SDG 14 ACCELERATOR:
A METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE

This methodological guide is the second knowledge product delivered under the project "Accelerating implementation of SDG 14 in selected countries in Asia and the Pacific" launched by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 2018 to contribute to the delivery of goal 14 ("life below water") in the region. The first knowledge product, the policy brief "SDG 14 in Asia and the Pacific: an Accelerator Approach for Implementation", introduces accelerators to facilitate transformative change across the Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on goal 14 in Asia and the Pacific.

The work presented here provides a step by step approach for developing an Accelerator Action Plan for SDG 14. The methodology uses policy tracking, interconnections between SDGs and participatory scenario planning to develop pivotal interventions to increase the rate of delivery of SDG 14. The Accelerator is designed as a strategic planning instrument for national governments in the Asia-Pacific region operating in data-limited contexts.

The methodological guide is illustrated using a practical example at each stage, associated with SDG 14 Target 4 (sustainable fishing), to improve understanding and accessibility. To ensure its relevance, the methodology is designed to align with national policy cycles and to accelerate nationally-defined policy priorities for the ocean. This guide has been developed through expert deliberation, literature review, engagement at a number of regional events including a validation workshop in Fiji (November 2018), as well as formal expert review processes.

1. Introduction

The SDG 14 Accelerator supports governments to identify and prioritize actions that accelerate implementation of the SDG 14. The SDG 14 Accelerator identifies pivotal interventions, which can generate positive multiplier effects on SDG delivery. The outcome is an Accelerator Action Plan which defines a route for accelerating priorities within SDG 14 which is feasible and maximises benefits. A policy brief has been produced by ESCAP introducing this Accelerator approach for SDG 14[1].

The SDG 14 Accelerator is creative and transformative in order to progress ocean sustainability. Evidence shows a progressive trajectory of degradation of ocean habitats and ecosystems in the Asia-Pacific region, coupled with persistent inadequacy of business-as-usual management approaches. The Accelerator methodology creates policy options when business-as-usual approaches to SDG 14 are inadequate or insufficient. The approach is especially pertinent when there is a desire to promote ocean sustainability but there are competing priorities due to the inherent complexity of ocean governance.

The Accelerator approach uses a sequenced but flexible diagnostic and participatory methodology. The methodology draws on a range of sources, including literature, data and consultation with relevant stakeholders. The methodology embeds core principles related to transformative change such as leaping forward and catalysing interlinkages, whilst accounting for national context and equity.

The methodology aligns to both national processes and the SDGs. The Accelerator is designed to be flexible so that it can align with, and utilise, relevant national processes such as ongoing policy and planning regimes for the ocean while also contributing to the delivery of all SDGs. Specifically, the methodology builds on the interlinkages between SDG 14 and other SDGs, such as hunger (SDG 2), work and economic growth (SDG 8) and climate change (SDG 13)[2].

The methodology is designed to be accessible to countries in the Asia-Pacific, accounting for their resources and capacity. The analytical approach can be implemented in a few months or tailored to align with national policy and planning timelines. The required expertise can be found in most governments, or an external facilitator can be used to guide the process. Costs are minimised as no or limited primary data collection is required, however, organisation of stakeholder consultations and workshops are necessary.

The Accelerator approach embraces international, regional, national and sub-national ocean initiatives. The approach recognises the transboundary nature of oceans, and the multiple spatial scales over which action is required for the effective delivery of SDG 14. Promoting and coordinating regional approaches may come under the remit of an Accelerator approach, especially where regional ocean governance is robust. There remain many opportunities for strengthened regional cooperation which can help progress challenging areas such as capacity development, institutional transformation, and sustainable financing.

The approach directly supports national governments but can be mainstreamed across a wider target audience of ocean stakeholders. The Accelerator approach directly aligns with the national government endorsement of the 2030 Agenda which makes national jurisdictions the prime unit of intervention and reporting. The approach also falls in line with national policy; it can thus be driven by an appropriate institutional entity or structure with a remit for ocean governance. However, by design it requires involvement of a wider constituency which can be drawn from government officials from a range of sectors, including the private sector, development partners, and civil society organizations at a national and regional scale.

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[1] https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP_SDG14_Policy%20Brief_Final.pdf

[2] https://nereusprogram.org/reports/report-oceans-and-sustainable-development-goals-co-benefits-climate-change-and-social-equity/

2. Entry points for the SDG 14 Accelerator

The Accelerator approach requires an aspiration for national progress in ocean sustainability which is more rapid than present. This aspiration for acceleration can be from acceptance of limited progress from standard "locked-in" approaches or from new and emerging policy initiatives. In either case, high-level agreement within the government is necessary to ensure that it receives cross-governmental support. This is especially important where the Accelerator will have to challenge existing business-as-usual approaches and "locked-in" development paradigms.

The need to more rapidly progress ocean sustainability can be informed by many factors depending on national circumstances. The 2030 Agenda and SDG 14 may provide impetus as could other international agendas and agreements (e.g. Voluntary Commitments of UN Oceans Conference, Aichi target 12 on marine protected areas). National political commitment though policy development (e.g. a new National Oceans Policy), or agenda setting from regional or national entities which urge action, may also influence the need for acceleration.

The specific entry point of the Accelerator methodology will be determined by national circumstances. There are a number of possible entry points for the Accelerator into national planning. Entry points could be early on, associated with problem identification, or through the subsequent policy steps: analysis – development – implementation – evaluation. Triggering factors could include a review of progress in ocean-related policies, realisation of inadequate resourcing or commencement of new initiatives (see examples in Box 1). Timing the start of the Accelerator approach could coincide with existing processes and timelines in the policy cycle, such as annual progress reviews, Voluntary National Reviews or sustainable development assessments.

Box 1: Entry points for SDG 14 Accelerator

- Development of a new national Ocean Policy creates increased inertia for action towards ocean sustainability. The Accelerator can be used to identify pivotal and impactful interventions which can be prioritised for implementation under the Ocean Policy.

- Further resource mobilisation through development funds is deemed necessary by government to strengthen activities pursuing ocean sustainability. The Accelerator methodology can be used to identify and structure cost-effective and impactful measures which can form the basis of a proposal to development funds such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) or the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

- National progress in SDG 14 is lagging behind many other SDGs in national reporting. The Accelerator methodology can be used to review and revitalise efforts at meeting SDG 14 through improved targeting of domestic budgets and identification of resourcing gaps.

