Halfway to 2030: Measuring success in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

UoN
University of Northampton
Institute for Social Innovation and Impact
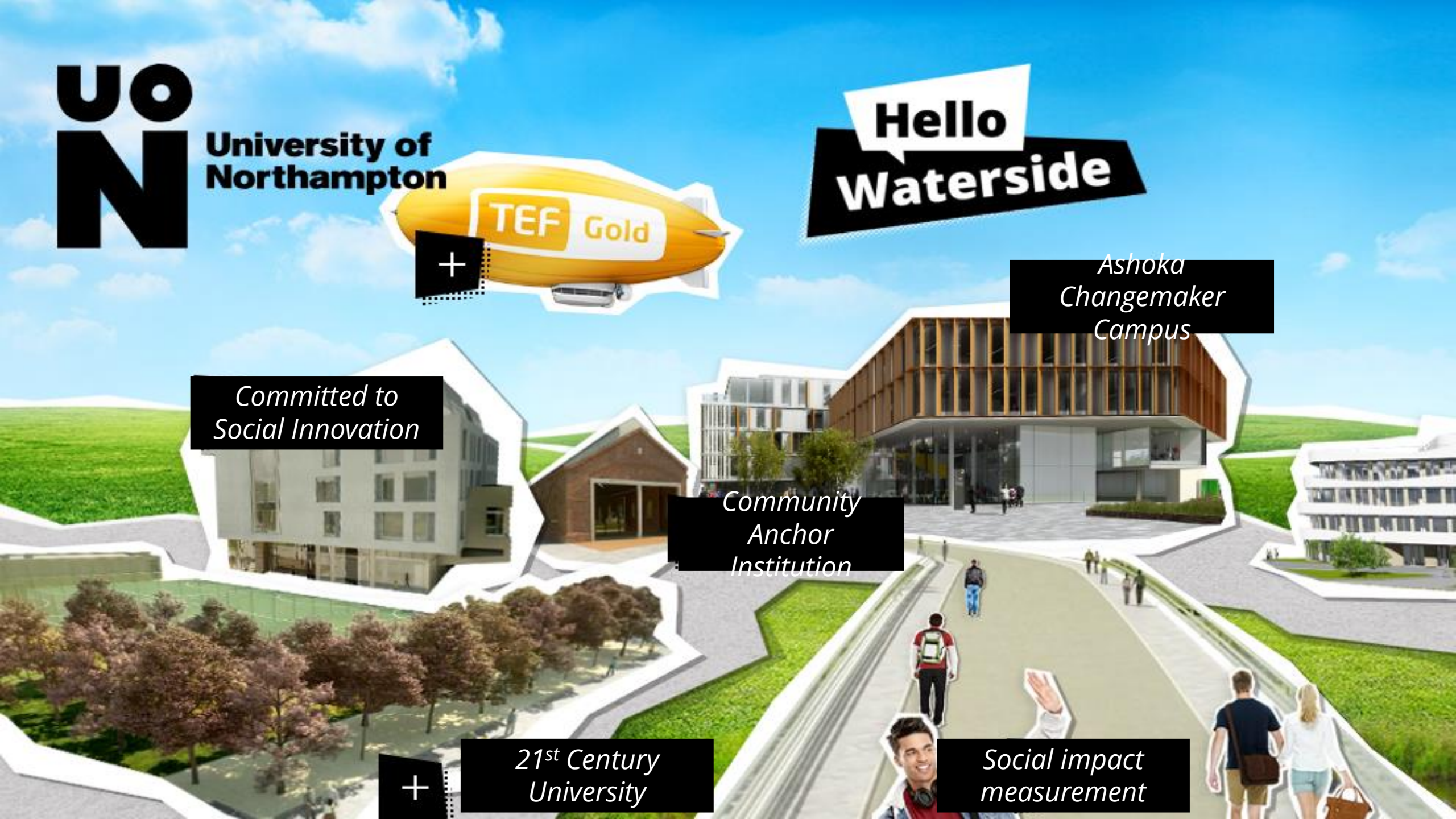
University of Northampton

- Our vision is to be a University that undertakes innovative research that has wide- ranging and significant impact on the lives of local, national, and international communities. We want our research to make a positive difference and create social value. Our research will be closely aligned to the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals** and support our commitment to being socially innovative and a **Ashoka U Changemaker campus.**

- Our internationally renowned research institutes and centres make a real difference to people's lives through improvements to health and well-being, education, public safety, business' and the environment.

