Annual Plan 2021

Deepening relations, growing influence, fostering resilience

Final Draft

Contents

Deepening relations, growing influence

Due to COVID-19 the world is in a very different state. The health and economic crises are expected to push hundreds of millions of people back into poverty. This does not only mean a lack of progress on the SDGs but in many instances it will also take us significant steps back - people are deprived of the opportunities and means they need to find a way out of poverty towards prosperity.

We are still learning about the implications of COVID-19 on corporate attitudes and actions towards sustainability and the influence governments have gained as they have had to step up to protect their citizens and economies. What we observe so far is that we see a lot of companies not delivering on their sustainability commitments due to the economic uncertainty. At the same time, we see that COVID-19 has brought increased awareness among business leaders, more and more see the urgency of tackling climate change, inequality, and biodiversity loss and how they matter for human health and wellbeing.

How this heightened awareness among business will translate into tangible action in a time of economic recession remains to be seen. We expect to continue to see major variations between industries and geographies, depending on the degree to which they will be hit by the economic downturn.

Despite COVID-19, WBA as an organisation was by and large able to follow the themes we set out for 2020: *scale first, depth later*. We grew the organisation to 60+ FTE, expanded our funders base, grew the Allies to 150+ organisations and assessed 500+ companies. WBA is now in a very different place than it was last year, while WBA is still a young organisation, it is increasingly recognised. This is reflected in the growth of the Alliance, our presence in key policy circles like the EU and UN and direct engagement with companies. Uptake by investors as a potential key user of the benchmarks still lags in that respect, except for the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark which has been around the longest and has wide coverage in terms of companies assessed.

Taking all of this into account – the growth of the organisation, the anticipated global recession and the need for the world to (re)focus on the SDGs as a roadmap for recovery - WBA will now need to grow its influence and foster its own resilience and that of the ecosystem in which we operate.

To grow our influence and resilience in 2021 we will commit to *deepening relationships.* This means deepening relationships between our people, the Supervisory Board, Allies, donors and partners and the companies we assess. Pursuing the growth of our influence and resilience through deepening relationships is in line with our mission; building a movement to measure and incentivise business impact towards a sustainable future that works for everyone.

Stronger connections, both within our own organisation and the movement at large should greaten our impact as we enhance our ability to learn, reinforce each other's work, prevent unnecessary duplication and respond quicker to change.

Key aspirations for 2021

Methodologies for six out of the seven systems transformations

By the end of 2021 we will have developed and published methodologies for six of the seven transformations (Urban is scheduled for 2022), as well as a number of spotlight methodologies. These methodologies will all have integrated the core social indicators, currently being developed, so that we can assess all companies on the social transformations.

These new methodologies will grow our potential to influence as they give guidance to 2,000 keystone companies on where their contribution to the SDGs is required. We will continue to put firm emphasis on the alignment of our methodologies with existing standards to strengthen connectivity in this ecosystem and make explicit where we developed new indicators to push for real SDG alignment and foster learning.

775 keystone companies assessed across 4 systems transformations

We will have assessed around 775 unique keystone companies by the end of 2021 across four transformations. Greater coverage will grow our potential impact, but we need to ensure our company engagement can keep up. Specifically, this means we need to ensure that initially the 20% of the most influential companies in an industry (due to their size or leading position) are engaged in the development of the methodology, the provision of data and the discussion of the results. In addition, we will publish four spotlight benchmarks, covering human rights in high risk sectors, gender in apparel, the seafood industry and the agricultural seeds industry.

Populating SDG2000

Early next year we will update the SDG2000 and undertake further research into the companies and their footprint, collecting and publishing key data points across the 2,000 companies. We will explicitly link to the work done by our Allies on WBA's website – signposting stakeholders to champion additional insights and relationships across the ecosystem. This will support our Allies' work and show how we complement one another. It is intended to grow WBA's influence as we aim to become the go-to place linking companies and their stakeholders to all publicly and freely available information on the sustainability performance of these companies. This will equally enhance the connectivity of the ecosystem and demonstrate what we collectively know about the impact of these companies and where we can improve our understanding.

225 Allies and 4 Collective Impact Coalitions

The Alliance is WBA's primary vehicle for growing the movement. As the Alliance grows, it can start to work as a force multiplier that increases the influence and ultimately impact of our benchmarks. To accelerate this, we will begin the design and establish *Collective Impact Coalitions*. The coalitions will build collaborative engagements with SDG2000 companies, based on WBA evidence and key findings. They will be taken forward by Allies, crowd in other stakeholders and be focused around a specific transformation.

Our 2,000 keystone companies fulfil diverse functions in the economy and differ in their ownership structure, varying from being publicly listed, (partly) state-owned, privately owned as well as cooperatives. This means that these companies will respond differently to levers for change created by investor engagement, consumer scrutiny and pressure, regulatory changes, policy incentives, brand risk and reputation and action taken by other companies in the value chain who can be direct competitors, suppliers and/or customers.

This means we need these different stakeholders to truly collectively engage with companies, together creating the incentives for companies to change. WBA will use the remainder of 2020 and Q1 of 2021 to co-design the Collective Impact Coalitions and their functioning with our Allies.

Preliminary 2021 Timeline

Q1

- World Economic Forum, virtually January 25-29, and launch of updated SDG2000
- Publish Social Transformation Framework
- Publish the revised Corporate Human Rights Benchmark (CHRB) Methodology
- Publish the Food and Agriculture Benchmark Methodology
- Publish the revised Access to Seeds Index Methodology
- Publish the revised Seafood Stewardship Index Methodology
- Publish the Oil & Gas (Climate & Energy) Methodology
- Publish Financial System Scoping Report

Q2

- World Bank Spring Meeting, April 9-11, Washington DC
- World Economic Forum in person early May in Davos
- Launch the Oil & Gas (Climate & Energy) Benchmark, June
- Publish the Just Transition Framework for the Climate & Energy Benchmarks, June
- Launch the Gender Benchmark, G7 Summit, June

Q3

- Publish commentary on first 1,000 companies assessed against core-social indicators
- UN High Level Political Forum, July
- Launch the first Food and Agriculture Benchmark at the UN Food Systems Summit, September/October
- Launch of the second iteration of the Seafood Stewardship Index at the UN Food Systems Summit, September/October
- Launch of the third iteration of the Access to Seeds Index (first edition as WBA) at the UN Food Systems Summit, September/October
- UN General Assembly, September/October
- 2021 G20 Summit, TBD

Q4

- COP26, November 1-12, Glasgow
- Launch Just Transition (incl core social indicators) benchmark for Oil & Gas, Automotive and Electric Utility sector including an update on Climate performance of Automotive and Electric Utility
- Launch of a benchmark based on the revised CHRB Methodology
- Launch of the second iteration of the Digital Inclusion Benchmark
- Publish Financial System Transformation Methodology
- Publish Circular System Transformation Methodology

Transformations

Social Transformation

Stage of development of the benchmark

WBA's social transformation reflects the need to transform the role of business in society such that businesses respect human rights, promote equality and empower people; acting responsibly to create long term value while ensuring that the transformations across the finance, food, energy, urban, circular and digital systems 'leave no one behind'. The Social Transformation approach has been in development in 2020, for full roll out in Q1 2021.

At this stage, we do not plan to have a single ‘social benchmark’. Instead, social criteria will be integrated into each of the other six transformation benchmark methodologies, recognising that respect for human rights and responsible business conduct enables and supports the achievement of the SDGs and the specific transformations. In addition, spotlight benchmarks under the Social Transformation (such as CHRB and Gender) will drive change in specific topics (such as respect for human rights and gender equality). These spotlights provide depth and assessment of performance on a topic, while the core social assessment provides breadth and a reassurance that companies have a solid foundation in place to contribute to a systems transformation in a way that leaves no one behind.

Key aspirations and themes for 2021

In 2021, the Social Transformation work will be intimately linked with our progress in the digital, food, climate & energy, finance and circular systems, by assessing all 750 benchmarked companies on a series of core social indicators in the digital, food and climate & energy rankings and by supporting the development of relevant social elements of new methodologies. The Spotlights in 2021 (Corporate Human Rights Benchmark and Gender Benchmark) and their link to the WBA aspirations and themes for 2021 are articulated separately below.

Expected results

Different aspects of the Social Transformation work are at different stages – see following sections for details on expected results for the Spotlight Benchmarks in 2021 (CHRB and Gender). The Social Transformation framework (published in Q1 2021) will explain how these spotlights link to the broader social transformation. Beyond CHRB and Gender, the main expected results are as follows:

- We will aim to establish the social transformation framework (and our intended impacts) as a recognised approach within the minds of key stakeholders and get them ready to take action on the basis of social transformation methodology and data, by deepening our relationships with key organisations and building relevant coalitions for impact;
- 1,000 companies will be assessed under social indicators to reflect the unique companies assessed for 2021 benchmarked companies from the SDG2000, at least 750 from the digital, food and energy benchmarks, as well as those from the finance and circular scoping / indicator testing phases. We will demonstrate the utility of core social assessment as a standalone product, by contributing to policy discussions (at global, EU and Asian levels) on corporate due diligence, reporting and responsible business conduct. This is based on the performance of those 1,000 companies on core social indicators, linking commentary and input to the World Economic Forum at Davos, the G7, rotating EU presidency and EU Commission work on corporate reporting and COP26. Establishing WBA and the Social Transformation within the minds of key stakeholders will be key to ensure long term impact.

Key activities to support impact

To launch and embed the social transformation framework from Q1, we will establish the Social Transformation framework as a key reference with external stakeholders (for example as a framework which tackles so-called SDG washing). This means building broad acceptance through deepening our relationships with groups like UN Global Compact and making the SDG2000 companies aware of and ready for the integration of social indicators in their rankings. In particular, ensure that the core social requirements are established as a basic 'must' in the minds of investors and ranked companies.

To further roll out the core social assessment, approximately 1,000 companies will be assessed on core social indicators (supporting) digital, food, energy and finance teams with their benchmarks. We will have anonymised analysis ready to produce thought-pieces for Davos in the summer, which will also support other transformations methodologies for inclusion of social aspects.

A key feature of next year's activities is to establish a network of organisations that can select and support aspects of social transformation through collaboration on benchmarks for specific areas within the social transformation (e.g. living wage, tax and corruption, racial justice). This would lend support to our aim to multiply impact while maintaining WBA resilience (by not relying on WBA to create every single benchmark linked to social transformation). Finally, hand in hand with this ambition goes the strengthening of the relationships between benchmarks linked to social transformation and relevant global, EU and Asian policymakers through policy dialogues and publications. We will also position submissions at UN Human Rights Council SDG – Human Rights Policy Process through Resolution 43/27 Framework with particular focus on gender and corporate due diligence.

Finally, to facilitate all of the above, we will establish a Collective Impact Coalition around the social transformation, identifying lead investors and other Allies to take forward collaborative engagements on core social assessment topics.

Learning questions and key challenges

- There are multiple 'mini' transformations under social (like gender equality, living wage etc). With WBA unlikely to be able to handle benchmarks for all of them, how can we drive impact in the social transformation without overloading us with new benchmarks?;
- How can we localise our global approach to drive impact in developing countries?

How will we measure success?

A key measure of success will be the delivery of research of 1,000 companies on the core-social indicators and the integration of core-social indicators into the rankings of the 2021 transformation benchmarks/research cycles.