The precise focus of the Accelerator approach needs to be clearly defined and agreed. Whilst the entry point will be determined by national circumstances, there is a need to clearly agree and determine the focus of the Accelerator among core stakeholders. This *focus* of the Accelerator could be one single target of SDG 14, or specific aspects of SDG 14 targets. It could also be a number of SDG 14 targets, recognizing that SDG 14 targets are themselves not independent but associated to each other. In some cases, the Accelerator target may be best articulated as a national policy objective (for example, from a national ocean policy) which is linked to SDG 14. In addition, the Accelerator approach may be used to identify pivotal interventions across the broader realm of SDG 14 in order to support governments to identify priorities within goal 14. A clearly defined focus is a prerequisite for the methodology; the examples presented below use SDG 14 target 4[3] as the focus of the Accelerator to illustrate the methodology.

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[3] SDG 14 target 4 By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics.

3. SDG 14 Accelerator

The Accelerator methodology follows four stages (Figure 1); which establish a process leading to an Accelerator Action Plan (Figure 2). To start the process the focus of the Accelerator needs to be clearly defined and agreed upon. Subsequent stages include: analysis, interpretation and participation. The final stage is the development of an Accelerator Action Plan, which details the actions required for implementation.
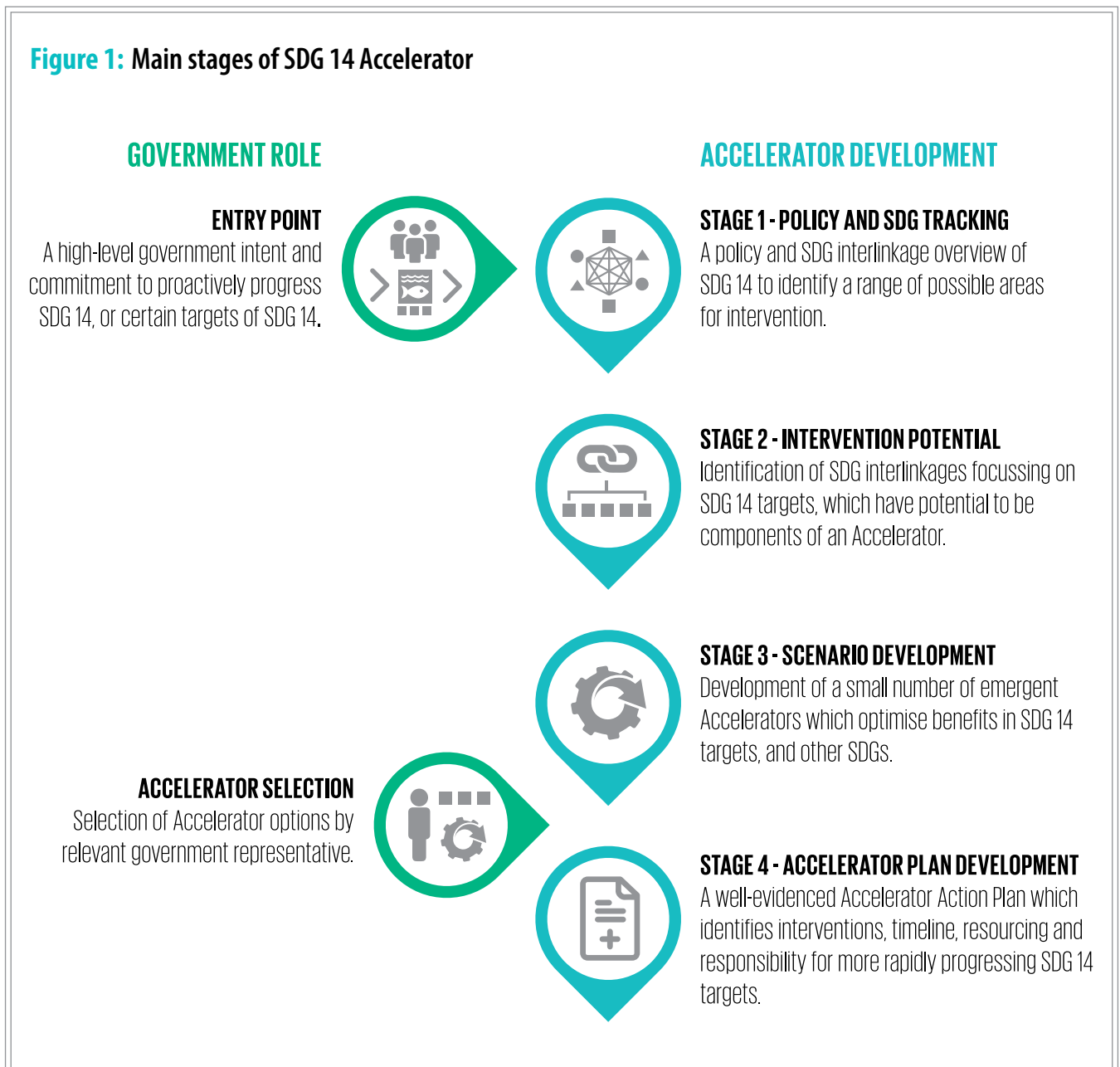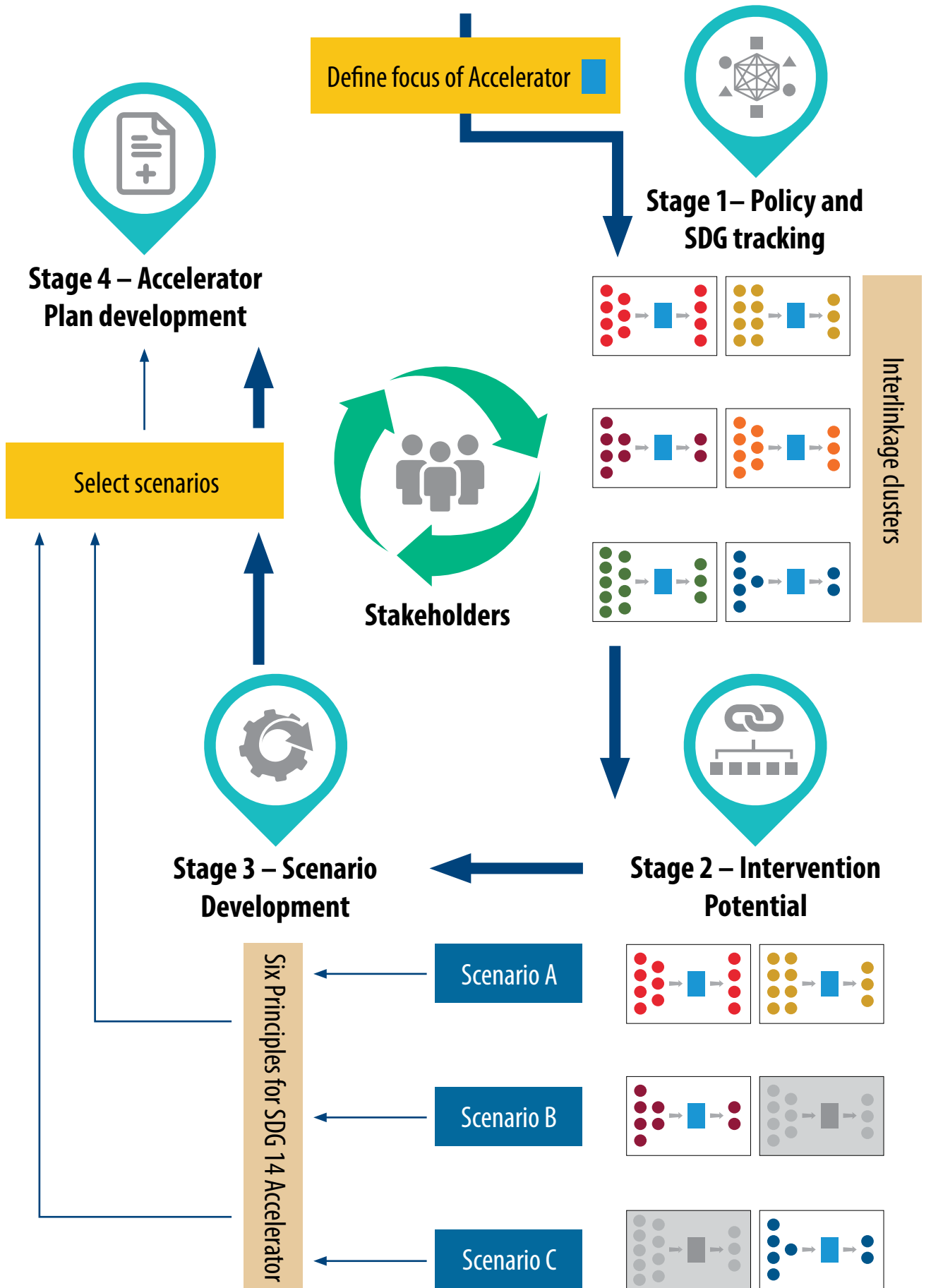
Figure 1: Main stages of SDG 14 Accelerator