Introduction

- The Institute for Social Innovation and Impact (ISII) at the University of Northampton evaluates and measures the social impact of social innovations in the UK and around the world, as well as exploring the financing of, and policy support for, social innovation.

- The ISII defines social impact as 'the economic, social and environmental benefits delivered by an organisation to society' and the Institute views social innovation as any new structure or process that enhances a society's resources and cohesion. Crucially, the ISII is fully self-sustaining and sources its income entirely from external contracts/grants, with no core University funding provided.

What the ISII do?

Supports social innovators to develop their ideas and organisations through the delivery of cutting-edge research and consultancy.

Supports the University in developing, implementing and evaluating socially innovative, high impact projects.

Evaluates the social impact of a range of initiatives and organisations using their bespoke 'Social Impact Matrix©, quantitative and qualitative methods.
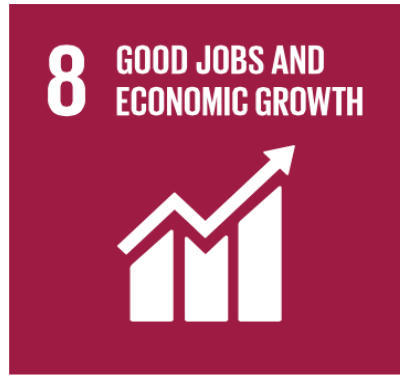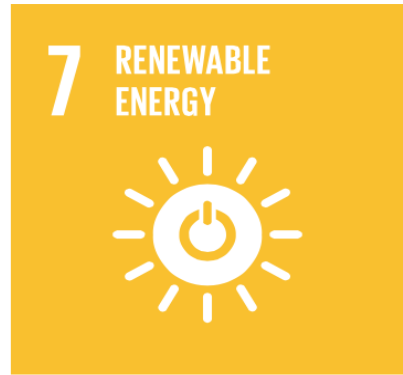
Collaborates on multi-disciplinary research projects through internal partnerships with the University's other research institutes and centres, as well as through external partnerships with other universities and organisations.

Halfway to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- The SDGs provide a blueprint for the development of a sustainable, peaceful and prosperous planet, with all United Nations Members States encouraged to adopt the agenda (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2020).

- SDGs were designed to be clear, universal, time-bound and measurable – inspired by the intention to overcome the gap between conserving resources-limiting emissions and incentives for further economic development.

- Adopting the SDG agenda creates pressure on Member States to develop and/or fund services that address the systemic barriers to sustainable development, and more specifically, transform outcomes (Paterson-Young and Hazenberg, 2021).

- SDGs also creates an opportunity for organisations to maximise funding by introducing a measurement approach that, not only captures the organisations success in transforming outcomes, but aligns organisational activities with the SDGs (Paterson-Young and Hazenberg, 2021).

"Leave no one behind. That defining principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a shared promise by every country to work together to secure the rights and well-being of everyone on a healthy, thriving planet. But halfway to 2030, that promise is in peril. The Sustainable Development Goals are disappearing in the rear-view mirror, as is the hope and rights of current and future generations. A fundamental shift is needed – in commitment, solidarity, financing and action – to put the world on a better path. And it is needed now." (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2023, Page 4)

The Halfway Point

- The halfway point for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was 2022-2023, providing a unique opportunity to analyse implementation and challenges (Biermann et al., 2022).

