

IAIA initiative on IA role in achieving SDGs

Maria R. Partidario

IAIA past-President

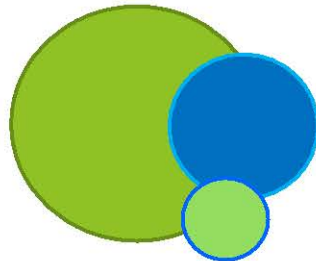
IAIA representative at UNECE ESPOO Convention and Kiev protocol meetings

International Association for Impact Assessment

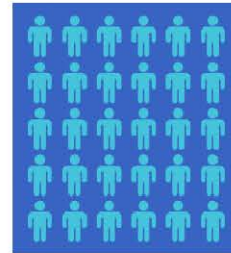


To provide the international forum for advancing innovation and communication of best practice in all forms of impact assessment so as to further the development of local, regional, and global capacity in impact assessment.

IAIA's Mission



114 Countries



5,000+ Members,
Including Affiliates

IAIA SDGs Task Force

Chaired by Rob Verheem (NCEA) and Maria R. Partidario (IST-UL)

Initiated in November 2016 (IAIA Board endorsement)

Purpose: creative discussion and reflection with all members on how Impact Assessment can be used to enhance the good application of SDGs.

Background: The SDGs will be one of the important instruments in the next decades to contribute to sustainable development. All across the world the SDGs are elected as a priority to be met both by the public and the private sectors. Many governments are now struggling with how to operationalize the SDGs in practice.

Discussions at IAIA '17 in Montreal concluded that

There seems to be consensus that IA is important to achieve the SDGs, and we should make that more clear.

Possible advantage of using SDGs: May make IA more objectives-led (rather than impacts-led). And it may make IA more relevant (since countries have agreed on the SDGs).

Possible disadvantages of using SDGs: SDGs may make IA less context specific, and less effective; may decrease ownership of the IA, since SDGs at project level are not the responsibility of company or communities; SDGs could add an extra burden/complexity to an already complex, resource consuming process.

Still under discussion if SDGs should change current IA good practice.

Answer would be a cautious yes, particularly at **project level**, because it may help in increasing the relevancy of the results of IA for governments that are serious about the SDGs. Cautious, because for this to happen we have to:

1. Make sure that national regulation on IA does not stand in the way;
2. Create incentives for proponents and governments that currently do not feel responsible for the SDGs, or are not aware of the benefits to them.

At **strategic and policy level** the urgency to start applying the SDGs in IA is clear, as is the use of SDGs in IA for projects under IFI safeguards. SDGs can set policy direction, linking to visioning and enabling backcasting.

How could SDGs be used in IA:

1. Always translate the SDGs into criteria that make sense in the specific project or plan context
2. Don't be rigid or overly prescriptive in using the SDG as not all SDGs will be relevant in all contexts.
3. Use SDGs to test in an IA whether allegations made on sustainability of a project or plan are valid
4. Use SDGs as benchmark (after translation into criteria that are context relevant)
5. Map SDGs addressing interactions among different SDGs, elaborating on their interconnections, using systems thinking rather than treating each in isolation
6. Also map SDGs in connection with sectoral, national, regional, local objectives, policies and plans, expressing SDGs in policies, or criteria, that are context specific
7. SDGs can also be included in Terms of Reference, adjusting to specific projects and contexts.

What could IAIA do?

1. Help to respond to the question: how much needs to change in reality in the IA practice?
2. Formulate a vision and message, communicate and advocate (both within the IA community as well as to the outside world) - prepare statement of endorsement.
3. Create room for discussion, for knowledge building and for inclusion of SDGs in IA practice
4. Dedicate sessions at conferences or adopt as conference/symposium theme for awareness raising, share of national/regional experiences
5. Stimulate research and training initiatives, build on good examples, show benefits
6. Initiate discussion with UN and IFI to build new guidance for SDGs

What could IA practitioners do?

1. Read and understand the SDGs, discuss with colleagues, find smart ways to ‘implicitly’ build SDGs into IAs (even if nobody else is interested)
2. Develop IA language that makes sense to the SDGs; e.g. look at the Global Reporting Initiative ‘bridging documents’ – possibly use SDGs as a reporting framework
3. Use it to advocate SDGs in an interesting way /appealing way, share case-studies
4. Keep sensitizing governments and proponents to integrate sustainable development (not necessarily SDGs) in IA. E.g. through increased focus on long term, community interests, broader than just financial issues, etc