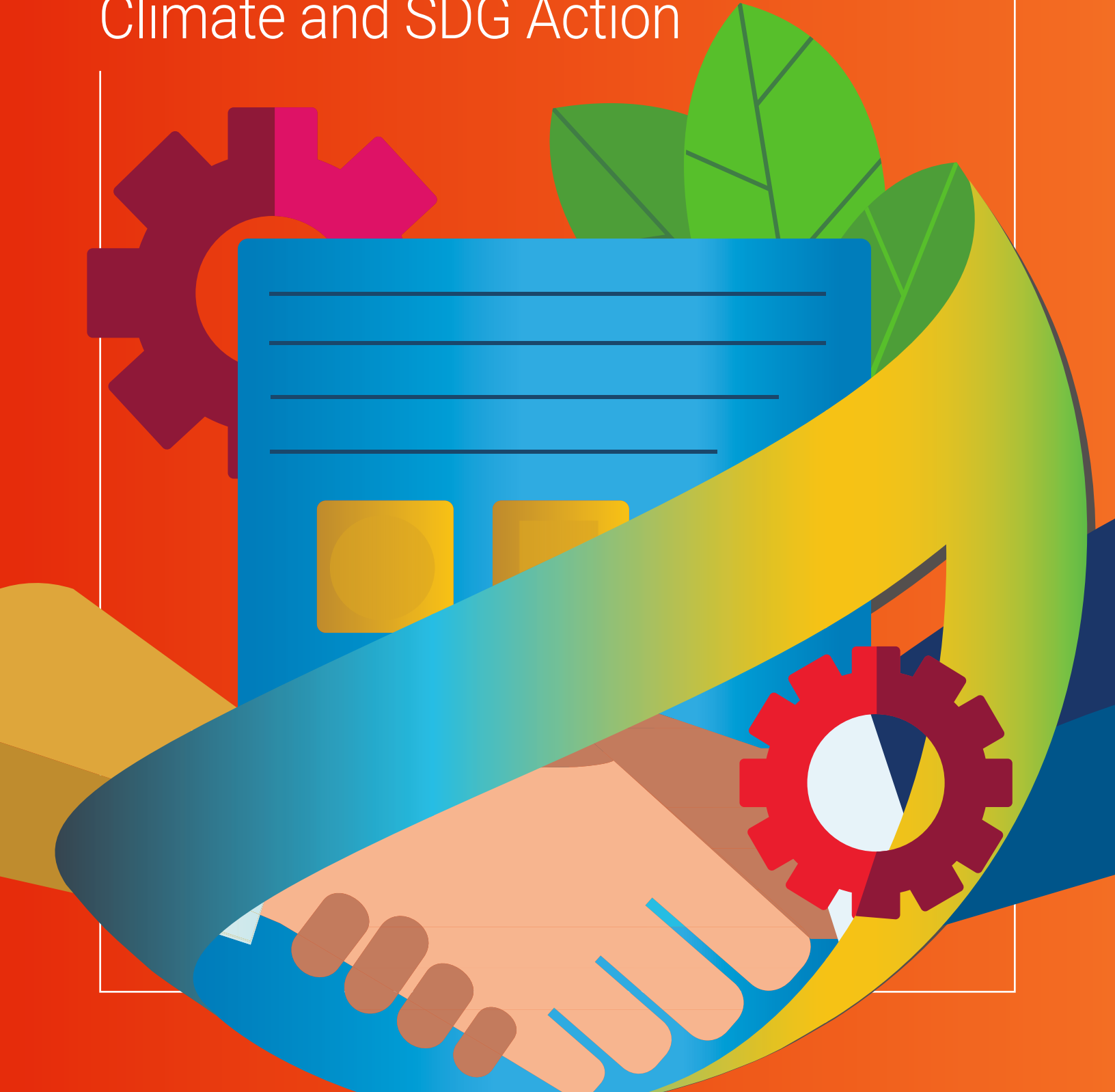


Seeking Synergy Solutions

Policies that Support Both
Climate and SDG Action



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For further information, please contact:
Website: sdgs.un.org/climate-sdgs-synergies
Email: climate-sdgs-synergies@un.org

Design concept and production by
Camilo Salomon @ www.cjsalomon.com

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Authors and Acknowledgements

Report Authors

Thematic Co-leads

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Måns Nilsson (Sweden)

Executive Director, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)

Måns Nilsson is the Executive Director of SEI. Måns is a scholar in the policy sciences and his interests include policy coherence, integrated decision making, energy and industry transitions, and development policy.

Heide Hackmann (South Africa)

Director, Future Africa Institute, University of Pretoria

Heide Hackmann is the Director of Future Africa and Strategic Advisor on Transdisciplinarity and Global Knowledge Networks at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. She has extensive international experience in science and technology policy, global science strategy, and systems development, spanning over 20 years.

Youba Sokona (Mali)

Former Vice Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

Youba Sokona was elected Vice Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in October 2015. Prior to this, Youba Sokona was Co-Chair of IPCC Working Group III on the mitigation of climate change for the Fifth Assessment Report after serving as a Lead Author since 1990.

Kaveh Guilanpour (United Kingdom)

Vice President for International Strategies, Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES)

Kaveh Guilanpour is the Vice President for International Strategies at the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, overseeing the international aspects of the work of C2ES including in relation to the United Nations negotiations process.

Tolullah Oni (United Kingdom/Nigeria)

Clinical Professor, University of Cambridge and Founder/CEO, UrbanBetter

Tolullah Oni is Clinical Professor of Global Public Health and Sustainable Urban Development at the University of Cambridge and Founder/CEO of UrbanBetter.

Thematic Co-authors

Adis Dzebo (Senior Research Fellow at Stockholm Environment Institute)

Belinda Reyers (Professor at University of Pretoria)

Eric Zusman (Research Director, Center for Sustainability Governance at Institute for Global Environmental Strategies)

Simon Hoiberg Olsen (Research Manager at Institute for Global Environmental Strategies)

Shinji Onoda (Research Manager at Institute for Global Environmental Strategies)

Support and Review

Geoff Clarke (Senior Science Writer and Editor)

Souran Chatterjee (Research and Analysis)

Referencing This Report

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Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) is an international non-profit research and policy organization that tackles environment and development challenges. SEI connects science and decision-making to develop solutions for a sustainable future for all. Its work spans climate, water, air and land-use issues, governance, the economy, gender and health. www.sei.org



Future Africa is the University of Pretoria's collaborative platform for research that works across the sciences and with society to address Africa's biggest and most urgent contemporary challenges. Its fundamental purpose is to develop and unleash the transformative potential of African sciences to inform and inspire a future of thriving African societies. www.futureafrica.science



Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES) works to secure a safe and stable climate by accelerating the global transition to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and a thriving, just, and resilient economy. It forges practical and innovative solutions to address climate change and engages with leading businesses to accelerate climate progress. www.c2es.org



MRC Epidemiology Unit, University of Cambridge mission is to investigate the individual and combined effects of the biological, behavioural, social and environmental factors that contribute to a rising burden of obesity, diabetes metabolic disorders. Through research programmes, the unit develops and evaluates strategies to prevent these diseases and their consequences worldwide. www.mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk



UrbanBetter is a learning collaborative, advocacy platform and urban health practice with a mission to accelerate building of healthy climate-resilient urban environments in rapidly growing cities worldwide. The work of UrbanBetter is data-driven, youth-privileged, equity-centred and Africa-led; equipping, connecting and mobilising individuals, communities and organisations for healthy sustainable urban environments. <https://urbanbetter.science>

Contributing Experts

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Cassie Flynn (United Nations Development Programme)

Niklas Hagelberg (United Nations Environment Programme)

Mikael Hilden (Finnish Environment Institute SYKE)

Mandy Jayakody (Presidential Climate Commission)

Macharia Kamau (Former Kenyan Ambassador to the United Nations)

Jeanne Nel (Wageningen University)

Debra Roberts (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)

Ernesto Soria Morales (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)

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Key Messages

- Countries are not on a path toward sustainable development and are failing to make sufficient progress on implementing the Sustainable Development Goal or achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. Failing to accelerate implementation, countries risk undermining hard-won global achievements that, in some cases, took decades to negotiate. To accelerate implementation, the 2023 stocktaking exercises of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda call on countries to seek synergies in implementation.
- All countries who are Parties to the Paris Agreement are expected to submit new and more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in early 2025. This is an opportunity to increase efforts towards strengthening domestic sustainable development and climate ambition, whilst simultaneously ensuring that their global commitments are achieved. To increase ambition, countries need to focus on synergies between the NDC, the SDGs and the domestic policy environment, to help navigate domestic politics and avoid fragmentation that arises in traditional siloed policymaking.
- Synergies are predominant in the academic and policy literature but are difficult to transform and operationalize in prevalent socio-economic contexts of different countries. To translate synergies from paper to practice, government officials need to account for the contextualized nature of synergies and the national constraints that many countries are facing. Many of the issues, trade-offs and decisions that countries will face in preparing and finalizing their NDCs will essentially involve conversations on how to develop sustainably and could usefully be viewed through an SDG lens.
- Institutional strengthening is a prerequisite to prevent siloed decision making. However, a synergistic approach also requires that government officials develop strategies for overcoming the incoherence embedded in the messiness of the policy process and capacity to navigate the political landscape and vested interests that work against progress on climate change and sustainable development.
- To be truly transformative, a synergistic approach must anticipate the effects of climate and sustainable development policies, including local, transboundary and teleconnected spillover effects; and particularly those effects that risk increasing the vulnerability of already exposed groups.
- A synergistic approach ensures meaningful integration between domestic priorities and global commitments on climate change and the SDGs. A synergistic approach is, however, merely a starting point to a long and transformative process towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient future that leaves no one behind.