GOVERNMENT ROLE

ENTRY POINT
A high-level government intent and commitment to proactively progress SDG 14, or certain targets of SDG 14.

ACCELERATOR SELECTION
Selection of Accelerator options by relevant government representative.

ACCELERATOR DEVELOPMENT

STAGE 1 - POLICY AND SDG TRACKING
A policy and SDG interlinkage overview of SDG 14 to identify a range of possible areas for intervention.

STAGE 2 - INTERVENTION POTENTIAL
Identification of SDG interlinkages focussing on SDG 14 targets, which have potential to be components of an Accelerator.

STAGE 3 - SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT
Development of a small number of emergent Accelerators which optimise benefits in SDG 14 targets, and other SDGs.

STAGE 4 - ACCELERATOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT
A well-evidenced Accelerator Action Plan which identifies interventions, timeline, resourcing and responsibility for more rapidly progressing SDG 14 targets.

Figure 2: Stages and sequential process of SDG 14 Accelerator

4. Stages of the Accelerator

Stage 1– Policy and SDG tracking

Aim:

The first stage identifies policy and SDG interlinkages in relation to the focal SDG 14 target(s).

Outputs:

1. A cross-tracking of relevant policies.

2. Mapping of the interlinkages between the Accelerator target and SDG goals and targets.

Steps:

1.1 Policy assessment. This step determines key policies relevant to the focus of the Accelerator and identifies areas of coherent policy. The assessment will also identify areas of inconsistency and possible gaps. The assessment will determine the degree of inter-operability between SDG 14 and national polices (such as ocean policy, national sustainable development plans, social policies, etc.) and provide further clarity on how the focus of the Accelerator is nationally articulated. In addition to policy, the assessment will include institutional arrangements at national level, and regional where relevant, to identify relevant government constituencies associated with the focus of the Accelerator – these will become key stakeholders in the participatory stages of the Accelerator.

1.2 Identifying linkages at the SDG goal level. This step requires identification of linkages between the SDG goals and the focus of the Accelerator. These linkages are mapped in terms of both "upstream" goals that affect progress in the focus of the Accelerator, as well as "downstream" goals in which progress in the focus of the Accelerator, directly contributes to their achievement. The significant or important interlinkages need to be identified and highlighted. Those upstream or downstream goals which do not link to the Accelerator focus can be dropped. Those interlinkages perceived as predominately theoretical can also be discarded. The outcome of this stage is a diagram which shows the upstream and downstream goals which are related to the focus of the Accelerator in this particular national context (Example 1).

Example 1. Step 1.2 - Interlinkages between the Accelerator focus (in this case SDG 14.4; restore fish stocks) and SDG goals, in terms of those which are affected by SDG 14.4 and those in which progress in SDG 14.4 contribute to[4].
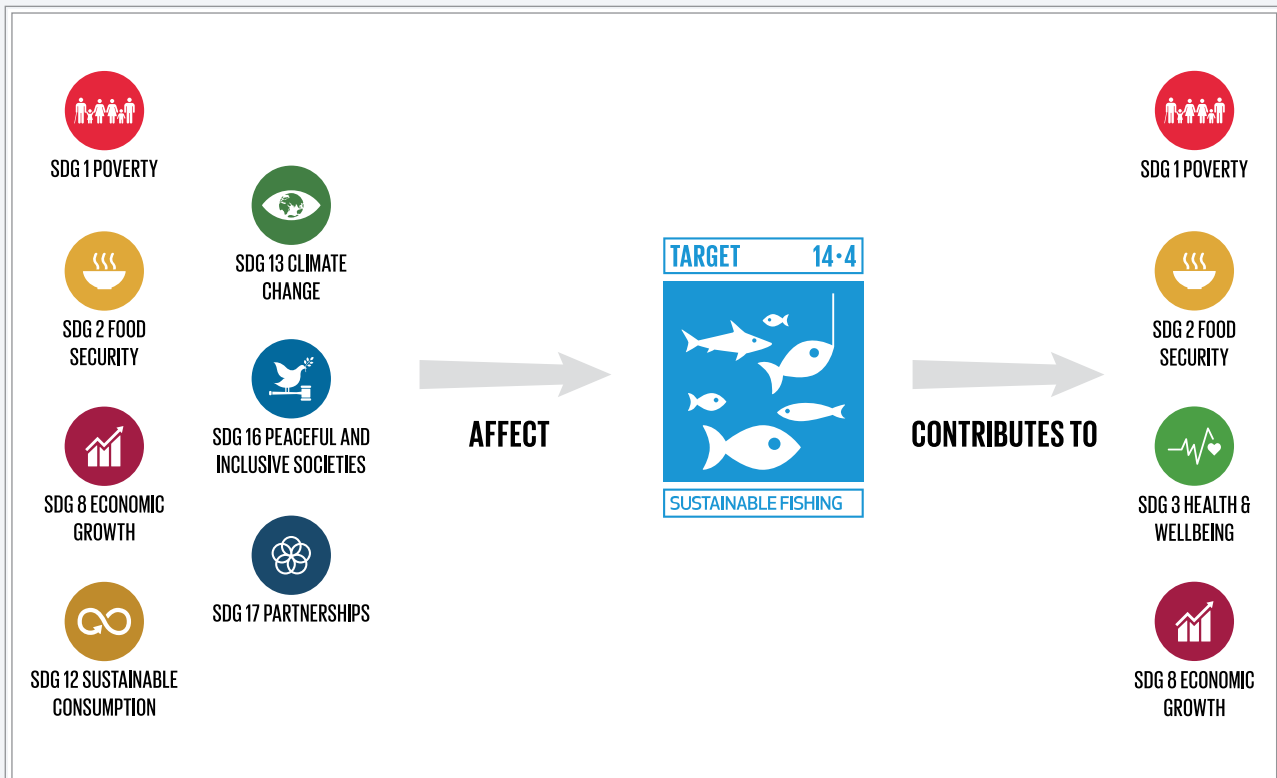

