



Sustainability through ISO Management Systems

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17 Sustainable Development Goals and ISO Management Systems

Learn how the implementation of ISO Management System Standards can assist with meeting the UNDP Sustainable Development Goals.

Introduction

In the 21st century, sustainability is at the top of most organizations’ priority list. The United Nations has developed 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which any organization worldwide can strive to achieve. The ISO/ UNDP PAS 53002:2024 – “Guidelines for Contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” defines sustainable development as *development that meets the environmental, social, and economic needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. Any organization that has implemented ISO management system standards already has the framework to integrate these 17 Sustainable Development Goals within their currently existing systems.

ISO 9001:2015 is an international quality management system standard introduced in 1987. ISO 14001:2015 is an international environmental management system standard introduced in 1996. ISO 45001:2018 is an international occupational health and safety management system standard that was introduced in 1999 in its original form, OHSAS 18001. These standards have withstood the test of time. Rather than treating the implementation of these standards as a project, most organizations have integrated the ISO standards’ requirements into the organization’s operations.

Organizations fulfill the requirements of the ISO quality, environmental, and occupational health and safety management system standards by engineering controls and objectives into their core, support, and management processes. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals can be integrated in the same manner and be an active,

living, ongoing part of an organization’s usual way of doing business on a daily basis, in other words, their management systems.

Here are some ways ISO quality, environmental, and occupational health and safety management systems can help organizations achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
1. NO POVERTY

End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

ISO 9001:2015 (Quality), ISO 14001:2015 (Environmental Management), and ISO 45001:2018 (Occupational Health & Safety) support Sustainable Development Goal 1 (End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere) by requiring organizations to consider poverty as a relevant external issue (Clause 4.1) and to identify the needs and expectations of interested parties, such as customers and communities affected by poverty (Clause 4.2). These standards guide organizations to assess risks related to poverty (Clause 6.1), set objectives and plans to address them (Clause 6.2), and regularly review progress through management reviews (Clause 9.3), ensuring that poverty-related concerns are integrated into strategic planning and continuous improvement.

By embedding poverty-related considerations into strategic planning, organizations can contribute to social equity and economic inclusion. This not only enhances corporate responsibility but also strengthens community resilience and long-term business sustainability.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
2. ZERO HUNGER

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, and ISO 45001:2018 contribute to SDG 2 (End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition, and Promote Sustainable Agriculture) by requiring organizations to identify hunger and food insecurity as external issues that may impact their ability to meet objectives (Clause 4.1). They also emphasize the importance of understanding the needs of interested parties, such as customers and communities affected by food insecurity (Clause 4.2). Organizations are expected to assess risks (Clause 6.1), establish objectives and plans to address food-related challenges (Clause 6.2), and monitor progress through management reviews (Clause 9.3).

Organizations that consider food security in their operations can support healthier communities and more stable supply chains. This is especially critical in sectors like agriculture, food production, and retail, where sustainable practices can directly impact global hunger.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
3. GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

ISO 45001:2018 supports SDG 3 (Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-being for All at All Ages) by requiring organizations to identify the health and well-being needs of interested parties (Clause 4.2), promote a culture of health and safety through leadership (Clause 5.1), and assess workplace hazards and risks that may affect well-being (Clause 6.1). The standard also mandates setting health-related objectives (Clause 6.2) and reviewing progress through management reviews (Clause 9.3), ensuring that health and well-being are embedded in organizational practices.

Prioritizing health and well-being reduces absenteeism, improves productivity, and enhances employee morale. It also demonstrates a commitment to ethical labor practices and social responsibility.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
4. QUALITY EDUCATION

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

ISO 9001:2015 supports SDG 4 (Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All) by requiring organizations to determine and maintain the knowledge necessary for effective operations (Clause 7.1.6). This includes acquiring new knowledge through education and training to meet changing needs. The standard also requires setting learning and development objectives (Clause 6.2) and reviewing progress (Clause 9.3), promoting a culture of continuous learning and knowledge sharing.

