

# More Funding to Save the Planet Will Save Us Also<sup>1</sup>

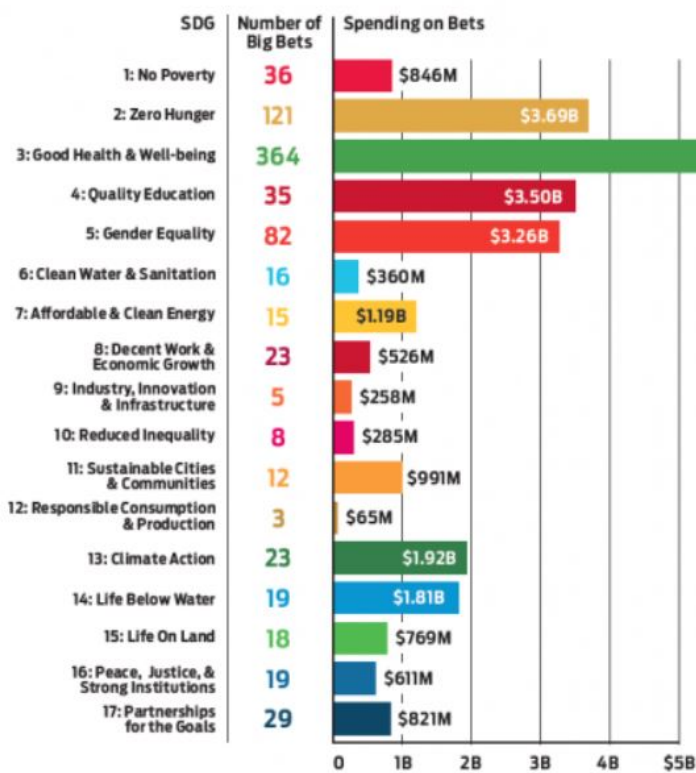
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As Earth Day 2019 approaches, it is worth noting the increasing number of news articles about global environmental problems that can potentially end most life on the planet. Those problems might not seem immediate because they take time to unfold, and even a decade seems like a long time in this era of fast change ushered in by technology. Nevertheless, these problems are real, pressing, and interconnected, especially the rapid loss of species' populations and their ecosystems, and the threat of climate change. Maintaining the planet's health is intrinsically related and fundamental<sup>i</sup> to economic and human development goals, but the later command by far the larger share of philanthropic funds.

## Big Bets on Global SDGs

Funders devoted roughly one-half of their spending on global big bets to just one of the 17 sustainable development goals—Good Health & Well-Being.



Overall the global value of the services provided by nature is estimated to be worth USD 125-145 trillion per year<sup>ii</sup>.

However, the global net investment in maintaining these services is far less, by several orders of magnitude!

Comparably, the largest philanthropic sector investments supporting the SDGs from 2000 to 2016 were directed towards human development (see chart). We need to be changing the cost-benefit analysis in developing projects.

Issues like climate change, clean energy, and conservation need to receive far more if we are to survive as a species. The IPCC

estimated that keeping greenhouse emissions stable would require roughly \$13 trillion through 2030, and protecting all the threatened species and effectively conserving their habitat would cost an estimated \$80 billion a year.<sup>iii</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This article was published by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, AP Perspectives, April 2019.

As funders have increasingly embraced strategic philanthropy and system change, they have become more niche-oriented and less flexible, and access to funding has become more cumbersome and slow. Since environmental issues are cross-cutting and do not respect national boundaries, success often depends on having access to opportunistic funding when is needed, takes time and depends on political will. Unfortunately, that is often misaligned with funder's expectations.

Preventing the worst of climate change and the decimation of natural areas and biodiversity requires elevating these issues at the top of everyone's agenda. Funders should sustain their commitments over several decades, and give direct and institutional support to groups that have on the ground capacity, local knowledge and access to the right constituencies.

Philanthropy must up its environmental game, as now it is evident, even to the private sector<sup>iv</sup>, that investing on economic and human development without investing on stopping climate change and protecting all species is at best a bad investment practice, and at worst futile.

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<sup>i</sup> 2017 UNDP-GEF Annual Performance Report.

<sup>ii</sup> 2018 Living Planet Report, WWF.

<sup>iii</sup> Financial Costs of Meeting Global Biodiversity Conservation Targets: Current Spending and Unmet Needs. By Donal P. McCarthy, Paul F. Donald, Jörn P. W. Scharlemann, Graeme M. Buchanan, Andrew Balmford, Jonathan M. H. Green, Leon A. Bennun, Neil D. Burgess, Lincoln D. C. Fishpool, Stephen T. Garnett, David L. Leonard, Richard F. Maloney, Paul Morling, H. Martin Schaefer, Andy Symes, David A. Wiedenfeld, Stuart H. M. Butchart, Science 16 Nov 2012 : 946-949.

<sup>iv</sup> Perspectives on the Long Term, James P. Gorman.