- Early efforts after the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted produced favourable trends:

  - Extreme poverty and child mortality rates falling

  - Improvements in diseases as HIV and hepatitis realised

  - Positive results in some gender equality targets

  - Share of renewables in the energy mix was increasing

  - Unemployment levels stabilising

- Progress was positive but unsustainable (fragile and slow), compounded by, in the past three years, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, war and climate related disasters (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2023)
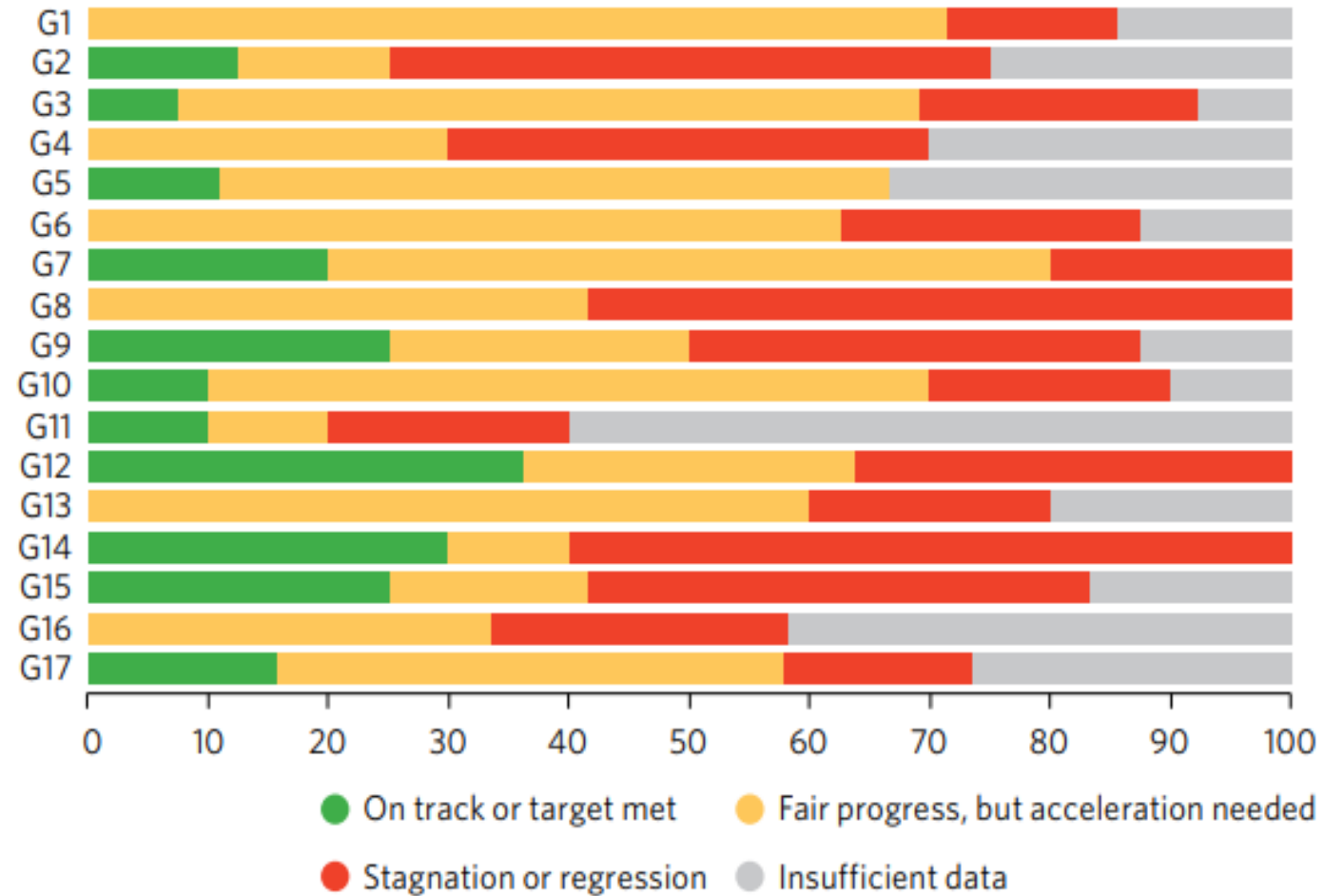
Achieving the SDGs

- The SDG 2030 Agenda is characterized by uncertainty and the achievement or failure to achieve individual goals may impact other goals due to the interconnected nature of gaols ((UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2023).