Investing in education and lifelong learning helps organizations stay competitive and innovative. It also empowers employees and communities, contributing to broader societal development.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
5. GENDER EQUALITY

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 45001:2018 support SDG 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls) by requiring organizations to provide a suitable and inclusive work environment that considers social and psychological factors such as non-discrimination and emotional well-being (Clause 7.1.4). ISO 45001:2018 further mandates the identification of social hazards like harassment and bullying (Clause 6.1.2.1) and inclusive communication practices that consider gender and diversity (Clause 7.4.1). Both standards require setting gender-related objectives (Clause 6.2) and reviewing progress (Clause 9.3).

Gender equality in the workplace leads to better decision-making, increased innovation, and improved financial performance. It also aligns with global human rights standards and enhances organizational reputation.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
6. CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

ISO 14001:2015 supports SDG 6 (Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All) by requiring organizations to identify the water-related needs of interested parties (Clause 4.2), assess environmental risks and impacts related to water use and sanitation (Clause 6.1), and ensure compliance with water-related regulations (Clause 6.1.3). The standard also requires compliance with relevant legal and regulatory obligations (Clause 6.1.3), the setting of water-related objectives and action plans (Clause 6.2), and regular review of progress through management reviews (Clause 9.3). Water scarcity and poor sanitation are critical global challenges that affect health, ecosystems, and economic development. By integrating water stewardship into environmental management systems, organizations can reduce their water footprint, ensure regulatory compliance, and contribute to the sustainable use of one of the planet's most vital resources. This not only protects communities and ecosystems but also enhances operational resilience and reputation.

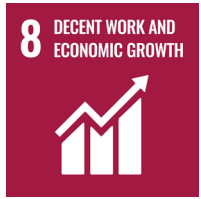


SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
7. AFFORDABLE CLEAN ENERGY

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

ISO 14001:2015 supports SDG 7 (Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy for All) by requiring organizations to consider energy access as an external issue (Clause 4.1) and to identify the energy-related expectations of stakeholders (Clause 4.2). The standard guides organizations to assess environmental risks related to energy use (Clause 6.1), set energy-related objectives (Clause 6.2), and monitor progress through management reviews (Clause 9.3).

By integrating energy sustainability into environmental management systems, organizations can reduce their carbon footprint, improve energy efficiency, and support the global transition to clean energy. This not only lowers operational costs but also enhances resilience and compliance with evolving energy regulations.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
8. DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, and ISO 45001:2018 support SDG 8 (Promote Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All) by requiring leadership to integrate sustainability into business processes (Clause 5.1), promote inclusive participation (Clause 5.4), and identify workplace hazards and social factors affecting employment (Clause 6.1.2.1). These standards also require setting employment-related objectives (Clause 6.2) and reviewing progress (Clause 9.3).

Embedding decent work principles into management systems helps organizations create safer, fairer, and more inclusive workplaces. This leads to higher employee satisfaction, reduced turnover, and stronger economic performance, while also supporting global labor rights.





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 9. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, and ISO 45001:2018 support SDG 9 (Build Resilient Infrastructure, Promote Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization and Foster Innovation) by requiring organizations to identify infrastructure and innovation as external issues (Clause 4.1), provide necessary infrastructure (Clause 7.1.3), and implement design and development processes that foster innovation (Clauses 8.1 and 8.3). These standards also guide organizations to set innovation-related objectives (Clause 6.2) and review progress (Clause 9.3).

By aligning with SDG 9, organizations can drive technological advancement, improve operational efficiency, and contribute to sustainable industrial growth. This fosters competitiveness and resilience in rapidly evolving markets.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Reduce inequality within and among countries.

ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, and ISO 45001:2018 support SDG 10 (Reduce Inequality Within and Among Countries) by requiring organizations to identify inequality as an external issue (Clause 4.1), understand stakeholder expectations related to equality (Clause 4.2), and address social hazards such as harassment (Clause 6.1.2.1). ISO 9001:2015 also emphasizes inclusive hiring (Clause 7.1.2), non-discriminatory environments (Clause 7.1.4), and equitable supplier selection (Clause 8.4.1). Objectives and reviews (Clauses 6.2 and 9.3) ensure continuous progress.

