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A Guide to SDG Interactions: from Science to Implementation

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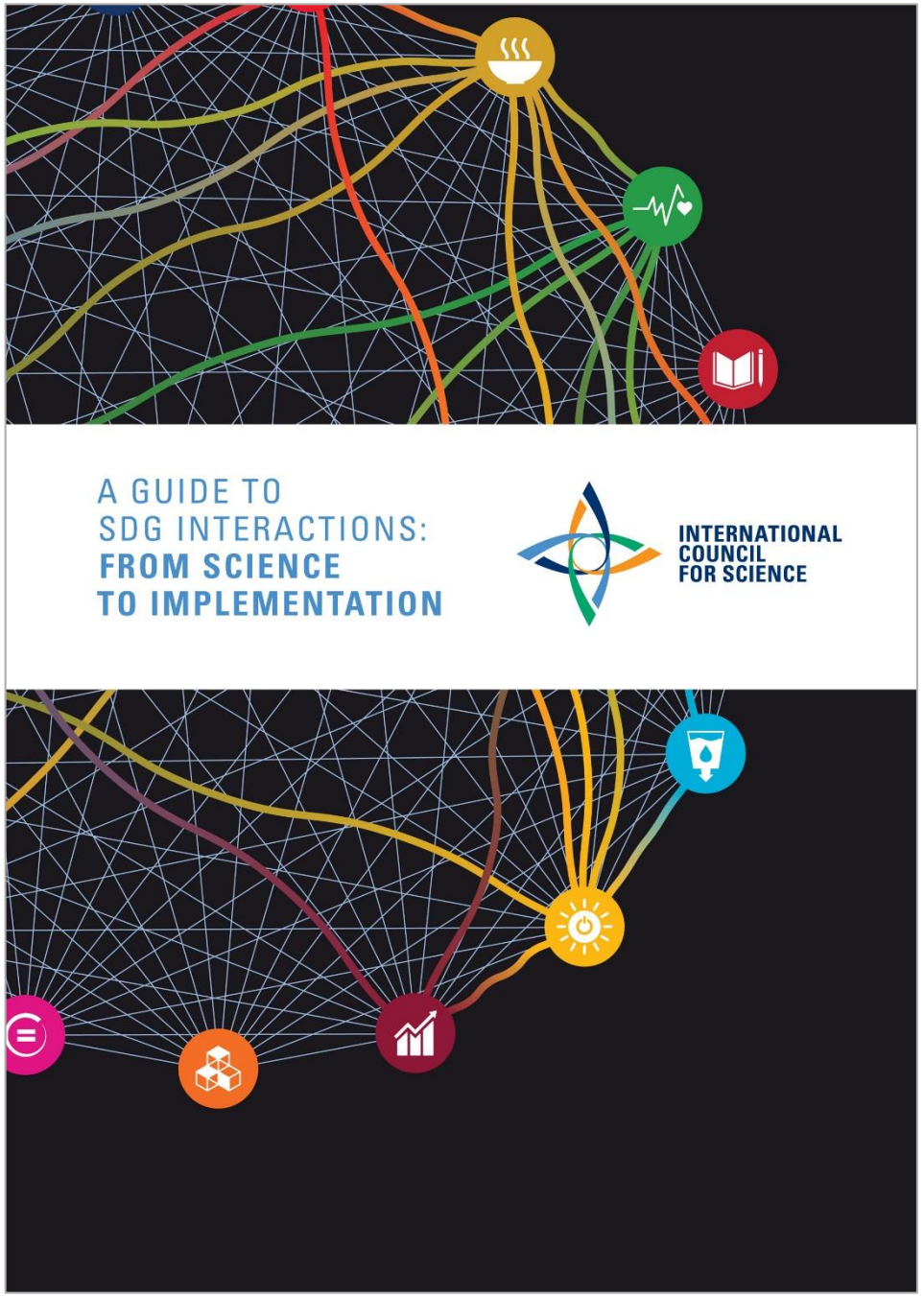

