The 17 Sustainable Development Goals — also known as the SDGs or the Global Goals — came into effect on January 1, 2016 following an historic United Nations Summit in September 2015. 193 governments from around the world agreed to implement the Goals within their own countries in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

These new, interconnected goals build on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs, while also identifying new priority areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among others.

Although each country faces specific challenges in pursuit of sustainable development, special attention is given to the most vulnerable countries, in particular, African countries, less developed countries, landlocked countries and small island developing states. There are also serious challenges within many middle-income countries.

For each of the 17 goals, there is a list of specific targets we aim to reach. The targets discussed in this guide have been summarized for ease of reading. For a more detailed list of all the 169 targets, visit GlobalGoals.org.
The first Sustainable Development Goal calls for an end to poverty in all its forms by the year 2030. Achieving this goal means seeing a reduction in the number of people living on less than $1.25 US per day. The more people earn, the more they can spend on their basic needs. One of the ways the UN hopes to do this is by implementing social protection systems at the national level to support the poor and vulnerable. That is no easy task, especially given that not everyone experiences poverty the same way.

**Targets**

- End extreme poverty for everyone
- Implement social protection programs for the poor and vulnerable
- Ensure that everyone has equal rights to economic resources, such as control over land, property, inheritance, natural resources and financial services
- Help improve vulnerable people’s resilience in the face of environmental and climate-related shocks and disasters
- Improve the political, economic, and social support for poverty-reduction strategies

“**The earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s needs, but not every man’s greed.**”

Mahatma Gandhi
Indian activist
1. Where did it begin?

- It's hard to say where poverty began. Often, poverty exists as a cycle of events that impact a person's socio-economic situation. For the individual, it could come from an unfortunate incident, or they could be born into poverty. A drought could have impacted a farmer’s crops and reduced their income, or someone could face discrimination in getting a job because of their gender, ability, religion, sexual orientation or literacy level.

- On an international level, the legacy of war, political instability, national debt, discrimination, vulnerability to national disasters and colonialism can impact the ability for governments to provide for their own citizens, resulting in social, economic and political inequalities that still impact the people living in these countries today.

2. Why does this issue matter?

- **Poverty exists in many forms**
  Poverty can be understood in a variety of forms, measures, and degrees, such as these key terms: absolute poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty represents an internationally set standard of measuring poverty in relation to a person’s ability to meet their basic human needs. Relative poverty is defined and measured by income inequalities of a particular social context, meaning that people are in poverty if they fall below prevailing standards in their region.

- **Poverty is a cycle**
  Poverty is more than not having enough money, it also includes the lack of basic services such as education, food security, social discrimination or lack of participation in decision-making. It takes money, resources and power to be able to engage with your community and support yourself.

  As described by the UN, poverty includes a lack of choices and opportunities. Without access to basic resources and services, poverty impacts people’s basic survival and participation in society.

  When you are poor, you don’t have enough money to feed or clothe your family, go to school or have land to grow your own food or earn a living. Living in poverty also means you are susceptible to violence and live in a fragile environment, or might live without access to clean water or sanitation.

- **Poverty is measurable**
  One way we can measure poverty is through the poverty line, or the minimum daily income that will allow you to meet your basic needs. A majority of people living on less than $1.90 a day live in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. They account for about 70 per cent of the global total of extremely poor people. Calculating a poverty rate measures the number of people living below this daily income level.
3 Who and what are affected?

- **The rich and poor**
  Both locally and internationally, there is a widening gap between rich and poor; however, this is not a simple question of extreme wealth in developed countries and extreme poverty in developing countries. Using data, European researcher Hans Rosling founded the Gap Minder Project[^3] that shows how wealth and poverty have been shifting over time. Take a peek and see how people in communities around the world live on their daily income.

- **Children**
  On a local level, many issues of poverty are impacting Manitobans. From homelessness to child poverty, to the over-representation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system, poverty has many sources and impacts in our community. In particular, Manitoba has the highest child-poverty rate in the country, with nearly 29 per cent of children living in poverty in the province[^4].

  Within Canada, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that in 2016, 60 per cent of children living on reserves were living in poverty[^5]. Barriers such as underfunded schools and child welfare services impact the ability for children to realize their potential. This is part of the problem of the cycle of poverty[^6]—the set of factors or events that make it difficult for an individual or group of people to get out of poverty without intervention.

