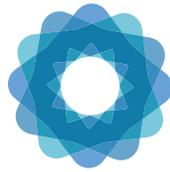




United Nations



System of Environmental Economic Accounting

# The SEEA and the SDGs

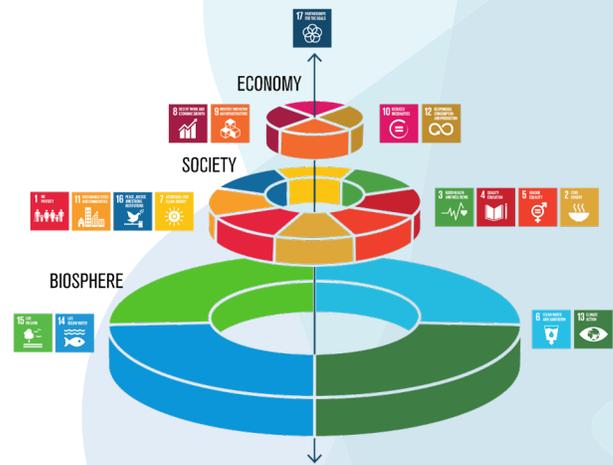
The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represent an ambitious plan to help countries shape their national policies and priorities. The interlinked nature of the SDGs requires an integrated approach to policy decisions, based on a better understanding of the interactions and trade-offs between the different pillars of sustainability.

Adopted as an international statistical standard by the United Nations Statistical Commission, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) transforms disparate economic and environmental information into internationally comparable statistics using an agreed-upon set of standard concepts, definitions, classifications, accounting rules and tables. As an integrated statistical framework that is fully aligned with the System of National Accounts, the SEEA is uniquely positioned to measure progress toward the SDGs on the economy-environment nexus.

The systems approach of the SEEA enables countries to develop sets of statistics and indicators on both natural resources (e.g. timber, water) and ecosystems and how they relate to the economy. The SEEA framework can be used to directly measure several SDG indicators and provide supplemental information for numerous others.

Designed for policy applications, the SEEA promotes the creation of integrated information systems and increased collaboration between data users and producers. By eliminating data siloes, the SEEA increases efficiency and provides policymakers with information to design effective strategies and monitor progress toward achieving the SDGs.

## Connecting the pillars of sustainability



Credit: Azote Images for Stockholm Resilience Centre

## The SEEA supports 40 indicators for 9 SDGs



# An example of the SEEA and SDG indicators: Goal 6 - Clean water and sanitation

The SEEA can support six indicators for Goal 6 to provide important information on water quality, water scarcity, and the extent of water-related ecosystems.

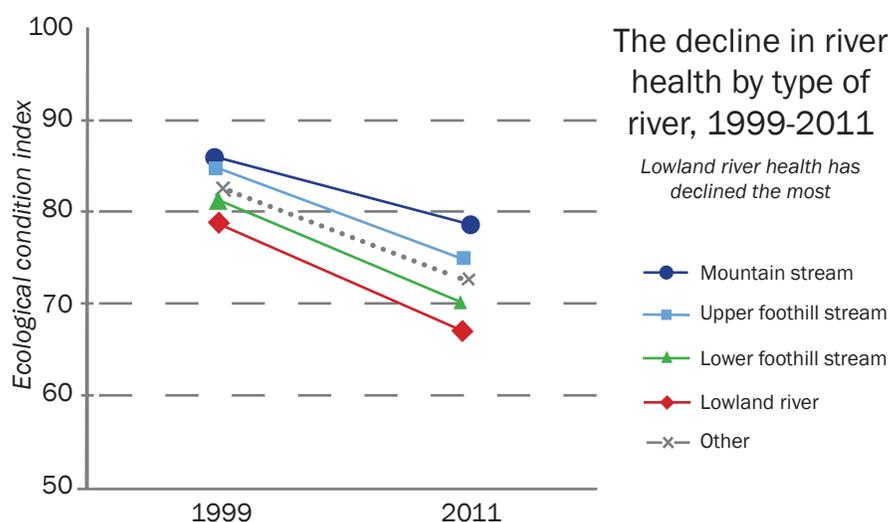


1. Proportion of wastewater safely treated
2. Proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality
3. Change in water-use efficiency over time
4. Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources
5. Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time
6. Water- and sanitation-related official development assistance that is part of a government-coordinated spending plan

## The SEEA and SDG 6 in South Africa

South Africa is a water scarce country, and water ecosystems are critical for providing a reliable supply of clean water for the South African people and the economy. In 2014, South Africa piloted accounts for river ecosystems using the SEEA framework to identify areas where river quality has declined.

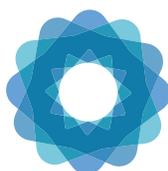
The key finding from the river accounts was that the ecological condition of South Africa's rivers declined by 10% from 1999 to 2011, a finding that can significantly inform indicator 6.3.2 on ambient water quality. The findings from these accounts also have informed South Africa's National Water and Sanitation Master Plan, currently being developed by the Department of Water and Sanitation, to develop solutions to better manage river ecosystems.



Source: National River Ecosystem Accounts for South Africa South African National Biodiversity Institute



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Environmental  
Economic  
Accounting

The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) is an international statistical standard that uses a system approach to bring together economic and environmental information to measure the contribution of the environment to the economy and the impact of the economy on the environment. Environmental accounts are an extension to the System of National Accounts (SNA) and facilitate the development of indicators and analysis on the economy-environment nexus.

**Comments and questions are welcome.**

Please contact us at: United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Environmental Economic Accounts Section, New York,

[seea@un.org](mailto:seea@un.org) | [seea.un.org](http://seea.un.org)