

SDG8 – SUSTAINABLE  
ECONOMIC GROWTH AND  
DECENT WORK FOR ALL

# CONCISE GUIDES TO THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## **Series Editors**

Walter Leal Filho

World Sustainable Development Research and Transfer  
Centre, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences

Mark Mifsud

Centre for Environmental Education and Research, University  
of Malta

This series comprises 17 short books, each examining one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The series provides an integrated assessment of the SDGs from an economic, social, environmental and cultural perspective. Books in the series critically analyse and assess the SDGs from a multidisciplinary and a multiregional standpoint, with each title demonstrating innovation in theoretical and empirical analysis, methodology and application of the SDG concerned.

Titles in this series have a particular focus on the means to implement the SDGs, and each one includes a short introduction to the SDG in question along with a synopsis of their implications on the economic, social, environmental and cultural domains.

# SDG8 – SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL

Concise Guides to the  
United Nations Sustainable  
Development Goals

MADHAVI VENKATESAN

*Northeastern University, USA*

GIULIANO LUONGO

*The Niccolò Cusano University, Italy*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India  
Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2019

© 2019 Madhavi Venkatesan and Giuliano Luongo. Published under exclusive license by Emerald Publishing Limited. The content of this publication has not been approved by the United Nations and does not reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials or Member States. For more information on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals see: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

#### Reprints and permissions service

Contact: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. No responsibility is accepted for the accuracy of information contained in the text, illustrations or advertisements. The opinions expressed in these chapters are not necessarily those of the Author or the publisher.

#### British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78973-094-4 (Print)  
ISBN: 978-1-78973-091-3 (E-ISBN)  
ISBN: 978-1-78973-093-7 (Epub)



ISOQAR certified  
Management System,  
awarded to Emerald  
for adherence to  
Environmental  
standard  
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985  
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*To all people actively engaged in forming an equal society.*

**\*\*\***

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

*Margaret Mead*

*This page intentionally left blank*

# CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	xi
<i>About the Authors</i>	xiii
Introduction to <i>SDG 8 Economic Growth and Decent Work for All</i>	1
1. Sustainable Development Goal 8 in Context	5
Introduction	5
Millennium Development Goals	9
Sustainable Development Goals	22
Sustainable Development Goal 8	27
Components of SDG 8	27
SDG 8 and the SDGs	32
Potential Emerging Issues	33
Summary	37

2. Economic Growth	39
Introduction	39
Measuring Economic Growth	40
Economic Growth and Energy Production	44
Energy Production and Climate Change	47
Decoupling Growth	51
Consumption and Economic Growth	56
Consumption and Sustainable Growth	59
Summary	63
3. Decent Work	65
Introduction	65
Historical Review, Defining Decent Work	68
Mission of ILO	74
Ensuring Decent Work	75
Decent Work and CSR	76
Decent Work, Trade and Gender Equality	80
Decent Work and the Gender Wage Gap	83
Decent Work and Poverty Alleviation	88
Summary	90



Contents	ix
4. Future Prospects: Issues to be Addressed	91
Introduction	91
Economic Growth and Unpaid Work	95
Economic Growth and Trade	98
Sustainability Aligned Economic Indicators	104
Conclusion	108
<i>References</i>	111
<i>Index</i>	141

*This page intentionally left blank*

# LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

## Figures

### *Chapter 1*

Fig. 1.	Millennium Development Goals.	10
Fig. 2.	Number of People Living on Less Than \$1.25 a Day Worldwide, 1990–2015 (Millions).	14
Fig. 3.	Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate for Primary Education, 2000 and 2015 (%).	14
Fig. 4.	Proportion of Seats Held by Women in Single or Lower Houses of National Parliament, 2000 and 2015 (%).	15
Fig. 5.	Under-five Mortality Rate, 1990 and 2015 (Deaths Per 1,000 Live Births).	16
Fig. 6.	Maternal Mortality Ratio, 1990 and 2013 (Maternal Deaths Per 100,000 Live Births, Women Aged 15–49).	16
Fig. 7.	HIV Incidence Rate (Estimated Number of New HIV Infections, 2001 and 2013 (Thousands)).	17
Fig. 8.	Emissions of Carbon Dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ), 1990 and 2012 (Billions of Tonnes, Data for 2012 Are Preliminary).	18
Fig. 9.	External Debt Service Payments as Proportion of Export Revenues, All Developing Countries, 2000–2013 (%).	19

Fig. 10.	Sustainable Development Goals.	24
Fig. 11.	Sustainable Development Goal 8.	28

### *Chapter 2*

Fig. 1.	Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide Concentration: 1960–2018.	46
Fig. 2.	Global GDP (Constant 2010 US Dollars).	47
Fig. 3.	Shares (%) of Global Primary Energy Consumption by Fuel Source.	48
Fig. 4.	Cumulative CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions 1850–2011 (% of World Total).	49
Fig. 5.	Production Possibility Frontier.	57