- Achieving the goals requires an integrated and aligned approach due to the interconnected nature of the goals.

- Without this integrated and aligned approach, with the consideration of other goals, negative and unintended impacts may occur (Brand et al., 2021).
  - For example, tackling SDG2 (Zero Hunger) by increasing agricultural yields using agro-chemicals will impact on SDG6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG14 (Life Under Water) and SFG15 (Life on land).

- Designing an approach that monitors the negative and unintended impacts is essential to ensure appropriate implementation of activities to tackle goals (D'Adamo & Gastaldi 2022).

Reality check

- Slowing down of progress

- Reversed progress on several goals

- Still negative trends on environment- and inequality-related goals

- Crises or 'scarring' effects-including COVID19

- Half of the 140 targets analyses have shown moderate or severe deviations from the desired trajectory.

- Around 30 per cent of these targets have experienced no progress or, even worse, regression below the 2015 baseline.

(UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2023, Page 8)

Progress assessment for the 17 Goals based on assessed targets, 2023 or latest data (percentage)

Legend:
- On track or target met
- Fair progress, but acceleration needed
- Stagnation or regression
- Insufficient data

What happens if trends continue...

575 Million people will still be living in extreme poverty

Only 1/3 of countries will have halved poverty levels

More than 600 million people worldwide are projected to face hunger in 2023

1 in 3 people worldwide will struggle with moderate to severe food insecurity

84 Million children and youth will be out of school

300 million students will lack basic numeracy/literacy skills

Only 1 in 6 countries will achieve Universal secondary school completion targets

(UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2023)

1

Heads of State and Government should recommit to seven years of accelerated, sustained and transformative action, both nationally and internationally, to deliver on the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2

Governments should advance concrete, integrated and targeted policies and actions to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and end the war on nature, with a focus on advancing the rights of women and girls and empowering the most vulnerable.

3

Governments should strengthen national and subnational capacity, accountability and public institutions to deliver accelerated progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

4

The international community should recommit at the SDG Summit to deliver on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and to mobilize the resources and investment needed for developing countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those in special situations and experiencing acute vulnerability.

5

Member States should facilitate the continued strengthening of the United Nations development system and boost the capacity of the multilateral system to tackle emerging challenges and address Sustainable Development Goals-related gaps and weaknesses in the international architecture that have emerged since 2015.

(UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2023, Page 7)

But how can we measure success really? What can we do at a local and national level?

Social Impact Measurement: A Way to Measure Success

What is Social Impact Measurement?

- Ogain, Lumley and Pritchard (2012:33) reported on a survey conducted by NPC that stated: "*impact measurement means different things to different people...We therefore... take responses about whether they are measuring impact... at face value.*"

- Interpretations and understanding of **social impact** and **social value** differ, which has resulted in confusion in the development of measurement tools and the reporting of social impact.

- There is **no single** universally accepted definition of social impact measurement (Sairinen and Kumpulainen, 2005).

Social impact (Freudenburg, 1986)	The impacts (or effects or consequences) that are likely to be experiences by an equally broad range of social groups as a result of some course of action.
Social impact (Clark et al., 2004)	The portion of the total outcome that happened as a result of the activity of the venture above and beyond what would have happened anyway.
Social impact (Vanclay, 2003)	The intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions and any social change process invoked by those interventions.
Social Impact (Clifford, Hehenberger and Fantini, 2014)	The reflection of social outcomes as measurements, both long-term and short-term, adjusted for the effects achieved by others (alternative attribution), for effects that would have happened anyway (deadweight), for negative consequences (displacement), and for effects declining over time (drop-off).

What is Social Impact Measurement?