Executive Summary

This report is written to support government officials at senior level, tasked with identifying, evaluating and implementing climate and sustainable development plans and policies. It emphasizes the importance of a synergistic approach in implementation by showcasing examples, tools and other resources for effective mainstreaming of climate change and sustainable development into domestic priorities for countries in the Global South and the Global North. It is also relevant for other stakeholders working on climate change and sustainable development, including sub-national government officials, civil society practitioners and researchers, who are all important actors for ensuring the societal transition to achieve climate and sustainable development objectives is efficient *and* equitable.

The objective is to encourage government officials to explore synergies between climate change and sustainable development policies and reconcile these with domestic policy priorities. Undertaking a synergistic approach is particularly important in the context of present global challenges, including geopolitical insecurity, rising cost-of-living and post-pandemic recovery. With climate risks and impacts becoming increasingly pervasive, it is critical to seek synergies that can tackle the root causes of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, as well as rising global poverty and inequality, to ensure that no solution in one area causes negative trade-offs in another. Countries are starting to realize the importance of enhancing synergies in policy development and implementation. The outcome document of the Paris Agreement Global Stocktake (GST), for example, underlines the urgency of a comprehensive and synergistic approach to climate change and biodiversity loss in the context of implementing the SDGs.

Attention is now moving toward 2025, a crucial year for climate action, as Parties to the Paris Agreement are scheduled to submit new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), with higher ambition than current climate action plans. Recent evidence from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on implementation of current NDCs found positive links between the level of integration between NDC and domestic development priorities. Thus, to increase ambition, countries need to focus on synergies between the NDC, the SDGs and the domestic policy environment, which can help navigate domestic politics and avoid fragmentation that arises in traditional siloed policymaking. A focus on strengthening the status of the NDC domestically can be the starting point of a new political manifesto that can shift the narrative on climate change and the SDGs as net positive for the society.

The purpose of a synergistic approach is for countries to strengthen domestic sustainable development and climate ambition, whilst simultaneously ensuring that their global commitments are achieved. Nevertheless, the circumstances that countries are facing in implementation vary significantly between countries in the Global North and the Global South. Prioritized synergies and their outcomes will be different in different countries and regions and therefore require approaches that are specific and fit for purpose. By showcasing country-examples, this report elaborates how synergistic action on climate change and the SDGs can be implemented to promote efficient use of limited resources through effective policy design and measures for monitoring and evaluating outcomes. At the same time, countries have committed to implementing the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda, and the policy process for achieving these goals has universal components, such as coordination, coherence and integration. This report explains the relationship between these components and offers guidance to government officials to strengthen the institutional settings and improve policy processes and their outcomes.

While synergies are ubiquitous in policy reports and the academic literature, most of them showcase potential rather than evidence, as they tend to focus on alignment of objectives rather than actionable universal policy options. Most synergies fail to be leveraged to positive effect due to their specific nature when implemented nationally or locally. Misguided focus on synergistic processes alone to prioritize action, risks undermining justice as a core value and leaving vulnerable groups, ecosystems, countries and regions behind. A synergistic approach must therefore include processes that anticipate the effects from climate and sustainable development policies on vulnerable communities, regions and other sectoral and issue area goals and objectives.

Government officials and politicians also need to see a synergistic approach as a starting point to a long process towards achieving the global sustainability goals and the goals of the Paris Agreement. The ultimate purpose is to ensure meaningful integration between domestic priorities and global commitments in such a way that countries achieve a just energy transition, ensure that no one is left behind, and arrive at system-wide and transformative changes across the social, economic and environmental domains. Such system-wide reorganization of ideas, norms and values has been identified as essential to implementing the global sustainability goals.

The safest pathway towards ensuring that no one is left behind is by strengthening synergistic action between climate change and the SDGs. To this end, and with the new and more ambitious NDCs in mind, the report elaborates on strategies, resources and practical steps that government officials can take to increase policy coordination and coherence, and to meaningfully integrate climate change and sustainable development policies into their domestic policy landscape. This includes strengthening institutional coordination, removing silos, reducing fragmentation and enabling meaningful participation. It also includes strategies for overcoming incoherence in implementation, such as anticipating policy interaction and negative outcomes and reducing transaction costs from horizontal and vertical coordination. Thirdly, constraints of political economy are a major barrier for synergistic action, including norms and ideas that drive unsustainability and vested interests who stand to lose out from synergistic action. These constraints are, however, not insurmountable and the report elaborates how identification of shared ideas and visions of the benefits from climate and SDG action can work towards gaining broad societal acceptance. Similarly, it suggests how government officials can interact with interest groups that benefit from status quo.

Finally, the report calls on the international community, and particularly the United Nations, to coordinate and contextualize the multitude of tools and other resources that can facilitate synergistic action and develop a knowledge platform that takes stock from county-driven examples and experiences from synergistic action. Such a platform could help government officials find ready-made actions applicable to their domestic context, as well as lessons learned from failures and unsuccessful approaches.

1. Introduction

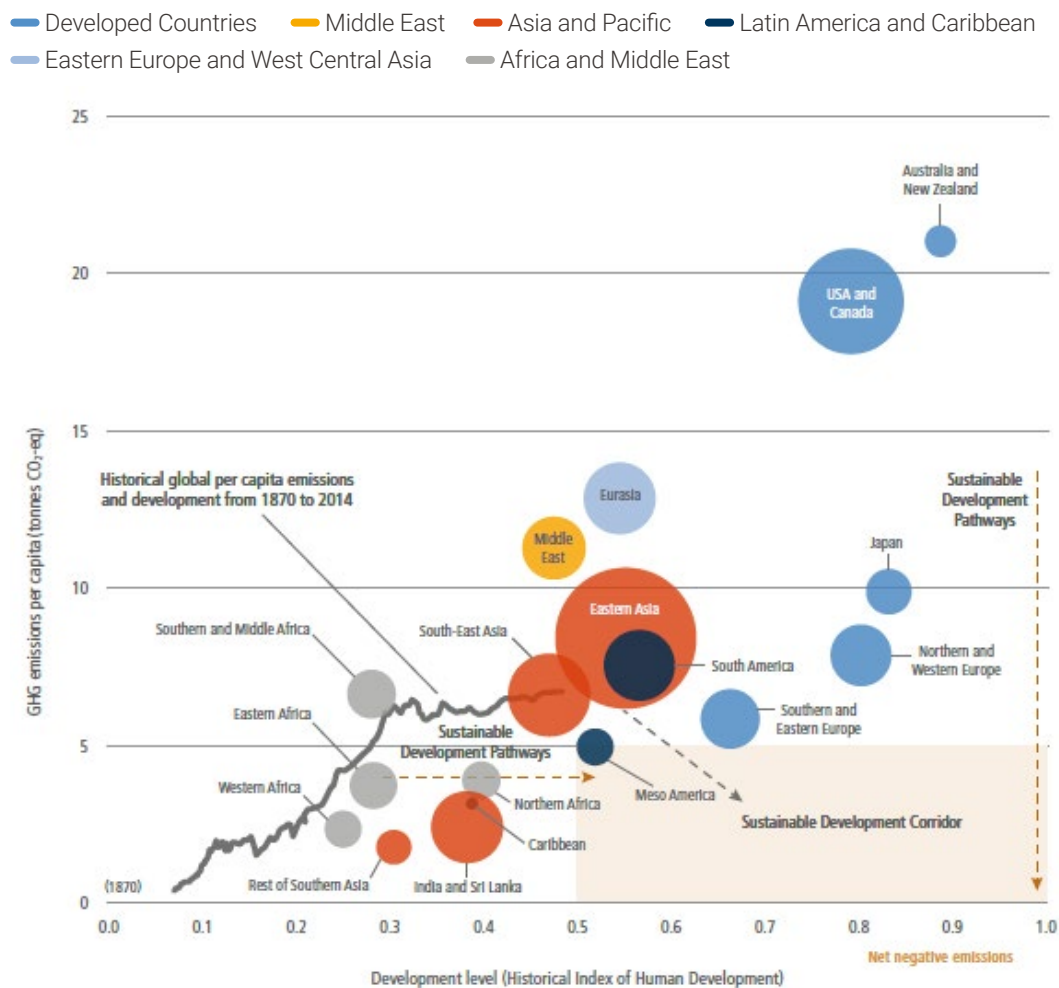
Despite the half-way mark to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) being passed last year, countries have not seized the opportunity to integrate their ambitions towards simultaneously pursuing the Paris Agreement and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. As biodiversity loss, pollution, environmental degradation and climate change risks and impacts are becoming increasingly pervasive, countries must identify and pursue synergies that can tackle their root causes and ensure that solutions in one area or one sector do not lead to negative consequences in others, but rather amplify positive impacts.

Both the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda went through stocktaking exercises in 2023, evaluating progress on implementation through the launch of the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) of the 2030 Agenda (GSDR, 2023) and the first Global Stocktake (GST), held at the COP28, aimed at assessing the world's collective progress towards achieving the objectives in the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2023). The outcome of both processes concluded that the progress so far was underwhelming, highlighting the increasing urgency in implementation and calling for accelerated action across all global sustainability goals.

