The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on decent work and economic growth dovetails with recently published work to develop a comprehensive approach to assess the burden of work-related injury, disease, and distress. Overall, decent work is work that has a low burden of morbidity, mortality, disability, cost, and psychosocial impacts. Generally, this burden has been incompletely portrayed and underestimated. To address this underestimation a comprehensive framework for burden has been developed. The framework includes four elements:

1. utilising multiple domains, including the individual worker, the worker’s family, the community in which the workplace is located, the employer, and society as a whole;
2. taking a broader view of the work–relatedness of disease;
3. assessing the impact of the entire working-life continuum; and
4. applying the comprehensive concept of ‘well-being’ as an indicator in addressing contemporary change in the nature of work, the workforce, and the work place.

Measuring the burden in these elements and their composite may serve as benchmarks to gauge progress on meeting SDG targets for decent work. For this to be practical there needs to research on developing and measuring these individual elements of burden and determining the means to integrate them. This may involve looking beyond the traditional sources of surveillance data.

Various concepts in the proposed burden elements are resonant with the SDG goals and targets. For example, underemployment and unemployment which appear to have similar health effects are resonant with the target of full and productive employment. Similarly, full and productive employment should be considered across the whole working-life continuum. Taking a comprehensive view of burden and applying it to the SDG targets is worth considering and this presentation will establish that proposition.

Disclaimer: The opinions in this presentation are those of the author and not necessarily of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

How can we, people working within the field of occupational hygiene and health, support the sustainable development goals? The latest figures show that 2.78 million workers continue to die each year from work-related injuries and illnesses. Especially when we realise ourselves that 2.4 million of these deaths can be attributed to work-related diseases alone. With this information in our minds we have to support the SDG in order to achieve a, healthy sustained, inclusive economic growth for everybody in the future.

The first important step is to consider what is the desired effect we want and which strings do we have to pull for this desired effect. In this presentation we will look for information which can help us to decide which choices we have and what the mechanisms might be that sort the best effect.

The second question to be answered is how should we approach the problems we have to solve? It is clear that to achieve the 17 intertwined Sustainable Development Goals before 2030 we will need ‘all hands on deck’ and we have to get in to motion. So how can the diversity of our backgrounds drive the innovation for new ideas, perspectives and solutions.

This presentation will focus on the idea that we need to change to achieve these goals, and that this can only happen if we can we overcome the challenges and see and share the opportunities we have in this connected world.