	3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease
	3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate
3.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and the harmful use of alcohol	3.5.1 Coverage of treatment interventions (pharmacological, psychosocial and rehabilitation and aftercare services) for substance use disorders
	3.5.2 Harmful use of alcohol defined according to the national context as alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol

Targets	Indicators
3.6 By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents	3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries
3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes	3.7.1 Proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15-49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods
	3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10-14 years; aged 15-19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group
3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all	3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services (defined as the average coverage of essential services based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases and service capacity and access, among the general and the most disadvantaged population)
	3.8.2 Number of people covered by health insurance or a public health system per 1,000 population
3.9 By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination	3.9.1 Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution
	3.9.2 Mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene (exposure to unsafe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) services)
	3.9.3 Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning
3.a Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate	3.a.1 Age-standardized prevalence of current tobacco use among persons aged 15 years and older
3.b Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all	3.b.1 Proportion of the population with access to affordable medicines and vaccines on a sustainable basis
	3.b.2 Total net official development assistance to medical research and basic health sectors
3.c Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States	3.c.1 Health worker density and distribution
3.d Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks	3.d.1 International Health Regulations (IHR) capacity and health emergency preparedness

It goes without saying, as pointed out by many researchers, that the SDGs cannot be pursued in isolation. There are no silos or islands of sustainability. Climate change and biodiversity are the core planetary boundaries through which the others operate. As Wright et al (2016) have observed, climate change or the inability to meet SDG 13 in other words, will adversely affect (constrain, counteract or cancel) (Allen et al, 2018) the ability of least-developed countries to achieve the SDGs in poverty (1), hunger (2), health (3), water (6), growth (8), infrastructure (9), cities (11), marine resources (14) and ecosystems (15); while also making the achievement of the other SDGs challenging. They observe, quite interestingly, that *climate change will make combating climate change more difficult* (in other words, while prevention would be difficult, cure would be impossible, and adaptation would be the only way out). While some compromises are unavoidable, some synergies can be harnessed too. Table 3 lists the different types of influences one SDG target can have on another target (which may be within the same SDG or a different one) – Nilsson et al (2016). *Synergistic* would include the indivisible, reinforcing and enabling influences (ordered in decreasing degree of synergism) and *trade-offs* would include constraining, counteracting and cancelling influences – ordered in increasing degree of conflict.

Using SDG indicator data (time series) for 227 countries, Pradhan et al (2017) showed that among the top ten *trade-off* SDG pairs, SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) figures seven times, conflicting with SDGs 10 (ranked I), 1 (II), 6 (III), 3 (IV), 4 (V), 5 (VII) and 2 (IX). Likewise, the paper also shows that SDG 1

(No poverty) figures five times in the top-ten synergistic SDG-pairs, positively influencing 4 (ranked II), 5 (III), 10 (IV), 6 (V) and 3 (VIII).

Table 3. SDG targets – nature of interlinkages

Nature of influence of an SDG target on another	Explanation
<i>Indivisible</i>	Inextricably linked to the achievement of another target
<i>Reinforcing</i>	Aids the achievement of another target
<i>Enabling</i>	Creates conditions that further the achievement of another target
<i>Consistent</i>	No significant positive or negative changes (neutral)
<i>Constraining</i>	Limits options on another target
<i>Counteracting</i>	Clashes with another target
<i>Cancelling</i>	Makes it impossible to reach another target

If we restrict our focus to SDG 3 and its occurrence among the top ten synergy-pairs and trade-off-pairs, 3-10, 1-3, 3-5 and 3-6 are 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th in the list of synergies; and 3-12 is 4th in the list of trade-offs. Needless to say, SDG 3 does have synergies with SDGs other than 10, 1, 5 and 6; and conflicts with those other than 12, but they are evidently not as marked as the ones observed based on recorded historical data for the 227 countries (and regions). In the SDG India Index report (NITI Aayog, Government of India, 2018), the authors note that SDG 3 has links to SDGs 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11 and 13. SDGs 10 and 12, links to which have been uncovered by Pradhan et al (2017) while working with global data, do not figure in the SDG Index India report.