To elaborate on the increasing urgency, Figure 1, from the most recent International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, shows that global emissions must decrease (vertical axis) whilst human development must simultaneously continue to increase (horizontal axis) for countries to maintain a position within the Sustainable Development Corridor that is flanked by GHG emissions on the one hand, and human development performance on the other. For that to happen, the historic relationship between emissions and human development (gray line) must change. The figure also shows the difference of regional per capita emissions (size of bubbles) and the necessity of tailoring sustainable development pathways to different national contexts. Many regions in the Global South need sufficient development space to be able to continue to grow to reach the corridor, while most regions in the Global North need a rapid transformation towards low-carbon and sustainable lifestyles (IPCC, 2023).

While implementation is lagging, politically, countries are realizing the importance of enhancing synergies. For example, the GST outcome document underlines the urgency of a comprehensive and synergistic approach to climate change and biodiversity loss in the context of implementing the SDGs. More concretely, the outcome document outlines a set of global efforts and collective targets on adaptation and mitigation, sending clear policy signals to countries to realize the synergistic potential between climate action and sustainable development, enhance international cooperation, and accelerate implementation (UNFCCC, 2023). Furthermore, the Sixth United Nations Environment Assembly, held in 2024, approved a resolution on promoting synergies, cooperation or collaboration to accelerate the implementation of global sustainability goals, thereby providing additional political impetus and action towards identifying and helping countries pursue synergistic approaches to tackle environmental and developmental challenges (UNEP, 2024a).

FIGURE 1. Sustainable development pathways



Source: IPCC, 2023

Attention is now shifting toward early 2025 when all parties to the Paris Agreement are expected to communicate new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the so called '3rd generation' NDCs with increased ambition. This process provides an opportunity for countries to advance the policy signals and 2030 targets emanating from the GST by seeking synergistic action between domestic policies and measures and international commitments on climate change and the SDGs.

Improving the standing of a country's NDC domestically, and the process to formulate and agree its goals and objectives, can be the starting point for a new political manifesto and shift the narrative on climate change and the SDGs as being a net positive for the society. Synergistic action can help navigate domestic politics and avoid fragmentation that arises in traditional siloed policymaking. This report aims to support government officials tasked with formulating coordinating and implementing climate and sustainable development policies, plans and strategies, including 3rd generation NDCs. It emphasizes the importance

of a synergistic approach in implementation and provides guidance by showcasing examples, tools and other resources for effective mainstreaming of climate change and sustainable development into domestic priorities for countries in the Global South and the Global North.

The report elaborates on strategies, resources and practical steps that government officials can take to identify, implement and evaluate synergies between climate change and the SDGs and provides empirical examples from key sectors and how they can be identified and pursued in ways that respond to domestic priorities. As synergistic action differs across countries and contexts due to structural, financial, and systemic differences, countries need tailored approaches for effective implementation. For example, challenges that Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are facing are often related to poverty alleviation, access to electricity and health services, and basic infrastructure. High-income countries, meanwhile, face different challenges, such as social exclusion, costs of health care and unsustainable consumption. This requires different approaches to implementing synergies and different measures to deal with policy interactions and their expected and unexpected outcomes, including those that arise outside the decision-making context, such as transboundary risks and effects.

However, while some aspects differ, others, such as job creation, economic growth and welfare are universal, as is the need for governments to reach internal compromises in the process to formulate and finalize their NDCs. Also, all countries face adaptation and mitigation challenges, and all have committed to implementing the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. The process to getting there is dependent on stronger integration between global commitments and national priorities and on increased international cooperation to share knowledge on identifying and implementing synergies and minimize trade-offs. While this report cannot go into individual contexts for all countries, it showcases examples of synergistic approaches across multiple country contexts – with different levels of income, vulnerability, governance structure and political leadership – focusing on both the nature of synergies, the importance of national and local contexts and constraints and on the universality of the underlying policy process. What is clear is that looking at the climate challenge through an SDG lens has net positive benefits for the NDC formulation process, as well as for securing increased domestic buy-in for its subsequent implementation.

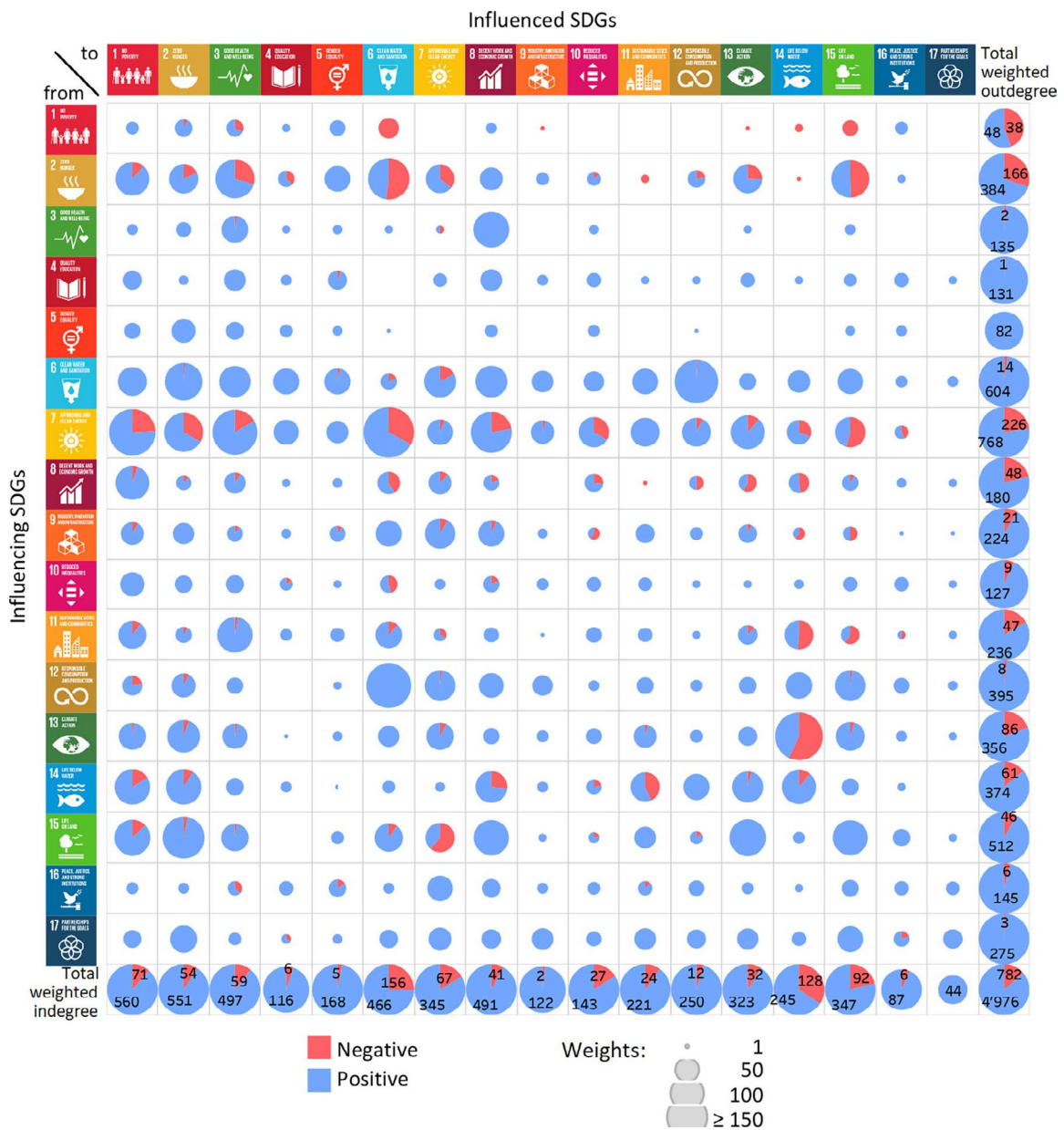
2. Climate and Sustainable Development: Entry Points for Synergistic Action

This section introduces the approach to synergistic action and elaborates on its contextual nature, the constraints of national and subnational capacity and the universality of a synergistic approach. It draws on the decisions taken at COP28, including the outcomes from the GST and the ongoing process of delivering the new NDCs, to present how they can support countries to meaningfully integrate climate and sustainable development objectives in the domestic policy process substantiated with empirical examples from multiple countries. The purpose of a synergistic approach is for countries to strengthen domestic sustainable development and climate ambitions, whilst simultaneously ensuring that their global commitments are achieved. In last year's report 'Tackling Climate and SDG Action Together', synergies were defined as referring to the combined or cooperative effects that occur when two or more actions interact in a way that produces a result greater than the sum of their individual contributions (UN, 2023:18). Following from this, in policy implementation, synergistic action increases efficiency in the whole policy process, minimizes risk across multiple sectors and issue areas and leads to more just and effective outcomes.

Multiple research outputs have shown the strong synergistic potential between SDGs (e.g., Bennich *et al.*, 2023; Dawes *et al.*, 2022) as well as between SDGs and the Paris Agreement (Dzebo and Shawoo, 2023; Moreno *et al.*, 2023). For example, a recent review of literature found supporting evidence of positive (and negative) interaction between SDGs (Figure 2), finding that synergies strongly outweigh trade-offs (Pham-Truffert *et al.*, 2020). Synergistic mitigation and adaptation action can contribute to the achievement of multiple SDGs, including energy (SDG 7), agriculture (SDG 2), water (SDG 6), biodiversity (SDG 15), infrastructure (SDG 9), employment (SDG 8) and human settlements (SDG 11), among others. See also (Box 3) for country-examples of climate-SDG synergies and their integration with domestic priorities.

