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**Sustainable
Development Goals
in a Time of Crisis:
Improving Ireland's
Institutional and
Policy Response**

A Working Paper by
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ABSTRACT

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) provide an overarching set of aims and targets to be achieved by all UN Member States acting together and individually by 2030. Agreed in 2015, progress in the attainment of these goals has stalled in many areas since 2020 as multiple intersecting crises have shifted our attention elsewhere. This Working Paper reviews the disruption to the SDGs that COVID-19, conflict and climate change have caused, arguing that our current model of development, which has been operationalised through the SDGs and is predicated on achieving necessary economic growth in the Global South, will only be truly sustainable if balanced by 'degrowth' in the West / Global North. This year, 2023, marks the 'halfway-point' between the adoption of the SDGs and 2030, the year set for their completion. Now is an opportune time to review our commitment to the SDGs.

Key words:

Sustainable Development Goals | Global Crises | COVID-19 | Conflict

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Introduction

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) provide an overarching set of aims and targets to be achieved by all UN Member States acting together and individually by 2030. Agreed in 2015, progress in the attainment of these goals has stalled in many areas since 2020 as multiple intersecting crises have shifted our attention elsewhere (Sachs et al., 2022). This Working Paper reviews the disruption to the SDGs that COVID-19, conflict and climate change have caused. Each crisis has had major impacts in Ireland and globally. In the face of these impacts, this paper argues that SDGs remain necessary but are not sufficient in addressing the urgent challenges we face collectively as co-occupants of an increasing fragile planet.

This paper argues that our current model of development, which has been operationalised through the SDGs and is predicated on achieving necessary economic growth in the Global South, will only be truly sustainable if balanced by ‘degrowth’ in the West / Global North. Models of development predicated on ‘catch up’ are unrealistic when put in the context of climate change. Simply put, ‘sustainable development’ is not sustainable if it is predicated only on the continued expansion of a growth-led consumer economy supported by continued resource extraction.

This year, 2023, marks the ‘halfway-point’ between the adoption of the SDGs and 2030, the year set for their completion. Now is an opportune time to review our commitment to the SDGs. The Second National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024 is Ireland’s main document outlining its commitments to the SDGs. A revitalized Irish commitment to the SDGs should include a number of key policy and institutional changes. In particular, the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) framework should be better operationalized and centralized (Abidoye et al. 2021; O’Brien 2022). This framework, combined with a reaffirmed human rights focus, should be central in Ireland’s efforts to achieve the SDGs.

The No One Behind Framework

The Sustainable Development Goals consist of 17 goals and 169 sub-targets which were contained in the *UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* document, adopted in 2015 (UNSDG, 2022). The SDGs aim to end all forms of poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change, while also seeking to ensure equity and justice on the journey to sustainable development. The SDGs are sometimes referred to as *Agenda 2030*. They include the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) framework, which is a central, transformative promise, launched to reach the furthest behind first (Mackie and Allwood, 2022).

LNOB recognizes that macro-economic growth and other indicators of ‘progress’ do not always improve the situations of those who are worse off. Women and girls, indigenous peoples, minorities, people with disabilities and many others, are disproportionately left behind even while aggregate development might be achieved. The SDGs aim to build upon, and go further than the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were the first set of global goals, adopted in 2000. As they have rolled out, the SDGs go further by being universal and addressing all countries, whereas the MDGs were aimed solely at developing countries.

The SDGs in Ireland Key Points:

- Ireland has implemented a whole-of-government approach to the SDGs although they are overseen by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC). DECC is responsible for developing the SDG National Implementation Plans.
- All ministers retain responsibility for the implementation of the SDGs relating to their individual Department.
- Ireland has committed to presenting a Voluntary National Review (VNR) every four years.
- Ireland has an SDG National Stakeholder Forum to provide a mechanism for stakeholders to discuss the national SDG framework in Ireland (Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, 2022a).

