Sustainable Development Goals *Policy Brief*

Closing data gaps is essential to achieving the environmental dimension of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development

UN environment

About

The **Sustainable Development Goals Policy Briefs** highlight a hotspot of environmental change. The evidence provided builds on the scientific data and information hosted on Environment Live and is complemented by stories from the regions.

A significant lack of data has corresponded to a lack of investment toward achieving the environmental dimension of the SDGs. Currently, **68%** of the environment-related SDGs do not have sufficient data at the global level to assess progress. If current trends continue, the world is on track to meet only **17%** of the environment-related SDGs.

UNEP has identified 93 environment related SDG Indicators. Of these 93, UNEP is the custodian agency for 26 SDG Indicators.

Of the 93 environment-related SDGs indicators, 38% are Tier I (A methodology exists and data is available for more than half of countries), 37% Tier II (A methodology exists, but data are available for less than half of countries) and 25% Tier III (No methodology exists).

The 93 SDG Indicators related to the environment are:

● Positive ● Little change ● Negative ● Some data is available ● No data

1.4.2	1.5.1	1.5.2	1.5.3	1.5.4	2.4.1	2.5.1	2.5.2	3.9.1
3.9.2	3.9.3	4.7.1	5.a.1	6.1.1	6.3.1	6.3.2	6.4.1	6.4.2
6.5.1	6.5.2	6.6.1	6.a.1	6.b.1	7.1.2	7.2.1	7.3.1	7.a.1
7.b.1	8.4.1	8.4.2	8.9.2	9.4.1	11.2.1	11.3.1	11.3.2	11.4.1
11.5.1	11.5.2	11.6.1	11.6.2	11.7.1	11.b.1	11.b.2	11.c.1	12.1.1
12.2.1	12.2.2	12.3.1	12.4.1	12.4.2	12.5.1	12.6.1	12.7.1	12.8.1
12.a.1	12.b.1	12.c.1	13.1.1	13.1.2	13.1.3	13.2.1	13.3.1	13.3.2
13.a.1	13.b.1	14.1.1	14.2.1	14.3.1	14.4.1	14.5.1	14.6.1	14.7.1
14.a.1	14.c.1	15.1.1	15.1.2	15.2.1	15.3.1	15.4.1	15.4.2	15.5.1
15.6.1	15.7.1	15.8.1	15.9.1	15.a.1	15.b.1	15.c.1	16.8.1	17.6.1
17.7.1	17.9.1	17.14.1						

More information on data availability is available in the Measuring Progress: Towards Achieving the Environmental Dimension of the SDGs

Harnessing the ongoing data and knowledge revolution and ensuring the authenticity and validity of those data to support sustainable development, combined with international cooperation, could transform capacities to address challenges and accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

environment live — Science and Data for People

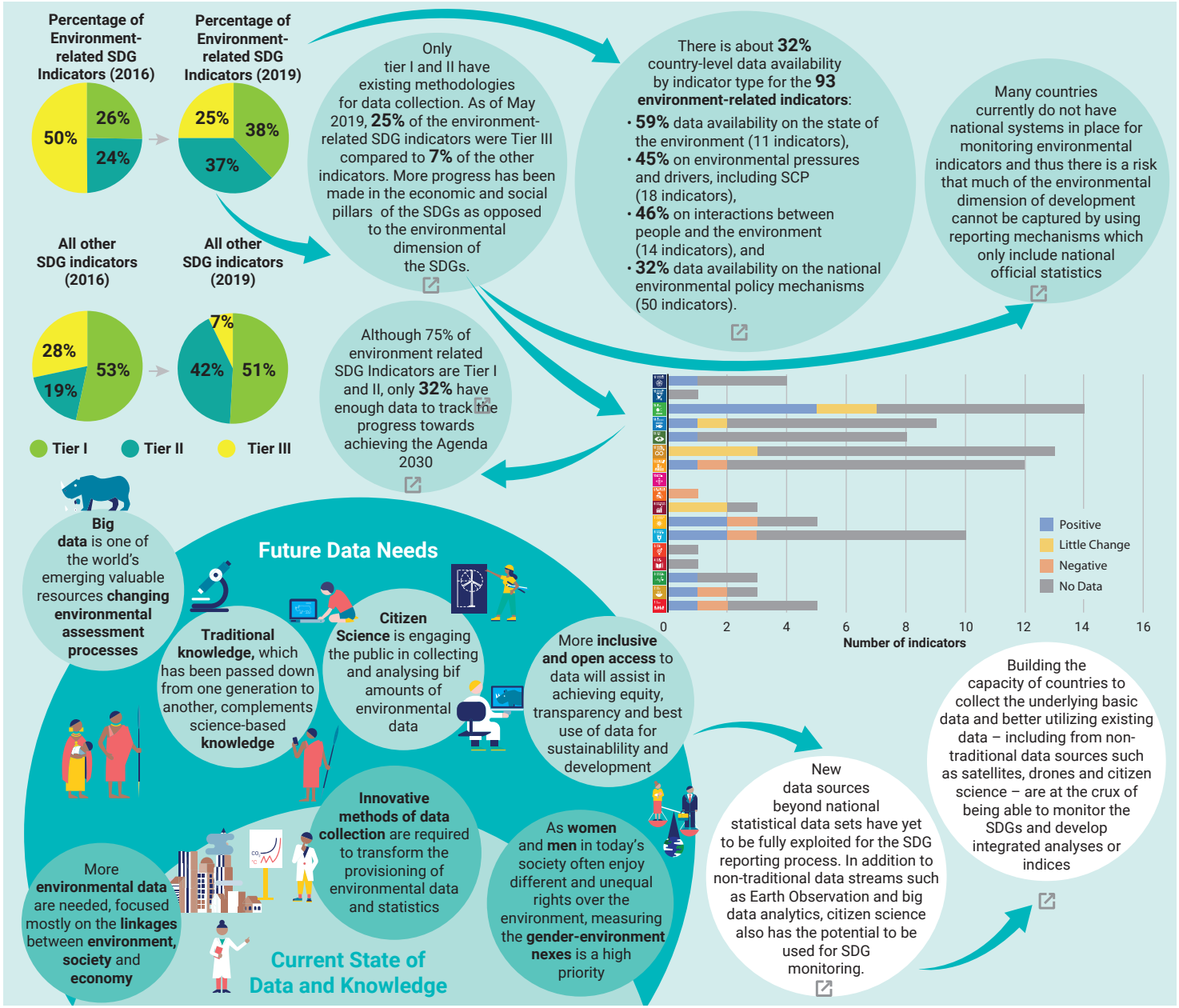
16 Sustainable Development Goals are related to the environment and directly contribute to monitoring the environmental dimension of the SDGs:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