In mitigation, for example, a global tripling of renewable energy capacity would lead to a significant increase of employment opportunities and have a positive economic effect on communities. Renewable energy jobs could rise from 12.7 million today to 38.2 million by 2030, more than offsetting losses in fossil fuel-sector jobs. It would also create industries along the value chain and spur industrial innovation. Such expansion of renewable energy capacity would also rapidly increase energy access to areas and communities that are still living without access to electricity, making progress on reducing poverty and inequality (Guilanpour *et al.*, 2023). Aside from reducing emissions, phasing out coal in favor of clean energy sources can provide significant public health and air quality benefits and mitigate the effects on vulnerable populations from policy measures that reflect the costs of fossil fuel pollution. When combined with vocational training and education initiatives for displaced workers in the fossil fuel sector trade-offs on employment can be minimized (Guilanpour *et al.*, 2023).

FIGURE 2. Matrix of evidence of positive and negative SDG interactions. Size indicates the weight of interaction or the supporting knowledge



Source: Pham-Truffert *et al.*, 2020

Similarly, for adaptation action, almost all SDGs are exposed to climate risks and impacts, whether through slow onset or extreme weather events. A recent study found that 86% of SDG targets are at the risk of being undermined and emphasized the importance of climate-proofing a wide variety of sectors, including wetlands, rivers, cropland, construction, water, electricity, and housing (Fuldauer *et al.*, 2022). Mangroves, for example, play a crucial role for coastal ecosystems as biodiversity hubs. They are equally important

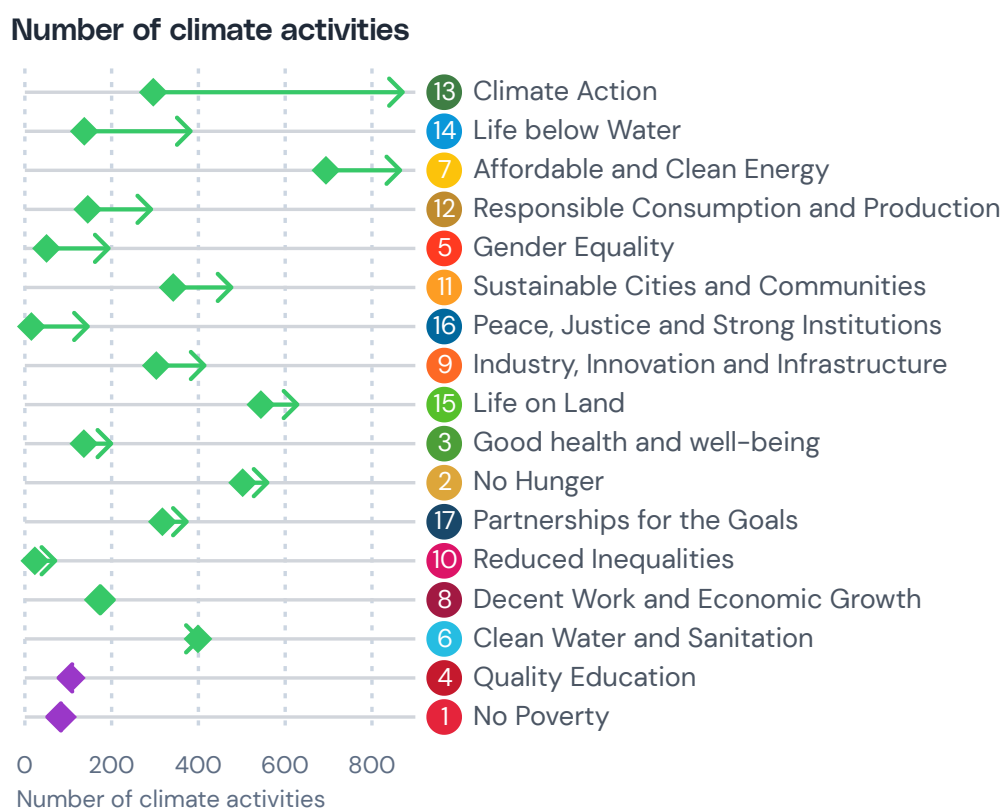
for coastal communities, providing protection from rising sea levels and extreme weather events and support and supporting long-term economic sustainable economic development. Despite covering less 1% of the world’s surface, they generate ca USD 40-50 billion annually in revenue from fishing, forestry, and recreation. As an additional service, mangroves have an ability to sequester up to four times more carbon than tropical forests (Khalidi *et al.*, 2024).

2.1 Building on the momentum from the global stocktake for the 3rd generation NDCs

Research on NDCs has already shown the connections between climate action and the SDGs and how they have increased over time, even when countries do not explicitly link these two processes. For example, (Figure 3) from the NDC-SDG Connections tool compares the number of activities in countries first and updated NDCs, showing an almost universal increase, with an increase of activities related to 15 of 17 Goals (Dzebo *et al.*, 2023).

For the 3rd generation of NDCs, enhancing ambition and integration in the domestic policy landscape are intertwined. The awareness of the importance of NDCs domestically has steadily increased over time, which makes the development of new climate action plans more complicated and challenging than before.

FIGURE 3. Change in climate activities between first and second generation NDCs



Source: Dzebo *et al.*, 2023

Box 1. NDC Integration with domestic priorities

- **Dominica:** In the formulation process of the updated NDC, Dominica placed resilience at the center declaring its ambition to become world's first "Climate-Resilient Nation". The country knows all too well the cost of climate change after Hurricane Maria inflicted damage in 2017 amounting to 226 percent of Dominica's GDP. To ensure resilience was a priority in its NDC, it was included alongside mitigation and adaptation as one of the three pillars that make up the country's integrated climate response. Another purpose of a resilience pillar was to function as a link between climate change, sustainable development and national development. Dominica's climate resilience vision is a developmental paradigm that seeks to 'climate proof' key pillars of national policy against the destructive impacts of extreme weather events.
- **Belize:** Following the 2020 general election, Belize began implementation of an ambitious agenda ("Manifesto for Change") for sustainable development and climate change. This translated into the establishment of a new Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management, helping to promote Belize as a green and sustainable country. This process built on years of work by Belize's government to identify risks and vulnerabilities and to articulate the importance of climate action. The knock-on effect is evidenced in Belize's updated NDC from 2021, which includes concrete implementation costings in its adaptation and mitigation targets, and direct links to the SDGs. The NDC revision process was supported by the UNDP and the NDC Partnership as well as the development of Belize's low-emission development strategy (LEDS).

Secondly, recent analysis from the UNDP on the second generation of NDCs has shown that countries that had strong integration between the NDC and domestic policy also were the most ambitious in their implementation (see also Box 1 for examples). Thirdly, the New Collective Quantified Goal on climate finance is set to be adopted in 2024 and has spurred countries to improve and quantify their climate activities in the next NDCs as well as developing integrated national financing frameworks. It has also increased the scope of the finance question by exploring issues beyond climate finance, such as derisking, debt, cost of capital and domestic mobilization. Finally, under the enhanced transparency framework under the Paris Agreement, countries are expected to submit biennial transparency reports ahead of their NDCs, which will provide data and information on, *inter alia*, progress towards current NDCs, policies and measures in place, impacts from climate change and adaptation measures, financial, technological and capacity-building support and needs. This exercise is timely as lack of data is consistently highlighted as a barrier for synergistic action between climate change and the SDGs.

This timing can also provide political momentum for an 'all hands on deck' approach across the whole society, as the complexity and the nature of the challenge reinforces the need to exploit positive synergies between climate action, sustainable development and domestic priorities. A synergistic approach provides a useful context for the various considerations, priority setting, and policy interaction that countries will need to think about when coming forward with more ambitious NDCs and how they will be implemented.

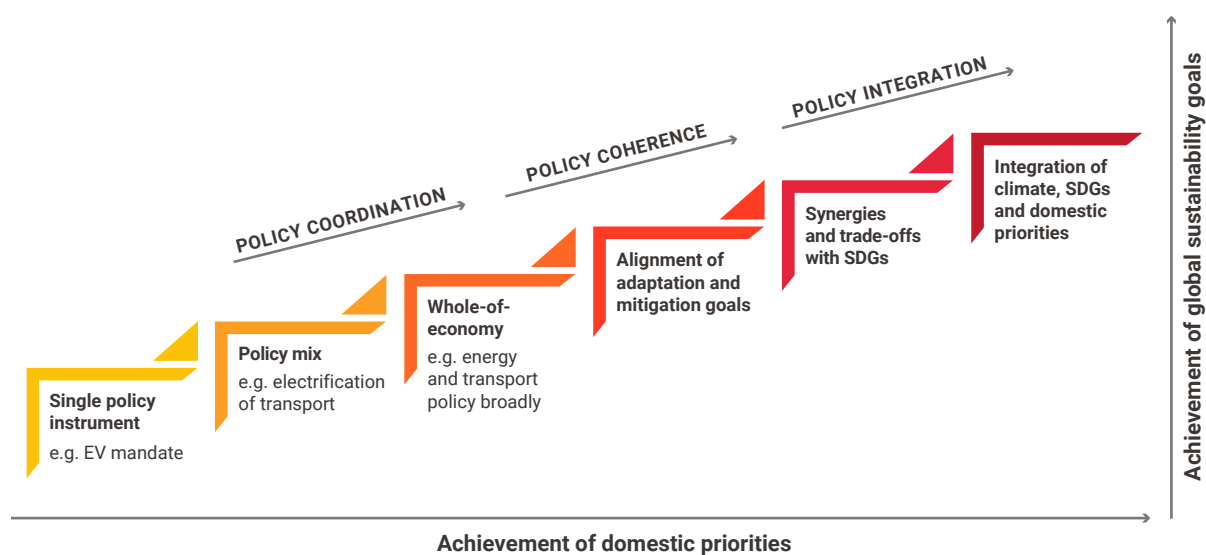
2.2 Policy processes for synergistic action

The entry point for identifying, evaluating and implementing synergies will be different depending on national contexts and domestic priorities. Synergies will be demonstrated against different SDGs and SDG targets depending on, inter alia, level of national income, vulnerability, and exposure to climate change risks and impacts. At the same time, there is a universality in the policy process as the components of synergistic action coordination, coherence and integration, are high on the agenda for most, if not all, governments that have committed to implementing the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda (Figure 4).