The Key SDG Organizations in Ireland

- **The Irish Government**, particularly DECC, who oversee the SDGs, and all relevant departments.
- **The Department of Foreign Affairs, through Irish Aid**, its overseas development programme, prioritizes addressing global poverty and hunger and helping to build better futures for some of the world's poorest communities. They also focus on gender equality, environment and climate change, health and other targets of the SDGs. They support long term development and humanitarian assistance on behalf of the Irish people (Irish Aid 2018).
- **Coalition 2030** is an alliance of civil society organizations committed to, and working towards, upholding Ireland's commitments to the SDGs. It consists of over 100 organizations, international and domestic NGOs, youth organizations, environmental groups, academics, and trade unions (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2022).
- **Dóchas** is an umbrella organization made up of 57 Irish international development organizations working on 15 out of the 17 SDGs, in over 100 countries. Dóchas took part in the consultation process launched by the Irish Government to gather information ahead of the drafting of the new National Implementation Plan. Dóchas advocates on behalf of their network and has contributed to outlining progress towards delivering the implementation plan, issues that are preventing progress, and recommendations to accelerate progress (Dóchas, 2021).
- **Ireland's international development agencies** base their work on the SDGs, as they work towards goals to alleviate injustice and poverty while working with communities to make this a reality.

2020 saw the launch of the *Decade for Action* aimed at achieving the 17 goals (UNSDG 2020). This launch was supposed to see an increase in international cooperation to make progress on achieving the SDG's targets in the run-up to 2030. However, the emerging COVID-19 pandemic meant that the world's attention shifted towards dealing with the national threat that the virus posed. COVID-19 showed rather starkly that an international focus on the implementation of the SDGs was not resilient to crises (Shulla et al 2021).

In addition to the significant impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on progress regarding the SDGs, the world has seen in an increase in war and military conflicts and is experiencing increasingly pronounced effects of the long-term climate crisis in the shape of droughts and unusually severe and destructive weather events (WMO 2022), which have reversed SDG achievements in places. 2021 was the second year in a row that recorded no progress in the implementation of the SDGs (Sachs et al., 2022), and a UN report published mid-2022 recorded a "deterioration of progress towards many targets, such as poverty, food security, ending the epidemic of malaria, immunization coverage, and employment" (UNSTATS 2022).

Major Crises are testing SDG-signatories' resolve

In a time of increasing geo-political division and conflict, the SDG framework offers us the clearest, universal pathway forward to recovery and prosperity for people and the planet. UN countries, including Ireland, that have adopted the SDGs, would benefit from a renewed commitment to achieving them. The Goals provide an agreed blueprint to end poverty, protect our planet, and ensure prosperity for developed and developing nations.

"The SDGs are not only achievable, but they are also necessary to promote shared, integrated approaches for economic, social and environmental development, including the international collaboration and solidarity that poor countries and global challenges like climate change require. So, a critical enabler for the COVID-19 recovery is the reaffirmation of the SDGs."
(Schmidt-Traub, 2020)

Three major crises have cast doubt on whether the SDGs are still fit-for-purpose in 2023:

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged in early 2020, and while it was a health emergency, it caused large-scale economic shocks that continue to be felt today. Priorities were shifted and funds diverted to respond to the immediate threat of the pandemic. As a result, COVID-19 compromised the world's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (Qadeer et al., 2022). Even before the emergence of COVID-19, progress on the SDGs was insufficient to reach the Agenda 2030 aims (Naidoo and Fisher, 2020). The stalled commitments towards the SDGs have increased economic and social inequalities and exacerbated the vulnerabilities of the least protected individuals in society (Abidoye et al., 2021). We have seen a global increase in hunger, poverty, health issues, conflict, and unemployment due to the pandemic (McCann, Mishra and Carmody, 2022). The unequal distribution of vaccines, disproportionately purchased by wealthy countries, has illustrated the global inequality regarding access to resources (Abidoye et al., 2021), and demonstrated that we are far from delivering on our global aim to "leave no one behind".

Local and Global impact of COVID-19:

At the start of 2020 Ireland went from full employment to a record high unemployment of 28.2% in April, affecting young adults disproportionately (Kennelly et al., 2020). Globally, it was estimated that the pandemic pushed between 119 and 124 million people into extreme poverty in 2020 (Gerszon Mahler et al., 2021). For example, in Vietnam unemployment rose to the highest rate in ten years, with 2.4 million job losses and as many as 17.6 million were believed to have had their income affected (McCann, Mishra and Carmody, 2022).