In this commentary, an attempt has been made to discuss qualitatively the links (synergies or trade-offs) that exist between SDG 3 on the one hand, and each of SDGs 10, 1, 5, 6 and 12 on the other.

Synergies with SDGs 10, 1, 5 and 6

All targets of SDG 10 aim to reduce inequalities that have crept into human society. While the need for gender equality has been emphasized in SDG 5, SDG 10 additionally focuses on age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, and country of origin. (Target 10.2 in Table 4). This is the cornerstone of the *Leave No One Behind* policy which the UN has recommended.

Table 4. Targets of SDG 10, as defined by the United Nations (United Nations, 2016)

Target	Content
10.1	By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average
10.2	By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status
10.3	Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard
10.4	Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality
10.5	Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations
10.6	Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions
10.7	Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies
10.a	Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements
10.b	Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes
10.c	By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent

Target 10.1 can be expressed in terms of the so-called Palma ratio which is the ratio of the expenditures of the 10% of richest households in a region (country, state or city) to that of the last four deciles of households (bottom 40% in other words). If this ratio decreases over time, it implies that the poorer sections of society have greater purchasing power, contribute more to economic growth and are able to provide themselves with the requisite resources (at least all the necessities, if not comforts) needed for good health and well-being.

Target 10.3 addresses equal opportunities and these include opportunities not just to find employment and have a secure income, but also have access to optimum healthcare benefits. Easy access to hospital facilities, pharmacies (including subsidised medicines) and information about healthcare options in the region, for everyone irrespective

of any of the aforesaid differences (10.2), will imply several steps forward towards meeting most of the targets of SDG 3. Asylum seekers who have endured adverse living conditions – physically, emotionally and psychologically – as well as the poor denizens of the developing world, need global support from the developed world (official development assistance), for the world on the whole to advance towards its SDG 3 targets. Targets 10.a, 10.b and 10.c are relevant ones in this respect.

Table 5. Targets of SDG 1, as defined by the United Nations (United Nations, 2016)

Target	Content
1.1	By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day
1.2	By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
1.3	Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable
1.4	By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance
1.5	By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters
1.a	Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions
1.b	Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions

While SDG 10 proposes to reduce inequalities, SDG 1 also strives essentially towards a similar goal, with a strong focus on the economically-disadvantaged section of the population (just as SDG 5 does the same, but with a strong focus on women's welfare). Indeed, a rise in employment-related earnings (link to SDG 8), transfers and government benefits (in cash or kind) will provide additional income to spend on essentials for good health (in addition to education). Social protection systems referred to in Target 1.3 (refer Table 5) includes, inter alia, healthcare benefits (subsidised or free).

Climate change will bring in its wake a plethora of challenges. Abatement is among the goals obviously (SDG 13), but adaptation is key. Here is where, one must think about the economically-disadvantaged sections of society and those living in regions of the world which are vulnerable to floods, droughts, forest fires and rise in sea levels (islanders, especially). Adapting to sudden changes brought about by climate change phenomena will be much more difficult for them vis-à-vis the richer segments of the population who would have *saved for a rainy day*. The said natural disasters (and indeed, rising temperatures), tend to precipitate outbreaks of water-, air- and food-borne epidemics (Targets 3.3 and 3.9). In addition to physical health, psychological well-being is extremely important, especially for the indigent. Combating poverty and enabling the impoverished to feel that they are an integral and important part of society, cared for and considered as fellow-citizens along with the better-endowed, will contribute to the achievement of Targets 3.5 and 3.a. Substance abuse /addictions and psychological disorders are indeed closely linked.

More intuitively, improving health and well-being among the poor will enable them to work, earn, care for their children, and gradually emerge out of poverty. Enabling them to rise out of poverty, can improve health outcomes in general and in particular, enable poor parents to care better for the health and well-being of their progeny. However, there is a limit beyond which money does not guarantee good health and well-being – as is seen in rich urban households around the world. Depression, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes are often the fall-outs of the fast-paced lives the rich and affluent live in the postmodern world's cities (which now hold more than half of the world's population).

