

Policy Brief: Sustainable Use at the heart of the 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

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Date: September 2020

KEY MESSAGES

- ‘Sustainable use’ focuses on goods and services from nature that support people (ie. goal b), thus on direct transactions and societal values (ie. benefits and sharing, goal c).
- To enable a Sustainable Use approach that is truly holistic, need to make the SDGs tangible to each set of actors in a particular land-or seascape.
- Given the extreme social and development needs of the African continent only a ‘sustainable use’ approach can assure the people-centred and nature-positive approach that is needed to achieve the GBF (CBD’s vision 2050), SDGs and other societal goals.
- The Covid-19 pandemic, undermining positive outcomes across multiples SDGs, is a manifestation of the need to transform human use of nature from the current destructive, exploitative mode to a balanced sustainable use mode.

Sustainable Use at the heart of the 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

Towards people-centred- and nature-positive development for the African continent

The challenge for the Global Biodiversity Framework

The challenge for biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and benefits going to the people that really need them is that the combination of issues, actors and potential actions are so many, while decline in natural assets and peoples' welfare is accelerating¹. African countries have no 'safety net' in terms of unused or minimally used territory, ocean area, distant sources for resources or less developed trading partners. Apparently 'unused wilderness' is critical for ecological and climatic balance at regional and global scales, balancing human uses in densely populated and farmed spaces. The concept of "contributions from nature to people"¹ (or NCPs) makes it clear that there are many ways in which nature sustains people – from climate and water regulation, through materials provisioning for direct use (e.g. food), to cultural and psychological benefits. Given the extent of transformed and populated areas on the planet a mosaic of natural to 'managed'¹ but fully functioning land- and sea-scapes are needed to sustain local populations, and a continental population exceeding 1 billion in 2020, and predicted to grow to 2.5 billion by 2050.

A mechanism is needed for all actors to align their actions, so they work in synergy – with minimal tradeoffs, and such that the natural, economic and social capital of each is not harmed by the actions of others.

The Sustainable Development Goals

Fortunately a universally accepted 'theory of change' that can facilitate alignment across all actors to achieve sustainability is already at hand, but it needs to be applied in new waysⁱ. Each actor needs to accept that she/he may not be able to consume, extract or use quite as much as ALL they want to of their primary resource. But the benefits are a) that others' actions will be limited to not damage their basic assets, and b) collective actions in other domains will assure that a much wider set of benefits, essential for a good quality of life but mostly neither quantified nor under financial transactions historically, will be highly costly to replace if degraded, will be secured.

The Sustainable Development Goals provide this Theory of Changeⁱⁱ as they recognize the value of not just economic assets, and not just environmental assets, but also social assets. Adopting the SDGs as a primary framework means that each actor, while optimizing their primary interests, which are often 'at home' in one or two goals (e.g. tourism, business or commerce in goal 8, or farming in goals 8 and 15, or fishing in goals 8 and 14), commits to nurturing and even improving their primary asset while using it (e.g. land or ocean health) as well as not harming assets important to other actors in other goals (e.g. public health in goal 3, food security in goal 2, rights and equity in goals 5 and 10, etc.).

The value of this approach is that it focuses on the direct dependence of people on goods and services from nature. Using figure 1 as the basis for a narrative, **Sustainable Use** means that:

- a) the ‘**direct benefits**’ that are the subject of transactions in contemporary economic approaches need to be identified, measured and regulated so that
- b) their supply from **natural capital assets** (i.e. the environment) is regulated to ensure those capital assets are not degraded and that nature’s regenerative capacities are maintained and even nurtured; and
- c) the distribution of ‘**indirect benefits**’ from their use is done equitably, ensuring that minimum needs are met across society, and that there is just allocation for a good quality of life.

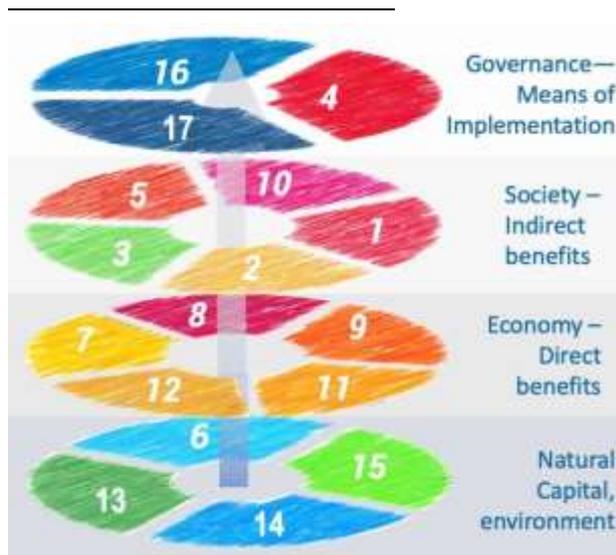


Fig. 1. The Sustainable Development goals group into four pillars – nature, economy, society and governance⁴. See also Annex 1

Importantly, the relevant scale of each interaction needs to be addressed, and may range from local to global scales, addressing planetary health and the challenges of the 21st century and the Anthropocene.