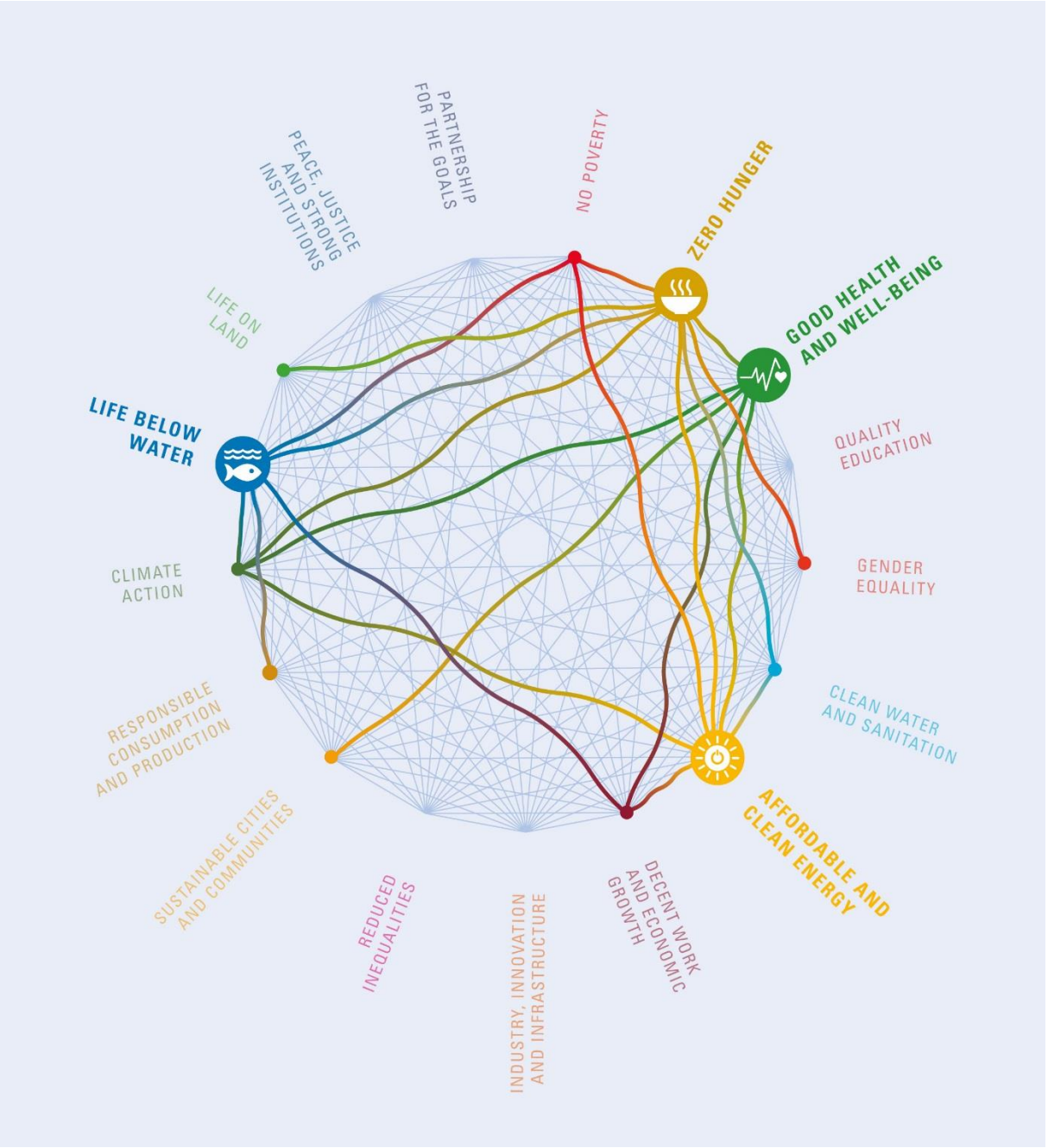

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Can interactions be a key driver in the implementation of the SDGs?

- Some goals and targets have conflictual relationships; progress in one area may come at the expense of progress in others.
- Understanding potential synergies and trade-offs is critical for efficient and coherent implementation and monitoring

GOALS SCORING

INDIVISIBLE
The strongest form of positive interaction in which one objective is inextricably linked to the achievement of another. Reduction of air pollution (12.4) is indivisible from improved health and reducing non-communicable diseases (3.4).

REINFORCING
One objective directly creates conditions that lead to the achievement of another objective. Increasing economic benefits from sustainable marine resources use (14.7) reinforces the creation of decent jobs and small enterprise in e.g. tourism (8.5 and 8.9)