## **Tables**

### *Chapter 1*

Table 1.	Millennium Development Goals.	11
Table 2.	Sustainable Development Goals.	25
Table 3.	SDG 8 Targets and Indicators.	29

### *Chapter 2*

Table 1.	Components of GDP.	42
----------	--------------------	----

### *Chapter 3*

Table 1.	Global Multidimensional Poverty Index.	86
----------	--	----

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Madhavi Venkatesan** is a Faculty Member in the Department of Economics at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. Her present academic interests focus on sustainable economic development and the role of women in fostering sustainability. She serves as the Executive Director of Sustainable Practices, a 501(c)3 non-profit that she founded in 2016. Sustainable Practices is focused on increasing financial and economic literacy to facilitate sustainability. She earned a PhD in Economics from Vanderbilt University, a Masters in Environmental Management from Harvard University and a Masters in Environmental Law and Policy from Vermont Law School. She is the Author of numerous peer reviewed articles and book chapters on the subject of sustainability and economics as well as the texts *Economic Principles: A Primer*, *A Framework for Sustainable Practices*, *Foundations in Microeconomics*, *A Framework for Sustainable Practices and Foundations in Macroeconomics*, *A Framework for Sustainable Practices*.

**Giuliano Luongo** is Acting Director at the EU-China Economics and Politics Institute (Prague and Brussels), and Contract Professor at the University of Rome 'N. Cusano', Department of Political Science, Department of Economics and Engineering. His current academic interests focus on sustainability education, public health and innovation policies, and the

relations between development and security. He worked for United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in the area of STI-STICT policies. He has authored various articles related to sustainability, security and international politics.

# INTRODUCTION TO *SDG 8* *ECONOMIC GROWTH AND* *DECENT WORK FOR ALL*

Sustainable development was defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. It contains two key concepts:

- The concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given.
- The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.

Essentially, sustainability acknowledges resource constraints and human dependence on the environment but also considers the impact of poverty on resource use and degradation as well as the moral parameters requisite of stewardship. Arguably, excluding explicit inclusion of morality, the defining of sustainability is in close alignment with the objective of the discipline of economics: ‘Economics is the study of human behaviour in relation to a resource-constrained world’ (Venkatesan, 2017).

The ability of economics to add value to sustainability objectives requires the insertion of value parameters or normative thinking in conjunction with the positive or observational stance adopted by the discipline (Knoedler & Underwood, 2003; Nelson, 1995). The catalyst for a value-based practice of economics rests with the ability to promote an understanding of economic systems relative to culture, to establish informational transparency, and to promote the attainment of optimal social and environmental outcomes relative to a measure of well-being that accounts for qualitative attributes (Beach, 1938; Costanza et al., 2014).

This text reviews the objectives of sustainable development goal (SDG) 8, economic growth and decent work for all through an economic perspective, and highlights the limitations in the assessment of the objectives. Further, the discussion focusses on the potential inconsistency between the implementation of SDG 8 and the measurements used to determine its attainment. The text concludes with a consideration of the role of data and the significance of cultural sensitivity as well as explicit inclusion of cultural protection in economic development as these apply to SDG 8.

The text is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the SDGs with respect to the millennium development goals (MDGs) they replaced. The chapter provides a basic foundation for understanding how SDG 8 is evaluated. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the relationship between economic growth, as measured by GDP, and sustainability. The chapter considers the relationship between GDP-based economic growth and energy production; energy production and climate change; the concept of decoupling; and the role of consumption in economic growth and in achieving sustainable economic growth. The focus of Chapter 3 is defining decent work specific to its origin and evolution to the present period. The chapter considers the role of corporate social



responsibility in ensuring decent work, the inclusion of decent work within trade agreements, specifically addressing gender and working conditions, and the relationship between decent work and poverty alleviation.

Chapter 4 evaluates GDP and employment, the subject of Chapters 2 and 3, respectively, from the perspective of future prospects and issues to be addressed. The discussion focusses on the role of women relative to the achievement of SDG 8. The chapter includes a discussion of the role of gender in unpaid work, highlights the understated impact of women on the economy and surfaces the limitations of using quantitative market values to assess growth. Also included is the role of trade in promoting and reducing country-specific gender inequality and a discussion of the need for data to properly assess the on-going impact of female employment. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the relevance of alternative indicators to GDP as measures of societal value, followed by a discussion of the holistic assessment of SDG 8 implementation.

This text provides a foundation for understanding SDG 8, defines the concept of economic growth and decent work, and ultimately, provides the reader with the opportunity to develop a critical analytical perspective with respect to the objectives and attainment of SDG 8.