As mentioned earlier, SDG 5 aims to efface another inequality from the social fabric of the world. Unfortunately, even in the 21st century, male dominance and patriarchy have not just deprived womenfolk of their well-deserved rights and place of pride in society, but through this deprivation, has affected the general well-being of entire populations. It is a well-known and indisputable fact that mothers, daughters and wives spend a lot of their time (often in all these capacities, at the same time), providing care and support (Target 5.4; refer Table 6). These efforts, are not accounted for as productive work in a country's GDP. It is long overdue for this fact to be accepted and appreciated.

SDG 5 surely sets out 9 ambitious targets, and at first read, any reader will agree that even a little progress every year in each of these, will bring about perceptible change in overall human health and well-being. For children to live through the challenging first few years of their lives (Target 3.2), mothers ought to be healthy (Targets 3.4, 3.5, and 3.7), and supported by family, society and government. Women also need to be well-informed about family planning. Therefore, at least primary education, state-sponsored whenever possible, is extremely important for girls. This leads to the irrefutable conclusion that child marriage and teenage pregnancies must simply become

things of the past (Target 5.3). Perpetrators of domestic violence and rape must be punished severely, and the deterrents must be firmly in place in legal systems of all the countries of the world (Target 5.2). Such crimes affect the victimized woman's health and well-being and also has an adverse impact on her near and dear ones (not to mention those of the perpetrator as well). Man and woman are two pillars supporting the edifice of humankind. Weakening one of them (as is happening in many parts of the world), will have the most obvious ramifications.

Table 6. Targets of SDG 5, as defined by the United Nations (United Nations, 2016)

Target	Content
5.1	End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
5.2	Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
5.3	Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
5.4	Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
5.5	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
5.6	Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
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.b	Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
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

Table 7. Targets of SDG 6, as defined by the United Nations (United Nations, 2016)

Target	Content
6.1	By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all
6.2	By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations
6.3	By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally
6.4	By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity
6.5	By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate
6.6	By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes
6.a	By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies
6.b	Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management

Water's role in sustaining ecosystems, human societies and economies, is very well-known to all of us. Water is one of the primary necessities for sustaining life. Although over 75% of the earth's surface is covered with water, only 3% of the total H₂O available is freshwater found in lakes, rivers, springs, and in aquifers below the ground. This may still be enough for humankind's survival if all this water is either of good quality or of a quality suitable for adequate purification by advanced water treatment technologies. Efficient and responsible use of the available water is also vital (Targets 6.1 and 6.4; refer Table 7). In the absence of good wastewater treatment and sanitation facilities, if the source of drinking water is also the sink for treated or untreated wastewater, the risk for contracting water-borne diseases is exacerbated; making Targets 6.2, 6.3 and 6.b critical, going forward.

Climate change (SDG 13) however, will tend to intensify droughts in some parts of the world, and floods in others. The latter, as we discussed earlier, not only causes damage and destruction, but also results in the outbreak of water-borne diseases (linked to Target 3.3). Here, transboundary cooperation for water sharing, large-scale investments in desalination (to harness the 97% water which is found in our oceans), water harvesting, and wastewater recycling will be not just advisable but necessary (Target 6.a).

Target 6.6 has a link to general well-being. Thriving aquatic ecosystems with luxuriant plant and animal life will contribute to psychological well-being.

Trade-offs with SDG 12

It may, *prima facie*, seem counter-intuitive that there are trade-offs between SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 3 (Global Health and Well-being). But a deeper understanding of the targets and the impact of efforts to achieve them provides insights into these conflicts. More and more resources, needless to say, are needed in order to promote good health and well-being. However, one must bear in mind, that sustainable production and consumption is first an environmental goal (having a favourable impact on meeting SDG 13), and a socio-economic goal thereafter. Improved healthcare relies on reaching out to larger sections of the population over time, and thereby generating the capacity to provide different kinds of resources such as medicines, clean water, good food, and protective clothing. This may call for diversification into more types of products and thereby consume more resources and generate waste beyond the capacity of the existing waste collection, recycling and reuse systems (Target 12.5). Hence, assigning a greater priority to *Good Health and Well-being* will constrain the ability of national governments to attain SDG 12 targets. For example, increasing the capacities of hospitals in the world to accommodate more patients in keeping with the SDG 3 targets, will lead to the generation of increasing hospital wastes needing responsible handling. In the absence of adequate handling capacities, the environmental media may get stressed, thereby adversely impacting SDG 6 and SDG 3.