The essence of this approach is to contextualize the SDGs to each set of actors in a particular land- or seascape, and then add these up to match the scope of local or national governments. Figure 2 illustrates this SDG model focused on a coral reef fishing household led by Mariam and Hamisi. It traces their SDG interactions through the reef to the full set of stakeholders and the mix of direct and indirect benefits resulting from the reef system and the system of governance. The same process could be undertaken from the perspective of any of the other stakeholders – whether a tourism operator, a hotel, a local business, NGOs, investors, or even local or national government. By using the SDG framing, it should be possible to align all these narratives in the local area because they can all have a common goal – sustainability, or Sustainable Use of the coral reef and natural assets that sustain the area. Tracking each direct and indirect benefit enables a system-wide approach to assuring sustainability.

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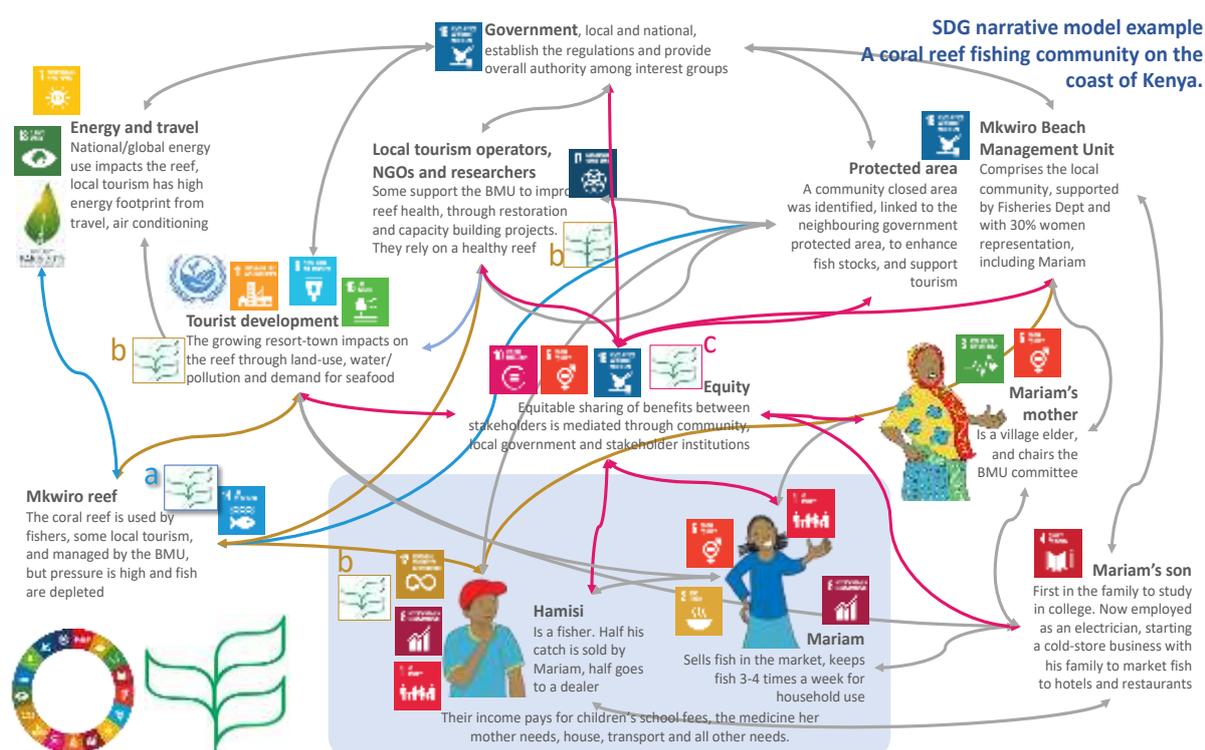


Fig. 2. A coral reef ‘SDG narrative’ built up from the primary dependence of Mariam and Hamisi on their local coral reef, and the varied interactions with tourism, other businesses, ecosystem protection, climate and energy systems, governance and equitable sharing of benefits among all stakeholders. SDG and CBD goal relevance is shown by symbols, as well as other relevant ones (e.g. Paris Agreement). Arrow colours indicate: blue- primary focus of CBD goal a (conservation of biodiversity); brown- primary focus of CBD goal b (Nature’s Contributions to People); red- primary focus of CBD goal c (equitable sharing of benefits from nature).