In the policy formulation process, vertical and horizontal coordination between ministries and departments is critical for agreeing on the broader vision and to ensure meaningful participation of practitioners, civil society and affected communities in the policy process. Coordination is also necessary for information sharing and establishing roles and responsibilities to ensuring alignment between policy objectives, especially when there is power imbalance between government departments. For instance, development of an integrated national financing framework can support cross-sectoral and cross-departmental coordination that integrates climate action and the SDGs in national development priorities, something the Maldives' gender responsive climate finance strategy aims to do (Box 2). It can also bring the ministries responsible for finance and planning to the table and ensure institutional and political buy-in (INFF, 2024).

The second component is ensuring coherence within and between different policy domains and ministries and agencies tasked with planning strategic decisions involving complex policy interactions, including at the subnational level. The nature of (positive and/or negative) interactions across multiple sectors, including their feedback loops, need to be balanced; whilst expected (and unexpected) outcomes anticipated where appropriate policy instruments and budgeting should enhance synergies and minimize the trade-offs. Policy tools, such as strategic foresight analysis or the [SDG Synergies tool](#), which has been used to this effect in Sri Lanka and Mongolia (See Box 2) to assess effects from policy interaction can provide a basis for priority-setting and assessing alternative development pathways (Weitz *et al.*, 2019).

FIGURE 4. Policy processes for synergistic action



Box 2. Evidence of coordination, coherence and integration to achieve synergistic action

- The Maldives' gender-responsive climate finance strategy integrated the country's Strategic Action Plan and NDC, with a gender equality focus. Having had several agencies involved in the Finance Strategy formulation, since its launch a year ago, implementation is well under way for 6 of the 16 policy objectives. To monitor the outcomes from implementation, the government of the Maldives established an impact-oriented approach. In its first phase, an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting framework is being developed with the Capital Market Development Authority, the regulator for capital markets in Maldives.
- Lao People's Democratic Republic, developed an integrated financing strategy to support the implementation of the country's 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan. The process of designing the financing strategy was led by the Ministry of Planning and Investment and engaged a total of 10 ministries, 20 national institutions, 15 development partners, and representatives from the private sector through a series of structured consultation discussions. Shifting focus from policy design to implementation of the strategy, the government explored policy interaction in the proposed actions and found that over almost all 54 actions require the involvement of more than one government department, while 60 % of actions connect across least two issue areas. To ensure integration and draw on the synergistic potential, the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the UNDP and the World Bank, developed institutional support structures, including the establishment of a financing strategy secretariat that will assist delivery, coordination and regular reporting, as well as ensuring alignment across ministries.
- To assess policy interaction in SDG implementation, the governments of Sri Lanka and Mongolia, together with the Stockholm Environment Institute and the UNDP, applied the SDG Synergies tool to assess interactions between SDG targets that were deemed priority by the government. SDG Synergies is a flexible tool for analysis of policy interactions that can be implemented through stakeholder interaction, self-assessment or system dynamic modelling. The results from SDG Synergies were used as input by the government to support priority setting across sustainable development and align institutional arrangements, including cross-sectoral partnerships and collaborations for integrated implementation.

Finally, to ensure maximum efficiency, the implementation plan should build on interaction assessments and ensure that there are integrated structures for enforcement and continuous monitoring and evaluation of consequences from combined climate and sustainable development policies, particularly on those who might fail to benefit. For example, auditing tools, monitoring and evaluation frameworks for tracking progress, such as the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) framework for SDG-related audits, can support preparedness and identify gaps to support long-term effects from synergies (INTOSAI, 2022).

2.3 Limitations

Despite the seeming logic and importance of synergies, practical implementation is fraught with challenges. Synergies are abundant when analyzing alignment of policy objectives, but their materialization is much more challenging in practice (Moallemi *et al.*, 2022). The nature of synergies is dependent on local and national contexts and constraints, meaning that a synergistic approach will require tailored strategies in different locations (Xing *et al.*, 2024). However, even when synergies are easy to identify, they can be difficult to implement, due to siloed decision-making, poor coordination, or perception of high transaction costs for coordination by government officials (OECD, 2016). However, the alternative cost to not seeking synergies can be orders of magnitude worse and increase the risk of policy failure.

There are also limitations to what a synergistic approach can achieve. Issues such as data limitations and institutional capacity, are providing challenges to many countries in the Global South and can prevent thorough analysis of the cost-efficiency of synergies, for example, by calculating economic and health benefits to garner broader support. In the Global North, countries face different institutional challenges, such as institutional silos and fragmentation of decision-making due to overly specialized ministries and agencies or lack of adequate citizen engagement and stakeholder consultation. Moreover, even in perfect institutional settings, political barriers can arise and prevent synergistic action, such as vested interests of powerful groups or false dichotomies between economic growth and social and environmental goals (Shawoo *et al.*, 2023). Even under such scenarios, effective coordination can help alleviate trade-offs and work towards reducing inefficiencies and negative impacts across different sectors (Nilsson and Weitz 2019). Nevertheless, a purely institutional approach to synergistic action will not yield benefits unless political obstacles are navigated.

Some domestic climate and sustainable development policies, even when implemented effectively, will lead to adverse outcomes on vulnerable communities, no matter what. This calls for investigating the relationship between outcomes from climate and sustainable development policies and consequences on inequality and which groups face the highest burdens (Browne *et al.*, 2023), as well as potential negative consequences in other countries. Synergies contain an international dimension and should be considered as a core principle in international cooperation. This complexity underscores the need for a more integrated and coordinated national approach to ensure effective design and implementation. A synergistic approach is not an end goal but a starting point to a longer process towards transforming economic, social and political governance systems.

Box 3. Evidence of coordination, coherence and integration to achieve synergistic action

Tripling renewable energy

Australia: An analysis of the rollout of large-scale renewable energy infrastructure in regional areas found that there is a significant degree of coherence between goals on climate change mitigation, renewable energy and social equity goals. For example, the design of the New South Wales Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap raised standards for engagement with regional communities and First Nations peoples. This ensured formal requirements for community engagement through stakeholder consultation workshops and improved partnerships between local governments and community organizations. The rapid and massive scale of ambition has not been without its problems. Nevertheless, the renewables sector has provided rural development by generating alternative jobs for fossil fuel workers, while surrounding infrastructure supports tourism development as alternative to coal mining, putting a dent in the powerful vested interests of the fossil fuel lobby (Pickering and Chalaye, 2023).

Transitioning away from fossil fuels

Germany: Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to a significant policy shift in Germany's energy transition – the *Energiewende*. The *Easter Package*, rolled out in Spring 2022, increased the ambition of renewable energy targets and laws to create synergies between climate action and energy security. These targets are to be implemented in tandem with existing laws such as the *Coal Exit Law* and the *Federal Climate Change Act*. To ensure alignment of policy objectives and synergistic implementation, climate, energy and economic issues were integrated into one ministry by the new German government (Faus Onbargi and Dombrowsky, 2023).

Kenya: The Kenyan energy sector's overall goal is to ensure the provision of affordable, competitive, sustainable and reliable energy at the least cost to achieve the national development needs, while protecting the environment. The key priority is the achievement of universal access to electricity by 2030 and clean cooking technologies by 2028. Despite inadequate resources for policy implementation and increasing public debt, electricity access has increased from 73% to 76%, improving the reliability of electricity supply. While the priority has been to increase energy access, the sector has increased the share of renewable energy in the electricity generation mix from 76% in 2017 to 87% in 2022 and has led to GHG emission reduction in the electricity generation sector. Meanwhile, the Kenyan civil society's ambition to ensure a just energy transition managed to halt, with support from international advocacy organizations, several large-scale fossil fuel development projects (Muhoza *et al.*, 2024).

Food and agricultural production

The Philippines: The agriculture sector in the Philippines employs almost a quarter of all workers in the country and constitutes the second largest source of emissions. A recent assessment of policy interaction between the agriculture sector, national climate targets and the government's *Green Jobs* agenda, which promotes employment that contributes to preserving or restoring the quality of the environment, was found to be highly synergistic with the potential to successfully contribute to the achievement of Philippine's climate and SDG commitments. One key binding element were efforts to increase equity, which were supported by the presence of integrated legislation between renewable energy, agriculture, food security and protection of farmer livelihoods (de Leon *et al.*, 2024).