- European Commission's "Groupe d'Experts de la Commission sur l'Entrepreneuriat Social" (GECES) sub-committee, described social impact measurement as the scope of the programme (*outputs* of the programme); the positive and negative outcomes experienced by beneficiaries (*outcomes* for the beneficiary group); the changes for beneficiaries and society over time (*impacts* on society); the role of different stakeholders/partners in this change (alternative attribution); and the changes that would have occurred regardless of the programmes delivery (deadweight/control group) (Clifford et al. 2014).

- Social impact measurement promotes efficient and transparent regulation of organisations by identifying the short, medium and long-term benefit of services, transforming outcomes and driving organisational change (Nicholls 2009; Clifford et al. 2013).

- It outlines the role of different stakeholder groups, and how they interact with each other, both strategically (from a power perspective) and operationally (in delivering the programme and measuring the impact).
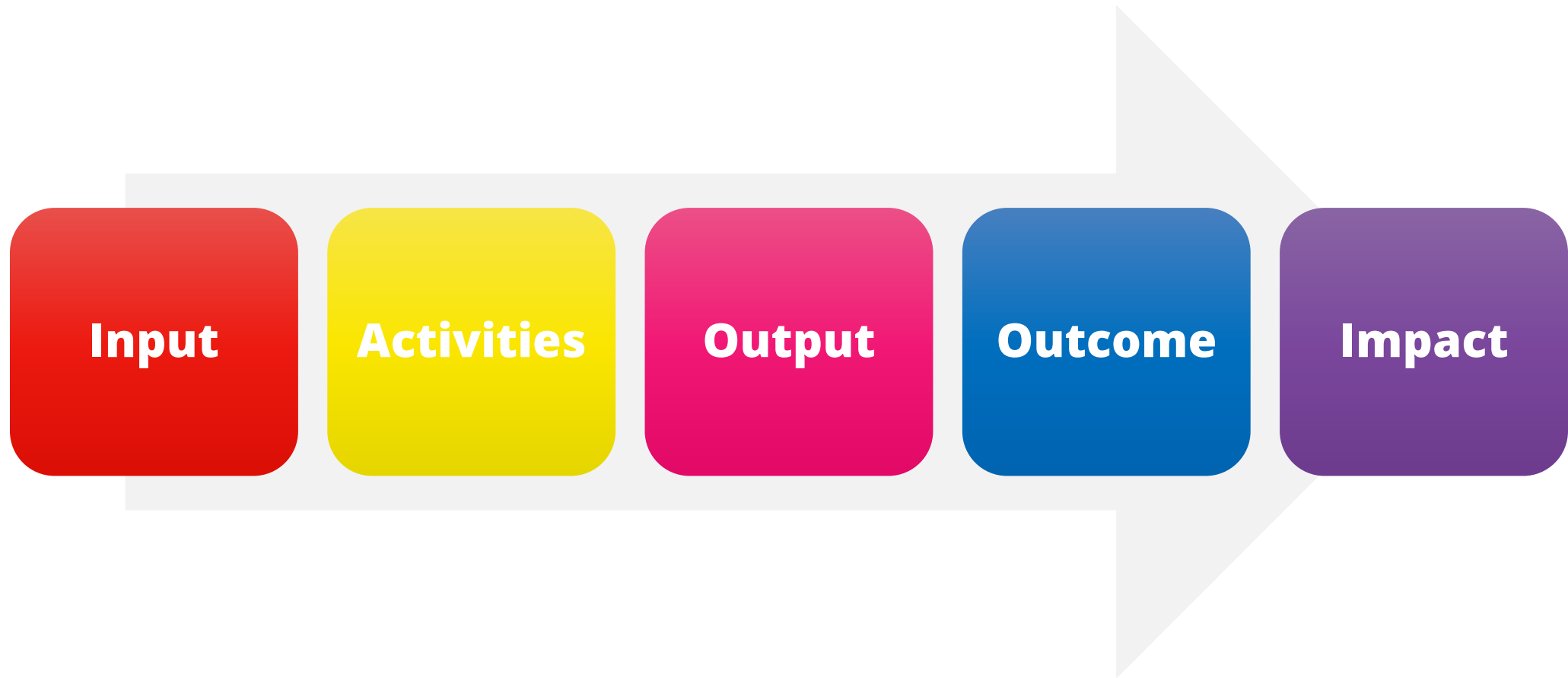
Why Measure Social Impact?