Success for the social transformation should also be viewed in parallel with both the CHRB and gender spotlights described below, as well as the food, digital and energy benchmarks. Following the launch of the final core-social methodology in Q1 2021, a focus will be to understand the pick-up, buy-in and amplification of the social transformation framework and its messages. If possible, endorsement and statements of support, reference in key events and 'pull' from companies on core-social assessments will demonstrate this.

Corporate Human Rights Benchmark (Spotlight)

Stage of development of the benchmark

The Corporate Human Rights Benchmark (CHRB) assesses the human rights performance of the largest global companies in high-risk sectors for human rights impacts. CHRB became part of WBA's Social Transformation in 2019, and in 2020 it is assessing 230 companies from five sectors, namely agricultural products (4th iteration), apparel (4th iteration), extractives (4th iteration), electronics manufacturing (2nd iteration) and automotive manufacturing (1st iteration). CHRB is also analysing the initial response of these 230 companies to the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the human rights implications of the crisis, and undertaking a year-long review of its methodology and approach.

Key aspirations and themes for 2021

In 2021, in line with WBA's ambition to deepen relations, grow influence and foster resilience, we will build on the increasing recognition and influence of CHRB in the business and human rights space to strengthen existing relationships with different stakeholder groups (particularly with investors, governments, inter-governmental organisations, expert organisations and civil society), build new relationships (particularly with individuals and organisations that are close to impacts on the ground, especially in the global south, with WBA Allies, as well as putting the data in front of a larger consumer audience) and position CHRB – and the social transformation more broadly – as *the* reference point to track the human rights performance of the largest, most risk-prone businesses.

Expected results

In 2021, CHRB has the following three main expected results

- Further increase in the number and quality of human rights disclosures and further improved human rights practices as a result of the CHRB methodology and benchmark (direct impact on companies);
- Further increase the use of the CHRB methodology and benchmark by the investor community, governments, international organisations, the media, civil society, academia and consumers (impact on stakeholders that can incentivise companies);
- Further increase the recognition of CHRB as the reference methodology and benchmark of corporate human rights performance (movement building and harmonisation/simplification/alignment of the landscape).

These expected results are all connected with the broader WBA objectives of systematically incorporating the perspective of global south stakeholders, embedding social issues into corporate practices and increasing corporate accountability through a demanding but harmonised and coordinated landscape of requirements.

Key activities to support impact

In order to achieve the expected results, CHRB will rely on the publication of the results of a study looking at the initial response to COVID-19 of the 230 companies in scope in the 2020 CHRB, as well as the publication of the revised CHRB methodology, scheduled to happen in Q1 and Q2 respectively.

CHRB will also publish a benchmark based on the revised methodology. An important question to resolve for next year will be whether we maintain the CHRB assessment of each company on an annual basis or move to a two-year assessment cycle, with the possibility of publishing the different sectors at different points in the year.

Building on these publications, the CHRB team will continue to pursue and develop engagement activities to promote the methodology and the results with different stakeholder groups. This will include engagement activities based on the 2020 CHRB assessment, on the CHRB COVID-19 survey, on the revised methodology and on the 2021 assessment (once published). For example, we will continue strong engagement with DG DEVCO (International Development and Cooperation) of the European Commission to look at how CHRB and Social could support the implementing plan of the EU action plan on human rights and democracy 2020 - 2024 and future European Corporate Due Diligence legislation. This is particularly around business and human rights actions in policy dialogue with the private sector, partner governments and regional organisations and the use of rights-based approaches.

The CHRB team will also continue to work with third-parties to conduct assessments on companies outside the CHRB list, based on a subset of indicators taken from the full CHRB methodology (also referred to as '*snapshot projects*', which are currently taking place in Denmark, Ireland, Finland, Belgium, Scotland, and also undertaken by business association WBCSD on its members).

Learning questions and key challenges

- With the possible adoption of a new publication cycle for CHRB (each sector published every 2-years instead of every year), how do we use this as an opportunity to maximise engagement whilst ensuring that the data remains sufficiently up to date?;
- How can we ensure meaningful engagement with stakeholders in the global south, in a context of travel restrictions and the increased vulnerability of the individuals and communities that we would want to connect with?;
- How can we build on the increasing recognition and influence of CHRB to contribute actively to the movement to build back better, using policy-engagement as a way to enhance progress?

How will we measure success?

In 2021 it is the ambition of CHRB to start the year with an early publication, with the launch of the results of the COVID-19 study as a one-off exercise that falls outside of the normal assessment conducted by CHRB and should therefore provide us with new angles of analysis to complement the 2020 benchmark results. It is also the ambition of CHRB to publish and socialise the revised methodology, which should reflect the multiple consultations with a variety of stakeholders across the globe which mostly took place in 2020. This revised methodology should then be applied for the first time to produce a benchmark towards the end of the year. Throughout the year we are aiming for high levels of engagement from different stakeholders using the 2020 benchmark results, COVID-19 results and the revised methodology. Successful engagement would include clear examples of the benchmark results being used by Allies, companies, investors and governments, but also evidence of the CHRB being recognised as a reference in the business and human rights landscape, for example through involvement with the UNGP 10 project of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights.

Gender Benchmark (Spotlight)

Stage of development of the benchmark

The Gender Benchmark is a spotlight benchmark within WBA's social transformation. Its comprehensive methodology assesses corporate efforts on gender equality and women's empowerment across the entire value chain. The initial plans for 2020 were to launch a full Gender Benchmark, ranking and scoring the world's 36 most influential apparel companies. However, after much consideration and discussion, we decided to modify the timeline of the Gender Benchmark due to the challenges posed by COVID-19 globally, especially for apparel companies that were occupied with more immediate needs (particularly in their supply chains). This decision was made to acknowledge the current reality, while also offering the opportunity to further strengthen our relationships with target companies, who very much appreciated the additional time and space to provide the information required to be thoroughly assessed in a full Gender Benchmark.

Accordingly, to continue the momentum, WBA launched the Gender Baseline Report in Q3 2020 as a preliminary assessment of the gender disclosure of these 36 apparel companies. This report used publicly available information to highlight these companies' public commitments and actions to drive gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as what is not currently disclosed.

Building on this initial assessment, in 2021 WBA will launch the first iteration of the full Gender Benchmark where apparel companies' gender efforts will be evaluated based on both publicly available and privately provided evidence through our engagement with companies.

Key aspirations and themes for 2021

In 2021, the Gender Benchmark aims to activate and leverage collective engagement opportunities as well as ensure that all stakeholder voices are not only heard but also integrated into how companies' gender efforts are assessed.

In line with WBA's aspirations to deepen relations, grow influence and foster resilience, we will build on the Gender Baseline Report to strengthen existing relationships with stakeholders and build new ones to drive a gender-transformative movement. To further develop existing relationships, we will more actively engage with the 36 apparel companies to share best practices and guide them through the gender transformation. As for building new relationships, our focus will be on policymakers, industry associations, as well as individuals and organisations that are closest to the impacts on the ground, particularly women garment workers in developing countries. In addition to the new Allies welcomed in 2020, we will continue to grow the Alliance with more gender-focussed organisations, especially those with a presence in the global south.

Expected results

The Gender Benchmark will drive the following expected results:

- Further educate companies on where they stand and explain how to drive gender equality and women's empowerment throughout their value chain using the Gender Benchmark methodology as the roadmap;
- Increase and improve corporate gender efforts to close the gender gap, as well as the number and quality of gender disclosures;
- Increase the use of the Gender Benchmark methodology and benchmark data by stakeholders, including investors, governments, international organisations, the media and civil society, in order to drive a gender-transformative movement incentivising the private sector to contribute to the SDGs.
- Understand the challenges faced by women garment workers in the global south and assess companies on what matters most to these women.

Key activities to support impact

Following the launch of and lessons learned from the Gender Baseline Report launch at the UN General Assembly 2020, we will launch the first iteration of the Gender Benchmark, assessing the gender impacts of 36 of the most influential apparel companies globally, on the margins of the Generation Equality Forum in Q2 2021. The findings of the Benchmark will be shared with a broad set of stakeholders with whom we have built relationships, including investors, policymakers, industry associations and civil society organisations. To ensure that our Benchmark assesses companies on what will have the greatest positive impact for workers on the ground, we will, together with our Allies and donors, engage with women garment workers in the global south.

Additionally, we will continue 2020's engagement with key stakeholders (in particular, the companies in scope for the benchmark) and leverage key moments to socialise the findings of the Gender Benchmark and encourage greater gender data disclosure by companies. We will also explore opportunities for engagement through roundtables, presentations and / or discussions at various events throughout the year, including the UN General Assembly, UN Commission on the Status of Women, G20 and World Bank. Finally, we will work to strengthen relationships with policymakers in relevant regions such as the EU and Asia to ensure that the findings from our Gender Baseline Report and our Gender Benchmark to be launched in 2021 contribute to driving policy change.

To achieve scale, we will identify, extract and use the lessons learned from the first iteration of the Gender Benchmark to explore how the methodology can be scaled up and used to measure the gender efforts of a larger set of the SDG2000 companies beyond the apparel industry.

Learning questions and key challenges

- Given the impact of COVID-19 on the apparel sector, how can we most effectively incentivise apparel companies to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment is at the heart of the recovery from the pandemic?
- How can we most effectively drive forward corporate disclosure and action that has a positive impact on women, including the invisible women in the global supply chains of apparel companies?
- How can we scale up the Gender Benchmark methodology to measure a larger set of the SDG2000 companies across various industries, given that SDG5 (gender equality and women's empowerment) is a cross-cutting theme for the 2030 Agenda?
- How can we align with other gender efforts going on globally to engage all key stakeholders most effectively in building a gender-transformative movement?

How will we measure success?

As a relatively young benchmark, the Gender Benchmark will measure success based on the WBA's Theory of Change and Results Management Framework. Key markers of success will be the engagement of and progress made by companies from the launch of the Gender Baseline Report to the launch of the Gender Benchmark, as well as the level of engagement from and use of the data by stakeholders.

In 2020, 67% of the 36 companies in scope meaningfully engaged with us during the Gender Baseline Report cycle. In 2021 we aim for involvement and meaningful interest in the Benchmark of at least 75% of the 36 companies in scope. To increase our engagement levels, we will provide multiple opportunities for companies to connect with us, including through participation in webinars, roundtable discussions, data collection and individual company engagements.

Food and Agriculture Transformation

Stage of development of the benchmark

The Food and Agriculture Benchmark will assess the performance of the 350 most influential food and agriculture companies across the value chain, from farm to fork, accounting for over half of global revenues. In 2021 WBA will present the first iteration of the Benchmark during the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). It will be WBA's first benchmark assessing an entire system transformation.

Already in 2020 it became evident that an increased number of crucial food and agriculture companies and stakeholders are getting behind the mission of transforming food systems to become more healthy, sustainable, equitable and resilient. However, despite their good intentions companies are still struggling to connect individual corporate action to system changing initiatives, while stakeholders remain focused on narrow often single-issue topics. Meanwhile, the sense of urgency surged due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exposed the fragility and inequality of the system with not only an alarming increase in malnutrition, but also record amounts of food waste. Low- and middle-income countries are hit the hardest, but also in developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom the rising numbers in food poverty and child hunger have made headlines. It has become bitterly evident that systemic failure results in human tragedy, which can only be remedied if all stakeholders, worldwide, come together.

