

# Promoting sustainability through connection

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## Video Abstract

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# Abstract

In 2015, the United Nations laid out 17 Sustainable Development Goals for the world. The goals aim to improve the lives of millions through actions such as ending poverty, protecting the planet, and assuring prosperity for all. Their success, however, depends on whether leaders can effectively mobilize to meet them. A team of researchers argues that this mobilization is unlikely without greater focus on implementing the goals in an integrated way. Finding connections among means of implementation, they say, will avoid wasted efforts and maximize efficiency. One of the biggest risks in overlooking these connections is contradictory efforts. Boosting industrial output, for example, could reduce the availability of clean drinking water. In this case, working towards one goal makes it harder to meet another. By understanding these connections between goals, however, leaders can tackle one target in a way that benefits many others. For instance, investing in renewable energy for cooking could not only reduce emissions but also control pollution, improve human health, and even increase equality. But achieving such outcomes requires consistent investments in innovation, training and trade that span across many facets of society. To accomplish this, the researchers focused on three types of societal connection: those formed across sectors; between societal actors; and among low-, medium-, and high-income countries. Looking at these connections helped them pinpoint key implementation challenges in several areas, ranging from finance to data management. One key financial challenge they identified is insufficient private investment in long-term development in lower-income countries. Such investment is essential to global sustainability. Supporting early-stage agribusiness in Africa, for example, could help eliminate poverty and drive economic growth by producing food items for export. These exports might then help overcome hunger in other regions of the world. Defining these challenges can turn them into opportunities. For instance, governments can incentivize private investments in sustainable products to create jobs that also improve human well-being. By identifying the difficulties associated with each area of implementation, the team emphasized the importance of coordination in approaching the Sustainable Development Goals. By connecting implementation efforts across different parts of society, leaders can foster the cooperation needed to build a more sustainable world.