Interpretation: *Within this example, the focus of the Accelerator − SDG 14.4 − **is** linked into a wide range of SDGs. Upstream goals relate to poverty, food, employment and economy affect SDG 14.4, as well as climate change and societal goals related to inclusivity and partnerships. Progress in SDG 14.4 contributes to progress in a smaller number of downstream goals associated with poverty, food security, health and economic growth.*

1.3 Identifying linkages at the SDG target level. A more detailed analysis will be carried out focussing on the interlinkages at the target level. Linkages with SDG goals identified in the first stage will be refined by detailing the interlinkages between the focus of the Accelerator and the SDG targets of the upstream and downstream goals identified in the previous step. Each upstream and downstream goal will be unpacked at the target level, and then the significant linkages between these targets and the Accelerator focus will be identified (Example 2). These interlinkages will be assessed to determine if they are positive and beneficial or incur trade-offs, although interlinkages can provide more detailed information (see Box 2). It would be beneficial if this analysis was carried out in collaboration with a range of relevant stakeholders to help promote a joint understanding of the interlinkages surrounding the focus of the Accelerator.

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4   Adapted from UN DESA, 2017

Example 2. Interlinkages between the area of focus of the Accelerator (SDG 14.4; restore fish stocks) and targets of SDG 1 (end poverty in all its forms everywhere) – all interlinkages are positive[5].
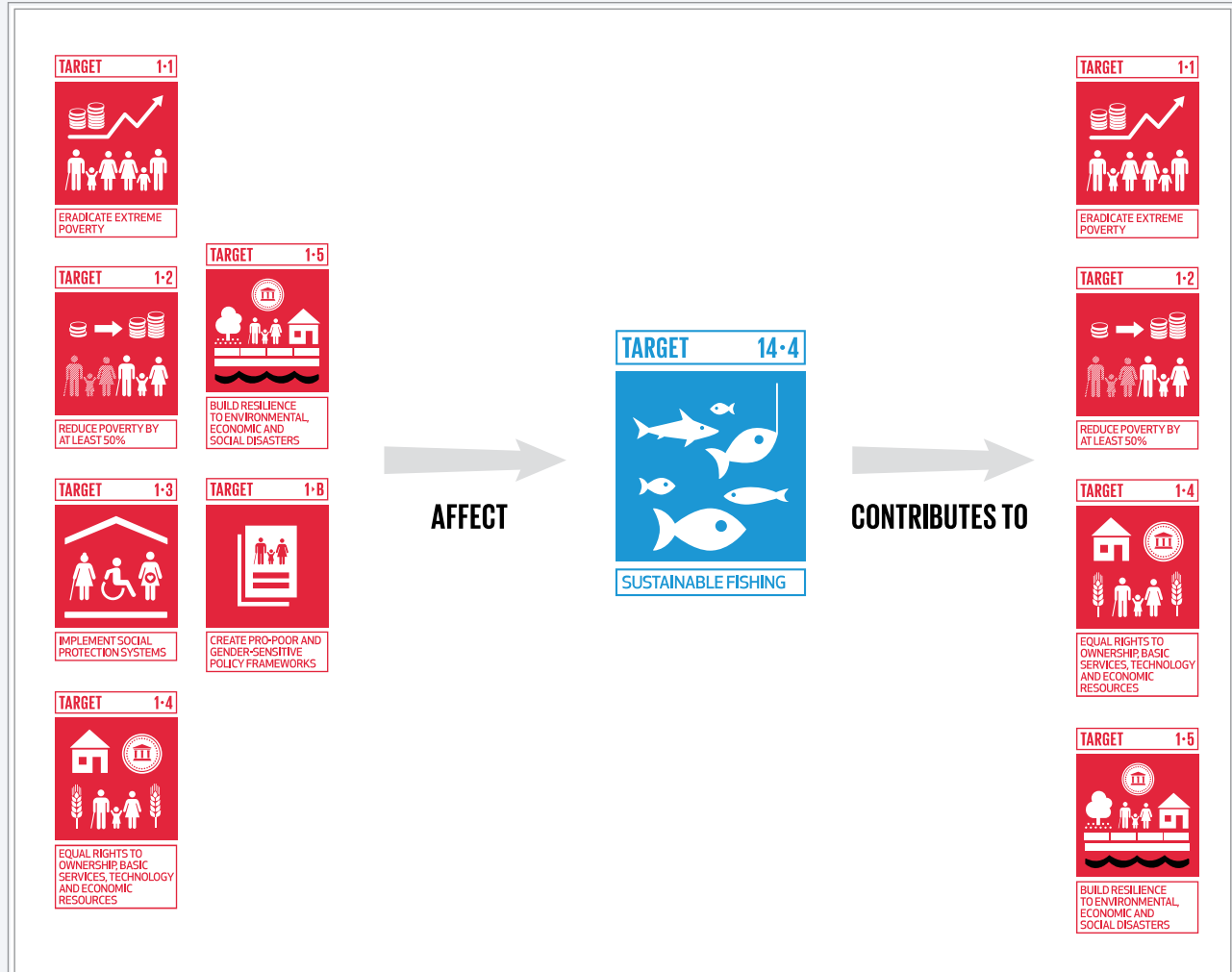
Interpretation: *In this national situation, there are clear linkages between the most of the targets of SDG 1 related to poverty and fish stocks. The upstream interlinkages suggest that fisheries access and rights, especially for the poor and vulnerable, need to be carefully considered and aligned with fish stock restoration efforts. The downstream contributions of SDG 14.4 link not simply to poverty, but other societal aspects such as rights and resilience. Thus, analysis of the interlinkages at the target level of SDG 1, suggest that SDG 14.4 is not solely a natural resource or stock management issue, but is affected by, and contributes to, rights of access and societal features of relevant communities.*

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5   Diagram informed by UN DESA, 2017 and ICSU, 2017.

