

Sustainable Development Goals not on track, says UN

21st September 2026



The United Nations has warned that the world is not on track to achieve its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The goals were implemented in 2015 to improve people's lives and protect the

planet. They include eliminating poverty, improving education, reducing gender inequality, and tackling climate change. However, the UN has reported that only about one third of the goals are currently on track to be met. Around half are progressing too slowly. Wars, climate change, slow economic growth, rising debt, financing gaps, and other global shocks are making progress difficult. The UN has called on countries to increase their efforts in the run-up to 2030.

The UN did report signs of progress. It noted that one billion more people now have access to drinking water. Internet connectivity has also increased, from around 40 per cent of the world's population in 2015 to about 74 per cent today. Despite these improvements, many serious challenges remain. In particular, there is a considerable lack of progress on gender equality. A UN spokesperson said: "At the current rate of progress, gender equality would take 171 years to achieve." Another official said governments needed to invest more money in infrastructure and institutions. The official also wanted countries to cooperate more. The UN said the goals could still be achieved, but much faster action was needed.

Sources: un.org / npr.org / earth.org

Writing

Gender equality is the most important SDG. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

UN / sustainable / development / goals / SDGs / planet / poverty / debt / shocks / progress / internet connectivity / challenges / gender inequality / infrastructure

True / False

- 1) The SDGs were introduced in the year 2015. T / F
- 2) One SDG was to eliminate climate change. T / F
- 3) The UN said around a third of the goals are on target. T / F
- 4) The article says financing shocks have slowed down the SDGs. T / F
- 5) The UN said no progress has been made with the SDGs. T / F
- 6) Around 74% of the world has internet access today. T / F
- 7) The UN said it could take 171 years to achieve gender equality. T / F
- 8) The UN said it doubted that the goals could be achieved by 2030. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. warned | a. dearth |
| 2. achieve | b. endeavours |
| 3. eliminating | c. fund |
| 4. progressing | d. reach |
| 5. efforts | e. organizations |
| 6. noted | f. advancing |
| 7. lack | g. cautioned |
| 8. invest in | h. collaborate |
| 9. institutions | i. removing |
| 10. cooperate | j. mentioned |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you know about Sustainable Development Goals?
- b) Have you ever done anything to help achieve one of the goals?
- c) Why are the goals not on track?
- d) Which of the goals do you think is most important?
- e) How often do you see information about the goals?
- f) How can we reduce gender inequality?
- g) What global shocks have slowed down the goals?
- h) What should countries do in the run-up to 2030?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. The goals were implemented | a. money in infrastructure |
| 2. reducing gender | b. shocks |
| 3. slow economic | c. of progress |
| 4. global | d. also increased |
| 5. increase their efforts in the run- | e. growth |
| 6. The UN did report signs | f. to cooperate more |
| 7. Internet connectivity has | g. in 2015 |
| 8. many serious challenges | h. up to 2030 |
| 9. governments needed to invest more | i. remain |
| 10. The official also wanted countries | j. inequality |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- How important is greater internet connectivity?
- Will we ever have gender equality?
- What could countries cooperate on more?
- What will happen if the goals have not been achieved by 2030?
- What would you do if you were head of the UN?
- What advice do you have for the UN?
- What questions would you like to ask the UN about the goals?

Spelling

- veaehci its Sustainable Development Goals
- The goals were peldtnemime in 2015
- lgtiieianm poverty
- reducing gender qaleiiunyt
- rising dteb
- innnaigfc gaps
- internet tcycivotienn
- despite these moepevnirtms
- a rcaienoebdls lack of progress
- Another cliifofa said governments needed to invest
- nrcseuurtafri and institutions
- countries to eeoarpot more

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. i	4. f	5. b
6. j	7. a	8. c	9. e	10. h

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	When were the SDGs first implemented?
2.	What were the SDGs designed to protect besides people's lives?
3.	What is one of the SDGs designed to tackle?
4.	How many of the goals are currently on track?
5.	What does the UN want countries to do in the run-up to 2030?
6.	How many people now have access to drinking water?
7.	How many people now have access to the internet?
8.	What did the UN say there was a lack of progress on?
9.	How long will it take to achieve gender equality at the current rate?
10.	What did the UN say was needed to achieve the goals?

Speaking – SDGs

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| • No poverty | • Climate action |
| • Zero hunger | • Gender equality |
| • Quality education | • Sustainable cities |
| • Clean energy | • Good health |

Answers – True False

1	T	2	F	3	T	4	F	5	F	6	T	7	T	8	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.