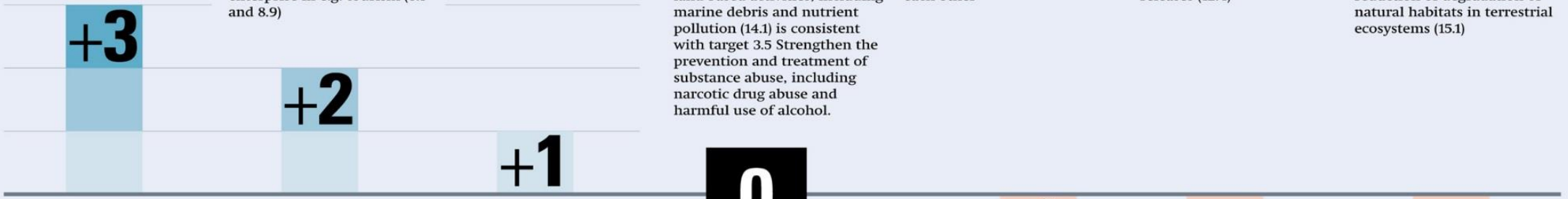
ENABLING
The pursuit of one objective enables the achievement of another objective. Developing infrastructure for transport (9.1) enables participation of women in the work force and in political life (5.5)

CONSISTENT
A neutral relationship where one objective does not significantly interact with another or where interactions are deemed to be neither positive nor negative. By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution (14.1) is consistent with target 3.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

CONSTRAINING
A mild form of negative interaction when the pursuit of one objective sets a condition or a constraint on the achievement of another. Conserving coastal areas (14.5) and development of safe affordable housing and basic services (11.1) may constrain each other

COUNTERACTING
The pursuit of one objective counteracts another objective. Ensuring access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food can counteract sustainable water withdrawals (6.4) and reduction of chemicals releases (12.4)

CANCELLING
The most negative interaction is where progress in one goal makes it impossible to reach another goal and possibly leads to a deteriorating state of the second. A choice has to be made between the two. Developing infrastructure (9.1) could be cancelling the reduction of degradation of natural habitats in terrestrial ecosystems (15.1)



Outdoor and indoor air pollution is responsible for 7 million deaths annually, as well as respiratory and cardio-vascular disease but also increases in perinatal deaths. In 2012, ambient (outdoor) air pollution was responsible for 3 million deaths, representing 5.4% of the total deaths. Worldwide, ambient air pollution is estimated to cause about 25% of the lung cancer deaths. Major urban centers in low and middle-income countries are the most exposed to this burden. (WHO, 2016).

Sustainable and diversified strategies for using the marine resource base open up opportunities for small enterprises in fisheries or other harvesting and associated value-addition activities, as well as activities related to tourism. Many SIDS and LDCs that are rich in these resources also have poor, vulnerable and marginalized coastal communities.

Affordable public transport promotes social inclusion, more equal access to different parts of the city, and enabling employment for marginalized groups. In many places, women do not have access to a car and depend on public transport, walking or bicycling to get around, to work places and to social or political activities (NCE, 2016; GSDR, 2016)

There is no significant interaction between the two targets.

Establishing protection areas in the coastal zone and expanding urbanization, infrastructure or transport risks spatial competition especially in densely populated areas. Integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning tools are readily available to mitigate spatial competition.

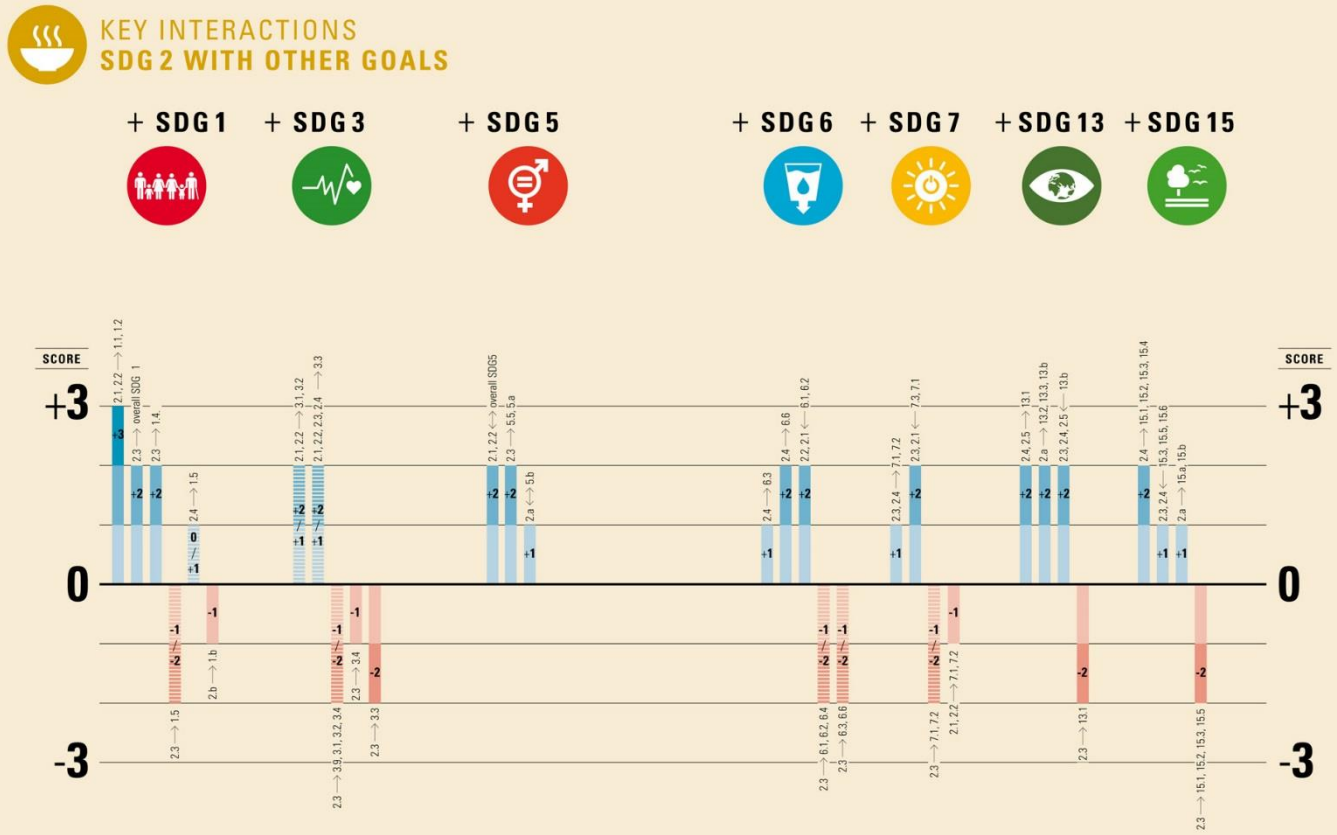
Increasing productivity in agriculture is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition to improve food security. In many places, this might entail increased and/or better irrigation as well as increased use of agro-chemical inputs.