> **Box 2: More on interlinkages between SDGs**
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> • Analysis and mapping of interlinkages between SDGs can help understand how systems work and how interventions can be targeted to create beneficial outcomes. A number of studies have been carried out on these interlinkages, including SDG 14.
>
> • A study by International Council for Science[6] concluded that understanding possible trade-offs as well as synergistic relations between the different SDGs is crucial for achieving long-lasting sustainable development outcomes. The study found that SDG 14 (along with SDG 2, 3 and 7) were the most highly interlinked with other SDGs, most of these interlinkages were positive.
>
> • Apart from considering positive and negative interactions, other detailed analyses[7] also considered if some SDGs were prerequisites for others, or if the outcome of the interaction was dependent on the national context. Results include the observations that delivery of many elements of SDG 14 are prerequisites for SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (zero hunger), and that many downstream benefits of achieving SDG 14 are context dependent, suggesting that interventions must be correctly formulated to secure these gains.

The upstream and downstream interlinkages at the target-level between the focus of the Accelerator and one SDG will be termed as an Interlinkage Cluster; in the case of Example 2 the Interlinkage Cluster is between the focus area related to SDG 14.4 and SDG goal 1. At this stage the number of Interlinkage Clusters will be equal to the number of SDG goals which the focus of the Accelerator significantly affects, or contributes to (see Example 1).

The target level analysis will be carried out for each goal identified as significant in step 1.2. Following step 1.2, the targets of some goals will only be linked to the focus of the Accelerator either upstream of downstream (for example, SDG 3 in step 1.2 shown in Example 1, would only be detailed at the target level downstream in step 1.3). To help complete this step, additional information provided in national or sub-national reports or consultation and validation with relevant stakeholders may be required. The outcome of this stage will be a suite of diagrams linking the Accelerator focus to relevant targets of the goals identified in step 1.2.

Pointers for completing stage 1

1. **A clear understanding and articulation of the area of focus of the Accelerator approach.**

2. **Some experience of policy review or reform procedures to allow tracking of policy objectives form different policies.**

3. **A workable understanding of 2030 Agenda and the SDGs targets.**

4. **Access to policy documents as well as reports which permit insight into interlinkages.**

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[6] International Council for Science (2017) A Guide to SDG Interaction: from science to implementation. International Council for Science.

[7] Singh et al (2018) A rapid assessment of co-benefits and trade-offs among Sustainable Development Goals. Marine Policy, 93, 223-231.

Stage 2 – Intervention Potential

Aim:

The second stage will assess the potential for intervention of the SDG interlinkages identified from stage 1.

Outputs:

1. An assessment of the intervention potential for each Interlinkage Cluster.

2. A review of the Interlinkage Clusters to identify associations and differences.

Steps:

Step 2.1. Intervention potential criteria. For each Interlinkage Cluster an assessment is made against a set of key criteria related to the potential for implementation. National circumstances are highly important in identifying impactful interventions. National circumstances may be affected by the national arrangements, but also regional and international processes; for example, a region with strong ocean governance which shapes the national situation. This step aims to detail the national circumstances in relation to each of the Interlinkage Clusters to provide insight into the feasibility and practicality of intervention, as well as the possibility of the intervention to contribute to an Accelerator.

Four criteria are used to assess the national circumstances in relation to the Interlinkage Cluster:

1. *Present status* – a summary review of the emphasis and progress with existing initiatives which link to the Interlinkage Cluster and identification of areas which may be weak or have opportunities.

2. *Capacity* – an assessment of existing institutional capacity in key areas in core implementing entities in relation to the Interlinkage Cluster.

3. *Finance adequacy and sources* – a summary assessment of potential financial resource in the intervention area, through existing domestic budget and development partnerships.

4. *Policy and institutional arrangements* – a statement on the relevance and strength of the existing policy landscape and institutional structure for supporting implementation in the identified areas of the Interlinkage Cluster.

Stakeholder consultation and a review of documents are used to provide an assessment against these four criteria (see Example 3).

Example 3. Step 2.1 - Summary of dimensions of assessment of Interlinkage Cluster for SDG target 14.4 with SDG 1 targets (based on Example 2, above).

Dimension	Summary
1. Present status	*Focus on fisheries stock and productivity, presently provides weak foundation for rights-based approaches and gender sensitive management.*
2. Capacity	*Limited capacity in local rights based management and local / provincial stock assessment.*
3. Finance adequacy and sources	*Good support from technical agencies but limited field budget and flexibility for investment in change.*
4. Policy and institutional arrangements	*Fisheries policy stock-based and not rights-based. Missing issues of equality. Government decentralised officers, but limited covering of fisher's organisations.*

Step 2.2. Intervention potential assessment. This step summarises and identifies possible intervention areas which could contribute to an Accelerator. If an Interlinkage Cluster has limited present activity, adequate capacity and potential for financial resourcing as well as supporting policy and relevant institutional entities, then intervention potential within that Cluster is high. On the other hand, if there are presently many initiatives within the area, limited capacity and potential for financing and a policy and institutional vacuum, then the challenges for implementation of a proposed intervention would be high. In reality, there is likely to be a balance of positive and negative factors within the Interlinkage Cluster area which should be picked up in this step and discussed with key informants. It may be that an intervention area which is deemed important to address by informants, but has low intervention potential, is reconsidered in terms of modifying the enabling environment, through for example institutional strengthening or policy reform.

This step results in a succinct summary of possible areas with intervention potential within the Interlinkages Cluster (see Example 4). The outcomes for each Interlinkages Cluster should be validated with core stakeholders.

Example 4. Step 2.2 - Summary of potential intervention areas for an Accelerator based on Interlinkage Cluster for SDG target 14.4 with SDG 1 targets (based on Example 3, above).

Potential for intervention: the present focus on stock and productivity means that the connections between poverty and fisheries are not optimised, especially for vulnerable groups who may have limited voice and influence. Potential exists for rights and access to increasingly shape fisheries management as stock size recovers. To do this requires targeted capacity development in both mangers and stakeholders, an increase field presence of government officers and improved and expanded coordination and communication. Existing institutional arrangements within the fisheries units are suitable, although a dedicated communications sub-unit would be a valuable addition.

