
Guest editorial: Motivating and empowering construction stakeholders to target sustainable development goals

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Introduction

The construction industry plays a pivotal role in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) due to its significant influence on economic development, social well-being and environmental performance. However, attaining the SDGs requires a fundamental transformation of construction practices, moving beyond conventional measures of project success, i.e. time, cost and quality, to encompass broader considerations such as sustainability, resilience and social value. Although the SDGs provide a comprehensive global framework for sustainable development by 2030, translating these aspirations into construction practices remains a significant challenge due to the fragmented nature of the industry and the involvement of multiple stakeholders with diverse objectives, responsibilities and capabilities. Clients, contractors, consultants, facility managers, policymakers, communities and end-users all play critical roles in driving sustainability transitions. Consequently, motivating and empowering these stakeholders through appropriate knowledge sharing, effective governance mechanisms, collaborative cultures, innovative technologies, decision-support tools and sustainable practices has become essential for accelerating the construction industry's contribution to the achievement of the SDGs.

This Special Issue, entitled “*Motivating and empowering construction stakeholders to target SDGs*”, responds to this urgent need by bringing together contemporary research that examines how different construction stakeholders can be empowered to contribute effectively to sustainable development outcomes. The Special Issue highlights theoretical advancements, methodological innovations and practical strategies across a broad range of themes, including organisational culture, stakeholder collaboration, sustainable project management, affordable housing, digital transformation, infrastructure management, economic sustainability, business resilience, health and well-being, circular economy, energy efficiency and climate adaptation.

Overview of the Special Issue

The Special Issue comprises 17 carefully selected and rigorously reviewed papers representing diverse geographical contexts. In our continuing pursuit of the overarching objective of this Special Issue, the accepted papers were deliberately organised in this Editorial, according to the primary SDGs they address. Having found that each of seven SDGs in particular was addressed by each of a small group of papers, we structured these 17 papers for purposes of this Special Issue overview into 7 paper clusters. In this way, each cluster can be taken to mainly address each of these seven particular SDGs, when targeting our Special Issue theme. This structure thereby provides a coherent and progressive narrative, demonstrating how collaboration and partnerships establish the foundation for sustainability transitions that subsequently lead to sustainable communities, innovative infrastructure, economic resilience, improved health and well-being, responsible resource management and climate-responsive built environments.

The SDG-based structuring of the Special Issue papers illustrates a progressive pathway towards sustainable transformation. Beginning with SDG 17-Partnerships for the Goals, the issue emphasises the importance of collaboration, stakeholder engagement and integrated



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sustainability management as foundational enablers of change. It then progresses through SDG 11-Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 9-Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, SDG 8-Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 3-Good Health and Well-being, and SDG 12-Responsible Consumption and Production, before concluding with SDG 13-Climate Action. This progression demonstrates how collaborative actions across the construction sector can collectively contribute to the development of a more resilient, sustainable and climate-responsive built environment.

Figure 1 provides a graphical overview of this thematic progression, illustrating the SDG-based structuring of the papers in our Special Issue and the interconnections among the research clusters. This visual overview also projects our perspective on how findings and outputs from these diverse research themes could collectively contribute to motivating and empowering construction stakeholders to achieve the SDGs, while emphasising the cross-cutting role of stakeholder collaboration, knowledge generation, innovation, governance and informed decision-making in advancing sustainable development across the built environment. The following sections discuss each SDG in sequence, highlighting the unique contributions of the individual papers to the overarching theme of the Special Issue theme.

SDG-17: Partnerships for the goals

The first cluster of papers aligns well with SDG 17-Partnerships for the Goals, recognising that meaningful progress towards sustainable development requires collective action, stakeholder collaboration and integrated approaches. The first paper by [Lingard et al. \(2026\)](#) examines the role of organisational culture in transforming the construction industry towards achieving SDGs related to health, gender equality and decent work. The study highlights that collaboration among clients, contractors and other industry stakeholders is fundamental to fostering systemic cultural change and achieving broader sustainability objectives. The second paper by [Algahtany et al. \(2026\)](#) provides a comprehensive overview of the evolution of SDG-related research within the construction sector. Through a bibliometric analysis of 1,026



Figure 1. Graphical overview of the Special IssueKEY: The Nos. 1 to 17 above indicate the sequencing of these papers in the Special Issue

publications indexed in the Web of Science database, the study provides researchers and practitioners with a strategic evidence base to inform future sustainability initiatives within the construction industry. The third paper by [Phung et al. \(2026\)](#) advances the discussion from knowledge creation to practical implementation by developing the GEPAS framework for embedding sustainability throughout the project lifecycle. Employing a design science research approach supported by expert validation, the study provides project managers and industry stakeholders with a structured mechanism for integrating sustainability into existing project management practices, thereby strengthening collaboration, accountability and shared ownership towards achieving the SDGs.

