

Integrated Policy, Sustainable Development Goals, and New Change and Governance Models:

Case Study of the UN's Joint SDG Fund

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Abstract

Conceptually and methodologically, the case study is based on author's recent work on systemic policy design (Rava, 2017; Rava; forthcoming) that addresses comprehensive concepts of policy and of design in the context of new models of change and governance; authentic use of policy and design judgment; and the multiplier, systemic social impact.

The case study will address the systemic (in the UN lingo: "integrated") approach to policy design for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as applied by the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda (the Joint SDG Fund). It will demonstrate the innovative use of policy design for SDG acceleration that is demand-driven, centred on marginalized and vulnerable groups (the "Leaving No One Behind" principle), and benefiting from new multi-stakeholder models of change and governance (e.g. acceleration labs and country-support platforms).

Accelerating progress towards the SDGs means getting the right economic, social and environmental policies in place and taking them to scale in an accelerated manner. It requires diverse stakeholders to come together to co-design and co-implement transformative initiatives for integrated policies informed by the human rights based approach. Inspired by the comprehensive reform of the United Nations, the Joint SDG Fund works across all 17 SDGs to innovate current development practices through integrated policy and catalytic finance.

While anchored in an emerging theoretical framework, the study will be of practical nature with the focus on the process of design, development and launch of joint programmes in 30 countries, in which the Joint SDG Fund invests 60 million USD and mobilizes the networks consisting of 500+ stakeholder groups.

The Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda

The Joint SDG Fund supports countries in accelerating the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to deliver on the commitment of the 2030 Agenda to Leave No One Behind. The transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda hinges on all segments of society urgently coming together to co-design and co-deliver systemic change through integrated policy and catalytic financing. The Joint SDG Fund incentivizes countries to draw on expertise and innovation from across the United Nations Development System and a broad range of partners to strategically invest in SDG acceleration that is tailored to different country contexts.

Linked directly to the reform of the United Nations, the Joint SDG Fund leverages the comparative advantages of the United Nations. It supports countries with SDG implementation—often in the context of uncertain and/or volatile development settings. The Joint SDG Fund provides a new generation of Resident Coordinators (RCs) and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) with a timely and critical instrument to incentivize the adoption of new solutions for longer-term sustainability, intrinsically linked to gender equality, and the principle of Leaving No One Behind¹. Central to the Fund is the commitment to forge paths and partnerships that unlock SDG resources at scale; financing that is far greater in order of magnitude and comes from multiple sources.

The 2030 Agenda is guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law. It is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome. It is informed by other instruments such as the Declaration on the Right to Development.

The challenges and commitments contained in these [frameworks]... are interrelated and call for integrated solutions. To address them effectively, a new approach is needed. Sustainable development recognizes that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, combatting inequality within and among countries, preserving the planet, creating sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion are linked to each other and are interdependent.

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The finely-tuned application processes and rigorous technical assessments of the Joint SDG Fund will ensure that the most transformative ideas and initiatives are realized, helping deliver on the 2030 Agenda. The Joint SDG Fund will provide flexible, reliable, and regular support to programmes built on integrated approaches, scalability, innovation and partnerships.

To support SDG acceleration, the Joint SDG Fund operates in three interwoven domains of change:

- Integrated policy
- Strategic financing
- Catalytic investments

The main instrument used are joint programmes that demonstrate a new generation of collaboration for results, embedded in the national SDG priorities and UN Coordination Framework, and enabling national ownership, leadership and capacities.

The Joint SDG Fund aims to stimulate integrated, transformative policy shifts, and support the UN in creating SDG financing strategies and making strategic investments so that countries accelerate progress on the SDGs.

Integrated Policy for the Interdependent SDGs

Despite good initial efforts by countries to accomplish the SDGs by identifying priorities in domestic contexts at national and sub-national levels, the reality of the 2030 goalpost requires a rapid acceleration of efforts and results. The SDGs are integrated and indivisible, which means that acceleration should be understood from a systems perspective: identifying policy levers for systemic change that address bottlenecks and produce a virtuous cycle across issues and/or sectors. Such changes can lead to major improvements in policy outcomes, contributing to accelerated progress across multiple SDGs.