Preliminary intervention areas: the short-term pivotal intervention for an Accelerator would be to build awareness and capacity in rights based approaches across the stakeholder base, including vulnerable groups. This could subsequently be followed-up by using selected demonstration areas for practical implementation and then upscaling once successfully implemented. In the longer-term for an Accelerator, policy reform towards rights based approaches and strengthening the communication arrangements would further strengthen and consolidate the approach.

Pointers for completing stage 2

1. **A good understanding of existing initiatives in the areas of the Accelerator.**

2. **Expertise in summarising information and identification of gaps or opportunities in complex information.**

3. **Open and functional suite of stakeholders and informants who can provide timely and accurate information on the assessment criteria and validate outcomes.**

Stage 3 – Scenario Development

Aim:

The third stage will combine Interlinkage Clusters to create a suite of Accelerator scenarios. A participatory approach is required at this stage to blend possible Accelerator intervention scenarios.

Outputs:

1. A number of Accelerator intervention scenarios are constructed and validated against Accelerator Principles.

2. Accelerator scenarios are summarised and presented for selection by relevant decision makers and stakeholders.

Steps:

Step 3.1 Building Accelerator scenarios. An iterative and deliberative process will be used to combine the Interlinkage Clusters into various combinations. A combination of Interlinkages Clusters would form one possible Accelerator intervention scenario.

A sequential process should be used to produce combinations of Interlinkage Clusters. As a starting point, it would be good to identify any Interlinkage Clusters which are highly associated in terms of the intervention area – these could be coupled together in all the various possible scenarios. Secondly, the Interlinkages Clusters could be aligned to emergent themes. For example, for an Accelerator focusing on reducing pollution (SDG 14.1), a number of Interlinkage Clusters may relate to reducing pollution in an intervention area related to reducing consumption and circular economy, and the remaining Interlinkage Clusters could be associated with improved control and management of pollution in marine environment. In this case one Accelerator scenario could focus on consumption and circular economy issues, and another Accelerator scenario could focus on pollution control and management.

Interlinkage Clusters may be arranged around a number of different themes to provide an array of scenarios, in the example above, the approach to SDG 14.1 may alternatively be aligned to marine litter and eutrophication. The purpose of the step is to develop an array of scenarios based on differently combinations of Interlinkage Clusters; as demonstrated using the example of the Accelerator focusing on SDG 14.4 (Example 5). Each scenario could be joined with another scenario depending on the degree of ambition and resourcing that can be realistically imagined.

Example 5. Example of step 3.1, blending Interlinkages Clusters together to form Accelerator scenarios for SDG 14.4. Example 2 and 3 used SDG 1 as example Interlinkage Cluster, where as in this diagram, Interlinkage Clusters are used from all of the SDGs which are linked to SDG 14.4 (as identified in Example 1).

• *Summary of intervention areas for all Interlinkage Clusters linked to SDG14.4:*

SDG 1 Rights and access to be included in fisheries management.
SDG 2 Fisheries community based monitoring of stock production and sustainability.
SDG 3 Access credit and access value chains.
SDG 8 Expand economic inclusion and employment opportunities in fisheries value chains.
SDG 12 Promote community-level hygienic fisheries storage facilities.
SDG 13 Improve infrastructure and transport resilience to allow reliable access to market.
SDG 16 Promote inclusive stock-management decision making including communities.
SDG 17 Enhance access to financial resources through domestic and development funds.

• *Accelerator scenarios based on identified themes:*

Scenario theme: Inclusion and access to fisheries	*SDG 1 Rights and access to be included in fisheries management.* *SDG 16 Promote inclusive stock-management decision making including communities.*
Scenario theme: Progress value chain opportunities	*SDG 3 Access credit and access value chains.* *SDG 8 Expand economic inclusion and employment opportunities in fisheries value chains.* *SDG 17 Enhance access to financial resources through domestic and development funds.*
Scenario theme: Sustainable fisheries infrastructure	*SDG 12 Promote community-level hygienic fisheries storage facilities.* *SDG 13 Improve infrastructure and transport resilience to allow reliable access to market.*

Scenario interpretation: Each scenario contains a number of Interlinkage Clusters which combined form a thematic linked to the Accelerator area of focus; in this case SDG 14.4. Each thematic scenario may be taken forward individually, or it may be considered to join two or more together, depending on the aspiration of the Accelerator. In the above example, national circumstance may suggest that the scenarios related to inclusion and access and to value chain opportunities would be mutually complementary, with value chain opportunities helping those in poverty access fisheries and more inclusive stock management embedding sustainability in capture, production and processing.

It is essential that this step is participatory; drawing on a wide range of stakeholders involved in the target area of the Accelerator. A workshop or another similar participatory process would be required in which guided discussions between key stakeholders would need to be facilitated for a range of agreed Acceleration intervention scenarios to be agreed by consensus; further information is provided in Box 3. As well as the core entities driving the Accelerator approach, the workshop would need to involve other stakeholders such as:

- Related line ministries (e.g. shipping, tourism, infrastructure);
- Private sector operators, such as fisheries and tourism;
- Civil society organizations active in the focus areas;
- Community group representatives;
- Science and research organisations; and
- Regional policy or developmental organisations.

Further stakeholders should be added depending on the coverage of the Interlinkage Clusters, for example, employment and labour organisations, trade and export experts.

Box 3: **Components of an Accelerator stakeholder workshop**

The main sections of the workshop could include:

1. An introduction to SDGs and Accelerator approaches.
2. An overview of the main stages and steps in the SDG 14 Accelerator approach.
3. An explanation, review and validation of the Interlinkage Clusters.
4. A task setting introduction to how scenarios are to be developed.
5. A clear statement of what is expected from the delegates by the end of the workshop.
6. Time for small group work and plenary feedback to discuss and create scenarios for the Interlinkage Cluster building blocks.
7. Elaboration of process after the workshop and how the outcomes will be used to further develop the Accelerator.

As well as sensitising and building awareness in the Accelerator approach in ocean stakeholders, the substantive outcome of the workshop would be a suite of possible Accelerator scenarios which are closely embedded in the national situation and circumstance.

Step 3.2 Validation of scenarios with Accelerator Principles. Once the suite of scenarios has been developed, it is necessary to track each scenario onto 6 Accelerator principles. These Principles have been identified from a literature review of Accelerator approaches and case studies and encapsulate many of the lessons learned from Accelerator approaches (Table 1)[8].

Table 1: Six Principles for SDG 14 Accelerators.