"Data is the lifeblood of planning. Only with accurate, timely, representative, inclusive and disaggregated data can we comprehensively assess the challenges we face, measure progress we make and identify the most appropriate solutions."
Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

"We will promote the use of data analysis models to develop environment foresights, support evidence-based decision making and improve national and local preparedness and responses to mitigate environmental degradation and risks from disasters and conflicts in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"
Ministerial Declaration of the 2019 United Nations Environment Assembly

Facts and figures



Partnerships and Action

Towards solutions . . .

Over 100 Stakeholders involved in **The UN Science-Policy Business Forum** working group on "Data, Analytics and AI"

SCIENCE POLICY BUSINESS FORUM

WORLD ENVIRONMENT SITUATION ROOM

World Environment Situation Room is working to build up SDGs data and uses innovative approaches for the availability and access of data and information.

Over 7 Digital technologies from a variety of public and private sector actors currently building and testing the **Digital Ecosystem For the Planet**, which integrates data, infrastructure, algorithms and insights to achieve different sustainability outcomes

44 Members to **the UN Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics**.

BigData UN Global Working Group

700+ Members of the One Planet network systematically collect and share data on the progress towards sustainable consumption and production, SDG 12, identifying best practices and solutions that can be replicated to achieve scale.

250 Partners to the **Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data** from the Government, Civil Society, Academia and Private Sector.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DATA

. . . for achieving the SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Big Data for Development - Harnessing Big Data For Real-Time Awareness
- Mobilizing the Data Revolution for sustainable Development
- Big Data for Development: Opportunities & Challenges
- A Guide to Data Innovation for Development - From idea to proof-of-concept

Initiatives on the ground

Using Green Economy to achieve the 2030 Agenda in Europe

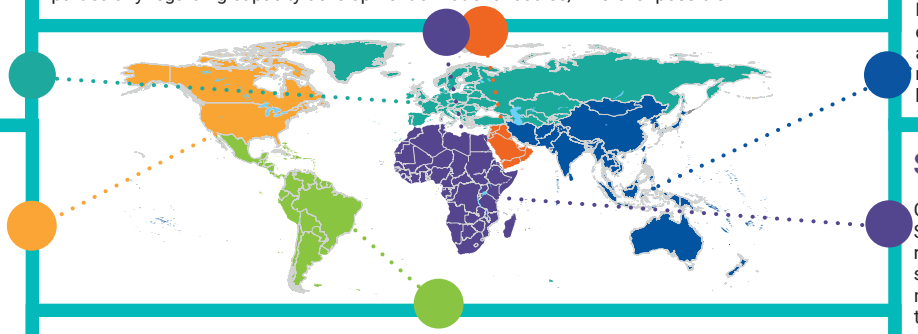
While challenges remain in tracking the environmental dimension of the SDGs, the pan-European region has many strengths and is driving forward the transition to a low carbon, green, and resource efficient/circular economy, evidenced by the current trends in decoupling economic output from environmental impacts. There is a strong policy framework being implemented in the EU and, notably, at the Eighth Environment for Europe Conference in Batumi in 2016, Ministers endorsed the Pan-European Green Economy Strategic Framework and launched the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy. In addition, UNECE, OECD, UN Environment, and UNIDO implemented the EU-funded programme "Greening Economies in the Eastern Neighbourhood" (EaP GREEN) in 2013-2017 to assist six countries of the Caucasus and Eastern Europe in their transition to green economies. The Batumi Action for Cleaner Air is a regional initiative supporting countries' efforts in improving air quality and protecting public health and ecosystems, promoted under the UNECE Air Convention.

