

The WISER framework of behavioural change interventions for mindful human flourishing



Most research on planetary health aims to contribute to achieving one or more of the 17 interlinked UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹ These goals are complementary in guiding sustainable development policies and actions beyond gross domestic product (GDP) metrics, and encompass ambitious targets such as to end poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG1), to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (SDG3), or to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG12). However, because of the breadth and scope of these goals, as well as their diversity, it might be challenging to systematically connect the contributions of planetary health research to several SDGs. In that regard, although numerous studies have been conducted to test behavioural change interventions for planetary health, it remains unclear how this field of research as a whole or its individual studies have contributed to changing behaviour towards multiple SDGs.²

We are conscious that addressing several SDGs is not feasible at the scale of every research project, if any. This difficulty especially applies to behavioural change interventions. Intervention-based and evidence-based studies are informed by behavioural and social sciences and their purpose is to support decisions and actions that can lead to short-term and long-term changes that benefit the individual and society.³ By definition, an intervention is inherently limited in scope, because manipulating too many factors simultaneously might lead to intractable quantitative analyses. These technicalities justify a narrow focus of behavioural change interventions whereby SDGs are generally addressed in isolation from each other. The purpose of this commentary is to categorise the SDGs under more succinct constructs that could help behavioural scientists to review and explore the links of their interventions to several SDGs.

To do so, we propose a framework, which rearranges the 17 SDGs into five main categories to which concepts from behavioural and social scientists can relate: wellbeing, inclusivity, sufficiency, empowerment, and resilience (WISER; panel). The WISER framework can enable behavioural scientists to both design their

interventions in a way that encompasses several SDGs, and to more clearly report and review how their interventions contribute to behavioural change towards SDGs, thus enhancing progress towards planetary health. To achieve this, we suggested a series of questions (panel).

We believe that the WISER categories could benefit behavioural science interventions in three main ways. Firstly, they highlight complementary areas that, ideally, would have to be associated to an SDG-related intervention. The WISER framework reminds the researchers that the individual benefits of a given intervention (wellbeing) should be balanced with societal (inclusivity) and environmental (sufficiency) objectives, and, where possible, involve the local actors (empowerment) to nurture behavioural change in the long run (resilience). Secondly, this framework could help overcome some of the limitations traditionally attached to behavioural science interventions by providing objectives that go beyond the standard individualistic and short-term oriented frames of analysis driven by scientists who design architectures of choice.^{9,10} The WISER framework invites researchers to build solutions in partnership with the local communities enabling the actors to bring and enrich their knowledge (empowerment) and to implement but also further develop bespoke sustainable solutions in the future (resilience). The WISER framework therefore encourages expanding the focus of the behavioural change interventions from the individual (wellbeing) to the collective by considering the diversity of the needs of the actors involved in the community (inclusivity) and by aiming for mindful collective flourishing (sufficiency). Finally, against this background, the WISER framework will eventually help go beyond the original intent of the SDGs by offering a larger perspective on planetary health. The concept of sufficiency can encompass interventions that are compatible with degrowth policies in high-income countries without excluding the implementation of behavioural changes towards sustainable growth policies in poor countries, for example. In essence, this perspective is also conveyed by the objectives of inclusivity and empowerment, which express a sense

Panel: Defining the categories comprising the WISER framework, and evaluating the behavioural interventions contributing to them

The WISER framework is for interventions that consider or can help contribute to wellbeing, inclusivity, sufficiency, empowerment, and resilience. These five categories can encompass the 17 interlinked sustainable development goals (SDGs) listed below. Along with their definitions, we also proposed a series of questions to help evaluate a behavioural intervention against each category.

Wellbeing

We define wellbeing as the degree to which people can flourish as a whole, as characterised by being happy and surrounded by resources that are necessary to ensure an optimal life expectancy.⁴ This category encompasses the following SDGs:

- SDG2: end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
- SDG3: ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages
- SDG6: ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- SDG7: ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all

A behavioural intervention can be reviewed to consider the following questions: does this intervention bring people the resources, whether material or immaterial, that they are missing (1) to live more healthily, (2) to live more sustainably, and (3) that contribute to their well-being?

Inclusivity

We define inclusivity as the extent to which a society provides equal participation for everyone and safeguards freedom, equal possibilities, and diverse values.⁵ This category encompasses the following SDGs:

- SDG1: end poverty in all its forms everywhere
- SDG5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- SDG10: reduce inequality within and among countries
- SDG16: promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels

A behavioural intervention can be reviewed to consider the following questions: does this intervention contribute to tackling economic and social inequalities within and between societies by (1) fostering equal participation, (2) preserving freedom, (3) promoting equal possibilities, or (4) diverse values at individual or institutional levels?

Sufficiency

We define sufficiency as living in line with ecological constraints by limiting the consumption and the production of environmentally unsound goods and services and preserving the environment.⁶ This category encompasses the following SDGs:

- SDG12: ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- SDG14: conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development
- SDG15: protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss

A behavioural intervention can be reviewed to consider the following questions: does this intervention provide solutions to help (1) consumption and production patterns stay within the planetary boundaries, (2) to preserve the marine, or (3) to preserve the terrestrial ecosystems?

Empowerment

We define empowerment as the capability to maintain determination over one's life and participation in the life of one's community through involvement in the functioning of institutions such as schools, churches, and other voluntary organisations.⁷ This category encompasses the following SDGs:

- SDG4: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- SDG8: promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all
- SDG17: strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

A behavioural intervention can be reviewed to consider the following questions: does this intervention maintain and propel people's capability to take part in the life of their communities through (1) education and lifelong learning, (2) work opportunities and economic security, or (3) partnerships between communities?

Resilience

We define resilience as the ability of communities to successfully adapt to difficult situations, adversity, and crises.⁸ This category encompasses the following SDGs:

- SDG9: build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation
- SDG11: make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- SDG13: take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

A behavioural intervention can be reviewed to consider the following questions: does this intervention enable communities to adapt to or address economic, social and environmental urgent crises and their impacts with inclusive and sustainable (1) infrastructures and innovations or (2) solutions for a better and safer way of being and living in cities and human settlements?

of climate justice between societies, as well as resilience, without which the future generations will not be able to adapt to climate change. In this way, the WISER framework enlarges the scope of the beyond-GDP mindset above and beyond the wellbeing lens.

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