Examples of SDGs impacted by COVID-19

- SDG 1 No Poverty: Four years of progress eroded. Working poverty rates increased for the first time in two decades. In 2021, 133,627 people were living in poverty who were in employment in Ireland (Social Justice Ireland, 2021).
- SDG 2 Zero Hunger: COVID-19 caused increased poverty, affecting food purchasing. Lockdowns prevented harvesting worldwide and impacted on food chains.
- SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing: COVID-19 was a leading cause of death and drove a reported increase in levels of anxiety and depression. As of November 2022, there had been 6,576,088 COVID-19 deaths worldwide (WHO, 2022).
- SDG 4 Quality Education: COVID-19 and lockdowns caused education facilities to shut down and moved temporarily online. This disrupted education, causing further inequality due to a loss of learning because of digital access inequalities and the supportive setting of school. At the height of the pandemic, 45 countries in Europe and Central Asia closed their schools, affecting 185 million students (Donnelly, Patrinos and Gresham, 2021).
- SDG 5 Gender Equality: COVID-19 increased unpaid care and domestic work, further worsening gender inequalities. Because women make up 70% of the health care workforce, they were at a heightened risk of exposure (OECD, 2020). Alongside this, a shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls was experienced during the pandemic.
- SDG 8 Decent Work: Unemployment rates increased and women and young people were disproportionately affected. In Ireland 47% of the population aged 15 and over had their employment situation impacted by the pandemic (CSO, 2020).
- SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities: The most vulnerable and marginalized groups were hit the hardest by the impacts of COVID-19, exposing structural inequalities. For example, in Bangladesh 60-70% of the marginalized households experienced a decline in savings (Bhattacharya et al., 2021).
- SDG 13 Climate Action: COVID-19 caused a diversion of attention and funding from the climate crisis and stalled the 'Decade of Action' designed to progress this goal (Sachs et al., 2022).

Climate Change

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. The year 2020 marked the five-year point for the 175 countries that ratified the Paris Agreement to increase their climate ambitions (Hammer, Hallegatte and Banaji, 2020). However, with the disruptive impact of COVID-19 and international conflicts, the focus on action to fight climate change has slowed down in many countries. Climate change affects every nation and is a major threat to human security and well-being, causing increased droughts, adverse weather patterns, heatwaves, floods, and wildfires. Every country is now experiencing weather and climate impacts to some degree, and the intensity will only continue to rise with inaction (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). Greenhouse gas emissions are predicted to further rise by 14% by 2030 under current voluntary national commitments (Sachs et al., 2022). Climate change impacts will continue to undermine developments achieved through previous SDG action, impeding gains in reducing poverty, lowering inequality, and leaving no one behind.

Local and Global impacts of Climate Change

Example of Projected Climate Changes Impacts on **Ireland**: Sea levels are projected to rise, resulting in increased coastal erosion, flooding, and damage to infrastructure in coastal locations in Ireland, where 50% of the Irish population resides (Environmental Protection Agency, 2022). **Globally** – Without action, climate change could push 130 million people into poverty in the next 10 years, and cause 200 million people to migrate within their countries by 2050 (Nishio, 2021).

Examples of SDGs impacted by Climate Change

- SDG 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) and 6 (Clean Water): The increased negative impacts of climate change and extreme weather events have caused a reduction in our ability to limit poverty, gain food security, increase human wellbeing and health, and gain water security. For example, low-income consumers are particularly at risk of food insecurity, with models projecting an estimated 183 million additional people at risk of hunger compared to a no climate change scenario (Mbow *et al.*, 2019).
- SDG 5 Gender Equality: The negative impacts of climate change amplify gender inequality as women and girls experience the greatest impacts. Their livelihoods, health and safety are threatened. When a crisis hits, women are less likely to survive, and more likely to be injured due to longstanding gender inequalities that have created disparities in information, mobility, decision making and access to resources (UN Women, 2022).
- SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and 8 (Decent Work): Environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation all impede progress on these goals.

- SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities: Climate change disproportionately affects the most vulnerable and marginalized groups and increases inequalities. Extreme weather events and natural disasters due to climate change directly affect economic activities, leading to high economic losses, unemployment, and poverty. Mitigating climate change can lead to success in the employment sectors and SDG 8 (UN Environmental Programme, 2021).
- SDG 13 Climate Action: Increased adverse weather events are affecting billions. Current climate action is not enough to reach the agenda 2030 goals and reduce current temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Taking urgent action to combat climate change is imperative to save lives and livelihoods, and key to achieving the SDGs (United Nations, 2022a).

Conflict

The world is currently witnessing the largest number of violent conflicts in decades (Sachs et al., 2022). Conflict is diverting attention away from the SDGs. The conflict in Ukraine has had a devastating impact on the lives of its people, and in addition, it has impacted the lives beyond its borders, with the crisis affecting the world's access to fuel and grain. It has exacerbated a global cost-of-living crisis unseen in at least a generation, compromising lives, livelihoods, and our aspirations for a better world by 2030 (UNSDG 2022b). Apart from the physical devastation in Ukraine, the large number of enforced refugees, and the enormous loss of life and numbers injured, the conflict has greatly deepened geopolitical tensions between Western countries and Russia. One particularly concerning consequence has been the re-militarization of Europe with most countries, Ireland included, announcing significant increases in defense spending. This has a clear and immediate consequence for social and development budgets. The Ukraine has joined Yemen and the Sahel as the world's most critical conflict zones and sites of humanitarian emergency (Khorsandi, 2022). Each conflict inevitably will set back progress in poverty reduction, social resilience, and human rights developments, and deepen the negative impacts already created by the pandemic and climate change (World Bank, 2022).

Conflict threatens peace, which is the major precondition for sustainable development (Kumar and Roy, 2018). States affected by conflict, whether international or internal conflict, or affected by cross-border militias, such as those in the Sahel Region, are faced with (internal) displacement, food and energy challenges, increase in disease, and a loss of capacity to respond to longer-term development challenges. Conflict adversely impacts the economic state of the country, degrades basic services and infrastructure, and increases the numbers of those dependent on social services and support (International Rescue Committee, 2019; Zhao et al., 2022). The SDGs recognize the link between sustainable development and peace, as it is a pre-requisite for many of the Goals and an explicit focus of Goal 16. As we have seen with climate change and COVID-19, conflict carries the ability to derail and reverse progress, exacerbating current inequalities and tensions, and decreasing peace, stability, and human rights. A recurring trend among all of these crises, is that they render marginalized groups, such as women and girls, even more vulnerable to shocks. Promoting human rights, reducing all forms of violence, and strengthening the rule of law is key to Goal 16 (UNDP, 2020a).

Example of the impact of conflict on migration

As of 06 November 2022, an estimated 62,425 people from Ukraine had arrived in Ireland under the Temporary Protection Directive (Central Statistics Office 2023). The war in Ukraine has caused the largest displacement of European citizens since the Second World War, with women and children accounting for the vast majority. An estimated 8.3 million Ukrainians will have fled by the end of 2022, and up to 25 million could be displaced and require humanitarian aid as a result of the war (Botelho, 2022). In 2021, violent attacks across the Sahel increased to nearly 800 in number, uprooting 450,000 people within their countries and forcing a further 36,000 to flee to a neighboring country. Insecurity is the main driver, exacerbated by extreme poverty, COVID-19 and the climate crisis. 2.7 million people are internally displaced within the region (UNHCR, 2022)

Examples of SDGs impacted by Conflict

- **SDG 1 End Poverty:** The conflict in Ukraine has caused food price inflation to rise in many countries, causing poverty levels to increase. Rising food prices and the combined impact of the war in Ukraine and COVID-19, could force many more millions of people into extreme poverty (United Nations, 2022b).
- **SDG 2 End Hunger:** Conflict has caused hunger and food insecurity. In the Sahel, more than 80% of people rely on agriculture to survive. Violence and displacement means that crops are not planted, tended to or harvested, placing communities at further risk of extreme hunger and famine (ICRC, 2022).
- **SDG 4 Quality Education:** Conflict causes displacement and school infrastructural damage, putting millions of children's education at risk. In Yemen, 6 million children are estimated to experience disruption to their learning (UNICEF Yemen, 2021).
- **SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities:** Conflict causes displacement. In 2021 we saw a record number of refugees. The number of refugees globally rose to 27.1 million in 2021, up from 26.4 million in 2020, setting a new record (UNHCR 2022).