Ecosystems and biodiversity

Brazil: Brazil's greenhouse gas emissions are dominated by agriculture and land-use change, especially from deforestation. Between 2004-2012, the government of Brazil managed to reduce deforestation rates by 84%, thanks to the effectiveness of the *Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Legal Amazon (PPCDAm)* and the enforcement of the *Forest Code*. One key for policy instrument of the PPCDAm was the *DETER* satellite system, used for monitoring deforestation hotspots. This allowed effective vertical coherence between federal and state-level government departments and more effective law enforcement through inspection and collection of environmental fines. The reduction of deforestation led to preservation of ecosystem services. However, over time political interference and budget cuts led to declined effectiveness of the PPCDAm shows the even the most effective policy instruments need long-term political and financial support (World Bank, 2023).

Resilience of Infrastructure and human settlements

Colombia: As part of its *National Green Growth Strategy*, in 2016, the Colombian government enacted Latin America's first mandatory green building code. The certification standard *EDGE* is a building certification tool that enables investors and developers to calculate the cost of going green. It was developed by the *International Finance Corporation*, a branch of the *World Bank Group*, and has contributed to significant change in the construction sector in Colombia. Five years later, by the end of 2022, in total 11.5 million square meters (ca USD 11.5 billion worth of floor space) of *EDGE*-certified green spaces had either been built or were under construction. Moreover, between 2021-2022, 27% of new buildings in Colombia were certified green by *EDGE*, reducing energy and water consumption through sustainable construction practices and contributing to lower emissions. The success of this initiative is attributed to the decisiveness of the Colombian government and support and buy-in at an early stage from the *Colombian Chamber of Construction (CAMACOL)*. To match the ambition with implementation, the government introduced appropriate policy instruments, including tax incentives for technical solutions such as insulation and energy-efficient air conditioning systems. *CAMACOL* organized training of developers and professional certifiers (World Bank, 2023).

3. Ensuring Just, Equitable and Transformative Outcomes

This section examines two challenges that government officials encounter when identifying and implementing synergistic action. The first is anticipating, deliberating and avoiding adverse impacts from policy outcomes on justice and equity within and between regions, societal groups and generations. The second is ensuring that synergistic actions drive transformative change, that is, system-wide reorganization of ideas, norms and values across political, economic and social structures (cf. IPBES, 2019). The section explores each of these challenges with examples and proposes a way forward to begin to connect work on synergies outlined in Sections 1 and 2, with insights and approaches from work on sustainable development transformations.

3.1 The need for synergies that leave no one behind

As the recent GSDR (2023) highlights, sustainable development has to be put into action in contexts where intertwined ecological, social, political and economic instabilities and crises are the reality. These crises pose a significant risk for successful outcomes from synergistic actions, as currently the global development pathway is reinforcing poverty, inequality, conflict and environmental degradation. Misguided efforts to implement climate and sustainable development policies pose a significant risk of leaving many individuals, groups, regions and places behind. It is critical to grow institutional capacity and implement approaches that incorporate consideration of policy outcomes and anticipate expected and unexpected consequences, particularly on vulnerable communities who stand to be adversely impacted, as well as account for important interdependencies in connected systems from local to global (See Box 4).

Misguided focus on synergies alone to prioritize action, risks undermining justice as a core value and leaving vulnerable groups, ecosystems, countries and regions behind. While some groups will benefit from synergistic implementation, other may not benefit at all, or worse, may incur the risks and costs of that action (Browne *et al.*, 2023). Targets for reducing vulnerability, poverty and inequality or for addressing aspects of biodiversity loss are seldom perceived as having the highest priority and are often deprioritized compared to targets in the economic dimension of sustainable development (Bennich *et al.*, 2023). However, they are critically important for vulnerable and marginalized groups and regions. They are also disproportionately impacted by failures to achieve other targets (Dzebo and Shawoo 2023).

Domestic synergistic action also needs to consider cross-scale effects and the sub-national and/or supra-national consequences from domestic synergistic actions (Keys *et al.*, 2019). Progress in one country or one sector can undermine progress in another or redistribute vulnerability to multiple countries and sectors (Atteridge and Remling, 2018), resulting in a 'whole that is less than the sum of its parts'. For example, reforestation programs can lead to multiple synergies with other SDGs and can be seen as a success when measured nationally. However, if indicators accounted for local and cross-border effects, the efforts on reforestation can be cancelled out by increased deforestation abroad that occurs as a consequence, as was the case with reforestation programs in China (Downing *et al.*, 2021).

Box 4. SDG Synergies 2.0 pilot project: Cross-scale policy interactions in Monterrey, Mexico

A new version of [SDG Synergies tool](#) that allows for exploring cross-scale analysis and spillover effects across political and geographical levels is under development. It was piloted in Monterrey, Mexico, where SDG Synergies was used to analyze policy interaction between mitigation and adaptation measures in the city action plan and key sectoral objectives in the Nuevo León State Climate Change Programme (PECC) as well as the actions of state government institutions in charge of the program. Furthermore, PECC and other state-level policies were mapped to the SDGs, to study the alignment and contribution of the state to the 2030 Agenda. The exercise focused on anticipating how the implementation of state-level policies influence policy outcomes at the local level, and *vice versa*. This is the first time SDG Synergies has been used for cross-scalar interaction analysis and the new function will be launched in the 3rd quarter of 2024.

As another example, some carbon emissions trading schemes, even when effective, may actually result in the concentration of dirtier industries in poorer communities, redistributing rather than reducing global emissions and creating pollution hot-spots, and adverse health impacts on vulnerable populations.

3.2 The need for synergies that are transformative

Senior government officials and other policy makers and practitioners need to critically examine how climate and sustainable development policies and actions can reinforce existing societal lock-ins. A key question that is not sufficiently considered is ‘can synergistic action within existing socio-economic system steer towards transformative changes of the same system and catalyze deeper change processes that align with values and norms of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris agreement?’

Evidence suggests that synergies which target technological and behavioral advances will not be enough to realize sustainable development objectives (Rammelt *et al.*, 2023). This is especially relevant in the identification of synergistic actions which have in the past tended to rely on incremental improvements and short-term fixes. The environmental dimension of sustainable development, for example, is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. Nevertheless, its importance for achieving the economic and social goals tend to be overlooked in the implementation (Blicharska *et al.*, 2023; Scharlemann *et al.*, 2020). For example, transitioning away from fossil fuels to fully renewable energy production, without reduction of global consumption levels, is expected to lead to an 60% increase of global extraction of raw materials by 2060, according to the most recent UN Global Resource Outlook Report. Already today, natural resource extraction has soared by almost 400% since the 1970s (UNEP, 2024b).

3.3 Approaches for transformation to sustainable development

Several tools exist to help government officials and other decision-makers and practitioner explore the potential for a set of synergistic action efforts, and relationships, to contribute to system-wide and transformative change. One set of tools are transformative frameworks that are structured around

Box 5. Examples of probing questions

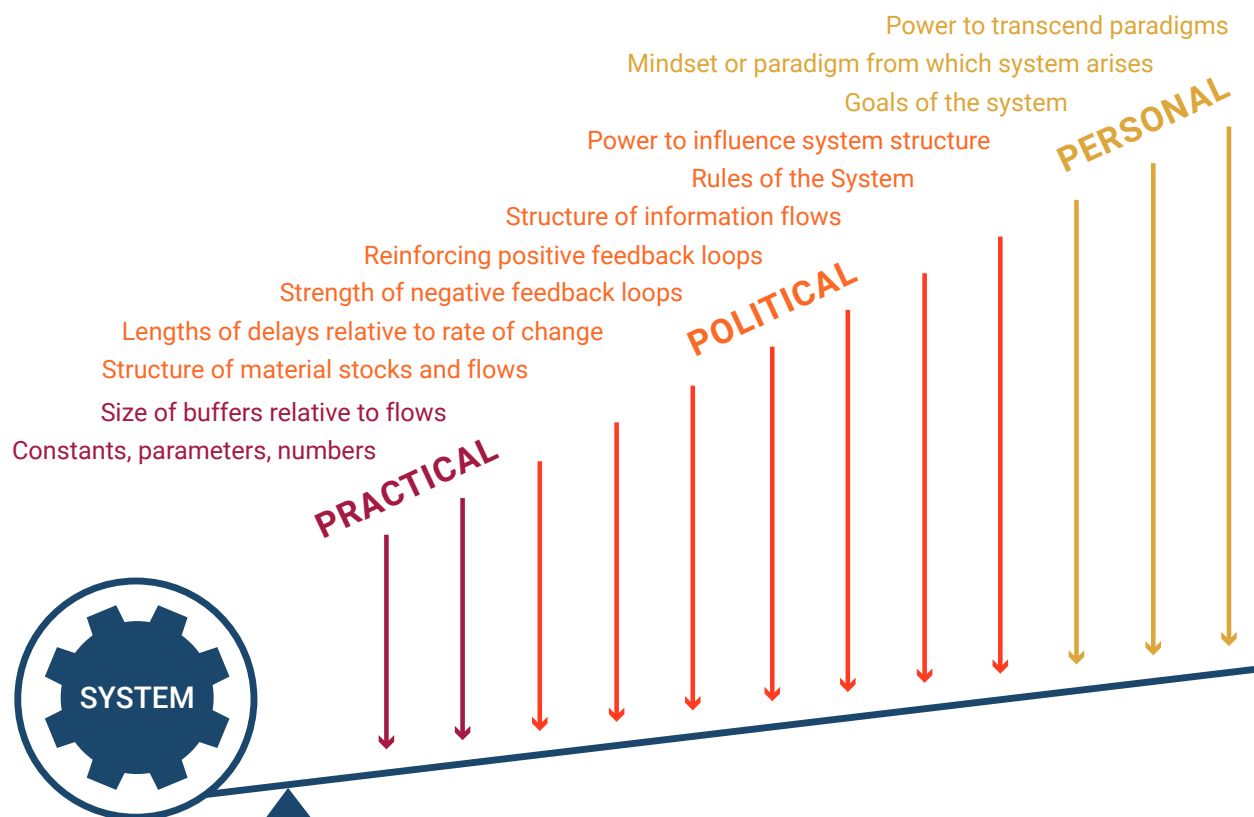
- How are economic, ecological, social, informational, material, technological, and cultural resources flowing? Who controls what? Who benefits (or does not)? How is the synergistic action embedded in this environment?
- Who holds authority? How is it exercised? How does a synergistic approach affect the balance of power and vested interest standing to lose?
- What norms, meanings, and values might engender unsustainability, inequity, and injustice? How will the proposed synergistic action address these?
- What feedbacks or relationships are operating? Where and how does the synergistic action intersect and interact with them? Is it intentionally trying to change them?
- What relationships dominate and hold the system in a particular state? How do they create connections between humans, and between humans, the non-human, and the planet? Does the synergistic action challenge, change, or reinforce these patterns?