Reducing inequality within organizations and supply chains promotes fairness, diversity, and inclusion. This enhances social cohesion, reduces reputational risk, and aligns businesses with global equity and justice goals.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
**11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES**

**Make cities and human settlements
inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.**

ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, and ISO 45001:2018 support SDG 11 (Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable) by requiring organizations to consider urban sustainability as an external issue (Clause 4.1), address stakeholder expectations (Clause 4.2), and incorporate inclusivity and resilience into infrastructure (Clause 7.1.3), work environments (Clause 7.1.4), and design processes (Clause 8.3). ISO 14001:2015 also includes lifecycle considerations (Clause 8.1). Objectives and reviews (Clauses 6.2 and 9.3) ensure alignment with urban development goals.

Organizations that contribute to sustainable urban development help build safer, more inclusive communities. This supports long-term economic and environmental stability and enhances their social license to operate.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
**12. RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION**

**Ensure sustainable consumption and
production patterns.**

ISO 9001:2015 supports SDG 12 (Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns) by requiring organizations to plan and control processes that support sustainability (Clause 8.1), set objectives for responsible production (Clause 6.2), and review progress (Clause 9.3), promoting efficient resource use and waste reduction.

Sustainable production reduces environmental impact, lowers costs, and meets growing consumer demand for ethical products. It also helps organizations comply with regulations and contribute to circular economy models.





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
13. CLIMATE ACTION

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, and ISO 45001:2018 support SDG 13 (Take Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and Its Impacts) by incorporating climate change into external issue analysis (Clause 4.1). ISO 14001:2015 requires evaluation of environmental impacts contributing to climate change (Clause 6.1.2) and mandates setting and reviewing climate-related objectives (Clauses 6.2 and 9.3).

Addressing climate change through ISO systems helps organizations reduce emissions, manage climate risks, and align with global climate targets. This enhances resilience and future-proofs operations against environmental disruptions.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
14. LIFE BELOW WATER

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

ISO 14001:2015 supports SDG 14 (Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources) by requiring organizations to evaluate marine-related environmental impacts (Clause 6.1.2), set conservation objectives (Clause 6.2), and review progress (Clause 9.3), promoting sustainable marine resource use.

Protecting marine ecosystems is vital for biodiversity, food security, and climate regulation. Organizations that manage their marine impacts contribute to healthier oceans and more sustainable global supply chains.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
15. LIFE ON LAND

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

ISO 14001:2015 supports SDG 15 (Protect, Restore and Promote Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems) by requiring organizations to assess environmental impacts on land ecosystems (Clause 6.1.2), set objectives for biodiversity and land restoration (Clause 6.2), and review progress (Clause 9.3), supporting sustainable land management.

Sustainable land use protects biodiversity, prevents deforestation, and mitigates climate change. Organizations that manage land impacts responsibly contribute to ecosystem resilience and long-term environmental health.





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
**16. PEACE, JUSTICE AND
STRONG INSTITUTIONS**

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, and ISO 45001:2018 support SDG 16 (Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies, Provide Access to Justice, and Build Effective Institutions) by requiring leadership commitment to inclusivity and justice (Clause 5.1), policy development (Clause 5.2), and setting and reviewing objectives that promote peace and accountability (Clauses 6.2 and 9.3).

Strong institutions and ethical governance foster trust, reduce corruption, and support sustainable development. Organizations that uphold these values enhance transparency, stakeholder confidence, and long-term success.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
17. PARTNERSHIPS FOR GOALS

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, and ISO 45001:2018 support SDG 17 (Strengthen the Means of Implementation and Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development) by requiring organizations to identify external issues that may include global partnerships (Clause 4.1) and to understand the needs and expectations of interested parties such as international collaborators and development agencies (Clause 4.2). Leadership is expected to demonstrate commitment to these partnerships through strategic alignment (Clause 5.1) and policy development (Clause 5.2). The standards also require organizations to set objectives that may include partnership goals (Clause 6.2), raise awareness among employees (Clause 7.3), and establish effective external communication processes (Clause 7.4). Progress is monitored and reviewed through management reviews (Clause 9.3), ensuring that partnership efforts are continuously evaluated and improved.