SDG-11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

The second cluster of papers contributes to SDG 11-Sustainable Cities and Communities, highlighting the importance of overcoming barriers to sustainable urban development and promoting inclusive housing solutions that respond to the diverse needs of communities. The fourth Special Issue paper by [Akotia et al. \(2026\)](#) investigates the challenges that hinder the effective integration of sustainability into urban regeneration initiatives. The findings reveal that sustainability challenges in urban regeneration projects are shaped by unique contextual factors, underscoring the need for strategic interventions, improved funding mechanisms and sustainability-oriented project governance to foster more resilient urban environments. The fifth paper by [Kiringoda Arachchige Dona and Rathnayake \(2026\)](#) shifts the focus to socially inclusive housing solutions by examining how different stakeholder groups can be motivated to adopt innovative housing approaches. The findings demonstrate that while government institutions are primarily driven by broader sustainable development objectives and the provision of affordable housing, community members are influenced by personal, social and psychological considerations. Together, these studies may be taken to emphasise that achieving sustainable communities requires not only technological or policy interventions but also a comprehensive understanding of the financial, institutional and human factors influencing sustainable transformation.

SDG-9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

The third cluster addresses SDG 9-Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, demonstrating how digital transformation, stakeholder collaboration and advanced asset management strategies can enhance the sustainability and resilience of the built environment. The sixth Special Issue paper by [Asigri et al. \(2026\)](#) examines the challenges associated with stakeholder collaboration in BIM-enabled construction environments. Through a two-round Delphi study involving BIM experts, the research findings reinforce the importance of collaborative digital practices in achieving innovative and sustainable construction outcomes. The seventh paper by [Mapa and De Silva \(2026\)](#) extends the discussion on technological advancement by proposing a context-specific model for evaluating the smartness of buildings. Through a mixed-method research approach, the study develops and validates a comprehensive assessment framework consisting of 11 attributes and applies it to modern buildings in Sri Lanka. This study provides practitioners with a practical tool to benchmark and enhance intelligent building performance. The eighth paper by [Samarakoon and Asmone \(2026\)](#) focuses on enhancing the long-term sustainability and operational reliability of complex infrastructure systems. Through an exploratory sequential approach, the study develops a maintenance optimisation framework that integrates reliability-centred maintenance, maintainability assessment and failure analysis. Collectively, these papers can be seen to demonstrate that technological innovation alone is insufficient for sustainable transformation. Instead, successful implementation requires collaboration among stakeholders, appropriate management frameworks and context-sensitive solutions that support intelligent and resilient infrastructure systems.

SDG-8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

The fourth cluster contributes to SDG 8-Decent Work and Economic Growth, emphasising the need for construction organisations to balance economic performance, organisational resilience and quality improvement while maintaining their commitment to sustainable development. The ninth paper by [Agyekum et al. \(2026\)](#) addresses the often-overlooked economic dimension of sustainability. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-method design involving multiple construction stakeholders, the study provides valuable guidance for integrating economic sustainability considerations into project evaluation and decision-making. The tenth paper by [Bondinuba et al. \(2026\)](#) examines the relationships among sustainability practices, green continuity management and organisational resilience. Using structural equation modelling based on responses from construction professionals, the study highlights the importance of integrating environmental responsibility with strategic organisational management to strengthen resilience in an increasingly uncertain business environment.

The 11th paper by [Arayamparambil et al. \(2026\)](#) offers an alternative perspective on sustainability by investigating the relationship between quality management and sustainable construction. Through the development and application of a comprehensive defect checklist across residential buildings in India, the study demonstrates that early defect detection can reduce rework, minimise waste, improve occupant satisfaction and contribute to broader economic, social and environmental sustainability objectives. Overall, these studies can collectively demonstrate that economic sustainability extends beyond financial performance. Achieving long-term sustainable growth requires resilient organisations, effective quality management practices and informed stakeholder decision-making that collectively enhance the economic, social and environmental performance of the construction sector.

