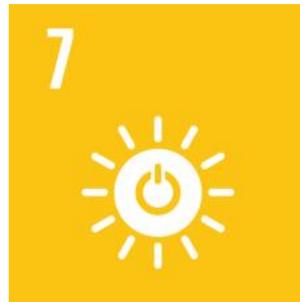


Sustainable Development Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all



What is Goal 7?

The Sustainable Development Goals will not and cannot be achieved without sustainable energy. Every major challenge the world faces today is in some way impacted by energy, whether directly or indirectly. Currently, one in five people around the world lack access to reliable, modern electricity. Due to lack of access, between three to four million lives are lost annually due to pollution resulting from indoor cook stoves fueled by bio-waste, coal, charcoal, and fire, with the majority of these lives lost prematurely being women and children. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has continuously fought for sustainable energy noting that, “Sustainable energy is the thread that connects economic growth, social equity, and our efforts to combat climate change”^[1]. Access and investment into sustainable energy not only results in a safer planet for future generations, but also spurs economic growth. For six years running, investment into renewable energy sources has averaged more than \$200 billion per year, creating new markets and jobs.

The seventh goal of the Sustainable Development Goals seeks to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. So what constitutes sustainable energy? Sustainable energy takes into account both renewable energy and energy efficiency, in order to meet energy demands without sacrificing future generations and the environment. Perhaps the most difficult part in achieving this goal and the rest of the SDGs is the emphasis on “for all”. Climate change is an imminent threat to everyone, however it disproportionately affects developing nations sooner and harsher than other parts of the world, especially the least developed states. Drastic weather such as floods or droughts are even more catastrophic for the poorest people due to lack of savings and inadequate infrastructure. Climate change also causes massive migration due to environmental degradation, resulting in increased levels of ethnic tensions, strain on resources in receiving countries, and civil strife. Developed and developing nations both face great problems in regards to energy, where developing nations face inadequate access or no access to energy, developed nations face a surplus of pollution and waste. Due to

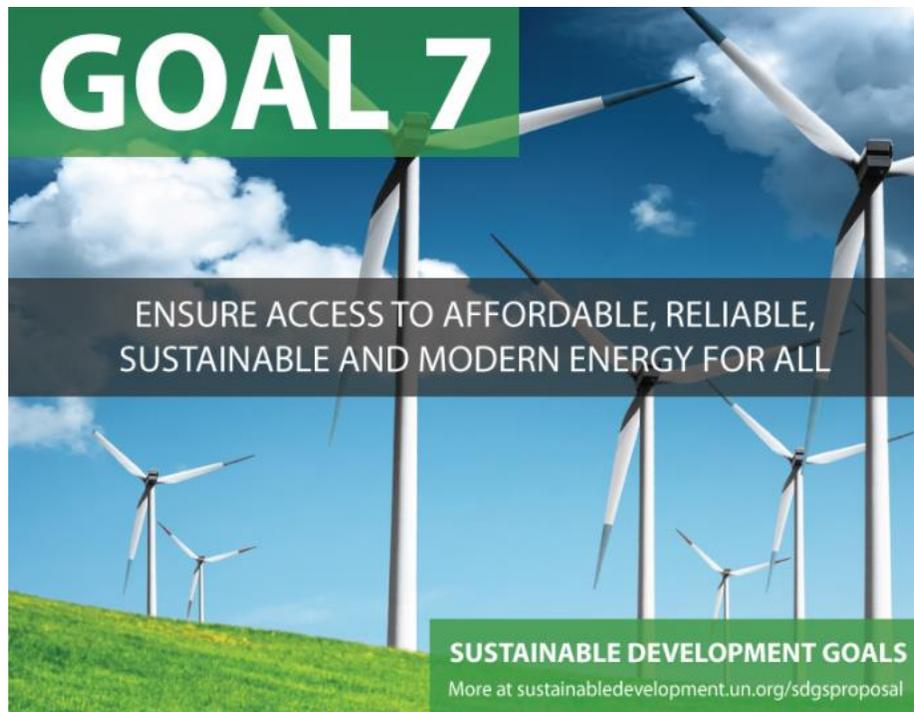
the differences in challenges facing nations around the world, it is important to create a sustainable energy plan that is not only adaptable but affordable and accessible to all. Through massive investments and new technology, we have seen great progress in the field of renewable energy in countries across the globe. In Denmark, 20 percent of their electricity comes from wind power, and Brazil's hydroelectric dams provide over 80 percent of their country's electricity. Strides have also been made in China, the world's largest consumer of coal, who just surpassed their own goals for 2015 in terms of renewable energy. Their coal consumption dropped almost 4 percent with net imports down over 30 percent, coupled with a 74 percent increase in solar capacity and 34 percent in wind energy capacity. These results are truly just the beginning. Sustainably grown biomass could produce over four times the global energy demand by 2050, along with the potential of geothermal energy being over 15 times the current total energy production of the world.

What Are The Targets?

- By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services
- By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix
- By 2030, double the rate of improvement in energy efficiency

Means of Implementation

- By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology
- By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, Small Island developing States, and land-locked developing countries, in accordance with their respective programmes of support.



Is This Possible?

The targets set out in Goal 7 are achievable, however, success hinges on the actions of all parties to ensure accountability, or this goal and every other goal of this agenda will not be possible. A crucial aspect in ensuring the success and achievability is the multifaceted nature of energy, and how it is crucial to achieving other means. This is reflected in the nature of Goal 7, addressing the economic, social, and environmental elements which are the three pillars of sustainable development. However, there are shortcomings, specifically the lack of clarification on what constitutes “access”. Goal 7 does not specify the type and level of services that should be considered in assessing the progress being made by countries. This lack of clarification can easily be exploited and result in loopholes. In addition, there is no mention of limiting indoor and local pollution caused from consumption of energy, specifically a huge issue that arises from inadequate cook stoves, which results in the death of millions of lives annually. And perhaps the largest obstacle regarding international cooperation in achieving this goal is the narrative surrounding energy production and consumption between developed and developing states. It can be argued that the actions taken by developed countries throughout industrialization have expedited climate change and necessitated the need for drastic changes in energy consumption today. However, it is developing countries that often carry the largest burden, facing many of the environmental consequences and trying to develop with greater restrictions, which developed nations did not face. These concerns are valid and are addressed through the common but differentiated responsibility principle, which allows for the taking into consideration the means available for change and progress within each country.

Despite these concerns, the World Energy Outlook for IEA and the IIASA Global Energy Assessment view Goal 7 as achievable by 2030. This success is dependent on targets and

benchmarks which are universal yet regionally applicable. Countries must create comprehensive plans of action that will hold them accountable for taking necessary steps to ensure reliable access to sustainable energy. Effective implementation and monitoring will be dependent on strong national and sectoral based indicators, allowing for the dissemination of good practices and precise evaluations. Countries will not be on their own in creating these indicators. A new initiative, spearheaded by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, [Sustainable Energy For All](#) (SE4ALL), is currently designing indicators to achieve their three goals, which are: ensure universal access to modern energy services, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency, and double the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. These perfectly align with Goal 7, and allow for countries to utilize SE4ALL's resources and global network of partnerships between governments, civil society, and the private sector to ensure the greatest progress. Furthermore, on April 22, 2016, a record number 175 countries signed the Paris Climate Agreement, agreeing that all parties will work to combat climate change. It is exactly these initiatives and partnerships which are crucial in ensuring the success of not only Goal 7, but also of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

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