¹ As represented in “Leaving No One Behind: A UNSDG Operational Guide for UNCTs”.

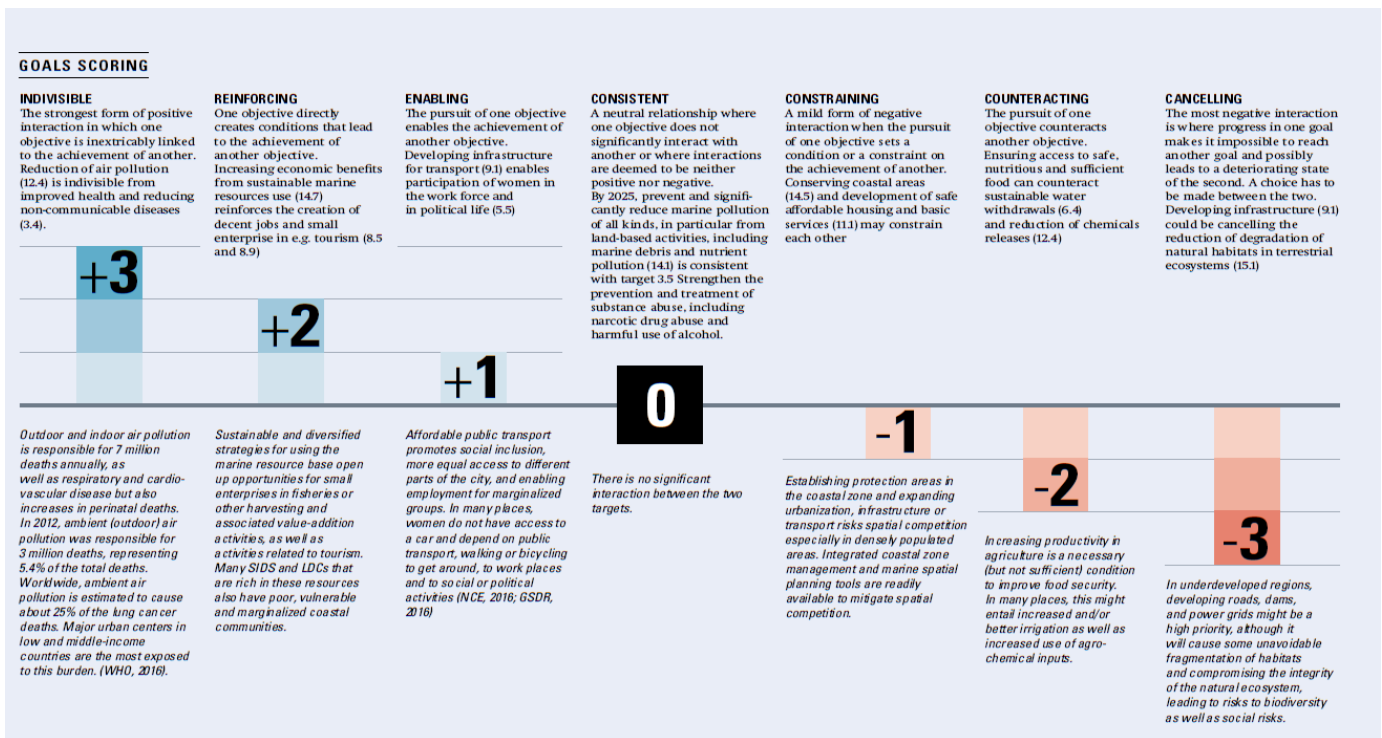


Figure 1. Scoring SDG Policy Proposals.