To assess the contribution of companies to the food systems transformation, WBA is developing the Food and Agriculture Benchmark and two Spotlight Benchmarks: the Access to Seeds Index (ATSI) and the Seafood Stewardship Index (SSI). The three benchmarks ensure alignment and coordination in resourcing, activities and learnings. In 2021 WBA will launch all three benchmarks during the UNFSS.

Key aspirations and themes for 2021

The Food and Agriculture Benchmark builds upon the knowledge and experience of the previous iterations of the ATSI and the SSI. These two spotlight benchmarks have both been well-received and are respected, credible sources to assess industry specific sustainability performance of companies. The Food and Agriculture Benchmark will deepen these existing relations and grow WBA's influence by reaching more companies and further involving our Allies. The Food and Agriculture Benchmark will assess a broad range of companies with headquarters in 41 different countries. Approximately one third of the companies in scope have not been part of an index or benchmark before and are mostly operating from the global south, making them crucial in reaching vulnerable demographics.

Expected results

The main objective is to accelerate progression of food systems transformation by providing an accountability mechanism for the private sector. The UNFSS - scheduled for Q3 2021 - will dominate all engagement activities throughout the year. To ensure our benchmark is relevant and meaningful for stakeholders, and on which they can base their engagement, WBA will work with the UNFSS secretariat and the private sector track to position WBA as the accountability mechanism to evaluate and track private sector progress against the SDGs. WBA aims to contribute to these efforts in the following way:

- The Food and Agriculture Benchmark is established as the accountability mechanism at the UNFSS;
- Food and agriculture companies use the methodology and the benchmark results as a roadmap to identify corporate action that could result into positive systemic change;
- The Food and Agriculture Benchmark findings will be used by multilateral policy actors such as the EU or ASEAN to inform food security regulations;
- A Collective Impact Coalition is in place that accelerates positive business performance.

Key activities to support impact

In Q1 WBA will finalise and publish the methodology for the Food and Agriculture Benchmark. The methodology translates the topics which have been set out in the framework and published mid-2020, into measurable indicators, providing the private sector with clear targets to act upon in the decade of action. The holistic approach along the three interrelated dimensions of nutrition, environment and social inclusion (integrating WBA's core social indicators) is unique and made applicable and relevant to all 350 companies in scope. In Q1 and Q2 WBA will use the findings of the baseline study published in December 2020 to share preliminary findings about critical areas where progress is failing or lagging. WBA will participate in multiple fora, engage with diverse stakeholders and further develop the Collective Impact Coalition geared towards the socialisation of the methodology and using the available data to stimulate the 350 keystone companies to do more. In order to be able to present key findings of the Food and Agriculture Benchmark at the UNFSS (late Q3) the research team will conduct all research in Q1 and Q2. Companies which are in scope of both the Food and Agriculture Benchmark and ATSI or SSI will be assigned one researcher working on both surveys, making it easier for companies by having one WBA contact person for all their food assessments. As with all other systems and benchmarks, WBA will limit the reporting burden for companies by prepopulating the surveys with publicly available information and data received from other indices. This should result in strengthening the relationship with companies and increase their willingness to provide additional input, improving the accuracy and relevance of the data. In Q3 and Q4 WBA will focus on sharing the results of the Food and Agriculture Benchmark, fully operationalising the Collective Impact Coalition and diving more deeply into understanding the influence that keystone companies have on their supply chain partners in especially East Africa and Asia. The research study on these supply chains will continue until 2023.

In terms of strengthening relationships between the Food and Agriculture Benchmark and relevant policymakers, we will focus on engaging on a global, EU and ASEAN level. Global engagement is conducted through the involvement with the UNFSS and possibly the G7. On the EU level, we will input specifically into delivery of the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy through an expert stakeholder group looking at implementation. Through that we will provide input on how the Food and Agriculture Benchmark can be an accountability mechanism as well as a policy feedback mechanism to measure progress of companies headquartered in the EU. Lastly, we will continue to engage with Asian policymakers, especially the Japanese government in preparation of the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit.

Learning questions and key challenges

- Which indicators in the methodology provide the most relevant insights into performance by companies on food systems transformation?;
- Where does the Collective Impact Coalition have the most potential (which companies, topics, geographies) and where the least; and why?

How will we measure success?

The Food and Agriculture Benchmark should be ambitious yet achievable. It should meet stakeholder expectations, while also being recognised and valued by companies. WBA will measure success along the applicable Results Management Framework criteria such as the level of engagement from investors, Allies, policymakers and of course the companies in scope. In 2021 we aim for involvement and meaningful interest in the benchmark of at least 20% of the 350 companies in scope. This includes participation in data collection or round table discussions and individual company engagements. The first benchmark will provide key insights into company performance against indicators and will help refine and review the methodology. Furthermore, we will be able to compare the baseline findings on commitments to the results of the benchmark. Finally, a key measurement area will also be the outreach and impact that we will gain from working with a Collective Impact

Coalition, most importantly we will measure the increase of Allies and stakeholders from critical regions in the global south who are using the baseline and benchmark results in their efforts to support the transition to more healthy, sustainable and equitable food systems.

Access to Seeds Index (Spotlight)

Stage of development of the benchmark

The Access to Seeds Index (ATSI) measures and compares seed companies' efforts to enhance the productivity of smallholder farmers. Following the second edition publication in 2019, the now-dissolved Access to Seeds Foundation has developed a collaboration model with the World Benchmarking Alliance. ATSI will remain a Spotlight Benchmark deepening insight into the seed industry's contribution, including small and medium-sized seed enterprises at the regional level, as part of WBA's Food and Agriculture Transformation. In 2021 the main output is the third edition of ATSI that focuses on three regional benchmarks: for South and Southeast Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa, and Western and Central Africa. The index particularly highlights the importance of local and regional companies providing access to seeds for smallholder farmers alongside global players.

Key aspirations and themes for 2021

Aligning with WBA's goal of deepening relationships, the main objective of ATSI in 2021 is to strengthen collaborations with regional partners to inform the methodology by their data needs, and use existing channels, events and conferences to disseminate the results of the ATSI.

For company and stakeholder consultations, the ATSI will make use of existing events in the regions such as the AFSTA Congress (Africa), APSA Congress (Asia), Seed Connect (Nigeria), the African Green Revolution Forum (Africa), Seed World (India), the Indian National Seed Congress (India) and ASIWA (West Africa).

Apart from focusing on relations with regional partners, strengthening our collaboration with Dutch seed sector development programs such as ISSD and SeedNL is an objective of this activity. We will also explore opportunities for building relationships that promote and align with WBA's mission such as ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), AU (African Union) and UNECA (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa).

Expected results

With its key position at the start of the global food chain, the seeds industry is vital to achieving multiple sustainability targets. As one of the SDGs main targets is to double smallholder productivity and incomes by 2030 as part of efforts to end hunger and achieve food security the seed industry's role is key. ATSI contributes to this goal in three ways by:

- Providing clear insight in the private seed sector in regions which inform policymakers but also helps civil society actors or public sector bodies to build partnerships with these companies;
- Ranking and comparing companies against each other, to channel the competitive spirit that drives every industry towards making a positive impact;
- Providing inspiration to the keystone companies included in the Food and Agriculture Benchmark: by demonstrating that inclusive agribusiness models that include smallholder farmers are possible and profitable, these companies set an example for other companies in the global food chain, also beyond the seed industry, to follow.

Key activities to support impact

From 2020 to 2021, ATSI will publish three regional landscaping reports providing an overview of the seed sector in each region. In addition to the main seed industry players identified for benchmarking in the 2021 Regional Access to Seeds Index, the report summarises the main crops of the region, the enabling environment, observations from the 2019 index results and recent events affecting the development of the seed sector in the region, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reviewing the index methodology with the goal to streamlining its structure while critically assessing indicators in terms of data effectiveness and outcomes. Feedback received on the 2019 index serves as an important basis for this process as well as discussions with other WBA teams on methodology alignment. In 2021 a methodology report will be published online containing an overview of indicators, a questionnaire for companies as well as a guidance for companies to submit data. In addition, the methodology report will feature a self-assessment tool for companies and cooperatives not selected for the index.

The third edition of ATSI will launch with the Food and Agriculture Benchmark at the UNFSS. The 2021 index will contain a league table comparing the performance of 72 leading seed companies in three regions: South and Southeast Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa and Western and Central Africa. Regional analysis provides market information of each region, country reports give an overview of presence of companies as well as the state of their seed sector. Company scorecards provide insight in the performance, presence and portfolio of individual seed companies.

ATSI is increasingly seen by media and congress organisers as an authority on seed industry activity in Africa and Asia. Throughout 2021 we will ensure that findings are presented at relevant global and regional platforms by building and strengthening relationships with key stakeholders, including regional policy and economic bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union, and UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Dedicated PR strategies will ensure that the findings of the 2021 Access to Seeds Index find their way to relevant global, regional and industry media and events. In 2019 such PR activities resulted in over 500 publications in global and regional media outlets.

Learning questions and key challenges

- What partnership and collaboration can advance the usability of the index's results for the benefits of smallholder farmers through the seed industry?;
- Who are the relevant and influential regional key players to support the participation of companies in the data collection process?;
- How will the index measure advanced seed-producing cooperatives assessed for the 2021, Access to Seeds Index in WCA i, given that the business models are too narrow relative to private seed companies?

How will we measure success?

For the 3rd edition of Access to Seeds Index most of the Results Management Framework criteria fit the ambitious goals set for 2021. At end of 2021, we will assess the number of index companies engaging and socialising with the methodology from the draft to the final publication. In addition, we will engage with companies or cooperatives, not selected for 2021 assessment, on the self-assessment tool to compare their performance against the selected leading companies.

For the 2019 Access to Seeds Index, 85% of the globally active companies, 82% of the Eastern and Southern Africa index companies, 78% of the Western and Central Africa index companies, and 75% of the South and Southeast Asia index companies provided data. In 2021 we will aim to increase the number of companies engaging with the index for data collection to reach more than 90% for each regional index. Furthermore, we will leverage WBA and the index's network to increase media mentions, growi partnerships in the index regions and events and dialogues to establish the index as a key measurement and driver for seed companies to align their business models operations with the SDGs.

Seafood Stewardship Index (Spotlight)

Stage of development of the benchmark

The Seafood Stewardship Index (SSI) is a spotlight benchmark of the Food and Agriculture transformation and assesses the 30 largest seafood companies involved in the production of seafood from wild-capture fisheries and aquaculture as well as aquaculture feed companies. The SSI methodology assesses company performance across five SDG-inspired measurement areas: governance and management of stewardship practices, stewardship of the supply chain, ecosystems, human rights and working conditions and local communities.

The first iteration of SSI was published and launched in October 2019 at the Our Oceans conference in Oslo. Based on the results of SSI, 2020 was dedicated to:

- Understanding the uptake of SSI by seafood companies and their stakeholders by a) directly engaging with companies to understand how they have used the benchmark b) engaging with relevant stakeholders (e.g. civil society, multi-stakeholder initiatives, pre-competitive groups) to identify alignment;
- Initiating the revision of the SSI methodology in line with the Food and Agriculture and the Social transformation benchmarks as well as the latest best practice standards;
- Hiring a Seafood Benchmark Lead.

