Introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Green Campus Hackathon: Building Digital Solutions for SDG and Green Agenda Integration in University Life

What is sustainable development?

• Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet.

• It is a visionary plan that calls for integration of economic development, social equity, and environmental protection. It is the development that puts people at the center and that is just, equitable and inclusive.

• Ending poverty, reducing inequalities and combatting climate change are indispensable requirements for the achievement of sustainable development. It also emphasizes the importance of democracy, good governance and the rule of law at all levels, for enabling environment sustainable development.

What are the SDGs?

- SDGs is the common acronym for the Sustainable Development Goals. They are a set of 17 interlinked global goals and 169 targets established by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- They aim to address pressing global challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The SDGs are designed to be inclusive and universal, applying to all countries and encouraging partnerships among governments, private sectors, and civil societies to promote sustainable practices.

- The goals will stimulate action over the next 15 years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet. The SDGs are intended to be a "blueprint" for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all, highlighting the need for collaborative efforts and shared responsibility among nations and communities. No one should be left behind in the journey toward sustainability!

Which are the SDGs?

Why environmental SDGs are so important?

• Environment is one of the three interrelated pillars of sustainable development. Environmental protection, ecosystem management, resilient cities, clean energy, sustainable production/consumption patterns, climate mitigation and adaptation are overarching objectives & essential requirements for sustainable development.

• A sustainably managed environment is a prerequisite for socio-economic development. The natural environment provides direct sources of food and supplies ecosystem goods and services supporting human health and well-being, incomes, job creation, poverty alleviation, safety nets and inequity reduction. A poorly managed environment, together with climate change, could reverse years of hard-won development gains.

• Environmental considerations are fully embedded in the SDGs and reflected in the set of goals, targets and indicators both as a cross-cutting issue and as a development priority. Several SDGs and SDGs targets have an environmental focus or address sustainability concerns. This means that no single goal can progress significantly without particular attention to the implementation of the environmental dimension.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION   7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY   11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES   12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION   13 CLIMATE ACTION   14 LIFE BELOW WATER   15 LIFE ON LAND

Universities and SDGs

- Sustainable development is crucial to the future of the entire planet. The SDGs framework ensures social cohesion, economic prosperity and protection of the environment. Education, research and innovation are essential in sustainable development, making universities key-contributors to achieving the SDGs.

- Universities provide cutting-edge research, high quality education, and groundbreaking innovation. Strong universities are an important part of civil society, and they are excellent promoters of global and local partnerships. Through their contributions, universities facilitate the achievement of all 17 SDGs.

- Universities support students in developing the rigorous scientific mindset, curiosity, & entrepreneurship needed to produce the solutions required for enhancing sustainable development. Researchers, teachers and students work in partnership with citizens and the private/public sector, co-creating knowledge that can produce solutions. It is the combination of these core missions that gives universities a unique place in the common effort to achieve the SDGs.
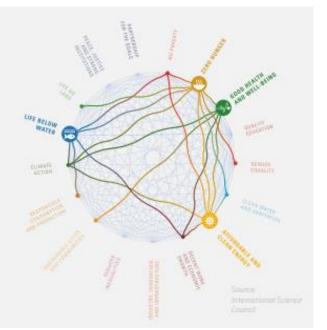
• Universities should incorporate the SDGs into their institutional strategies, both in management and in teaching and research. Sustainable campus management has become important to many universities and is often considered part of the institution's societal responsibility.

• Sustainable management practices can include energy saving measures, resource efficiency and waste reduction, as well as the sharing of services, infrastructure and facilities with other universities or partners. A key element in all sustainability strategies is the "whole-institution approach", meaning all parts of the university community are involved in the efforts.

• Overall, strong institutions accountable to society are key components of sustainable development. Strong autonomous universities are important partners of governments, companies and civil society. These partnerships are crucial in the promotion and implementation of the SDGs internationally.

Universities and environmental SDGs

- The SDGs can be grouped into three broad areas: well-being, the environment and the economy. Universities play a central role in all three, while interdisciplinarity is a key factor in this process.

- As environmental SDGs are concerned, universities conduct research that is crucial to understanding how nature and the earth's ecosystem function. Universities gather people from various disciplines, with different approaches and talents to find innovative solutions to the world's environmental challenges. Research produces evidence that is indispensable in understanding the interactions of various environmental SDGs, identifying trade-offs and mutual reinforcements and developing a balanced approach in pursuing them.

- Sustainable environmental development is only possible if we radically change the way we produce and consume. Innovative solutions must be developed in a collaborative effort. Universities work with companies, other education providers and local stakeholders, often supporting business creation through start-ups. Universities also provide the international links and pipelines needed to nourish local innovation ecosystems and achieve sustainable environmental growth.

Thank you

Together, we can make a difference for our planet and future generations…

Sources

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