Integration as articulated in the 2030 Agenda makes the case for tackling complex development problems together in order to maximize synergies and manage trade-offs while leveraging and allocating resources more efficiently to achieve sustainable solutions. Integration can be understood to include several aspects more broadly:

The principles of integration, indivisibility and balance across the economic, social, environmental dimensions of sustainable development, addressing the inter-linkages among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals;²

- The underlying mandate to Leave No One Behind and to endeavor to reach the furthest behind first;
- The connection of this development agenda to other related global agendas (including human rights, peace and security, climate, financing, prevention, risk and resilience, and the humanitarian-development nexus);
- The recognition that this requires of a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach;
- The trajectories of mutually reinforcing actions over time and across generations.

The policy accelerators are distinct and specific to each country context and need to be identified through an understanding of the complex system of SDGs particular to that setting. Informed by a rights-based approach, it will need to identify and engage major stakeholder groups that have an impact on development outcomes, moving beyond traditional development actors as appropriate.

² Weitz, N., Carlsen, H., Nilsson, M. *et al.* Towards systemic and contextual priority setting for implementing the 2030 Agenda. *Sustain Sci* **13**, 531–548 (2018).

Applying such systems thinking to SDG implementation requires tangible changes in how policy is designed, financed and implemented, how sectors collaborate with each other, and how UN entities collaborate with each other and other stakeholders. Such policy support can address a range of the most pressing problems at national, sub-national and local levels, drawing on an understanding of the interlinkages across sectors. It will need to develop integrated data ecosystems and capacities, and leverage new technologies and partnership opportunities that facilitate leapfrogging and transformation.

Leaving No One Behind and the Systemic Impact of Social Protection

The specific focus of the first Call for Concept Notes was on Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) and, specifically, social protection. Social protection³ is the set of policies designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle. Social protection systems are implemented through a mix of contributory schemes (social insurance) and tax-financed social assistance. Social protection, or social security, is a human right. However, 55% of the world's population are not protected at all⁴, and many more are only inadequately protected. Social protection systems, including floors, are a vital element of integrated policy responses to leave no one behind.

Social protection plays a key role in accelerating progress towards the SDGs: by increasing people's income, it has positive synergies on social, economic and environmental policies. It is reflected in SDG 1.3 that specifically calls for implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems, including floors. It also contributes to the other SDG goals through targets 3.8, 5.4, 8.5 and 10.4 and is a policy accelerator for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, in all its dimensions – people, prosperity, planet, as well as peace and partnerships.

Social protection is interrelated with health, food security, education, formalization and employment policies, among other fields. It is also firmly linked to economic development policies through its positive impact on local economies, household productivity, and labour market participation. By acknowledging the role of private households and particularly women in providing care, social protection policies should also be integrated with gender equality and women empowerment strategies. Social protection can help minimize people's vulnerability to shocks that affect their future, so it is linked with disaster risk management and climate change adaptation. The sustainability of social protection systems requires ensuring the coherence between social protection policies and the national financial, fiscal, and economic contexts. Social protection benefits should be delivered close to where people live and work – the principle of subsidiarity - which relates to decentralization reforms.

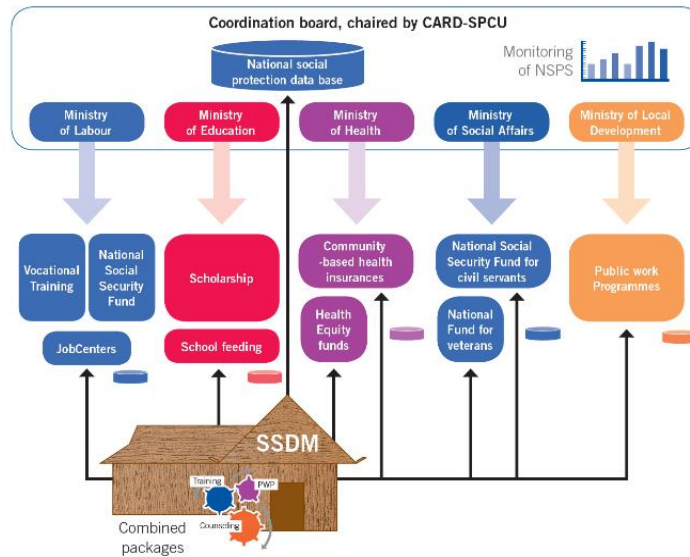
Coordination between social protection and related fields is a necessity not only to ensure the adequacy and consistency of the system, but also to guarantee its sustainability, given fiscal forecasts and budgetary allocations, and its efficiency.