Key aspirations and themes for 2021

In line with WBA's ambition to deepening relations, grow influence and foster resilience, 2021 will be dedicated to increase the visibility and influence of SSI in the sustainable seafood space by deepening existing relationships, especially existing Allies, civil society and business organisations), and creating new relationships, especially with financial institutions, policymakers and on-the-ground stakeholder groups. By deepening and growing our relationships, SSI aims to activate and leverage collective engagement opportunities as well as ensure that all stakeholder voices are heard and integrated into the expectations communicated through the benchmark. The SSI engagement strategy will also focus on identifying Allies that have leverage in the seafood industry while at the same time increasing the number of Allies that can lend support towards a sustainable seafood sector. Allies will be mobilised through the Collective Impact Coalitions, in coordination with the Food and Agriculture Benchmark.

Expected results

In 2021, SSI expects to have the following results:

- SSI is known by key relevant stakeholders (with a focus on civil society, investors and multi-stakeholder/pre-competitive platforms) leading to an increased recognition of SSI as the "go to benchmark and methodology to assess sustainability performance in the seafood industry;
- The SSI results are used by a group of relevant Allies to drive change in the seafood industry;
- At least two thirds of the companies participate in the second iteration of the benchmark and one third of the companies show improvement;
- SSI contributes to the discussion on the role of seafood in the wider food transformation.

Overall, SSI will use the second publication of the benchmark to ramp up its visibility in the seafood industry and its community of stakeholders, further increase its relevance to different users and align with on-going multi-stakeholder efforts while contributing to re-framing the sustainable seafood agenda around the SDGs.

Key activities to support impact

In order to achieve the expected results, SSI will carry out a number of research and engagement activities, while leveraging the activities of other benchmarks (e.g. the Social Transformation Benchmark, the Financial Transformation Benchmark and the Food and Agriculture Benchmark) and WBA as an institution.

SSI will use the revision process of the methodology to engage with companies and key stakeholders by ensuring participation in the revision process either through the ERC, one-on-one consultations and through the public consultation period of the methodology revision (Q1 2021). Key stakeholders include CSO's and multi-stakeholder initiatives and pre-competitive platforms such as EAT, Friend of Ocean Action, GSSI and SeaBOS to foster aligned and common engagement with seafood companies.

As the methodology is published, SSI will socialise the methodology through various channels including conferences (e.g. World Ocean Summit in Lisbon 2021, UN Second World Ocean Conference, Seafood Expo North America, Seafood Expo Global), online webinars, partners, the seafood media and social media channels (Q1 2021). TSSI will use its existing network of partners and Allies as well as the WBA Alliance overall to support the socialisation of the methodology.

SSI will assess the 30 largest seafood companies for the second time (Q2-Q3 2021) and publish key finding at the UN Food Systems Summit, together with the Food and Agriculture Benchmark and the Access to Seeds Index results (Q3 2021). The detailed scorecards will be published shortly after. The publication of the second index will be promoted through conferences, our networks of partners, social media and the seafood media (to reach key stakeholder groups including investors, policymakers as well as consumers and seafood buyers (Q3 2021). SSI will also integrate and align engagement activities as appropriate with the Food and Agriculture Benchmark (as well as other benchmarks where appropriate) by jointly contributing to overlapping events and the Collective Impact Coalitions (continuous, particularly Q3 and Q4 2021). Finally, we will work to strengthen relationships with policymakers in relevant regions such as EU and Asia to inform policymaking through SSI scorecards as evidence and contribute to drive policy change.

Learning questions and key challenges

This year will be dedicated to identifying and "testing" different levers for impact for SSI. Therefore, the following learning questions are expected:

- What are the best levers (civil society, investors, policy) to effectively drive behaviour change among the 30 largest seafood companies using SSI as a learning and accountability tool?;
- How can the SSI increase its impact beyond the 30 companies in scope?;
- How can the SSI narrative and engagement be best aligned with the Food & Agriculture Benchmark to maximise impact and include the sustainable seafood narrative into the food transformation narrative, especially given the increasing understanding of the role of seafood in sustainable and healthy diets and the overlap of 21 companies between the two benchmarks?;
- How to best adapt SSI's engagement strategy and activities in light of restricted travel and face-to-face engagement?

How will we measure success?

We are tracking outreach and response to the above proposed engagement activities and outputs, seeking to engage at least two thirds of the companies in scope (i.e. 20 companies). We are also tracking engagement with individual stakeholders and stakeholder groups (investors, civil society and investors) and across different geographies. Stakeholder engagement means engagement in methodology revisions as well as education about the benchmark and its results. These proxies will be used to assess reach and engagement among seafood companies and their key stakeholders. With the second iteration of the benchmark, we will track how companies have improved and integrated learnings from the first iteration. Finally, we will also track the extent to which Allies and stakeholders outside of the Alliance are using the results of the benchmark to engage with seafood companies.

Digital Transformation

Stage of development of the benchmark

2020 has been a watershed for WBA's digital system transformation work. The pandemic has increased attention towards the role of technology in health, education and economic development. It has re-focused the public discourse toward the consequences of digital divides, particularly in developing countries where the gaps are the largest. The first publication of the Digital Inclusion Benchmark in December 2020 therefore comes at a pivotal moment which sets the groundwork for demonstrable impact in years to come.

Key aspirations and themes for 2021

In 2021, the digital transformation workstream will build on the momentum of the Digital Inclusion Benchmark's debut. Doing so necessarily involves deepening stakeholder relationships that have been built during the benchmark's development phase and in particular, deepening engagement with companies to facilitate internal business transformation. By scaling up the benchmark scope from 100 to 150 companies, the digital workstream also contributes towards WBA's commitment to assess 2,000 companies by 2023.

Expected results

The digital system transformation work has three main expected results in 2021:

- Widen awareness and adoption among digital technology companies of digital inclusion as a key issue and obligation. This obligation towards digital inclusion is broadly defined to include improving universal access and affordability, enhancing skills, fostering trust to foster beneficial use, and innovating openly and ethically;
- Empower government, civil society and investor stakeholders with data that they can use as evidence-base for development planning and cooperation, national and international policy advocacy and capital allocation;
- Mobilise a global multi-stakeholder coalition that leverages benchmark results and findings to advocate for digital inclusion.

These expected results are proportional to the level of development of the digital workstream which will see a second benchmark publication in 2021.

Key activities to support impact

To achieve the first stated result, WBA will continue to closely engage with digital technology companies, prioritising those who have stated their willingness to embark on a learning journey about digital inclusion best practices. We will work with selected business platform Allies to organise a series of "community of practice" roundtables where digital technology companies gather for peer learning on how to change business practices to facilitate digital inclusion. WBA will also reach out to the 50 new companies in scope as well as continue outreach towards companies who have not engaged during the benchmark's first iteration. Ongoing company outreach and education include webinars as well as bilateral communication, especially company engagement calls to discuss their data and benchmark performance. These engagement and outreach activities will consciously integrate the core social transformation component, to help ensure the digital technology companies also embrace their broader obligations to sustainable development.

Engagement outreach will also include policymakers at the global and regional levels. In particular, we will continue to inform policymakers on emerging evidence for the need around consistent standards to measure impact in digital inclusion.

To achieve the second stated result WBA will continue to undertake benchmark research and analysis, gathering initial data from public sources of information such as company disclosures and drafting individual company scorecards that identify leading practices and risks as well as publishing a report detailing policy relevant analysis. We will also continue to engage with stakeholders to feedback and identify ways to improve metrics and benchmark methodology. This would include closer engagement with standard setting bodies, advocacy groups and developing country ICT ministries on many issues ranging from child online protection to ethics in artificial intelligence. The idea is to set the stage for a more comprehensive review of the benchmark methodology during its third year of publication. In 2021, WBA will also recruit additional members to the ERC to further strengthen technical guidance and assure research quality.

To achieve the third stated result, WBA will build on the momentum of our government and investor roundtable held during the 2020 UN General Assembly. This roundtable highlighted the willingness, particularly of a core group of institutional investors, to rally around the benchmark's findings and engage companies in their portfolio to improve their performance. Already, there have been initial commitments from Fidelity Investment and Aviva Investors as well as interest from Deutsche Bank. As with other transformations, investors will form the core group around which we build and convene a Collective Impact Coalition for digital system transformation. In 2021, we will formally launch this coalition and facilitate a plan of action. The digital system transformation lead will continue external representation at key events, organise convenings and ramp up thought leadership pieces as well as bilateral conversations to deepen and widen the network of advocates using benchmark data. This effort will be supported by the recruitment of an additional engagement support person solely focused on the digital system.

Learning questions and key challenges

- Is there demand from stakeholders to assess more industry specific risks and harms? If so, how can we incorporate more industry-specific elements without changing the benchmark's comprehensive but simple framework?
- What is the scope of obligation we can require from hardware companies which produce no consumer devices or business-to-business software services towards specific topics such as child online protection or school connectivity?
- How does WBA design and drive forward the Collective Impact Coalition for the Digital transformation, as it is likely going to require us to build it from the bottom up, given the pioneering nature of the benchmark and the lack of other coalitions on issues covered?

How will we measure success?

The starting point for measuring success is WBA's MEL framework. For example, we can look at company engagement rates and supplement this metric with specific company case studies. We can track uptake of the benchmark framework and findings in terms of references from stakeholders and penetration through various media. Again, this will be supplemented with specific use cases that shed light on the qualitative results. Finally, an important yardstick of success comes with the growth of private sector effort towards digital inclusion as measured by benchmark indicators, with special attention paid to efforts in developing countries, especially with respect to universal access to digital technologies, economic value contribution, support for technology innovation ecosystems and the sharing of data sets for sustainable development research and policy.

Decarbonisation and Energy Transformation

Stage of development of the benchmark

A major decarbonisation and energy transformation is needed to align with global efforts to prevent the worst impacts of climate change and limit global warming to well below 2°C. Without urgent climate action, the world will experience more extreme weather events, rising sea levels and negative impacts on ecosystems. These will have a disproportionate effect on the poorest and most vulnerable populations for decades to come.

The Climate and Energy Benchmark will rank 450 keystone companies in high-emitting sectors and measure the readiness of companies to transition to a low-carbon economy. The benchmark uses the Assessing Low Carbon Transition (ACT) methodologies, which assess companies against emissions pathways based on the sectoral decarbonisation approach developed by the Science-Based Targets Initiative (SBTi). To assess companies against the well-below 2 degrees Paris Goal, the most ambitious scenarios available from the International Energy Agency are used to calculate the company pathways. The methodologies include indicators that align with the information disclosed by companies using CDP, GRI and SASB. They also show alignment with and support the objectives of the recommendations made by the Taskforce on Climate Related Disclosures (TCFD).

The benchmark tracks keystone companies in the highest emitting sectors, identified through extensive consultation and research, including on the industry groups included in the TCFD recommendations. To date, the Climate and Energy Benchmark has launched the Automotive (December 2019, with an update in November 2020 and Electric Utility (July 2020) sector benchmarks bringing the total to 80 companies benchmarked.

The Automotive 2020 update includes the first WBA cross-system findings, with the same 30 Automotive companies being benchmarked on their approach to human rights in the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark. This update will align decarbonisation- and social-based assessments delivering a unique and multifaceted view on company performance.