SDG-3: Good Health and Well-being

The fifth cluster of papers contributes to SDG 3-Good Health and Well-being, emphasising that sustainable construction extends beyond environmental and economic performance to include the health, safety and well-being of workers, occupants and communities. The 12th paper by [Lim et al. \(2026\)](#) explores the reciprocal relationship between occupational health and safety (OHS) and the SDGs within the construction industry. Through a systematic analysis of the existing literature, complemented by an analysis of Australian work health and safety legislation, the study challenges the traditional perception of health and safety as a compliance requirement and instead position OHS as a strategic contributor to the broader sustainable development agenda. The 13th paper by [Sari et al. \(2026\)](#) extends the discussion of well-being from construction workers to building occupants. By linking occupant well-being with economic viability, the research provides valuable evidence for building owners, facility managers and policymakers to invest in healthy and sustainable building practices. Together, these studies could be taken to highlight how achieving sustainable development requires a shift from merely constructing efficient buildings to creating environments that protect, support and enhance human health and well-being throughout the lifecycle of the built environment.

SDG-12: Responsible consumption and production

The sixth cluster aligns well with SDG 12-Responsible Consumption and Production, focusing on the need to transform construction practices through improved resource management, the adoption of circular economy principles and behavioural change among industry stakeholders. Given the significant material consumption and environmental impacts associated with construction activities, achieving SDG 12 requires both conceptual clarity and active engagement of practitioners in adopting sustainable practices. The 14th paper by [Senaratne et al. \(2026\)](#) addresses one of the fundamental challenges limiting the implementation of circular economy principles in the construction sector. Through comparative literature analysis

and expert validation, the study develops a comprehensive taxonomy that establishes clear definitions and hierarchical relationships among frequently misused circular economy terms. This contribution provides a common language for researchers, practitioners and policymakers, thereby supporting more consistent implementation of circular economy strategies in the construction sector. The 15th paper by [Lu et al. \(2026\)](#) examines the behavioural dimensions the influence sustainability performance among building practitioners. By recognising the diverse motivations and capabilities that influence practitioners' decisions, the study provides a foundation for developing targeted interventions that can motivate stakeholders to voluntarily exceed minimum sustainability requirements and accelerate progress towards SDG targets. Collectively, these studies can demonstrate how responsible consumption and production cannot be achieved solely through technological improvements; rather, it requires a combination of clear sustainability knowledge, robust implementation frameworks and behavioural transformation among construction stakeholders.

SDG-13: Climate Action

The final cluster of papers in this Special Issue addresses SDG 1-Climate Action, highlighting the increasing responsibility of the construction industry to mitigate environmental impacts and enhance resilience to climate change. Given the substantial contribution of buildings to global energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, climate-responsive strategies are critical for achieving long-term sustainability. The 16th paper by [Gajaba and Dissanayake \(2026\)](#) investigates the factors influencing the adoption of HVAC-airside strategies that can improve energy efficiency in commercial buildings. The findings provide valuable guidance for building stakeholders in evaluating and promoting energy-efficient solutions that contribute to climate change mitigation. The 17th and final paper by [Maddakandage and Sridarran \(2026\)](#) focuses on improving climate-informed decision-making in facilities management. Employing a design science research approach, the study develops the "FMClimate" prototype database, which integrates accessible climate data with visualisation tools to support building professionals. Together, the papers in this cluster could be seen to emphasise how effective climate action within the built environment depends not only on technological advancements but also enhanced accessibility of knowledge, informed decision-making and proactive engagement from construction stakeholders.

Concluding remarks

This Special Issue brings together 17 international contributions that collectively advance the understanding of how construction stakeholders can be motivated and empowered to achieve the SDGs. The papers demonstrate that sustainability transformation within the built environment requires a collaborative and multidimensional approach involving industry professionals, project teams, organisations, policymakers, communities and end-users. The contributions originate from a wide range of geographical contexts, including Australia, Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, reflecting the global nature of sustainability challenges and the need for context-specific solutions. Collectively, the papers contribute to advancing theoretical understanding, developing practical frameworks, identifying critical success factors, promoting behavioural transformation and providing evidence-based solutions to accelerate the contribution of construction industry towards the global sustainability agenda.

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It is our expectation that the findings presented in this Special Issue will inspire further research and practical initiatives that strengthen stakeholder collaboration, foster innovation and accelerate the transition of the construction industry towards a more sustainable, resilient and inclusive future.

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