

Leveraging interlinkages for effective implementation of SDGs

Charles Arden-Clarke, Head of Secretariat, Ten Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP), HLPF interlinkages session, 14th July 2017

SDG 12 focuses on “ensuring sustainable consumption production patterns”. This objective is transversal to the SDGs, with targets this goal and twelve others clearly depending on a shift to more sustainable consumption and production patterns. At least 49 of the 169 targets in the 17 SDGs are dependent on this shift, with implications for key economic sectors as well as systemic implications for policy making, investments and other decisions taken by all stakeholders engaged in consumption and production.

A brief examination of a range of these individual targets illustrates these interlinkages and leverage points.

Target 8.4 in the goal on “sustainable economic growth” is focused on improving resource efficiency in consumption and production and decoupling economic growth from environmental. The positioning of this target in this goal has broad implications for economic policy making, for overall development objectives and within key economic sectors.

This target clearly links to target 1.5 in the goal on ending poverty, which focuses on building resilience of the poor to economic, social and environmental shocks, including extreme climate-related events. The greater the efficiency of resource use, the less the depletion of natural stocks, and the more economic and welfare gain can be generated from a given input and use of resources. Greater resource efficiency thus increases resilience for all, and often critically for the poor who generally have lower access to resources.

Both these targets are in turn served by actions and policies to achieve target 12.2 on the “sustainable management and efficient use of resources”. This is a more technical and “granular” target with a strong focus on better physical management of individual resources (both renewable and non-renewable) which underpin most economic activity and support human life and welfare. The conjunction, interaction and co-dependence of these three targets across these three goals is central to achieving sustainable development. The interlinkages have implications for policies and actions extending from the physical management of individual resources to the design and implementation of macroeconomic policies, which governments and other stakeholders will need to understand and act upon.

Set against the backdrop of these three targets, we find other critical SCP targets in sectoral goals. Target 2.4 in the goal on ending hunger and achieving food security is on “ensuring sustainable food production systems”. Not only does this target echo goal 12 on SCP, but it also links back to target 1.5 on building resilience of the poor, by contributing to more resilient and productive agricultural practices. With its focus on maintaining ecosystems and improving land and soil quality, target 2.4 also feeds into targets 15.1 on sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and their services, and 15.3 on restoring degraded land and soil.

Target 6.4 on increasing water-use efficiency and target 7.3 on doubling the global rate of improvement of energy efficiency are clearly relevant for greater resilience, productivity and sustainability in most economic sectors. These targets underline how a focus on more sustainable use of key resources can

provide additional entry and leverage points for establishing more sustainable and resilient local, national and global economies.

The range of SCP targets, distributed transversally across the SDGs, offers opportunities for integrated and synergistic responses to many of the inter-linked challenges of sustainable development. However, designing policies that leverage action towards more than one target will require more coherence, coordination and integration across government departments than we have seen to date. It will also require the knowledge and engagement of other key stakeholders in civil society and business.

Sustainable consumption and production is an essential requirement for sustainable development, as recognized in Jo'burg and Rio - but it will not be achieved by policy-making or business as usual. We must collectively define these and other inter-linkages, and then the policies, actions and investments which put them to most effective use. The 10YFP is here to help with this task, in the context of its six programmes with their 520 partners and beyond, but broader action by many actors will be required to ensure SCP patterns.

Thank you.