- **Women**
  Internationally, women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change because they constitute the majority of the world’s poor. Because two-thirds of the working women in developing countries make a living from agricultural resources for their income, they are more vulnerable when it comes to poverty when those resources are negatively impacted by climate change[^6].

[^3]: [Gap Minder](https://www.gapminder.org)
[^4]: [Manitoba Council for International Cooperation](https://www.mcic.mb.ca)
[^5]: [Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives](https://www.policyalternatives.ca)
[^6]: [Zoé Gatti de Gamond](https://zoegatti.com)

"The most direct cause of women’s misfortune is poverty; demanding their freedom means above all demanding reform in the economy of society which will eradicate poverty and give everyone an education, a minimum standard of living and the right to work."

**Zoé Gatti de Gamond**
Belgian educator and feminist
4 What is being done?

- Tackling huge systemic issues like poverty takes a lot of coordinated effort from a number of stakeholders, or people who have an interest in seeing this issue resolved. From large corporations to smaller local organizations, everyone is capable of tackling poverty issues.

- Advocating for effective poverty reduction strategies is a great way governments, organizations and decision-makers can help on a number of different levels. From income supports to child care programs, poverty-reduction programs enable people in poverty to create wealth for themselves and end their cycle of poverty.

- In order to make a difference in ending poverty as we know it, we need programs at the local, national and international levels. Some strategies are introduced to empower particular groups of people, like women, while others attempt to address particular elements of poverty, like debt or food insecurity.

- Another strategy for poverty reduction is using a universal basic income as a means of supporting citizens or residents of a region or country to receive an amount of money either from a government or public institution. The idea was explored in the town of Dauphin in Manitoba in 1970 to see the impact of giving people money instead of targeted aid. The results found that, while not cheap, the program was able to stabilize poverty, reduce hospitalization rates and saw more teenagers staying in school.1

“Don’t let complexity stop you. Be activists. Take on the big inequities. It will be one of the great experiences of your lives.”

Bill Gates
Microsoft founder
The more the global population grows, the more burden is placed on the environment, making poverty a concern for our planet as well. From harmful practices which lead to deforestation, air and water pollution, soil erosion and increased consumption, impoverished communities can contribute to environmental degradation in many ways. Education is needed to learn about proper and harmless methods to dispose waste and develop sustainable agricultural systems. Programs like re-forestation or improved waste management systems can help restore the impact of humanity and poverty on our environment.

As a social problem, poverty and income inequality have been a reason for protests and social revolutions. As an example, the Occupy Wall Street movement wanted to change the way money, wealth and income are distributed in the United States. The movement’s focus is to change the fact that there is a very big difference between how much money and wealth rich and poor people have. A group of protesters came together in New York City on September 17, 2011 and began gathering in Zuccotti Park in downtown Manhattan near Wall Street. The objective of the protest was to bring attention and political action to economic inequalities worldwide.

Poverty continues to impact women more than men. Women are over-represented in the ranks of the poor and under-represented among upper income earners. According to the Centre for Social Justice, in Canada the poverty rate is 20 per cent for women in general; 37 per cent for women of colour; and 43 per cent for Indigenous women. While issues of poverty affect populations in general, the above statistics show that they affect people within these groups uniquely.
Consequences of inaction

- From an economic perspective, poverty is expensive. It is not just about giving money to people to support them, but orchestrating an entire network of support. From healthcare and justice to education and social welfare, it costs of the Province of Ontario (in collaboration with the federal government) between $10.4 billion and $13.1 billion a year to reduce poverty in the province. ¹¹

- One of the biggest challenges to alleviating poverty is to tackle all of its various root causes. While it might be easy to assume that taking care of someone’s income or personal finances might solve the problem, the causes of poverty can often be social or health-based, or experienced as a result of war or climate change.

- Problems with physical or mental health, experiences of violence, exploitation and marginalization contribute to putting people in positions of poverty. Without taking the time to understand what the social and emotional causes of poverty are, we might be putting our efforts into a short-term solution of a long-term problem.

REFLECTION AND ACTION QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel about the issue now that you know more about it?

2. How might this issue have been prevented? What could have been done differently?

3. How has this problem changed over time? Where do you see it going in the future?

4. What questions do you still have?

“When individuals join in a cooperative venture, the power generated far exceeds what they could have accomplished acting individually.”

R. Buckminster Fuller
American author and inventor