Operationalising the SDG framework to emerge from crises

The need for a renewed focus on human rights and Leaving No One Behind

Given the reversal of many SDG achievements due to COVID-19, conflict and climate change, this Policy Brief argues strongly for a renewed commitment to the principals of Agenda 2030. The Leave No One Behind (LNOB) framework should be central to this. Ireland should strongly affirm the LNOB framework's principles of meaningful participation of marginal and disadvantaged people and seek to ensure that there is an accessible platform for the voices of those who could be at risk of being left behind. "Human rights give us methods for ensuring no one is left behind and realizing more equal development outcomes" (Thornberry, 2020).

Relevance of SDGs for addressing COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic taught us that the SDGs are not resilient to sudden stressors such as pandemics. COVID-19 has served as a reminder of how vulnerable medium- and long-term objectives are when governments are faced with sudden and unprecedented crisis that requires an immediate response. However, current geopolitical instability, climate change and increasing inequality suggests that recent events may not be the last crises we face. Budget-proofing, and indeed policy-proofing, the SDG framework can help lessen the impacts of crises, increase adaptivity and provide a framework for recovery.

The SDGs are a way to address the health and economic inequalities revealed by COVID-19. The global response to COVID-19 vividly exposed underlying health and resource inequalities. This was particularly evident regarding the vaccine dissemination. The capacity of wealthy countries to buy vaccine stocks to vaccinate otherwise young and healthy age cohorts came at the expense of stocks for older and vulnerable cohorts in poorer countries¹. Equitable access to the vaccines was not prioritized and this negatively impacted on the health status of poorer, more marginalized people, and those living in countries with different vaccination production capacities, eventually affecting the continued impact that COVID-19 has worldwide. The sustainability and equity principles underlying the SDGs have been revealed as being essential to address future pandemics, health crises, and other shocks in a more equitable manner. Indeed, using the SDGs to guide the recovery from COVID-19 can have a positive knock-on effect on the wider environmental and poverty reduction commitments of the global community.

Relevance of SDGs for addressing Climate Change – Just Transition

The SDGs can guide us to focus on a ‘just transition’, based on values of solidarity. The SDGs seek to mitigate the current effects of climate change and to prevent catastrophic climate change from being further exacerbated. Central to a necessary response to ecological crisis is the concept of a *just transition* (Climate Justice Alliance 2022). *Just Transition* is a unifying set of principles, processes, and practices that promote a move away from extractive, growth and profit-focused principles by which many wealthy and highly polluting countries manage their economies, whilst recognizing that many low- and middle-income countries should have the right to develop, albeit, if possible, in the least wasteful and polluting manner. It is crucial that the reforms and changes demanded by the climate emergency do not disproportionately impact the development of the world’s poorest countries. If applied fairly, the SDGs offer a framework that guides policy so that the just transition needed ensures that nobody is left behind. The LNOB Framework provides a very helpful way to set out goals and methods for achieving that.

Growth for some countries, de-growth for others.

Human well-being and sustainability are dependent on the earth, its ecosystems and biodiversity. One key contradiction apparent in the SDGs, lies in SDG 8, a goal that promotes Decent Work and Economic Growth. SDG8 supports continued global economic growth through various objectives, whilst simultaneously supporting the protection of the planet from degradation (Hickel, 2019). While growth is necessary in many poorer countries, it is ecologically harmful in many others because of the link between growth and carbon emissions and resource use (Hickel, 2019). Economic growth must

therefore be nuanced and appropriate to planetary constraints (Naidoo and Fisher, 2020). Many countries, including Ireland, need to start a national conversation about the mechanics and implication of de-growth as a necessary economic policy (Rayworth 2020). Politically and perhaps socially, this is very challenging but is ultimately required for environmental survival and global equity.