- Identifying the 'whole story' of impact for beneficiaries, organisations and communities allow organisations to demonstrate the effectiveness of activities.

- Provides evidence of your impact - evidence for stakeholders, funders and beneficiaries.

- Promotes an approach that monitors the negative and unintended impacts is essential to ensure appropriate implementation of activities to tackle goals (D'Adamo & Gastaldi 2022).

- Transition in third sector relationship with the state/NGOs/investors: desire for evidenced-based policy-making, austerity and scarce resources that aligns with SDGs (Lyon and Arvidson, 2011; Ogain, Lumley and Prichard, 2012).

Impact chain...

Input → Activities → Output → Outcome → Impact

Approaches and Tools for Social Impact Measurement

- ✓ Eco Management & Audit Scheme (EMAS)

- ✓ Local Multiplier 3 (LM3)

- ✓ The Social Impact Measurement for local Economies (SIMPLE)

- ✓ Social Accounting and Audit (SAA)

- ✓ Social Return on Investment (SROI)

- ✓ Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit

- ✓ European Foundation for Quality Management (EQFM)

- ✓ Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations (PQASSO)

- ✓ Social Enterprise Balanced Scorecard

- ✓ Third Sector Performance Dashboard

- ✓ Social Impact Matrix©

What is the ISII approach to Social Impact Measurement?

The Social Impact Matrix© provides a holistic social impact measurement approach to impact measurement, combining the SIMPLE framework with the 'triple-bottom line. It defines

- Inputs (or resources) represent the resources used for the delivery of interventions.

- Activities represent the specific actions employed to deliver services.

- Outputs can be defined as the direct and easily identifiable outputs of projects (i.e., number of participants)

- Outcomes represent positive changes to the participant's lives (i.e., reducing loneliness and isolation).

- Impact is the longer-term benefit relating to the wider impact on society resulting from the intervention/activities (i.e., reducing reliance on healthcare provisions).

SDG4 – Social Impact Measurement Example

SDG Target Indicator	Activities	Output	Outcome	Impact
Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment.	Placements and employability programmes for young people.	Number of young people supported with placements. Number of young people in employment.	Improvement in wellbeing for young people. Improvements in self-efficacy for young people.	Reduction in welfare payments. Increase tax and national insurance.

SDG16 – Social Impact Measurement Example

SDG Target Indicator	Activities	Output	Outcome	Impact
End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.	Trauma informed support services providing victims of sexual violence (Eaton and Paterson-Young 2018).	Number of service users self-reporting that they feel safe walking alone around the area they live and/or victimisation surveys.	Improved emotional well-being (example measurement tool Warwick-Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale).	Improved emotional and physical well-being resulting in reduction in public services costs (for example, law enforcement and healthcare

Summary

- The halfway point for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was 2022-2023 has shown positive progress however this progress is unsustainable (fragile and slow), compounded by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the war in Ukraine and climate related disasters (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2023)

- The SDG 2030 Agenda is characterized by uncertainty and the achievement or failure to achieve individual goals may impact other goals due to the interconnected nature of gaols (UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2023).

- Without this integrated and aligned approach, with the consideration of other goals, negative and unintended impacts may occur (Brand et al., 2021).

- Designing a social impact measurement approach that monitors the negative and unintended impacts is essential to ensure appropriate implementation of activities to tackle goals.

- Social impact measurement promotes efficient and transparent regulation of organisations by identifying the short, medium and long-term benefit of services, transforming outcomes and driving organisational change (Nicholls 2009; Clifford et al. 2013).

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Thank you
for listening

Any questions?

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