North America commitment to achieving the SDGs

Canada and the U.S. were supporters of the adoption of the SDGs in 2015 and recognised the need to invest in sustainability. Although there has been progress towards achieving the environmental dimension of development, the withdrawal of the U.S. from the Paris Agreement and the rollbacks of many environmental regulations and policies by the current U.S. administration have caused uncertainty about the country's progress towards environmental SDGs. In the case of Canada, British Columbia Council for International Cooperation estimates that Canada is currently not on track to implement the 2030 Agenda and noted some particular pitfalls in the environmental dimension of development. Although, Canada and the U.S. have made progress on goals related to water (SDG 6), oceans (SDG 14) and life on land (SDG 15), there remain challenges in terms of achieving these goals. North America is facing additional challenges in terms of SCP (SDG 12), particularly with respect to addressing the high per capita material footprint; tackling inequality in terms of access and use of natural resources and addressing climate change (SDG 13). Achieving the SDGs in the North American context will require deliberate and collaborative effort (in the U.S. and Canada) to match the shared goals with solutions that work at scale.

Monitoring SDGs Progress in West Asia and North Africa

There has been significant evidence in West Asia and North Africa of regional support for the attainment of SDGs and the gathering of data in order to monitor their progress. Regional organizations have made significant progress in developing frameworks and tools that support countries and enhance their capacities to achieve the environmental dimension of the SDGs. A regional reporting platform called The Arab Working Group on Sustainable Development Indicators has been established. It is chaired by the League of Arab States and is therefore representative of all states in the West Asia and North Africa region. Through this initiative, a core set of 83 indicators aimed at monitoring the progress of the agreed regional strategic framework for sustainable development were agreed upon and adopted. However, many members of the initiative encountered difficulty in reporting on the agreed indicators. As a result, the number of indicators was reduced to 44. However a differentiation in capabilities between nations limits gathering statistical data. Lack of data which is exuberated by unavailability of qualified researchers and environmental experts to collect, collate, and analyze data and lack of processes for sharing data at the national level. The forward-looking focus for the West Asia and North Africa region should be to provide support, particularly regarding capacity development of national bodies, wherever possible.



Latin America and the Caribbean's Escazú Agreement

The Latin America and the Caribbean region is advancing in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by establishing interinstitutional coordination mechanisms and aligning the National Development Plans with the SDGs. During the last decades, committed and innovative social actors from civil society, communities, governments, and the private sector have successfully put sustainable development initiatives into practice at different scales. These initiatives are related to food insecurity, resilience to climate change, and access to water. However, data indicate that although the rate of conversion of natural systems has begun to slow, the overall rate of loss of ecosystems remains high. Signed by 16 Latin America and Caribbean nations, the Escazú Agreement could be a crucial tool for climate and environmental protection in the years to come. There is a need to continue to support efforts towards its entering into force and implementation at the national level, including the development and availability of environmental information (e.g. integrated Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers that include reporting on energy and water consumption and pollutant releases from production and consumption of products), ensuring mechanisms for public participation in decision making, and strengthening the access to environmental justice.

Statistical availability and capacity in the Asia-Pacific Region

The largest data gaps in the Asia-Pacific region in terms of statistical availability and capacity exist in SDG 11 (Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Oceans), and SDG 17 (Partnerships and Means of Implementation) where majority of data are still not available or not sufficient to analyze changes over time. The two areas that require most urgent and significant attention in the Asia-Pacific region are disaster risk reduction and resource efficiency. Indicators in these two areas are related to multiple SDGs and have showed setback during the past 15 years. Based on this strong commitment and actions by the Asia-Pacific countries, more targeted support is needed for nations and indicators identified as being farthest behind, including the need to continue to support efforts towards building integrated Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers that include reporting on energy and water consumption and pollutant releases from production and consumption of products as a tool to efficiently address gaps in monitoring as well as facilitated, informed decision-making processes by the government and other stakeholders.

SDGs Implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa

Countries are at different stages of SDGs implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa. In particular environmental data relating to key natural resources sectors like agriculture and fisheries is lacking that demonstrates the links between the three dimensions of sustainable development is lacking. This makes it more challenging to persuade such sectors to take sufficient action to improve sustainability. Support is vital to assess efforts underway and to speed up progress. There is a need for additional support for capacity development through national bodies in charge of statistics as this is the most relevant way of identifying, assessing, measuring, and monitoring progress as well as making decisions to advance the SDGs. The UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Action for the SDGs (PEA) has been working with UNEP-WCMC and the universities of Cambridge and Southampton to support countries, particularly statistics agencies, to integrate environment and natural resources into multi-dimensional poverty measurement. This work will help measure how ENR management is linked to poverty and further how implementation of environment focused SDGs could contribute to achievement of SDG 1 and the umbrella Agenda 2030 objective of eradicating poverty. The work has demonstrated significant data gaps at the country level relevant to measuring progress in implementation of SDGs. On a more positive note, the work has developed practical guidelines on how household survey based poverty data can be combined with ENR data from other sources (e.g. GIS) to measure and track ENR linked multi-dimensional poverty.