Relevance of SDGs for addressing Conflict

“New ideas are...now required and, even more, their communication to citizens – ideas based on equality, universal public services, equity of access, sufficiency, sustainability” (President Michael D. Higgins). The SDGs offer an agreed pathway that transcends current conflicts. The current geo-political instability arising particularly from the war in Ukraine and in many other conflict zones, is exposing the world’s increasing divisions. The SDGs explicitly include in Goal 16 a commitment to reduce violence. A global re-affirmation of the SDGs as an agreed human project may permit countries to move beyond their current stance on a particular conflict by focusing on the shared goal of a sustainable world. In addition, the actual implementation of the SDGs would produce a more stable and cohesive world, with less causes for conflict. Linked to this should be greater emphasis on the SDGs’ call for strengthened rule of law, and the promotion of human rights. The SDGs, and LNOB framework that is linked to it, promote an affirmation of human rights as the motivator for global equity rather than aid and resource transfers being linked to political influence and political alliance building.

Peace is fundamental to the achievement of the SDGs, and despite the current rise in conflict, the SDGs should remain the roadmap for achieving sustainable development and peace. There is a growing need for peace as conflicts continue to disrupt and destroy lives, mostly affecting the poor and vulnerable (Sachs et al., 2022). Agenda 2030 asserts the indivisibility of peace and sustainable development, and this must be prioritized.

The continued relevance of the SDGs

COVID-19, climate change and conflict are crises that are impacting on the implementation of the SDGs. Yet, we argue in this Policy Brief, that the SDGs are themselves the means by which these crises can best be addressed. Ireland should take a leading role in renewing its global commitment to the SDGs. One opportunity for this will be presented by the SDG summit to be held at the UN General Assembly in September 2023 (UN 2022c). Other specific actions will be outlined below.

There are two compelling reasons why the SDGs offer an immediately available pathway to resolving our various crises and achieving our sustainability goals:

[1] The SDGs are globally agreed – this is very important in a time of global fracture and competition.

Attention should be paid to the universally agreed nature of the SDGs. The SDGs are the first globally agreed set of goals that target sustainable development. They are a common framework across all UN member states that address environmental, economic, and social issues. The unity that the SDGs promote and exemplify is extremely important as we face global fracture and geopolitical tensions. They demonstrate the possibility and imperative for global solidarity and co-operation.

[2] The SDGs recognize the complex connections between global challenges

We are facing a confluence of crises and the SDGs present ways to prevent and navigate them (United Nations, 2022d). The SDGs demonstrate the complex connection between these crises and provide a holistic and clear pathway to help tackle these crises on a global scale. The SDGs, if properly implemented, could simultaneously positively impact climate change, conflict and would help our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. They also are a potent reminder of the need to transcend the immediate in favor of the medium- and long-term objectives of a sustainable, more equitable and peaceful planet. “There is a need to critically reflect on the reactions and responses to the pandemic so that policymakers, in particular, can be more fully informed about the social, economic, political, security and healthcare implications of this globalized event and plan for the future” (McCann, Mishra and Carmody, 2022: 1).

Conclusion

At a time of mounting and overlapping crises the Sustainable Development Goals and their underlying principles present themselves as more relevant and necessary than ever. They offer an agreed framework for collectively addressing the pressing challenges before us. The Irish government has an opportunity to re-affirm them and exercise global leadership in advocating for their implementation.

However, as we have outlined, the adoption of the Goals poses particular political and social dilemmas for Western governments. While they are necessary, they are not sufficient to resolve our collective problems. Development itself, as currently modelled, cannot in principle be sustainable unless managed economic growth in the Global South is accompanied by significant economic de-growth in the Western world. The need to de-limit economic growth in the ‘developed world’ to achieve global equity and sustainability is an acutely difficult political undertaking. How is ‘de-growth’ to be sold to Western publics who naturally perceive such a move as causing reductions to their material living standards? Western historical models of ‘development’ appear particularly ill-suited to contemporary requirements. How truly sustainable is ‘sustainable development’ if it is predicated on further extraction of resources, particularly from the Southern world, and the expansion of a growth-led consumer economy, however modest this may purport to be? The ‘Green economy’ itself requires vast resources to be implemented. The implication is that we now need to begin to think our way into addressing this challenge so that we may engage with initiatives and collective responses that offer hope and practical ways to respond to these complex issues.

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ⁱ (<https://data.undp.org/vaccine-equity/>)