Principle name	Description
Leap forward	An identifiable desire or need to hasten forward, or promote more rapid progression, in a goal, target, or cluster of targets which is coherent with national sustainable development policy and regional / international ocean governance frameworks and which achieves the desired situation more rapidly than the present trajectory.
Linkages between SDGs	An identifiable group or cluster of SDG targets in which progress is interlinked.
Locally relevant	Positive and appreciable gains in the selected development target are attainable at the local scale and identifiable by local stakeholders. This is to ensure that top-down, policy-based approaches reach down and frame interventions which have a direct and tangible impact on people and prosperity.
Leave no-one behind	Ensuring that poor, vulnerable or disempowered groups receive disproportional development benefits or dividends through anti-regressive safeguards and mechanisms.
Leadership	An identifiable political and policy prioritisation and commitment to preferen-tially progress the identified development agenda through a participatory ap-proach involving all relevant stakeholders.
Leverage	A proactive capturing of assisted advantage to catalyse financial, capacity and technical resources to progress further.

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8   https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP_SDG14_Policy%20Brief_Final.pdf.

The validation of the scenarios by tracking against the Principles provides consolidation after the scenario workshop. Information developed earlier, such as the intervention potential criteria used in step 2.1, may be useful to help tracking against Principles. The step provides a check to ensure that the scenarios are aligned to the core Principles of Accelerators.

This analysis also identifies existing strengths of the scenarios in relation to the other Principles (locally relevant, leave no-one behind, leadership and leverage). If one scenario is misaligned or weak in a certain Principles, then revisions, or the addition of remedial actions, can be added into the scenario to try to maximise compliance with the Principles. In some cases, some Principles may not apply to certain scenario by default of the nature of the areas of focus of that scenario.

Example 6 Step 3.2 – Tracking the "Inclusion and access to fisheries" theme scenario onto Accelerator Principles

Principle name	Tracking to scenario theme: Scenario theme: Inclusion and access to fisheries
Leap forward	There is a clear intention as stated in government rhetoric and further expounded by the Oceans Committee to tackle SDG 14, the Accelerator focus. The rhetoric does not specially note issues associated with inclusivity of access, but these are inherent to the issue and align to other policies (such as social development and national economic planning). Thus the scenario is compliant to the leap forward Principle.
Linkages between SDGs	The scenario combines the Interlinkage Clusters of SDG 1 with respect to poverty and SDG 16 in relation to strong institutions. The scenario promotes a co-management type approach with community resource users having further access and involvement. The scenario is fully aligned to SDG linkages of SDG 1 and 16.
Locally relevant	The scenario is of high local relevance and applicability as it involves community resource users in decision making of the fish stocks. The primary beneficiaries of the scenario intervention are the resource users associated with the localised fisheries grounds. The impact on these communities is likely to be positive and direct in tangible in socio-economic terms.
Leave no-one behind	The scenario promotes access and inclusivity but to be fully compliant with this Principle it needs to ensure that progressive mechanisms are used to be inclusive and representative of the poverty, vulnerability and gender. Social and demographic information, coupled to explicit and appropriate mechanisms, are needed to be built into the intervention to ensure compliance to this Principle.
Leadership	At a national level leadership has been secured for this issue. At the more local or provincial scale, there is need to identify leaders within provincial entities and community groups who can champion this approach. Identification of suitable local champions could be one aspect which determines pilot sites for implementation
Leverage	There is significant potential for financial leverage in this issue, with potential for non-recurrent support through the medium-term budget framework for provincial fisheries offices. This may also make adequate co-financing for partnership with development partners such as FAO and EU. In terms of capacity and technical leverage, there are ongoing programmes funded by philanthropic organisations which have in-country expertise and technical com-petence which could be mobilised to support capacity and tech-nical strengthening through a national University.

Scenario interpretation: The "Inclusion and access to fisheries" theme scenario is compliant to the Principles related to leap forward, linkages with SDGs, locally relevant and leadership. However, the Principles of leaving no-one behind and leadership need to be designed into the intervention (during Stage 4) to ensure that the scenario is strengthened in these areas.

Step 3.3 Prepare Accelerator scenario options summary. This step prepares an accessible summary of the Accelerator work to date to provide adequate information for scenario selection. There needs to be a selection process of scenario options identified in step 3.2 and this step prepares documentation to support this process.

The approach to date has used SDG linkages (stage 1), assessed for intervention potential (stage 2) and developed into a number of intervention scenarios (Stage 3 steps 3.1 and 3.2) to create a number of possible Accelerator intervention scenarios. Each scenario should be elaborated in a simple and accessible way to facilitate selection. Based on the usual demands on policy-makers, it is proposed that a document is produced which has a (i) summary of the approach and stakeholders involved, (ii) summary of each of the intervention scenarios, (iii) a final table which compares the differences between scenarios[9]. This document can then be submitted to the relevant responsible authority or stakeholders for consideration.

The one-page summary of each scenario should include:

1. A summary diagram of the linkages between the Accelerator focus and the other SDG targets and a description of these interlinkages.

2. A succinct and non-technical description of the scenario theme and the main interventions that would be required.

3. Its compliance to the Accelerator Principles and the additional mechanisms that need to be built in to promote compliance.

Further information can be supplied as required to facilitate decision making. The final outcome of this stage will be the selection of one, or more than one scenario, to further detail in the next stage (see Box 4).

Box 4: **Supporting the Accelerator decision-making process**

•   The decision-making and selection is required to be carried out by the representative or entity which has the remit and authority in the national situation.

•   The Accelerator methodology is a policy-related analytical process and designed to provide a number of options, in the form of intervention scenarios, which can then be considered for selection.

•   The Accelerator process is not designed to select a scenario itself, as government decision-making is informed by a wide range of interests and demands.

•   If the Accelerator team are provided with clear decision-making criteria then they could use their experience to provide an assessment of how the scenarios meet these criteria.

•   Those leading the Accelerator work may be requested to provide further information or to help guide selection.

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9   The criteria for this table will differ depending on the national circumstance and policy frame but may include aspects such as policy objectives it will deliver, resource requirements, degree of intervention, rapidity of results, scale of impact.

Pointers for completing stage 3

1. **Maximise pre-engagement opportunities with stakeholders prior to the scenario workshop.**

2. **Ensure that the core Accelerator team have worked through some possible themes for scenarios to help seed the workshop discussion if required.**

3. **Check that the workshop stakeholders have adequate representation form the various sectors and entities involved.**

4. **Using the Interlinkage Clusters, try to be creative in the development of themes and scenarios.**

Stage 4 – Accelerator Plan development

Aim:

The final Accelerator stage will elaborate an Action Plan for the selected Accelerator intervention scenario.