Global challenges like climate change, poverty, and inequality require coordinated action across sectors and borders. By embedding partnership principles into management systems, organizations can align with international development efforts, access shared resources and knowledge, and contribute to collective impact. This not only enhances their global credibility but also strengthens their ability to innovate and scale sustainable solutions.



Conclusion

Organizations around the world have been implementing ISO management system standards successfully for over 38 years. Rather than treating ISO management system implementation as a project with a beginning and an end, successful organizations have integrated requirements and engineered controls into their processes so that the systems live on. Like the ISO management system requirements, the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals can be integrated into an organization’s processes and systems so that the advancement towards those goals lives on.

The table that follows represents the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals and the ISO standards and Clause numbers that could be used to meet those goals.

Sustainable Development Goal	ISO Standards and Clauses
1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere	ISO 9001:2015 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.1, 6.2, 9.3 ISO 14001:2015 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.1, 6.2, 9.3 ISO 45001:2018 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.1, 6.2, 9.3
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	ISO 9001:2015 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.1, 6.2, 9.3 ISO 14001:2015 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.1, 6.2, 9.3 ISO 45001:2018 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.1, 6.2, 9.3
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.	ISO 45001:2018 clauses 4.2, 5.1, 6.1, 6.2, 9.3
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.	ISO 9001:2015 clauses 6.2, 7.1.6, 9.2
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.	ISO 9001:2015 Clause 7.1.4, 6.2, 9.3 ISO 45001:2018 clauses 6.1.2.1, 7.4.1, 6.2, 9.3
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.	ISO 14001:2015 clauses 4.2, 6.1, 6.1.3, 6.2, 9.3
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.	ISO 14001:2015 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.1, 6.2, 9.3

Sustainable Development Goal	ISO Standards and Clauses
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.	ISO 9001:2015 clauses 5.1, 6.2, 9.3 ISO 14001:2015 clauses 5.1, 6.2, 9.3 ISO 45001:2018 clauses 5.1. 5.4, 6.1.2.1, 6.2, 9.3
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.	ISO 9001:2015 clauses 4.1, 6.2, 7.1.3, 8.3, 9.3 ISO 14001:2015 clauses 4.1, 6.2, 8.1, 9.3 ISO 45001:2018 clauses 4.1, 6.2, 9.3
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries	ISO 9001:2015 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.2, 7.1.2, 7.1.4, 8.4.1, 9.3 ISO 14001:2015 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.2, 9.3 ISO 45001:2018 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.1.2.1, 6.2, 9.3
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	ISO 9001:2015 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.2, 7.1.3, 7.1.4, 8.3, 9.3 ISO 14001:2015 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.2, 8.1, 9.3 ISO 45001:2018 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 6.2, 9.3
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.	ISO 9001:2015 clauses 6.2, 8.1, 9.3
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.	ISO 9001:2015 clauses 4.1, 6.2, 9.3 ISO 14001:2015 clauses 4.1, 6.1.2, 6.2, 9.3 ISO 45001:2018 clauses 4.1, 6.2, 9.3

Sustainable Development Goal	ISO Standards and Clauses
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.	ISO 14001:2015 clauses 6.1.2, 6.2, 9.3
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	ISO 14001:2015 clauses 6.1.2, 6.2, 9.3
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.	ISO 9001:2015 clauses 5.1, 5.2, 6.2, 9.3 ISO 14001:2015 clauses 5.1, 5.2, 6.2, 9.3 ISO 45001:2018 clauses 5.1, 5.2, 6.2, 9.3
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.	ISO 9001:2015 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.2, 7.3, 7.4, 9.3 ISO 14001:2015 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.2, 7.3, 7.4, 9.3 ISO 45001:2018 clauses 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.2, 7.3, 7.4, 9.3



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