“probing questions of how, what, and why existing patterns of resource use [and relationships] exist and what specific factors need to change at multiple scales (individual, societal, technical, cultural)” (Parris et al., 2022:25) Probing questions can be useful in clarifying how synergistic action can change the relationships and dynamics of the existing system, and could serve as important starting points for government officials in the policy formulation process to analyze the problem together with key stakeholders from multiple scales, perspectives and longer time horizons (Box 5).

Another useful approach that might help understand whether an identified synergistic action is likely to drive transformative change is the system leverage points approach, which specifically focuses on ‘where’ and at ‘what level’ synergistic actions should intervene in a system to create the desired change. This leverage points approach is based on the notion that some interventions are more likely to result in transformative changes, while others are shallower and only result in minor changes in a specific outcome (e.g., Abson et al., 2017; Meadows, 1999). The system is visualized as a hierarchical framework of leverage points from shallow (easy to implement but resulting in little change) to deep (harder to implement but potentially transformative) (Figure 5).

The shallow leverage points (often called the practical sphere) primarily focus on behaviors and technical responses – the more popular technocratic parameters and resources often targeted by policy makers. The Political leverage points take a wider systems approach and include actions that aim at addressing institutional interdependencies and feedback that drive sustainability outcomes. This includes changes in regulations, norms and institutions. The final set of deep personal leverage points include actions and processes which aim to shift power, goals, paradigms and values that undermine sustainability efforts,

FIGURE 5. Leverage points for systems change



Source: Meadows, 1999

including shifts away from growth-based models to new 'green' paradigms. For example, a review of food and energy interventions for climate action found that priorities in both sectors were rarely addressing deeper system properties such as norms and equality, instead prioritizing a technological or economic problem framing. However, such interventions alone are unlikely to result in system wide change because key system characteristics, feedback and power relations remain unchanged (Dorninger *et al.*, 2020).

4. How to Make It Happen – Strategies and Resources for Enabling Synergies

As the GSDR points out, it is not whether or not transformation will happen but rather its speed, direction, and consequences (GSDR, 2023:63ff). This section serves as a practical guide for government officials on how to navigate institutional and political challenges when coordinating, formulating and implementing climate and sustainable development policy, with an emphasis on preparing the 3rd generation NDCs. It elaborates on practical steps that can be taken to increase policy coordination and coherence, and to meaningfully integrate climate change and sustainable development policies into the domestic policy landscape.

4.1 Strengthening the institutional environment

As shown in the previous sections, institutional barriers to synergistic action exist can be found across all country contexts and levels of economic development. Here we focus on three actionable steps that do not imply a need to reinvent the wheel, and where synergies can work within existing governance structures.

One critical need is to break down institutional siloes that often prevent government departments, agencies and other stakeholders from working across climate and other sustainable development remits. However, while siloes are common, they are not permanent; there are examples of institutional arrangements that support synergies and can motivate other countries to do the same. For example, China has set up a power sharing arrangement between the National Development Reform Commission (NDRC) and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) that facilitates the co-control between climate change and air pollution. Synergies driving this action have also been confirmed in recent research, showing evidence that combating air pollution aligns with sustainable development in China (Zhou *et al.*, 2024).

Checklists or probing questions can be developed to help policymakers understand how different agencies can coordinate and implement synergies between climate change and sustainable development priorities. For example, policy coordination can be improved by applying institutional checklists or scoreboards, such as the OECD's Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development framework to improve communication, negotiation and information sharing between government officials, practitioners and civil society (OECD, 2018). Probing questions, (See Box 5), can provide a useful complement to ensure long-term consistency in implementation and compromise where adverse outcomes cannot be avoided.

Another institutional catalyst involves identifying and engaging champions to help strengthen institutional coordination. Leadership and political will to pull together the varying mandates of different agencies can be facilitated through institutional mechanisms that motivate and enable champions to step forward. Such mechanisms could be to enable influence, ownership, and encourage physical presence at the point of change, persuasiveness, grit, and participative leadership styles (Bonawitz *et al.*, 2020). Creating or using existing mechanisms as suggested can provide the kind of financial, reputational or other desirable benefits that motivate peer-learning, context appropriate replication, and scaling of synergistic actions.

Finally, one crucial component for strengthening the institutional environment is to ensure meaningful participation of different stakeholders in the entire policy process, from agenda-setting and policy formulation to evaluation of outcomes. Civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders can ensure diverse perspectives and needs are heard and reflected in decisions and increase transparency and accountability and societal buy-in. Evidence has shown that effective stakeholder participation occurs when stakeholders are well-informed. This does, however, not occur spontaneously but is instead driven by political organizing from advocacy organizations and local communities, often via support from the international community (Ravikumar *et al.*, 2018).

4.2 Overcoming policy incoherence

A related but not insuperable challenge for synergies is policy incoherence, the absence of a systematic and coordinated policy process that maximizes efficiency and minimizes risks and trade-offs between climate change and sustainable development. Incoherence can occur at each step of policymaking, resulting in overlooked or neglected risks to society. Its drivers include poor communication between relevant ministry departments and agencies and poorly integrated vertical policy implementation structures between state, federal and/or sub-national level, (Moure *et al.*, 2021). In most cases, incoherence leads to ineffective and unequal outcomes (Browne *et al.*, 2023).

However, policy incoherence is neither permanent nor immutable. It is possible to anticipate conflicts or sources of incoherence. Data-driven or stakeholder-based tools for analyzing policy alignment, interaction and anticipation can help identify and reconcile possible tensions before they become problematic. For example, [SDG Synergies](#) (See Boxes 2 & 4) is a tool that can be utilized together with experts and stakeholders to assess and score policy interaction and develop options where trade-offs are persistent. It has been used by multiple countries, regions and municipalities as well as the European Union (Carlsen *et al.*, 2022). Foresight analysis, or risk-benefit analyses—a technique that may be particularly well suited to anticipating inequitable distributional impacts—can also shed light on possible negative trade-offs or adverse impacts. In some cases, government officials will need to work with technical experts or universities to use these tools or tailor them to their own context. Other methods such as participatory budgeting, citizen juries and referendums could also facilitate cooperation within and beyond government.

At the same time, it is important to note that synergistic action is not a purely institutional process. It involves actors who seek to advance their own interests. It is characterized by power dynamics, vested interests, and political and economic structures that shape its outcomes (Brand *et al.*, 2021; Shawoo *et al.*, 2023). Some incoherence will always exist in all policy processes as democratically and transparently dealing with a multiplicity of voices and policy frames, will involve painful trade-offs (den Hertog, 2018).

4.3 Navigating political constraints

Recognizing and carefully navigating political constraints can be difficult – because they are embedded in norms and ideas and/or driven by vested interests. They are not always immediately visible. They also require consideration beyond technical fixes such as the planning tools and checklists mentioned previously. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for using politics to open space for working across climate and other parts of the sustainable development agenda.

One relatively low-cost way forward for working around political constraints is identifying a nationally driven shared vision for the future that builds on climate and sustainable development synergies. To some extent, this kind of synergistic framing is already happening in the growing body of work that calls on policymakers to transform, *inter alia*, food, energy, water, biodiversity and transport systems in ways that are also good for climate resilience and societal well-being. Identifying pathways for multi-sector systemic change – as mentioned in Section 3 – involve deliberation and visioning on what kind of society is desired and back-casting exercises on how to achieve it. A successful narrative can generate a sense of inevitability and catalyze movement in a new more sustainable direction. This envisioning exercise is part and parcel of the growing emphasis on co-design and co-production of knowledge that can help strengthen connections between research, policy and the civil society. It is also likely to be fostered by a culture of multi-stakeholder dialogue, including supportive education for not only policymakers but also politicians who may or may not be allies in the struggle against climate change.

To some extent, finding political allies will entail leveraging the inherent interconnections in the synergies framing to build coalitions of change. This framing may involve, for example, connecting climate change into ideological, philosophical and ethical discussions that can appeal to interest groups who may not support climate action. It may also involve narratives about how protecting the climate and strengthening planetary resilience is consistent with religious or cultural values and norms. It may similarly be important to find connections with real world issues such as jobs or tax reductions that motivate people to vote or otherwise express political support. Finally, it may entail highlighting that a healthy climate is prerequisite for resilience of not only existing but also future generations. In using this more expansive framing, the pursuit of synergies can help elevate discourse above the frequently fractious left and right debate and bring people from diverse walks of life together.

