

Building Back Better and Achieving the SDGs
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The story of humankind is a history replete with challenge but also resilience. Today's crisis offers an opportunity to refashion a world that is fairer, greener and more resilient by 2030.

How to achieve that?

All government spending is not equal – some will reshape the world in which we live. Thus, all spending should be strategically undertaken. Future returns also makes the debt incurred more sustainable as the debt-to-GDP ratio depends not only on the debt but crucially on GDP growth.

There are three areas of investment that could generate the returns that will help achieve the SDGs.

First, invest in human capital. Governments must not think that build back better is solely physical capital. 'Digital' human capital will generate great returns. The economy of tomorrow will be increasingly digital. Achieving SDG 4 on quality education requires investment in innovators and the digital skills of people so they can adapt to this age of disruption.

Second, a greener world also requires investment but again not just physical. Governments should invest in the green transition to net zero – including in digital and human capital - which will generate returns for years to come.

The third is in partners. No country can achieve the SDGs through top-down dictates. That is not how development happens. Not just private sector funding, but participation by local communities will be crucial in achieving a fairer, greener and more resilient world.

It took over half a century from the collapse of the old way of organising the economy during the late 19th century to the creation of a new one centred on the welfare state in the post-war period. The result was the golden age of growth. So, rebuilding the economic approach towards a fairer and greener as well as more resilient world will take time. And the time to start is now.