Table 8. Targets of SDG 12, as defined by the United Nations (United Nations, 2016)

Target	Content
12.1	Implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries
12.2	By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources
12.3	By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses
12.4	By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment
12.5	By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse
12.6	Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle
12.7	Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities
12.8	By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature
12.a	Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production
12.b	Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products
12.c	Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist, to reflect their environmental impacts, taking fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimizing the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities

Consumption of food after the *best-before* date is looked upon as being deleterious to health and this results in greater food waste (non-sustainable consumption; Target 12.3). The *7-billion-dollar question* then, is if one can sustainably ensure good health and well-being, while minimizing the adverse impacts on the environment. Seemingly, countries (especially developing ones) will end up *putting the cart before the horse* by, assigning a very high priority to SDG 12, at the expense of SDG 3. However, as long as all the production and consumption oriented towards satisfying SDG 3, does not end up defeating the very purpose (by causing water pollution and challenging Target 3.9), the trade-offs in the developing countries can very well be in favour of SDG 3.

The die is cast

It is imperative for the sake of genuine sustainable development to appreciate and incontrovertibly agree that judged against the SDGs, all countries are developing countries. Therefore, what is needed now for any actor in the world is to conceive a new and different, truly universal concept of international cooperation for sustainable development that addresses all types of entities, rich and poor alike. In the modern world with all its complexities, cooperation is essential if breakthroughs are to be made. One can be inspired by the work done by the 2019 Nobel Economics laureates – Abhijit Banerjee, Ester Duflo and Michael Kremer. They shunned the high-theory ap-

proach, which is the default favourite of economists, in favour of randomised trials, to understand the less-understood relationships among different aspects of (sustainable) development – healthcare, education, entrepreneurship and skills development.

Transformative change is needed to attain the SDGs and this, as proposed by Randers et al (2015), is feasible with accelerated renewable energy growth, accelerated productivity in sustainable food chains, new development models in poor countries, unprecedented inequality reduction, and investments in education for all, gender equality, health and family planning – all being prioritised equally and implemented simultaneously. Countries like Costa Rica, for instance, can show the way ahead even for the developed world – it has ended extreme poverty and posts high levels of nutrition, life expectancy, education, sanitation, and access to energy (exceeding SDG thresholds) with GDP per capita of only USD 11,000, less than one fifth of that of the United States. This is undeniable evidence that human development objectives can be achieved by distributing existing GDP more fairly, and by investing in social services (healthcare, education, etc.) (Hickel, 2019).

Collaboration and cooperation are paramount. If one takes India for instance, several government ministries relevant to SDG 3 are in the fray, responsible for the strategies and actions towards the attainment of different targets. One finds the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Tribal Affairs (link to SDG 10), Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (link to SDG 6), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (link to SDG 12), Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (link to SDG 7), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (links to SDGs 10 and 16), Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (link to SDG 9), Ministry of Commerce (links to SDGs 8 and 9), Ministry of Science and Technology (SDG 9), and the Ministry of Shipping (SDG 9) (NITI Aayog, Government of India, 2018). Thus, achieving the targets set for SDG 3 alone entails working collaboratively.

It is quite like everything being One before the Big Bang, and over the aeons, assuming multifarious forms, each tracing its origin to the One. Respect for these interlinkages is indispensable. There is no point arguing against them. A cynical perspective may paint the scenario as a *zero-sum game*. When everyone wants all of everything, all the time, then it can at best be a zero-sum game, and more often than not, a net-negative-sum affair. If sustainable development approaches employ total awareness and strive to achieve the optimal balance, one can even make things net-positive.

And yes, as the old saying goes, health indeed is wealth!

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