

# The UN Sustainable Development Goals and Crocodilian Conservation

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

When the leaders of 193 countries came together in 2015, the world was suffering from famines, drought, wars, plagues and poverty. These leaders recognized that whilst there was enough food available to feed the world and enough medicines to treat HIV and other diseases, a glaring imbalance existed around the globe. And so, 17 ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were created that would rid the world of poverty and hunger and keep it safe from the worst effects of climate change. The 17 SDGs are:

1. No Poverty,
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequality
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals

To ensure their implementation and to put the SDGs into action, in 2017, specific targets for each goal were identified, along with indicators to measure progress. Whilst some of the targets had a deadline of 2020 for their achievement, others were set at 2030 and some were left open-ended, with no set target date. [A further UN GA Resolution has been passed called the “2030 Agenda” (or “Agenda 2030”)].

## How does the CSG contribute to achieving the SDGs?

Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG) and its members plays a significant role in contributing to the achievement of the UN SDGs. One key area of impact is in biodiversity conservation (SDG 15), as the CSG focuses on the sustainable management and conservation of crocodilian species worldwide. Through the research carried out and the monitoring of crocodilian populations, as well as through implementing conservation strategies globally, the CSG contributes to conservation of biodiversity in aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, which aligns with SDG 15’s objective to protect, restore, and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, halt biodiversity loss, and prevent the extinction of endangered species.

Moreover, the CSG’s activities also address SDG 14 (Life Below Water) by promoting the conservation of aquatic habitats crucial for crocodilian survival. Through initiatives such as habitat restoration, community engagement, and scientific research, the CSG contributes to maintaining the health and resilience of marine and freshwater ecosystems. Additionally, by building awareness and improving education about the importance of crocodiles in ecosystems, the CSG indirectly supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting environmental literacy and encouraging sustainable practices. The collaborative efforts of the CSG thus underscore the interconnectedness of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, contributing to the broader global agenda set by the United Nations.

The 17 SDGs are integrated - they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability, as demonstrated by the following graphic.

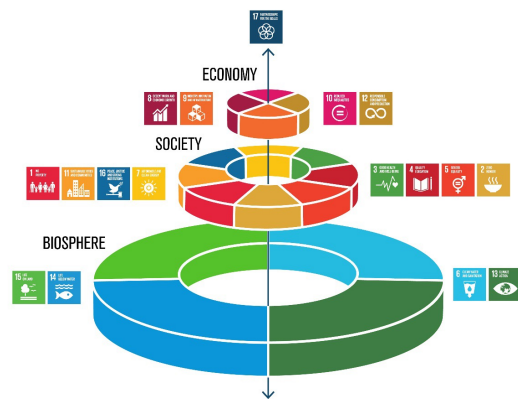


Figure 1. SDG ‘wedding cake’ model - a way of viewing the economic, social and ecological aspects of the SDGs.

## Crocodilian Conservation and the SDGs

Crocodilian conservation efforts across the globe are multi-faceted and support many of the SDGs, including:

- **SDG 14: Life Below Water**, which aims to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Although primarily targeting fisheries and marine conservation, this goal encompasses crocodilian conservation and management through the targets that aim to conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas based on the best available science. Crocodilian conservation and management programs contribute to achieving this goal in various ways, as crocodilians play a significant role in maintaining health and balance of aquatic ecosystems. In addition, many crocodilian conservation programs involve protection of wetland and river habitats, which provide additional essential services such as carbon sequestration and shoreline



stabilization, crucial for mitigating the impacts of climate change on marine and freshwater environments. For example, conservation and management of Saltwater crocodiles in Papua New Guinea, Australia and Indonesia, includes wild population surveys, IPLC participation, job creation and livelihoods, industrial processing, policy and management, wetland conservation, public awareness, gender equality, land management.

- **SDG 15: Life on Land**, which aims to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. Crocodilian conservation and management efforts contribute to SDG 15 through biodiversity and scientific research, development of management plans for ecosystems, conservation of habitats, contribution of crocodilians to nutrient cycling, supporting habitat restoration and broadening education and awareness about the importance of life on land. Crocodilians are also a key component of healthy terrestrial environments. As apex predators, their conservation helps to maintain biodiversity and balance of ecosystems. Restoring crocodilian habitats, such as mangroves and wetlands, can help in the recovery of diverse plant and animal communities. The scientific monitoring of crocodilian populations also incorporates monitoring of other species, such that crocodilian research enhances understanding of the dynamics of life on land and contributes to broader conservation strategies and sustainable land management practices.



Other SDGs that are supported by crocodilian conservation include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- **SDG 1: No Poverty**. End poverty in all its forms everywhere. This goal calls for the end of poverty in all its forms and focuses not just on people living in poverty, but also on the services people rely on and social policy that either promotes or prevent poverty. The goal has 7 targets and 13 indicators to measure progress, with the two targets related to means of achieving SDG1 being: a) the mobilization of resources to end poverty; and, b) the establishment of poverty eradication policy frameworks at all levels. Rural poverty rate stands at some 17%, which has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 as national and local lockdowns have led to the collapse of economic activity and reduced income generating opportunities. Development of crocodilian management policies and programs for the sustainable use of crocodilians contributes to achieving Target 1.b of SDG 1, ie “create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions”.
- **SDG 5: Gender Equality**. Achieve gender equality and



empower all women and girls. There are 9 targets and 14 indicators, a key ‘outcome’ target being: Target 5.5 - Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.



- **SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth**. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. There are 12 targets in total, then of which are ‘outcome’ targets. Two of the targets that are of relevance are Target 8.5 - Full employment and decent work with equal pay and Target 8.9 - Promote beneficial and sustainable tourism (the integration of cultural heritage in sustainable tourism can enhance income generation and livelihoods of local people and assist in rural economy stimulation, preservation of cultural historical sites, and promotion of local values). Involving local communities in crocodilian conservation initiatives can lead to the development of sustainable livelihoods. This engagement may include training programs for alternative income sources, such as guiding tours, crafting, or sustainable fishing practices. Building local capacity in these areas contributes to community development and indirectly supports infrastructure growth.



- **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities**. Reduce inequality within and among countries. In some regions, conflicts arise between local communities and crocodilians due to competition for resources. Crocodilian conservation efforts often address these conflicts by promoting sustainable resource use and habitat management. Ensuring equitable access to resources, such as water and fish, contributes to reducing inequalities among different user groups.



- **SDG 12: Responsible Consumption & Production**. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. This goal has 11 targets to be achieved by 2030, progress measured by 13 indicators. The goal aims to ensure wise use of resources, sustainable infrastructure, and providing access to basic services, green and decent jobs, and ensuring a better quality of life for all. Crocodilian conservation and the industry contribute to achieving this goal through contributions to the ‘outcome’ targets, namely: achieving the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources; achieving the environmentally-sound management of chemicals and all wastes through their life cycle; encouraging companies to adopt sustainable practices; and, ensuring that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development.