Key aspirations and themes for 2021

For 2021 the aim is to grow to 180 unique companies assessed, including an industry focus on Oil & Gas, alongside Automotive and Electric Utilities. The key aspiration for 2021 is to include the just transition assessments - the intersection between decarbonisation and social transformation - alongside the core social assessments for all 180 companies in the Climate and Energy Benchmark. By fully integrating the social elements (which includes just transition) across these 180 companies in 2021, we enable the Climate and Energy Benchmark to be ready to move into its second phase from 2022 onwards, when we plan to publish a full benchmark (including social) for every decarbonisation and energy industry group every two years, with an update in each interim year.

The first year of operation of the Climate and Energy Benchmark focused on building effective research processes and exploring the opportunities and value add of the benchmark in a crowded climate action space. These learnings will contribute to a scaling up of benchmark development and delivery, broadening our industry and sector coverage and deepening our presence and relations in sector- and system-level dialogues. As awareness of the benchmark grows, so does its influence. We consider this influence an important driver and test of our work; driving collective stakeholder engagement as different actors share responses and take action as a result of the benchmark, and testing to further incorporate the benchmark in decision-making centred on the low-carbon transition. Benchmark resilience will develop as its positive influence is proven through response, action and impact.

The Climate and Energy Benchmark team will look into a 2-year benchmark cycle which establishes a full iteration every 2 years and an update/refresh at the one-year mark. The refresh will provide the opportunity to update and reframe the findings, relevant to emerging challenges, events or external moments and in partnership with an Ally or organisation for purposes of targeted engagement. The 2-year cycle will bring a structure and rhythm to the benchmark's production and publication. Sectors will be paired, so for example in the year Automotive is fully benchmarked, Transport will undergo an update.

Expected results

COP26 will be the main target for the Climate and Energy Benchmark to launch its just transition benchmarks and findings. By assessing all 180 companies in Automotive, Electric Utilities and Oil & Gas on core social and just transition indicators and publishing these alongside the ACT climate assessment in the benchmarks, all engagement activities scheduled in the run up to COP will support the just transition narrative, as well as other key themes at COP26 across these three sectors. Expected results are:

- WBA is positioned as an accountability mechanism that underpins private sector engagement on the transition to reach the objectives of the Paris Agreement;
- Widen awareness of the just transition concept with key stakeholders, first and foremost benchmarked companies;
- Drive policy reform on global, EU and Asian level on climate, including through working with the UNFCCC COP process;
- Mobilise a collective impact coalition that leverages benchmark results and findings to advocate for Science Based Targets and a just transition.

Key activities to support impact

In Q1, we will finish the Oil & Gas Methodology and start to assess the 100 companies in the benchmark. The benchmark will be published in June 2021, alongside publishing the Just Transition methodology/framework (including indicators), taking the cumulative methodologies published on the Climate & Energy Benchmark to four (Automotive, Electric Utilities, Oil & Gas, Just Transition). Key stakeholders will be consulted on the Just Transition Methodology via multi-stakeholder roundtables.

By October we will publish an Automotive Benchmark or update (30 companies) and Electric Utilities Benchmark or update (50 companies), including core social and just transition assessments. The Automotive results will be used for a Call to Action campaign in run up to COP26 to support the call to phase out the Internal Combustion Engine.

Benchmark launches will be supported by various pre- and post-launch dialogues with a key focus on regional findings, investor specific dialogues and movement building through our Climate Allies. We will also strengthen relationships with relevant global, EU and Asian policymakers involved with the Climate and Energy transformation through policy dialogues and publications.

Furthermore, we will begin assessments for a Transport Benchmark (90 companies) or a Buildings and Construction Benchmark (80 companies) for publication in 2022, in line with the 2-year strategic benchmark cycles.

Lastly, 17 ACT sector methodologies will be available by the end of 2021, including a generic methodology that can be used across a range of sectors, which will allow flexibility to assess companies who do not fall within one of the 16 high-emitting sectors with a specific methodology. A possible example of application of the cross-sectoral methodology within the WBA partnership will be to allow for the assessment of conglomerates at parent company level.

Learning questions and key challenges

- How can the Climate and Energy Benchmarks be more intentional in regional engagement? Building on the success of the regional findings on the Electric Utilities Benchmark, how do we cultivate more targeted partnerships with locally, nationally and regionally influential organisations to sustain this effective entry point into policy discussions and drive better engagement results with companies?;
- How can we work out loud to ensure consistency internally and within the Alliance? Over time, WBA and the Alliance can begin to appreciate the depth and possibilities of the benchmarks; specifically in drawing out learnings and synergies for better cross-system alignment and for the purposes of systematic decarbonisation;
- What strategy will be most effective for engagement with state-owned companies? Given this is key to the Oil & Gas sector, how will we go about this jointly across systems thinking?

How will we measure success?

As the Decarbonisation and Energy transformation will work to launch the Oil & Gas sector benchmark in the summer of 2021 it will be crucial to engage with at least 20 % of the companies in scope of the benchmark (total sample 100 companies). As we will launch the Just Transition framework at the same time as the Oil & Gas Benchmark, for full publication of the data assessment by COP 26, the success will be dependent on the right consultation for the framework. Industry representation from the Oil & Gas, Electric Utility and Automotive sector will be needed to get support for the framework. We will do so through roundtables, and establishing a working group around the Just Transition topic that seeks alignment with existing initiatives. Furthermore we need to grow our Alliance in regions that are under-represented such as China and Africa through our regional findings and engagement. The aim is to have at least six media mentions throughout the year to increase visibility of our results.

Financial Transformation

Stage of development of the benchmark

The aim of the Financial System Transformation (FST) benchmark is to accelerate the contributions of financial institutions to sustainable development. The financial system plays a unique role as enabler of the six other system transformations. Given its inextricable links with all aspects of the economy, the financial system's own sustainability is dependent on the sustainability of other systems. Yet not one country is on track to meet all SDGs by 2030. This unsustainable trajectory poses financially material risks to financial institutions. These institutions can also, in turn, impact the SDGs – negatively and positively, intentionally and unintentionally. This potential for influence holds particularly true of the system's keystone actors.

We started scoping the FST benchmark in 2020, consulting with over 200 stakeholders via seven regional roundtables as well as via dozens of semi-structured interviews.

Key aspirations and themes for 2021

The FST benchmark is in development; its main focus over 2021 will be the socialisation of the benchmark concept, following publication of the scoping report in January 2021 and development of the methodology over the rest of the year. This will contribute to WBA's aspiration to publish six of its seven transformation benchmark methodologies by end 2021. To achieve this, we need to continue to broaden and deepen the movement, begun in 2020, of influencers, amplifiers and future users of the FST benchmark.

Expected results

Given that the FST methodology will not be published until the end of 2021 and the full FST benchmark will not be launched until 2023, no results are expected yet for 2021.

Key activities to support impact

2021 will see us continue to build a movement by testing our narrative further – how well does it work across all financial institutions in scope? Do people agree that the financial institutions in scope are both affected by and can influence these global goals? How can they influence these goals, and which (general) actions could be most influential to accelerate sustainable development? We will test our narrative with the following groups:

- Financial institutions in scope of the benchmark;
- Industry associations and networks that represent or work with financial institutions and that are working on sustainability, with particular focus on those that have disclosure standards, frameworks or tools (e.g. Principles for Responsible Investment, Principles for Responsible Banking, Principles for Sustainable Insurance, IIGCC's Net Zero Framework, UN High-Level Financing for Development Working Group Process, European Corporate Reporting Lab of the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group);
- Regulators and policymakers, with a focus on those regulating the largest clusters of keystone actors in scope of the benchmark (e.g. European Commission, FSA in Japan);
- Civil society actors that are engaged with financial institutions and can represent the views of those affected by financial institutions' decisions (e.g. Fair Finance, ShareAction).

In developing the FST benchmark, our aim is that it proves additive and complementary to evolving market disclosure frameworks and accountability initiatives. Particularly as the FST baseline will not be published until late 2022 and is being developed against a rapidly evolving landscape.

This approach is complementary to our Alliance building efforts. Currently, 20% of our 160 allies are either financial institutions or working directly with financial institutions. Our ambition is to grow our Alliance to over 300 organisations by 2023, including more than doubling assets under management of financial institution Allies. It is also complementary to our policy ambitions. We are working closely with the Policy team, given amongst other opportunities the many developments linked to the European Commission sustainable finance strategy.

We will engage these stakeholders via publication of the scoping report (Q1); publication of the draft methodology (by end Q2); and then final methodology (end Q4), building on the successful regional consultations held already to further widen and deepen our network of influencers and potential benchmark users. With a new Research Lead joining January 2021 and the Expert Review Committee having its first meeting in Q1, we will develop the methodology over the remainder of the year. Key milestones include mapping existing industry initiatives and indicators (Q1-Q2); testing the draft methodology through sampling a number of financial institutions in scope of the benchmarks, including testing the core Social transformation indicators (Q3); exploring and identifying potential research partners, whether to support in data collection (2022 onwards) and/or on whose reporting frameworks our benchmark we may directly build; and revisiting further, if needs be, the 400 in scope as part of our annual SDG2000 updates.

Learning questions and key challenges

- How will the FST interact with or amplify our other transformation benchmarks? How can we use platform moments such as COP26?;
- How best to engage financial institutions in a rapidly changing regulatory environment? Particularly in the US with a changing presidency (given >100 of the 400 in scope are headquartered there), and Europe (where the EU Taxonomy is setting standards for financial institutions as well as corporates);
- Will our principal engagement focus on industry leaders, industry associations and disclosure frameworks give us sufficient reach to influential agents of change? We plan to deepen relations with these groups first, and build connections to policy makers and regulators in the key regions where the majority of FST 400 are headquartered later (USA, Europe, Japan).

How will we measure success?

We are tracking outreach and response to the above proposed engagement activities and outputs, seeking to contact half of the 400 in scope and engage 20%, overall. We will aim for a balance of input, geographically and by stakeholder type, by tracking quarterly outreach and multi-stakeholder roundtables organised, including number of participants, capturing percentage participating from developing countries, with specific numbers and percentages of those based in and/or working primarily in Africa and South Asia. These proxies will be used to assess reach and engagement among financial institutions and their key stakeholders – as noted in this report's opening remarks, knowledge of WBA is lagging amongst investors. The direct outreach suggested here, backed up by deepening relationships with key industry associations and disclosure frameworks, alongside the four planned Collective Impact Coalitions and hiring of an investor engagement lead noted elsewhere in the annual plan, and making smart use of other transformation benchmark launch moments, ought considerably improve awareness of WBA amongst this key user group.

Circular Transformation

Stage of development of the benchmark

More and more research is becoming available which shows the urgency to move away from a linear economy as a system that generates extreme amounts of waste and exacerbates the climate crisis. The latest Circle Economy Gap report shows that less than 8.6% of the global economy can be considered circular and the trend is downwards. This issue is particularly relevant for developing countries. Sustainable growth for developing economies can be more resilient when based on a circular model of raw materials and products. A lack of recycling and waste-sorting facilities, combined with waste exports (particularly plastic and e-waste) create a negative impact, whilst opportunities for job creation and enhancing livelihoods (such as in retrofitting and repair) create opportunities. The full value chain on keystone companies, including their relationship with the informal sector, is fundamental to the circular transformation.

