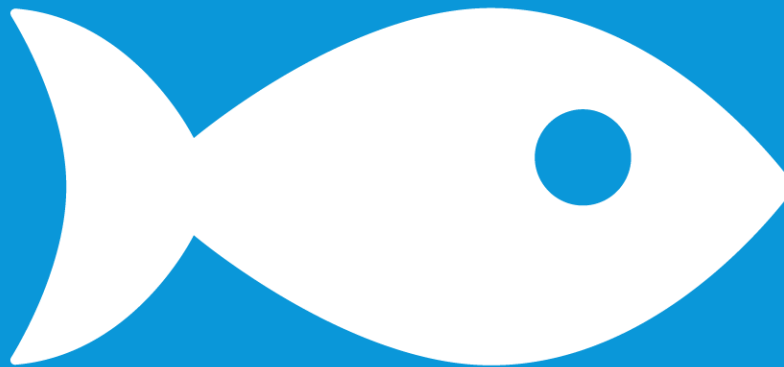# 14 LIFE BELOW WATER

CO-MODERATORS

Lisa Dreier, Managing Director, Advanced Leadership Initiative, Harvard Kennedy School

David Obura, Founding Director, CORDIO East Africa

17 ROOMS GLOBAL FLAGSHIP 2021 ROOM DOCUMENTS
NOVEMBER 2021

17 ROOMS

This document summarizes the ideas and actions that emerged from Room 14, a working group for Sustainable Development Goal 14 on Life Below Water, that convened as part of the annual 17 Rooms global flagship process in 2021. The 17 Rooms initiative is co-hosted by the Center for Sustainable Development at The Brookings Institution and The Rockefeller Foundation. Each Room, one per SDG, was asked to identify actionable priorities that can be advanced by the end of 2022 to improve some component of 2030 outcomes for its respective Goal. Corresponding documents prepared by the other flagship Rooms are available here, alongside a synthesis report prepared by the 17 Rooms secretariat.

Room 14 — A simple but powerful framework to harness cross-SDG synergies with the oceans

Room 14 Co-Moderators: Lisa Dreier (lisa_dreier@harvard.edu) and David Obura (dobura@cordioea.net)

Room 14 Participants: Nathan Bennett, Jessica Blythe, Kate Brown, Neil Davies, Fabrice DeClerck, Kim Friedman, Renzo Guinto, Megan Morikawa, Ravenna Nuaimy-Barker, Rashid Sumaila, Sebastian Unger, Jacob Taylor (17 Rooms secretariat)

The problem

Ocean and coastal locations face a challenging mix of interactions and inter-dependencies, presenting a particular version of 21st century challenges. The ocean provides opportunities as well as imposing challenges, and the people, jurisdictions and organizations interacting with the ocean face a complex puzzle to identify what actions lead to sustainability, and those that lead away. Existing approaches may be data-heavy and challenging to implement, or context-dependent and difficult to replicate in terms of impacts and learning. Our approach helps to find a middle ground—applying consistent language and concepts through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which enables aggregation, comparison and learning, and may also help with quantification and assessment. A local SDG narrative based on a fishing family in coastal Kenya, is illustrated here,[1] as a starting point for harnessing cross-SDG synergies to stimulate action for local sustainability.

What we are trying to do

Room 14 is developing a framework that can help any community, place, or organization to identify and catalyze systemic action that benefits people, ocean biodiversity and ocean-based economic activities. The SDGs provide a Theory of Change and a narrative framework that can help in this regard—to map cross-SDG synergies, opportunities and trade-offs. Grounded in a specific ocean-focused place, initiative or theme, this process may help actors to identify potential transformational actions and the capacities required to achieve them. Gender is a key determinant of local action and agency, and SDG 5 will form a common thread through all narratives. Further, the common language and narrative framing of the SDGs can help link narratives among places and actors, to foster collective action and SDG delivery at scale. While this is being developed for initial use on SDG 14, the approach can be applied to any SDG.
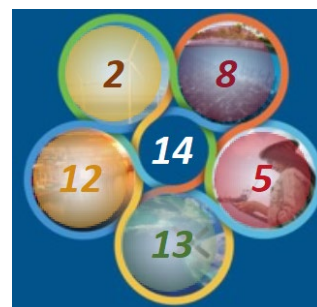
---

[1] http://bit.ly/sdgcoastke

Approach

The approach focuses on an entity or geographical place, including key stakeholders or participants and the boundaries of the system, to assure no one is left out. Participants define their ocean-based vision, what it means in terms of sustainable development, and any cultural, religious, ethical, or other context-specific values and interactions between people and nature.

Putting SDG 14 at the center, the process identifies the 5-6 other SDGs that have key interactions and interdependencies with the ocean. Based on this scaffolding, and generic guidance on goal interactions, a high-level narrative detailing the dominant interactions of the specific context is prepared, identifying key opportunities and challenges to the stated vision. This narrative provides a way to map and communicate the relevance and influence of oceans on other key issues; and provides a strategic foundation for communities or institutions to harness synergies and address challenges arising from those interconnections.

Outputs and outcomes

Specific outputs will depend on the role the narrative can most usefully play in its given context. It may be presented as a written summary, an interactive web page, or a visual rendering. It could contribute to a planning process or strategy; help build understanding, alignment, and engagement among diverse stakeholders; initiate connections to new networks and resources. Three key areas it is most likely to contribute to are in prioritizing key challenges and actions, building momentum and leadership, and engaging new or existing champions.

Next steps

1) *Develop* the narrative development approach with specific steps and outputs (Sept–Oct 2021).
2) *Prototype* the approach through a small and diverse set of places/organizations, each supported by a room participant; trial and iteratively improve the process (October 2021–March 2022). Resources may be needed to support this process. Three potential prototypes are:
   a) _Moorea, French Polynesia_ at the island/municipal level (17,000 people) to support a multi-stakeholder initiative to identify priorities for development.
   b) _Mombasa, Kenya._ A city of 1-1.5 million, in a "smart city" sustainability project focused on climate change and waste management, in a multi-stakeholder scenarios process.
   c) _Iberostar._ A Spanish family-owned tourism company with multiple properties and destinations, to support transformations towards sustainable tourism, particularly around seafood consumption and sourcing.
   d) _17 Rooms-X_. Explore synergies with existing 17 Rooms-X partners, to contribute to and/or complement prototyping*.
3) *Consolidate* the narrative-building approach, to lead into the 2022 17 Rooms process with a view to scaling out and building a Community of Practice or supporting existing ones—e.g. around SDG 14 voluntary commitments, the Friends of Ocean Action, etc. (April–June 2022)

We are seeking partners

- Do you have an ongoing process that could benefit from this approach? We are interested to know if it is compatible with your work or could be useful for your SDG; and to explore what we can learn.
- Can this help you **BREAK blockages** and/or **MAKE new pathways** to sustainability actions?
- Can you help **identify interactions and synergies** between your issue and SDG 14/oceans, for further development in our prototype initiatives?

- Specific 17 Rooms synergies to explore further include on data localization (Room 16), food systems (Room 2), natural security, land degradation (Room 15).
- Others? We are open to suggestions…

Milestones—2022 and beyond

- UN Oceans/SDG14 Conference—Lisbon Conference, June 2022. Demonstrate prototypes and contributions to Voluntary Commitments and their monitoring.
- UN Oceans Decade and Agenda 2030—mobilization plan to expand from SDG 14 Conference towards SDG Decade of Action, Ocean Decade Laboratories.