This includes the 3 dimensions of coordination⁵: horizontal at the policy level, vertical between the policy level and the operational level, and horizontal at the operational level.

³ For more information: <http://www.socialprotection-humanrights.org>

⁴ [World Social Protection Report 2017-19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

⁵ [UNDG social protection coordination toolkit](#)



Example of Social Service Delivery Mechanism - SSDM (Cambodia)

Figure 2. Social Service Delivery.

People: preventing poverty, reducing inequality and fostering social inclusion

Social protection systems are an important component of public policies to prevent poverty by protecting people from the financial consequences of life cycle events such as unemployment, ill health or maternity, facilitating access to nutrition, health, education, care and other basic services, and fostering social inclusion. They reduce inequality, promote gender equality and women’s empowerment and foster social justice and social peace. They can play a decisive role in rebuilding the social contract during the transition from conflict to peace.

Prosperity: strengthening human capabilities and fostering inclusive growth

Social protection systems promote decent employment and inclusive growth and are an integral part of decent work. They contribute to stabilizing and enhancing domestic demand for goods and services. They also contribute to strengthening human capabilities, enhancing employability and the productivity of workers, facilitating job search, enhancing skills and labour market participation, and encouraging investment and entrepreneurship. Social protection systems play an important role in building resilience, facilitating necessary structural transformations, and injecting money into rural economies.

Planet: facilitating a just transition to a greener economy

Social protection systems can help to ensure more sustainable consumption and production patterns by allowing people to plan ahead and avoid environmentally harmful behaviour. They provide income support to households affected by climate-related hardship, and offset the negative social impact of “green policies” that introduce structural transformation by phasing out certain industries. They contribute to environmental conservation by offering offsetting income security measures to reduce exploitation of marine and land resources.

Peace: promoting complementarity between development, humanitarian and peace

Social protection systems, contribute to fostering social cohesion, building resilience, strengthening institutional capacities and (re-)building trust in public institutions. This is a key element in promoting

social justice and political stability. In fragile contexts, social protection systems, can be used to facilitate the transition from humanitarian assistance to development.

Partnerships: Delivering as One UN on social protection floors

Since 2009, the UN mobilizes the collective support of UN agencies and development partners through country level “One UN” social protection floor teams in order to support countries in designing and implementing social protection systems and floors under UNDAFs and SDG implementation plans.

From Ideas to Implementation

On 28 March 2019, the Deputy General Secretary launched the first Call for Concept Notes (i.e. initial proposals for joint programmes) of the Joint SDG Fund. She invited 130 UN Resident Coordinators to apply an innovative methodology on integrated approach to SDG acceleration.

A total of 114 countries applied, each proposal being accompanied by an endorsement letter from the government (e.g. Prime minister/President or a Minister). Out of 114, the best 30 proposals will be selected based on robust set of 11 technical criteria (each scored and weighted) and 60 million USD will be allocated for their implementation by end of June 2019.

The proposals demonstrate a transformative approach: How the development results that normally require 5-10+ years can be achieved in 2-3 years by designing, testing, and implementing innovative policies at scale, and catalyzing diverse partnerships, rapid capacity development, and financial resources.

The initial proposals will be turned into full joint programmes that will scale innovative approaches to integrated policy solutions, and leverage financing, paying special attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized populations, including children, women, adolescents, people, living with disabilities and older people. The intention is to facilitated a large scale action that based on a new generation of transformative, nationally-led, integrated initiatives that leverage the best expertise and resources to address complex problems to accelerate the progress on SDGs.



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