Outputs:

1. An Accelerator Action Plan.

Steps:

Step 4.1 Theory of Change. The aim of this step is to develop a coherent Theory of Change diagram for the selection of the Accelerator scenario. The Theory of Change (ToC[10]) is common component of project and programme design that helps to uncover and critically interrogate how change happens (see Box 5). ToC identifies the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the outcomes that must be in place for the goals to occur. The approach allows the link between activities, outcomes and the achievement of the long-term goals to be more fully understood. This leads to better planning, in that activities are linked to a detailed understanding of how change actually happens. In the Accelerator case, the formation of the scenarios from the SDG Interlinkage Clusters, already provides insight in the ToC.

Box 5: **Theory of Change for Accelerators**

- Accelerator approaches are predicated on promoting change – thus, they are closely aligned to the Theory of Change which is a tool to help understanding of how change occurs..

- A ToC is a coherent set of ideas that describe: what the change should be, how a change process occurs, what makes it happen, what has to happen for the intended outcome to be reached, who needs to be involved, whose interests are at stake, and what the outcome of a change process should be.

- As ToC are used in complex and often multi-layered change processes it is important to link changes at different levels and in different outcome areas to one another. Central to ToCs are an understanding of causal links, and in a development context, this relates to where interventions must be positioned to make change.

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[10]   https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation/our-evaluation-approach/theory-change

- The analysis of SDG Interlinkages used in the Accelerator approach, and the use of Interlinkage Clusters to form scenarios, both further the understanding of the system dynamics and how change may be propagated. ToC is thus closely associated with the Accelerator approach laid out in this methodology.

The ToC would be best delivered through a workshop or similar participatory process drawn from entities represented at the scenario workshop (step 3.1). Alternatively, a small core group could develop the ToC diagram and then carry out a number of bilateral meetings or communications to revise and validate the ToC.

To facilitate the Theory of Change analysis and to shape interventions existing tools and approaches relevant to the national context will be used where possible. Tools and approaches such as cost-benefit analysis, life-cycle analysis, institutional and capacity assessment, ecosystem service assessment or Strategic Environment Impact Assessment may all play a role, depending on the Accelerator focus.

Step 4.2 Intervention design. This step develops the project structure and design for the Accelerator. From the ToC, further project design components are produced to develop a coherent and robust Accelerator Action Plan. The Plan should include the follows sections:

1. Theory of Change diagram and interpretation;
2. A suite of actions in a logical framework;
3. An implementation timeline;
4. Indicative budget and financial sources;
5. Alignment mechanisms to Accelerator principle;
6. Involved and responsible stakeholders;
7. Key monitoring indicators and plan.

However, final structure of the Accelerator may be different depending on the character of the Accelerators and needs of those stakeholders involved. For example, if it is a ministry implementation plan, then it needs to conform to national guidelines, whereas, if it is to help lever financial resources from available development funds (such as GEF, GCF) then the structure could be revised to fit into the required document submission guidelines.

Step 4.3 Acceleration Action Plan publication. The draft Accelerator Action Plan should be produced and circulated among relevant entities and stakeholders for feedback within an identified time frame. Comments and appropriate revisions should be carried out and a final version produced and circulated. The development of a short (2 − 4 page) summary, maybe in local languages, for circulation around a broader group of stakeholders may be appropriate.

Pointers for completing stage 4

1. **A good grounding in ToC approaches developed through prior capacity building workshop or background reading.**

2. **Obtain consensus and clarity on the goal end-points of the Accelerator across stakeholders and sectors.**

3. **Create time and promote discussion on the assumptions and causalities involved in the pathways for change.**

4. **Iterate around the ToC and redesign and remodel to ensure that the final ToC is coherent and robust.**

5. Accelerators and links to future sustainability

The Accelerator methodology is designed to explicitly consider interlinkages between SDGs. The SDGs are used as a base for the Accelerator approach as they have been endorsed by governments across the world. Whilst the aim of the Accelerator is to drive forward progress in SDG 14, inherent in this is the need to consider upstream and downstream connections to SDG 14. The approach uses interlinkages between SDG 14 and other goals as building blocks for the Accelerator and thus forces a more integrated approach to planning of interventions.

Transformative approaches for future sustainability invariably involve integrated outcomes. The Accelerator approach is one development tool in which an integrated approach is designed into the process. Rather than focussing on the SDGs, the approach focusses between the SDGs. Moreover, integrated thinking and conceptualisation needed for the Accelerator approach may also pay dividends in other planning processes in which transformative approaches are required to go beyond normal development lock-ins. For SDG 14, with multiple targets established with a 2020 deadline, there is an imperative for acceleration of action.

Integrated initiatives have the potential to catalyse national and regional cooperation and coherence. Context-specific partnerships, clustered around the explicit integration in the Accelerator methodology, can provide new impetus to the notoriously fragmented ocean governance system. This may be especially important for regional approaches which have unexploited potential for increased resource leverage, knowledge exchange and efficiencies associated with harmonisation. The commonality of the SDGs across nation states provides opportunity and further impetus for collaboration and coordination across such integrated partnerships. The Accelerator approach can help synergise and contribute to strengthening and implementing regional and international ocean governance frameworks[11].

SDGs are milestones for progress in global sustainable development. Post-SDGs in 2031, the focus of sustainable development may well move more towards more integrated pathways. The 169 targets of the SDGs are laying the foundation for a more integrated and holistic vision of sustainable development; this has been articulated by some as "the achievement just and equitable future for all on a resilient planet". This holistic perspective helps to prevent lock-ins, catalyses potential to accelerate and leverage transformation towards sustainability and enables the exploration of multiple possible implementation pathways.

The Accelerator approach is future proofed for more integrated and holistic pathways to sustainability. The approach works on integrated building blocks which lend themselves to transformative outcomes, it takes a holistic approach covering all the development areas captured in the SDGs and develops a range of development pathways as scenarios. Whilst the present focus is on SDG 14 and the pressing challenges around oceans, there is potential for a wider contribution to transformative sustainable development.

There is an urgent need for increased rapidity in progressing SDG 14, especially as four out of ten targets are due in 2020. This document outlines an approach which has been designed for SDG 14 for governments of the Asia and the Pacific region.

ESCAP invites interested representatives to contact the Environment and Development Division escap-edd@un.org to discuss developing possible future collaborations.

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[11] Partnership for Regional Ocean Governance (PROG) (2017) Partnering for a Sustainable Ocean – The Role of Regional Ocean Governance in Implementing Sustainable Development Goal 14. https://www.prog-ocean.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/PROG_Partnering-for-a-Sustainabe-Ocean_Report.pdf

Authors

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