In underdeveloped regions, developing roads, dams, and power grids might be a high priority, although it will cause some unavoidable fragmentation of habitats and compromising the integrity of the natural ecosystem, leading to risks to biodiversity as well as social risks.

Four case studies

The report includes detailed analysis of four SDGs and their interactions with other goals

- SDG2 Zero Hunger
- SDG3 Good Health and Well-being
- SDG7 Affordable and Clean Energy
- SDG14 Life below Water



Approach

- Each chapter examines interactions between an ‘entry goal’ and targets under other goals
- Scientists identified key interactions for through expert judgment and available literature
- The teams identified over 300 target-level interactions, mostly synergistic
- The resulting analysis was peer-reviewed by outside experts, including from the global membership of the Council

SDG 14 + SDG 12

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TARGETS	KEY INTERACTIONS	SCORE	POLICY OPTIONS
14.1 ⟷ 12.1, 12.2, 12.3, 12.4, 12.5	Sustainable production and consumption, sustainable management of natural resources, recycling, and sound management of chemicals and wastes will help prevent marine pollution	+3	Develop integrated policies and action plans on marine litter Promote circular economies and improve recycling along the entire value chain, including streamlining the prevention of marine litter into policies related to consumption and production
14.4 ⟷ 12.2, 12.3	Sustainable fisheries contribute to sustainable management of natural resources. Specific management measures, such as discard bans or selective fishing methods reduce food losses along the production chain	+3	Develop fisheries policies based on maximum sustainable yield, promote the adoption of sustainability and discard elimination targets for all fish stocks and support context-specific technical innovation for resource efficiency
14.4 ⟷ 12.6	Adoption of labelling schemes and voluntary codes of conduct by companies by the fishing industry will help support sustainable fisheries	+1	Promote and establish sound seafood eco-labelling
14.7 ⟶ 12.2, 12.3, 12.a	Increase in benefits for SIDS from sustainable use of marine resources can enable sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, a reduction in food wastes, and strengthened scientific and technological capacity	+3	Strengthen capacities for impact assessment and sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture Establish incentives for sustainable and resource-efficient use of marine resources and coastal areas

Recommendations

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1. Convene people from a wide range of expertise to identify the interactions between and among the 17 SDGs in each country. This will help prioritize investments, and create a common language and approach, as well as break down siloes and work across sectors.
2. Map existing institutions and actors to assess a country's potential to meet the SDGs. This will help determine who should do what and where there are gaps to fill.
3. Enact change so that achievement of the SDGs can happen across sectors. This may involve creating cross-cutting coordination mechanisms to allocate resources, share data and information, facilitate research and innovation, and build capacity.
4. Apply a similar integrated perspective to monitoring, evaluation, and review as a country works toward achieving the SDGs.

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