Another way to use synergies is to build coalitions of change that foresee political and vested interests that often stand in the way of cooperation. This could involve a careful mapping of, and engagement with, the industries and interest groups that may potentially lose out from climate actions. It may similarly entail identifying policy mixes and designs that help mollify their concerns. Another way to overcome sometimes locked in interests is to work within the existing partisan institutions to bridge political divides. For example, [Denmark's 2030 Network](#) or [Germany's Enquete Commission](#) are parliamentary platforms that work to foster dialogue across political parties to incorporate scientific and citizens' knowledge. Other countries may also work through existing legislative or *ad hoc* committees to identify mutually beneficial compromises and opportunities for cooperation.

Yet another key to circumvent political constraints is to recognize that financing can be a crucial enabler of change. Many financial mechanisms can motivate international cooperation across global sustainability goals. Notable examples include green tax, auditing and budget tagging practices or alignment with the global sustainability goals. As also implied in previous sections, this may not necessarily require crafting new mechanisms. Rather existing taxing schemes can be updated to price in unsustainable use of commons and deliver benefits to underprivileged communities (Dixson-Decleve *et al.*, 2022). There is a similar need to make the synergies argument more central to climate and development finance at international and regional levels. This could entail provisions that build capacity to enhance direct access sub-nationally and provide preferential treatment for projects and programs supported by the global climate

and development funds and the Article 6 Finance Mechanism under the Paris Agreement. There is also a role for micro-finance, ODA, and FDI to factor in synergies between climate and development priorities in allocating and accounting for resource flows.

A final option that can help work around domestic political challenges involves moving synergies discussions to regional and global levels. Plurilateral settings where countries with shared risks and interests may encounter lower levels of friction than bilateral or multi-lateral fora. Existing processes such as the G7 and G20 are two initiatives that may be amenable to supporting synergies, for example, in helping exchange synergistic good practices or address negative spillovers from value chains that involve several countries as well as eliminate perverse incentives that continue to reward unsustainable behavior. One key and clear example of low-hanging fruit are fossil fuel subsidies. The recently approved UNEA resolution on synergies is another example that is likely to help create momentum and opportunities for enhancing synergies. The resolution may also help to bring coherence to reporting mechanisms around climate change, biodiversity and the SDGs. Finally it may be possible to strengthen the appeal for synergies among the private sector by including synergistic performance indicators in financial disclosure processes such as the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures, Sustainability Disclosure Standards, and the European Sustainability Reporting Standards, which involve different relevant stakeholders along the value chain.

4.4 Frameworks, tools and other resources to enable synergistic action

As noted above, there is no shortage of tools and good practices that illustrate the benefits of synergies. This report has mentioned several that can be helpful at various stages of the policy process. There are also publications (e.g., ADB and UNEP, 2019) and online platforms that summarize and organize tools, guidelines and online courses for climate change and sustainable development integration and implementation, including [UN SDG:Learn](#), [SDG Acceleration toolkit](#), [SES Toolkit](#), [UNPAN Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs](#) and [the FAO Climate Risk Toolbox](#).

There may nonetheless be a lack of easily accessible and transferable knowledge on implementation of these tools and the synergies they have delivered, or trade-offs they have helped to minimize, in different contexts, such as national, regional and sub-national or sectoral or issue areas. A platform of synergies in the form of case studies or step-by-step processes of policy formulation, content, implementation and outcomes could not only meaningfully support decision-makers and practitioners but would also complement the recommendations from the task force on the role of knowledge and data. The proposed platform may be designed to concretely demonstrate synergetic examples and embed tools and other resources in that context, for example, in terms of the main features and functions, how they have been applied in decision-making contexts and what outcomes they have contributed to.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- There are clear benefits to a synergistic approach to climate and sustainable development policy implementation. To reap these benefits, countries need to improve the standing of their next NDC domestically and improve integration between climate action, the SDGs and domestic priorities. As progress on the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda is faltering, government officials in all countries tasked with implementing the global sustainability agendas have the responsibility to translate these synergies to their national context to accelerate implementation.
- To accelerate implementation, traditional supply-driven actions should be combined with demand-side interventions and behavioral shifts in, for example, diets, modes of transportation and consumption to ensure the availability and quality of natural resources for future generations. It is particularly important to increase awareness about the value of nature for the achievement of other climate goals and SDGs.
- To translate synergies from paper to practice, scientists, government officials and politicians must improve the science-policy interface. There is a wealth of academic publications on policy coordination, coherence and integration. What is lacking, however, are collaborative approaches and co-production of knowledge that deliver contextualized policy-relevant insights on the nature of synergies and how policy interactions and implementation processes can lead to effective, fair and just implementation.
- To be truly transformative, a synergistic approach needs to better account for interacting processes, consider local to global interdependencies and assess and anticipate outcomes from climate and sustainable development policies and their adverse consequences on at risk groups. To increase accountability, government officials should utilize tools and methodologies, such as the SDG Synergies 2.0, that consider interdependencies at all scales, including cross-border and more distant spillovers from domestic synergistic actions.
- Synergistic action is not the responsibility of government officials alone. To develop a positive vision of climate resilience and sustainable development, politicians in all countries are responsible for leadership that encourages an all-hands-on-deck approach that enables meaningful collaboration and interaction between all branches of the government, courts, parliaments, national and local councils, as well as the media, science and civil society.
- There are multiple tools, platforms and methodologies that can facilitate a synergistic approach. What is missing, however, is knowledge about their implementation and its consequences. An international organization, such as the United Nations, should curate a new knowledge platform with the objective of showcasing on-the-ground country examples of synergistic action with ready-to-go actionable steps and guidelines and lessons learned from failures to support countries and government officials.

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Co-conveners



United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs



United Nations
Framework Convention on Climate Change

The report is part of the series of four Thematic Reports contributing to the final, Synthesis Report, which together constitutes the 2024 edition of the Global Report on Climate and SDG Synergy led by the [Expert Group on Climate and SDG Synergy](#). Co-convened by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat in May 2023, the Group consists of 14 renowned experts from diverse thematic and geographic backgrounds. Its task is to provide up-to-date analysis and recommendations based on scientific evidence and innovative approaches on how to tackle climate and SDG action in synergy. The Group is composed as follows:

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- **Luis Gomez Echeverri** (Colombia) International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)
- **Heide Hackmann** (South Africa) Future Africa, University of Pretoria

Members

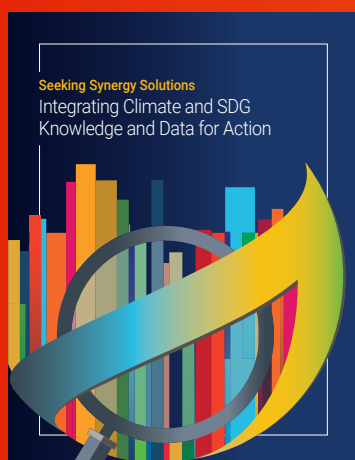
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- **Felix Creutzig** (Germany) Technical University of Berlin
- **Meagan Fallone** (New Zealand) Step Up Advisers, Ltd. and CARE,
- **Kaveh Guilanpour** (United Kingdom) Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES)
- **Ma Jun** (China) Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs (IPE)
- **Måns Nilsson** (Sweden) Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)
- **Tulullah Oni** (United Kingdom/Nigeria) University of Cambridge and UrbanBetter
- **Youba Sokona** (Mali) Former Vice Chair of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
- **Soumya Swaminathan** (India) M S Swaminathan Research Foundation
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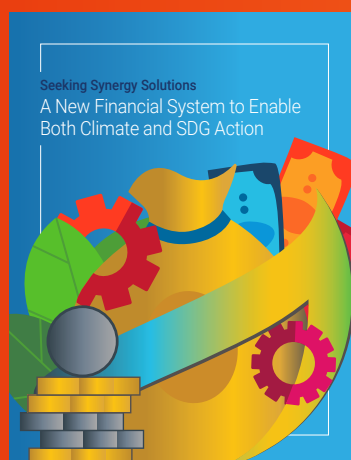
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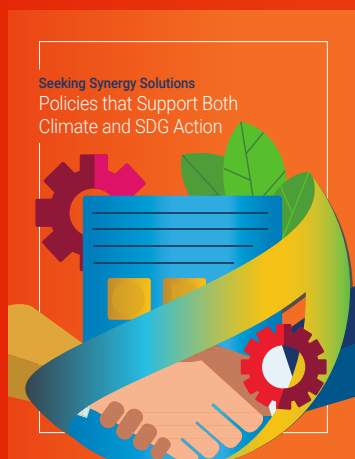
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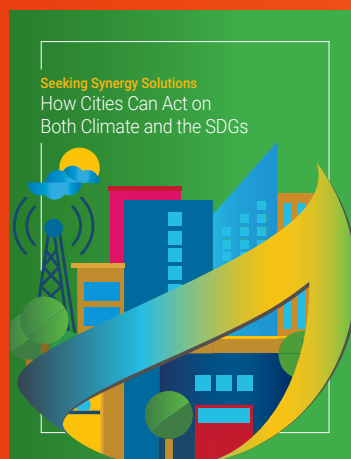
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