This is why Circular is one of the seven system transformations WBA has identified as crucial to achieving the SDGs. We see evidence of some companies committing to implementing circular principles, but much more needs to be done. Whilst the recent uptake and interest in the circular economy is definitely positive, it begs the question as to how these commitments and ideas are understood by boards and practically translated into real life projects and programmes with the adequate tracking and measuring mechanisms required to understand their full effect and potential.

The scoping study completed and published in Q4 2020, supported by the Laudes Foundation, highlighted the potential for transparency to propel the circular agenda forward, with a primary focus on the global fashion industry. Learnings from the fashion industry can be applied to other key industries such as the built environment and electronics. Key findings were that 1. Circularity as a business concept and activity is in its infancy; 2. Greater transparency from the private sector is urgently needed to move circularity beyond words to concrete actions; 3. There is broad support across stakeholder groups to capture existing best practices and inspire action from others in the sector by establishing a corporate benchmark.

Key aspirations and themes for 2021

This scoping study has recommended that a publicly available and free circular benchmark be developed to serve as a tool to incentivise companies. This will allow for the opportunity to capture best circular corporate practices through engaging with companies, to inspire companies to do more and show which circular business models are fit for the future. To address the lack of comparable data and incentives for companies to be transparent, such a benchmark should rely on the development of a methodology that would seek to find commonalities among existing frameworks. Building such a methodology and benchmark requires multi-stakeholder dialogues that involve the companies themselves, circular experts, civil society (including those representing marginalised voices who are affected by impacts in developing countries) alongside eventual benchmark users, such as investors and policymakers. The circular benchmark and associated company-level data could also serve as an input into the evolving policy sphere by providing an evidence base for the development of policy regulations and requirements with regard to circularity, such as recyclability, repairability and plastics regulation. The next step in the development phase will be to initiate the work on methodology development with the ambition to launch a full methodology by the end of 2021.

Expected results

Given that the Circular methodology will not be published until the end of 2021 at the earliest, no benchmark results are expected yet for 2021. The year will be focused on developing the methodology through multi-stakeholder dialogues, continuing to leverage the work of others and ensure that the benchmark is relevant.

Key activities to support impact

Q1 will be used to start ERC-building, for which we have approached multiple interested parties already such as the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the WBCSD Circular experts who have indicated their willingness. Furthermore, we will do preliminary research for methodology framework. Many learnings from the Food & Agriculture transformation work will be taken into account for the Circular framework which is a system that will do assessments at a scale that is unprecedented for the organisation.

Q2 and Q3 will be used to deep dive into themes, targets, metrics, more in-depth engagement calls, etc. with the aim to end with a draft methodology that can be published for consultation. Q4 will be all around methodology feedback gathering, calls from all stakeholders including the Expert Review Committee and publication of the final methodology.

Learning questions and key challenges

- With no specific funding secured for this transformation, how can we refine the scope to make it more relevant and impactful?
- What type of a methodology would be appropriate to for the scale of our ambition – to assess over 700 companies across different industries by 2023?
- How can we build further on learning in from the financial and food systems to get to the scale needed whilst still driving impact and recognising the different industry challenges?

How will we measure success?

Results will be measured in terms of expansion in Allies with a focus on Circular Economy, particularly in developing countries, the establishment of an Expert Review Committee and engagement uptake in socialising the methodology.

Institutional Engagement

WBA's institutional engagement efforts in 2021 will concentrate on expanding and deepening relationships, with a focus on driving forward multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral engagement through the development of Collective Impact Coalitions in at least three systems, as already expressed above. We anticipate designing and developing these in the Social, Digital and Food and Agriculture transformations and exploring the potential to align with other coalitions (i.e. collaborative platforms curated by Allies such as Ceres, We Mean Business, etc.) in the Decarbonisation and Energy transformation to drive forward shared action and impact. These multi-stakeholder engagements will prioritise action from investors and policymakers and will be co-created and led with Allies.

Expected results:

- WBA is seen as an evidence-based solution to promoting transparency and accountability and action on corporate SDG performance in line with the Decade of Action;
- Deepened relationships and buy-in from SDG2000 companies to reflect importance of company engagement throughout benchmark development process;
- Investors, civil society organisations and policymakers understand and are empowered to use WBA data to influence company behaviour;
- Strengthened regional and international demand/ consensus among policymakers and sustainable development practitioners for consistent and comparable corporate legislation and reporting;
- Allies better understand how to work with us and each other to create Collective Impact Coalitions that drive systemic transformation in and across areas of focus. Continue to broaden and grow the Alliance;
- Globally inclusive and balanced engagement across geographies and sectors, including customised engagement strategies based on cultural and regional norms or expectations, to reflect the diverse perspectives and voices of stakeholders;
- Adequate internal resourcing and capacity to facilitate diverse engagement with various stakeholder groups, as well as alignment of benchmark-level engagement with institutional needs and priorities.

Key activities to support impact

As we work to empower diverse stakeholders and constituencies to use our data to mobilise and accelerate company performance, we will continue to focus on widening the tent of actors we engage with. This will include working closely with our Research and Communications colleagues to ensure that relevant perspectives are reflected in benchmark methodologies, position benchmark data appropriately and develop cohesive and complementary narratives for impact. It will also include working with our Allies in new ways that cut across silos, sectors, and geographies to drive collective engagement at a systemic level.

We will accomplish this through the following activities:

- Map relevant industry associations and professional networks, including those headquartered in developing or emerging economies, on a system basis to deepen engagement at the benchmark level and expand reach in terms of potential impact on behaviour of the SDG2000;
- Develop and launch a list of influential SDG2000 companies to test and champion WBA benchmarks and approach to business engagement on the SDGs;
- Hold multi-stakeholder roundtables or activations on high-level themes of transparency and accountability, in partnership with Allies wherever appropriate, during at least three global convenings, including:
  - World Economic Forum Annual Meeting (Davos);
  - UN High Level Political Forum;
  - UN General Assembly.

- Grow Alliance to 225 organisations representing a diverse cross-section of geographic regions and sectors and focusing on community-building and strengthening through:
    - Annual Allies Assembly;
    - Recruitment event focused on sharing positive stories of Ally engagement with WBA and introducing new voices to WBA so that the growth of the Alliance is Ally-led;
    - Regional convenings aimed at promoting intra-Alliance collaboration and partnerships, including potentially around Collective Impact Coalitions, Policy CoLABS, or other shared priorities;
    - Embedding developing country perspectives within the Alliance, including through strengthening the Farmer Coalition and expanding this model to other systems/benchmarks.
- Initiate three Collective Impact Coalitions focused on aligning stakeholder expectations of companies, highlighting multi-sector influence on company behaviour and developing principles for collaboration within and across Allies;
- Coordinate two investor statements/letters, in partnership with WBA Allies, calling for the use of WBA data in investment decisions and capital allocation;
- Develop and launch two Policy Collective Learning & Action Labs (CoLABS) focused on convening WBA Allies around key policy issues and driving shared outcomes or deliverables for engagement with policymakers, including on a regional basis;
- Drive deeper policy engagement and demonstrate thought leadership and expertise at the global and regional levels by developing white papers or position statements, inputting into major consultations or policy frameworks, or hosting multi-stakeholder roundtables or activations on the margins of major global fora such as:
    - G7 and G20;
    - World Bank/IMF Meetings;
    - UN Financing for Development Forum;
    - UN Human Rights Council;
    - Regional Economic Commissions;
    - PRI In Person;
    - Paris Peace Forum;
    - COP;
    - Regional fora (i.e. ASEAN Summit, ADB Forum, etc.).
- Continue to be globally inclusive in our engagement by:
    - Developing a target stakeholder list to extend our professional network in regions across the globe where the effects of not achieving the SDGs will be most severely felt, particularly in developing countries;
    - Build a customised narrative for our work that reflects the reality of these regions and can therefore create the necessary impact;
    - Map events and conferences (regions/transformations) where WBA should take part across the globe to maintain this principle of inclusivity and gain wider perspectives into our work.

Learning questions and key challenges

In 2021, our primarily learning questions will be:

- How can we ensure globally diverse, inclusive, and representative engagement with key stakeholders?
- How can we facilitate collective engagement through multi-stakeholder, cross-sector collaboration to mobilise and accelerate corporate performance on the SDGs?

In working to successfully address these learning questions, we anticipate the following challenges:

- Continued gaps in geographic representation within the Alliance, particularly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America;
- Difficulties in penetrating the market with American and Chinese companies, where 50% of our SDG2000 are headquartered;
- Potential difficulties in building new relationships or deepening existing ones due to continued COVID-19 travel restrictions.

How will we measure success

We will primarily measure institutional engagement success by aligning outcomes of our activities with WBA's Results Management Framework. This includes tracking at three key levels: stakeholders using benchmarks to take action (including through collective engagements), publication and socialisation of benchmarks, and evolution of the Alliance. At the first level, we will aim to launch at least three Collective Impact Coalitions focused on the digital, food and agriculture and social systems. These Coalitions will convene relevant Allies from across geographies and stakeholder groups and will aim to develop targeted recommendations and actions using benchmark data that will lead to broad impact focused on driving company behaviour change. We will also potentially launch a Coalition focused on climate, developed in close coordination and alignment with other Allies that are currently active in the space such as PRI, Ceres, ShareAction and others. At the second level, we will host at least two socialisation events per benchmark or system, in partnership with Allies, in addition to individual benchmark launches. Wherever possible, these events will be hosted during or on the margins of major regional or global convenings. We will also rely on our community of Allies to provide platforms for socialisation of benchmarks through amongst others webinars and roundtables. Finally, at the last level, we will grow our Alliance to 225 members spread across stakeholder groups and geographic regions, with at least 30% of Allies headquartered in developing countries.

In addition, we will continue to measure our success by tracking qualitative measures, including invitations from Allies to provide feedback or comments on organisational work plans or publications, examples and use cases on how stakeholders are using benchmark data to spark dialogue and influence company behaviour and anecdotal evidence on WBA's role in shifting attention and focus to broader conversations around corporate disclosure, transparency and accountability.

Research

Growing our Research Capabilities & Working with Partners

A significant way for our research to help deepen relationships, grow our influence and foster resilience is through building on the work of others. During 2021, we will continue to ensure that we collaborate with Allies and align with relevant initiatives and metrics as we develop and deliver new methodologies.

With the continued rapid growth of an in-house research team, we will invest extra time in ensuring we have the skills needed to deliver our benchmarks. With scale, the challenge of quality control becomes greater. Alongside the in-house skills that we need to recruit for, we will also continue to apply a hybrid model where we selectively outsource specific work to partners, such as CDP for our climate benchmarks and EIRIS Foundation on the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark. The core social indicators that will be applied across all benchmarks in 2021 will require working with new partners too. We will explore options for working with a number of different partners on research with a particular focus on those located in developing countries. By ensuring we use a mixture of in-house teams and outsourced partners, we can manage the peaks and troughs of the workflow, learn from others and maximise our impact.

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

During 2019-2020, we undertook a thorough review of our Theory of Change (ToC) and Results Management Framework (RMF) and updated them to focus more specifically on our impact in developing countries. This resulted in our new Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework through which we monitor and evaluate our impact.

