Backgrounder

Policy and planning

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Leaving no one behind by 2030

'As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind.' But what does this mean in practice?

Decades of international advocacy around action plans such as Agenda 21 and environmental conventions designed to bring together development and sustainable use of the environment have culminated in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs build on progress already made during the period of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with an emphasis on making sure that all 193 nations who agreed to them will meet the targets and aim to reach all segments of society, leaving no one behind.

Post 2015, the SDGs have come to define the development agenda. But what does 'leave no one behind' (LNB) mean in practice? How will those furthest behind be reached

first? And what will it take for LNB to be embedded in institutions and processes at every level, from local to global?

Unfinished business

Much of the rhetoric for LNB in the context of the SDGs refers to finishing the work of the MDGs and 'getting to zero' by ending poverty in ways that also reduce stress on the environment.

Over the past 15 years the number of people living in extreme poverty has halved but despite an overall reduction in poverty, inequalities have increased. Development has been variable and millions of people have not experienced a sense of progress, particularly in developing countries.

KEY STATISTICS

- Nearly 300 million people depend on fishing, with nearly 50 million employed directly by fisheries — more than 90 per cent of whom are in developing countries.1
- · In Cambodia the wealth of disabled households is half that of non-disabled households, whilst 43 per cent of those with disabilities are illiterate compared to 9 per cent of the overall population.2
- About 1.5 billion people in developing countries lack access to electricity and about 3 billion people rely on solid fuels for cooking.3

WHY IS THIS **IMPORTANT?**

The SDGs cover areas that the MDGs did not and are ambitious.

Goal 7, for example, envisages a world (by 2030) where all have access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy.

Goal 11 sets out an aim of achieving inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities, implying that all city-dwellers should be included, listened to, and achieve a good level of wellbeing. Many cities are headed the other way — towards division, exclusion and inequality.

Goal 14 envisages sustainably managed oceans and marine resources - but how can this be done so the millions of poor people who depend on coastal fisheries for their livelihoods and nutrition get a fair share of the benefits?

Some large countries have seen huge changes. In China, for example, 60 per cent of the population was living in poverty in 1990; that figure had dropped to around 6 per cent in 2015. India's poverty level dropped from over 50 per cent in 1990 to less than 30 per cent in 2015.

The MDGs have been criticised for targeting those easiest to reach first. SDG1 sets out the ambitious goal of ending poverty in all its forms everywhere. The LNB agenda is an attempt to focus sustainable development efforts on the poorest and most marginalised groups, regardless of their demographic and socioeconomic background, their income, gender, ethnicity, religion, age or geography.

What IIED is doing

IIED's research will explore how the SDGs can address the causes of social exclusion and marginalisation at the same time as reducing environmental stress, focusing on coastal fishing communities, energy access, and people living with disabilities in urban areas.

Tackling systemic constraints to ensure no fisher is left behind. Small-scale fishers and their communities in developing countries are prone to high levels of vulnerability, closely related to their fishing and associated livelihoods.

Some of the economic and non-economic shocks that fishing communities experience include lack of access to finance, markets and other services, declining fish stocks, occupational hazards, climate change and post-harvest loss.

These systemic constraints are preventing artisanal fisher families from moving out of poverty and feeling the impact of SDGs implementation. Investments in the sector could have benefits across the economy, and along the fishing supply chain, right the way to the consumer.

Our study uses value chains to assess the impact of the constraints faced by hilsa fishers in the Lower Menghna basin of Bangladesh. We examine and quantify the complex linkages across formal and informal markets, and assess how power asymmetries and institutional failures affect fishers' profitability. Resulting evidence will be used to support the design of fairer policy recommendations that benefit fisher families.

Community-led approaches to inclusive urban development. Not all disabled people are poor but they are overrepresented

among lower-income groups, with poverty being a significant driver of disability, due to dangerous living and work environments.

Community groups in Southeast Asian countries have started a number of projects with an element of leaving no one behind. Their central premise is to support the welfare of the most chronically poor and vulnerable within the community, and a proportion of those who benefit are either disabled, chronically ill or elderly, and thus unable to earn a livelihood. The projects make sure that all members of a community continue to be included in collective processes even when they might not have the financial or physical means to contribute.

We will also analyse legislation and policies surrounding disability and interview key agencies. The work will culminate in a workshop with community representatives to discuss how disabled or otherwise vulnerable community members can be included in community-led processes, how these processes can be scaled up across urban low-income communities, and how this can be facilitated by other urban stakeholders.

Public and private financing that leaves no one behind in accessing energy. The Energy SDG aims to achieve sustainable energy for all by 2030, but what do trends in country tell us about which low-income groups will benefit and what quality of energy service they might get access to? There is increased public and (socially oriented) private investment in access to energy, most notably in low-cost solar lanterns and solar home systems. This is linked to factors such as the worldwide fall in solar prices and delivery model innovation.

Through our research, we aim to understand which segments of populations and 'tiers of access' — from basic lighting and cooking to energy that enables some productive activities — are targeted by different public- and private-sector actors. We will also clarify the barriers to managing and accessing finance by different actors, and identify key priorities for improving public and private arrangements to ensure no one is left behind.

Looking ahead

Equity and fairness in sustainable development have always been at the heart of IIED's work. Now is the time to produce definitive evidence of how countries can make sure no one is left behind. Knowledge generated from the case studies will help researchers, development practitioners and policymakers understand, beyond a mere aspiration, what leave no one behind means in practice.

IIED will research what 'leave no one behind' will mean for the SDGs in practice. How can policy actors interpret the notion that everyone should be included? We will probe what that means for laws, sector policies, markets and budgets. The research will also look at the challenges that need to be overcome in terms of vested interests and power relations.

- ¹ Blackmore, E, Norbury, H, Mohammed, EY, Bartolini Cavicchi, S and Wakeford, R (2015) What's the catch? Lessons from and prospects for the Marine Stewardship Council certification in developing countries. IIED, London.
- ² Handicap International France (2009) *Disability facts in Cambodia.* www.addc. org.au/documents/resources/ briefing-paper-disability-facts-in-cambodia_948.pdf
- ³ UNDP, WHO (2009) A Review Focusing on the Least Developed Countries and Sub-Saharan Africa. www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Environment%20and%20 Energy/Sustainable%20Energy/energy-access-situation-in-developing-countries.pdf

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Knowledge Products

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) promotes sustainable development, linking local priorities to global challenges. We support some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in decision making.

FIND OUT MORE

There will be a growing collection of content relating to the topic of the SDGs and leave no one behind. To see more, go to: www.iied.org/tag/leave-no-one-behind