The essential role of Sustainable Use to achieve 2030 and 2050 goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity

For consultations on the CBD Global Biodiversity Framework, this model helps focus on the complementary challenges that:

- goal (a) too narrowly addresses just one part of this nature-economy-society mosaic, only the coral reef in fig. 2;
- goal (c) cuts across all the societal and economic relationships in fig. 2, which are highly complex and involve myriad dependencies in addition to those directly related to nature.

- by contrast, goal (b) very tangibly addresses the interests and dependencies of stakeholders on natural assets, and is at the juncture between nature on the one hand (goal a) and social interests (goal c).

A principle conclusion for the Africa CSO Biodiversity Alliance, given the extreme social and development needs of the continent, and the historical inadequacy of goal (a) in addressing nature loss and peoples’ needs, that a focus on goal (b), i.e. ‘sustainable use’ is needed to assure the dual people-centred and nature-positive approach necessary to achieve the GBF (CBD’s vision 2050), the SDGs and other societal goals.

Africa’s experience of the Covid-19 pandemic will likely provide a stark example of how not only a major threat (the virus), but also responses to it (e.g. calls for blanket bans on wildlife trade)ⁱ, may profoundly worsen peoples’ livelihoods, welfare and prosperity across multiple domains of life covered by the SDGs. Bringing into force a profound transformation of economic systems to promote Sustainable Use has never been more urgent than now.

Annex 1 – coral reef SDG model

The general SDG narrative model behind fig. 2 is presented here in words for a coral reef area, with SDG numbers cited between curly brackets {}:

- **Coral reefs {G14} provide key services and benefits to people, globally supporting 10s of millions of jobs in multiple economic sectors {G8} in coastal and distant states, protect and harbor communities and cities {G11} across tropical coastlines, sustain use of living and non- living resources {G12}, provide transport infrastructure and valuable natural products {G9}, and in future may provide energy solutions {G7}.**
- **Through these multiple benefits, coral reefs contribute to reducing hunger {G2} and poverty {G1}, thus improving health {G3}, and potentially strengthening gender {G5} and social equality {G10}.**
- **However, access and use result in pressures that may drive decline in coral reef health. Broader land and seascape factors must be managed to sustain reef health, including land-use {G15}, freshwater flows and pollution {G6} and climate change {G13}.**
- **Managing this complex system requires appropriate awareness and knowledge {G4}, governance mechanisms and institutions {G16} and investment and participation by stakeholders {G17}.**

Annex 2 – animated version of fig. 2

An animated slide-deck/video will be posted on our facebook page, at <https://www.facebook.com/acsosba/>

ⁱ IPBES (2019): *Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services* of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services AND

IPBES (2018): *The IPBES regional assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services for Africa*. Archer, E. Dziba, L., Mulongoy, K. J., Maoela, M. A., and Walters, M. (eds.). Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Bonn, Germany. 492 pages.

ⁱ U. Pascual, et al. (2017) *Valuing nature’s contributions to people: the IPBES approach*, Curr. Opin. Environ. Sustain. 26–27 7–16, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2016.12.006>

ⁱ Kremen, C. & Merenlender, A.M. (2018). *Landscapes that work for biodiversity and people*. Science, 362, eaau6020.

ⁱ Obura, D.O. (2020). *Getting to 2030 - Scaling effort to ambition through a narrative model of the SDGs*. Marine Policy, 117, 103973.

ⁱ F. Biermann, N. Kanie, R.E. Kim, (2017) *Global governance by goal-setting: the novel approach of the UN Sustainable Development Goals*, Curr. Opin. Environ. Sustain. 26–27 26–31, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2017.01.010>.

ⁱ Roe, D., Dickman, Amy, Kock, R., Milner-Gulland, E.J., Rihoy, L. & t Sas-Rolfes, M. (2020). *Beyond banning wildlife trade: COVID-19, conservation and development* | World Development, 136, 1–4. DOI: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105121