The framework is implemented through various tools. The RMF structures the data collection, processing and reporting aspects of the MEL framework. The KPIs within the RMF are selected to represent the ToC components in data that are collectable, measurable, and reportable. Evaluation serves the continuous improvement of the implementation of the activities of WBA to ensure they are as relevant, efficient and effective as possible or, where not, modified or cancelled. Learning activities ensure that the results stemming from the monitoring and evaluation work are captured, fed back into the organisation, and shared more broadly with internal and external stakeholders.

The first evaluation of the MEL Framework took place at the end of 2020. During 2021, WBA will review and implement recommendations from this first evaluation. In conjunction with our Supervisory Board and Donor Committee, we will review recommendations regarding the relevance, efficiency, impact and sustainability of WBA benchmarks. The findings will inform decision-making to ensure our MEL is fit for purpose.

In partnership with the IKEA Foundation, WBA is developing a specific MEL project to deepen our understanding of the impact of keystone companies. The pilot project will extend our institutional Theory of Change by evaluating the correlation between the benchmark performance of approximately 30 food and agriculture companies, and their regional impact through value and supply chain partners in East Africa and South and Southeast Asia. WBA intends to use this project to:

- Demonstrate to keystone companies the growing societal expectations around the applicability and disclosure of sustainability policies and programs beyond their core operations;
- Inform the methodology development of the Food and Agriculture Benchmark, by demonstrating the extent to which the benchmark is sufficiently capturing regional impact;
- Provide institutional learnings and recommendations across all of WBA's seven system transformations.

During the first full Food and Agriculture Benchmark in 2021, companies with the biggest spheres of influence across the two regions will be identified. The framework for evaluating impact will be developed in line with the benchmark methodology, with both the project framework and final company selection finalised in mid-2021. The second half of the year will be spent engaging with the selected companies and their value and supply chain partners, in preparation for data collection and the first correlation analysis in early 2022 (using the results of the 2021 benchmark as the basis). The findings will support our ongoing learnings on how to transform systems and improve business impact of all our work in developing countries.

Deepening our Insights into the SDG2000

During 2021 we will expand and enhance our understanding of the 2,000 keystone companies that make up the WBA benchmarking universe. In January 2021, we will relaunch the SDG2000 to reflect changes to the companies (such as mergers or acquisitions) and make new links to the work of our Allies. We will also publish new insights into the collective impact of the keystone companies to help deepen an understanding of their relevance in a way that complements the benchmarking cycles.

We will also explore new ways of visualising the SDG2000 on a dashboard that tells a story about results and impact. Our aim is to help everyone to understand how an individual company, as part of an industry that is nested within a system, can play a role in delivering the SDGs.

Learning questions

In 2021, the Research team's primary learning questions will be:

1. What is the right balance between recruiting and resourcing benchmarks internally vs working with external third parties, and how do we maintain quality and oversight for both?;
2. What changes do we need to make to our MEL to improve the relevance, efficiency, impact and sustainability of WBA benchmarks?;
3. How can we deepen our insights into the 2,000 keystone companies we are benchmarking, particularly around their impact in developing countries?

Communications

We plan to use 2021 to initiate our journey to communicate to our audience in a more ambitious, interactive, and in-depth manner. It is crucial for us to continue to keep our communication simple and clear to understand and use it to shape impactful engagement and research milestones. From 3 FTE's in the beginning of 2020, our team has grown to 6 full time communication employees with various segments of expertise shared between them. In 2021, we would like to fully utilise the combined expertise and diversity of this team to maximise WBA's communication efforts to reach the outside world. We would like to achieve this by not just taking an inside-out approach, but by also learning to listen, collaborate with our stakeholders and react and adapt to what is happening externally. For us, 2021 brings the opportunity to reach new territories, by expanding our reach geographically to create new impressions and impact in regions where we have not been before. We will also strive to continue to keep our communications truly inclusive by using methods and stories that will resonate with our global audience.

At the transformational and benchmark level, it is essential for us to break down the data and results we produce into accessible, creative and easy-to-understand formats for all stakeholders. Here, it is important to remember that communication requires a constant seat at the table, right from the beginning of the planning for all our initiatives, in sync with engagement and research efforts, to deliver a holistic approach to create impact. We strive to keep momentum ongoing throughout the year and customise our work to reflect the key moments of the organisation overall. In 2021, our communication strategy will be truly integrated and use all the different tools and resources we have, to achieve maximum impact.

Audiences
While engagement focuses on deepening relations on a one-on-one and one-to-few basis, communication takes that further by focussing on reaching the mass audience. The below table maps the stakeholders we hope to reach in 2021 with our communication efforts.

	PR/earned media	Social media	Website	Publications
Companies	X	X	X	X
Investors	X		X	X
Civil society		X	X	X
Governments			X	X
Individuals		X		
Allies		X	X	X
Media	X			

General objectives to influence knowledge, attitude and behaviour

In 2021, the communications team will focus on influencing the knowledge, attitude and behaviour of the above stakeholder groups in the following ways:

- Build awareness on how benchmarks are a roadmap for companies to change behaviour;
- Ensure that WBA and colleagues are perceived as an independent, credible and influential voice;
- Create compelling content that will help our audience arrive at a call to action as a concrete next step.

Key activities to support impact

Earned media

Earned media is any publicity or content published about WBA by a third party, which we have not created or paid for. It is gained organically with editorial influence and word of mouth, often through proactive media relations.

Objective
Position WBA as a sustainability leader and respected commentator in global media. We will make our voice heard by translating benchmark insights into meaningful and concrete examples.

Activities

- Continue expanding WBA's voice across global media with a focus on SDG2000 and our key transformations;
- Develop media relations in regions across the globe where WBA's visibility needs to be enhanced to create impact;
- Leverage our agenda to key external moments to build our profile in the media;
- Devising a thought leadership strategy that reflects our ambitions (aiming for a balanced proactive/reactive approach) and thereby creating a license to speak.

Learning questions

- How do we sharpen our unique selling proposition towards the media to set our voice apart in the external world?
- How do we keep our internal agenda relevant and aligned to media appetite?

How will we measure success?
This can be measured by keeping a tab on WBA's media mentions, stand-alone stories and features. We will continue to aim for coverage in a qualitative rather than quantitative fashion.

Quantitively, we will be able to compare our global reach by identifying areas/countries of media coverage in 2021 vs 2020. We will also compare the amount of high impact stories, the number of positive, neutral or negative representation of WBA in the media. Another metric can be the ownership of WBA representation, for example when WBA is simply mentioned or when a whole article is authored by one of our colleagues.

Finally, in order to assess our thought leadership efforts, we should be able to measure our 'push and pull', disclosing how many media opportunities are originated by proactive efforts or rather the journalists coming to us as a reliable, trusted source of information.

Owned media

Owned media is the set of communication channels that we have complete control over: website, publication tool, newsletter, blogs.

Objective
WBA's research and stories are communicated in a simple and aspirational way through an intuitive and goal-oriented journey through our website and publications.

Activities

- Use our newly launched website to show the expertise of our colleagues, collaborations with Allies and how our benchmarks are being used by stakeholders;
- Further building our visual identity and design, while making sure we stay consistent;
- Use our owned media channels as a vehicle to communicate more critical information around the SDG2000 companies;

- Improve the presentation of our data and findings via our publication tools to maximise user-friendliness;
- Analyse online behaviour and use this to tailor our decision-making on best practices and track active areas for improvement.

Learning question

- How can we let the outside world help shape our decisions on how to best present our benchmark results?

How will we measure success?
An increase of sessions (+20%) and time spent (+10%) on our website and publications and by having a proactive outreach to our stakeholders for feedback.

Social media

Objective
WBA's defining moments are amplified online by strengthened social media engagement and online conversations.

Activities

- Continue to build on our social media presence and increase our following online quantitatively and qualitatively;
- Maximise our key moments on social media to connect with our audiences and to keep awareness high;
- Equip our internal thought leaders with tools needed to become active voices on social media and use their platforms to generate interest for their areas of expertise and inspire action;
- Create and share content on social media that resonates and provokes conversations in order to strengthen our engagement with key stakeholders;
- Identify and try to use new social media platforms to engage with our audience across the globe (through the use of e.g. Weibo/WeChat in China) in our strive to be more inclusive.

Learning question

- How do we turn our internal thought leaders into influential voices for WBA's mission on social media? How do we best amplify our research and engagement milestones and create impactful conversations online?

How will we measure success?
We will record quantitative (increase in rates of impressions, visits, engagement, reactions, mentions etc.) and qualitative (influential followers, frequent mentions by SDG2000 companies) social media metrics. In addition, we will assess how our internal thought leaders gained proficiency in using their personal accounts and how their channels/online networks grew over time.

Storytelling and co-creation

Objective
Have our audience relate better to our content and feel energised to act on it by embarking on conversations through a storytelling and co-creation approach across our communication channels (owned, earned, social).

Activities

- Draw on the power of our existing stakeholders, board members, ambassadors and diverse Alliance to amplify WBA's mission and impact through various means of communications;
- To co-create our messages, stories and communication campaigns with our Allies as opportunity arises;

- Inform our colleagues on how they can utilise storytelling to create powerful content and optimise their personal voice.

Learning question

- How can we co-create our content in a way that allow us to share, listen and bring in different perspectives of the external world/partners?

How will we measure success?
Number of shares online via WBA channels and engagement rate with posts (both for WBA and colleagues). This can also be measured by tracking how many communication opportunities/projects we work on in a collaborative manner with our external stakeholders.

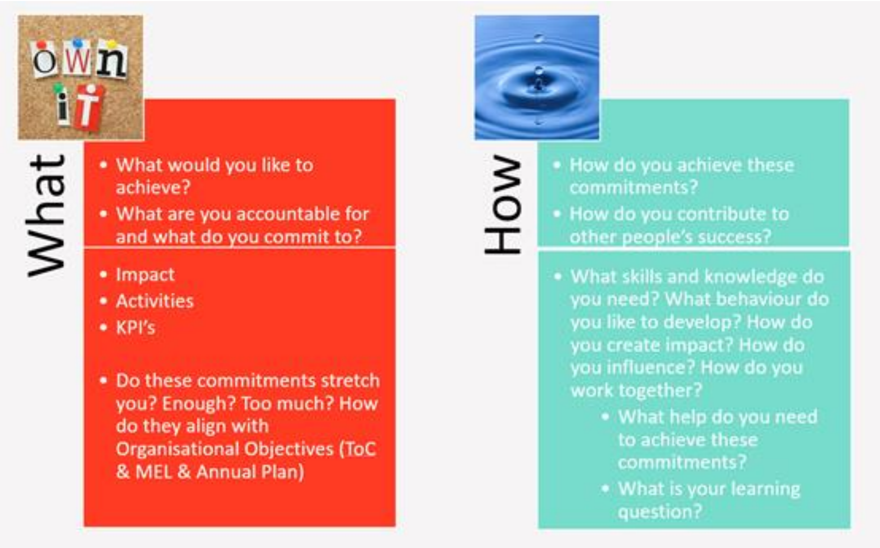
Operations

People, Culture, Learning and Development

In 2020 the organisation grew rapidly from 41 colleagues at the end of 2019 towards 64 expected at the end of 2020. Growth happened in all parts of the organisation and around the globe and we are proud to have been able to successfully onboard and integrate new people into the organisation even during times of COVID-19. In order to achieve the continued aspirational impact and the delivery of the activities mentioned in this annual plan, the growth curve will continue to be steep with an indication of 20 new upcoming roles in 2021. With this larger workforce in place, we will have to align people related processes more explicitly with the overall theme of this annual plan. As we need to be ready to welcome these new colleagues in 2021, we feel it is important to focus on the 4 objectives below to ensure the organisation is and will remain resilient.

Manage performance and development

Impact, the related commitments and development are part of a self-owned individual process. Self-management is a crucial element of WBA's culture. But we know the importance of supporting people in this journey as it might be perceived as counterintuitive. That is why we will further develop the role of People Leads. People Leads are people in the organisation that are personally committed to people development as part of their own commitments. They like to encourage colleagues to own their learning and development and like to help to maximise colleagues' impact. The bi-annual commitment setting conversations are key to identify commitments, personal impact, feedback and learning questions. In line with the picture below we will make these conversations and the process more explicit.



Grow and maintain talent

It is our conviction that the only way to be impactful is through happy and independent people who bring their full potential to work. It is also important to identify talent and ensure they remain challenged by their work at WBA. To ensure this, we are putting emphasis on what colleagues can learn as they go instead of making use of what they already know. We believe lasting and impactful personal and professional growth comes 70% from the job, 20% from and with others and 10% by formal learning. Although we have been working according to these guidelines since the start, we feel we have to implement this approach more explicitly. As a result, we will (continue) to ensure individual and collective growth and dedicate activities to identifying, cherishing and maintaining talent in the organisation. Together with the executive team, the people- and benchmark leads, we will make sure to identify talent and closely monitor them.

HR processes and policies

In 2021 we will further determine and simplify our (international) human resources processes and policies, to ensure we continue to shape the organisation in a clear, equal, inclusive and transparent way. Some activities that we will undertake to ensure that are: re-evaluating our salary house and compensation system, our HR-systems and international compliance of pensions and staff related insurances. The size of the organisation also asks for the creation of light job profiles, describing the purpose of each role whilst staying independent in how to reach that impact.

Culture: Make Teal and our ways of working more explicit

In 2021 we will continue to build a resilient organisation and deliver the impact in an effective and efficient way. Therefore we will make sure to continue to focus on culture and our ways of working. The values of WBA are at the heart of our culture and we are using the principles of a Teal organisation (Frédéric Laloux, Reinventing Organisations) to create an organisation that is a great place to work at and with. The concept of Teal culture is people-centric by promoting the autonomy of the team which in turn enables organisational change and evolving as the organisation grows. Our Teal culture can be characterised by self-management, being your whole self and evolving purpose (see picture). We see the organisation as a living system, where change happens all the time and we all grow as the organisation and people evolve. We will do this through open and honest conversations, raising self-awareness and without a need for command. In 2021 we will further evolve the activities around Teal working, such as our cultural introduction days, our buddy system for new people, the People Leads and our bi-annual team building days. We will also continue our learning approach, with setting up trainings/information channels and our learning leaders helping to create certain habits and behaviours around feedback and active listening, resilience, ownership and self-management and systems thinking.

Learning questions

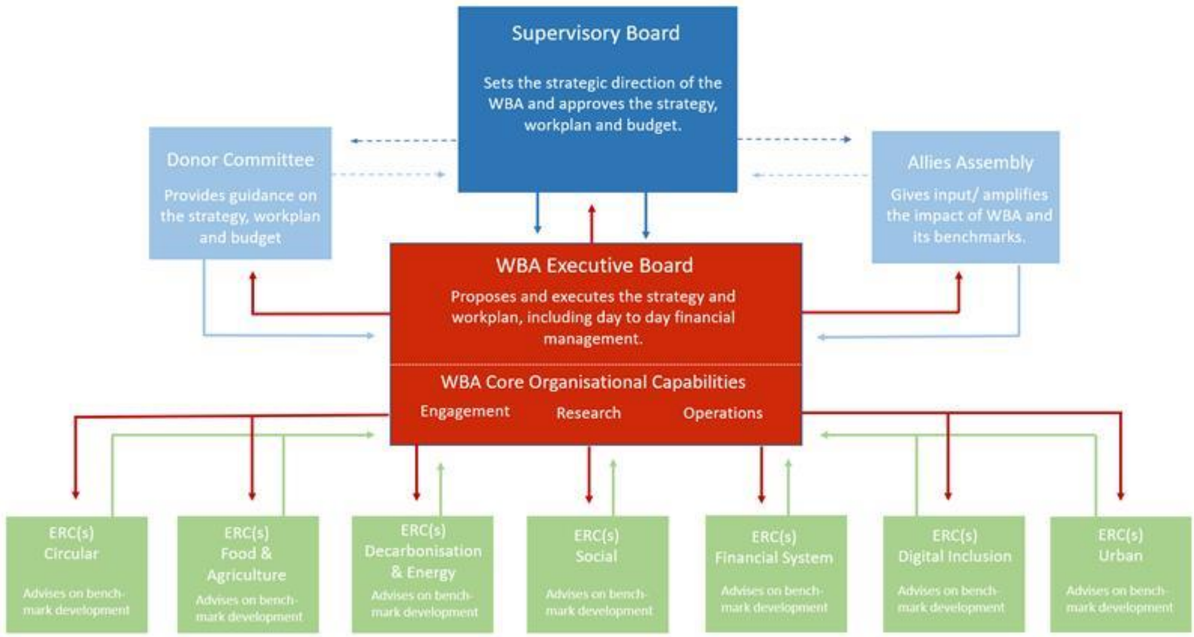
- How do we support our colleagues and the organisation in embracing the teal way of working?
- What are the processes, tools and interventions needed to ensure agility whilst continuing to grow the organisation?

Governance

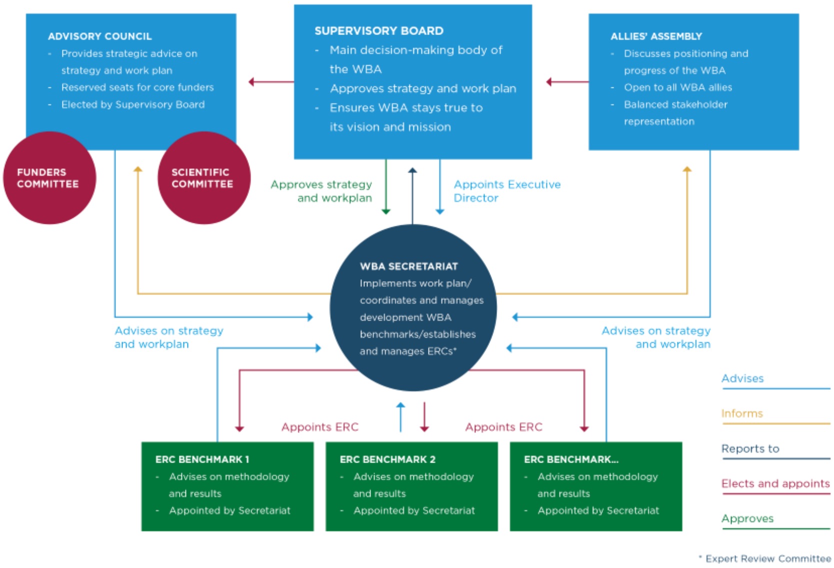
Our Supervisory Board expanded with an additional six new members in 2020 and two Board members stepped down. In 2021 we aim to complete the Supervisory Board composition with the recruitment of two or three additional members. Having a Board that is diverse in mind and way of thinking is our ultimate goal as it creates a body that is able to ask the right questions and independently oversee the work of WBA. We believe that by ensuring that the Board mirrors WBA's stakeholders in terms of expertise and geographical context we will achieve that. Therefore, we will focus on finding people who have experience from mainland Europe and East Asia, as well as a youth representative. A youth representative is critical as the voice of the future, as someone with a real stake in what the world looks like in thirty, forty or fifty years.

2021 will be the year to deepen the relationship with and amongst the Supervisory Board members to ensure they are able to exhibit the governance that WBA needs. During the recruitment and onboarding process of new members in 2020, we tested the initial governance model and slightly adjusted it for the coming years (see below). We replaced the advisory council with a clear role for our donors and we also clarified the role of the Allies Assembly. Both entities provide guidance and input, which is then used by the Executive Board to adjust plans and strategies, after which the approval of the Supervisory Board is sought. In the previous version there was a direct relationship between the Supervisory Board and these entities, which we felt complicated the governance in the early years of WBA's existence. Furthermore, we divided the organisation into the Executive Board and its three core capabilities. Another new feature from 2020 which will continue into 2021 is the three different committees within the Supervisory Board which reflect the Core Organisational Capabilities: Engagement, Research and Operations. These committees will continue to provide WBA with support and expertise on each of the focus areas.

As the organisation is further developing around the teal principles the major learning question for 2021 is how to govern a teal organisation like WBA. This may further impact the governance model.



New WBA Governance Model



Old WBA Governance Model

Donor management

Despite and maybe sometime because of COVID-19, WBA has been making good progress with bringing in new funders. With WBA's ambitions remaining high in 2021 and beyond, there is a need to continue to grow our funders base. With most in-person events still being virtual at the start of 2021, growing our funding pipeline will be challenging. WBA will continue to ask existing donors and our Supervisory Board members to leverage their contacts with other funders and introduce WBA to grow our pipeline. In 2021, we look to learn more on how we can continue to grow our funders base in times of COVID-19.

WBA aims to build a mutually beneficial partnership with its donors by:

- Maintaining regular contact by leveraging mutual interests and involving our contacts in consultations or content appropriate discussions;
- Convening two donor meetings for donors that give WBA unrestricted funding – spring 2021 to coincide with finalising the 2020 annual report and autumn 2021 to coincide with planning 2022;
- Linking donors' thematic units or contacts with WBA's benchmarks to ensure expert insights are exchanged and properly captured in scoping, framework development or engagement activities.

Specifically for private foundations donors:

- Facilitating a quarterly 'Funders Synergy Hub' in which WBA facilitates a discussion among private funders on topics that relate to the private sector's role in systemic change to achieve the SDGs.

Specifically for government donors:

- Providing insights from WBA's benchmarks, indicating where policy is enabling or hindering sustainable development, for building effective government policies;

- Co-hosting events and/or provide each other with speaking opportunities both at national level, as well as at multi-lateral level, often alongside events such as the UN General Assembly or COP;
- Linking WBA with government missions, to help include developing country voices and insights and amplify WBA's work at a local level.

IT and data platform

Digitalisation and automation is important for WBA to create impact as it helps ensure the integrity of the organisation's data and allows people to focus on those tasks and activities where they can make a difference. To have an effective and efficient team, WBA wants to continuously monitor and (when necessary) enhance its IT and Data platform.
The platform consists of a set of products or tools to support WBA's core processes. In order to efficiently and effectively grow and adapt this platform to our needs, WBA maintains a set of architecture guidelines and uses an agile/scrum development approach. These guidelines define the structure of the platform that is already in place to ensure that future additions to the platform satisfy the same requirements. Such guidelines create a solid foundation for our platform, making it more scalable, increasing performance and reducing costs. It will also allow WBA to more immediately utilise new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning (when useful), as the platform tools will already be well integrated with each other. The agile/scrum development process ensures that the evolution of WBA's platform can withstand a state of flux, by being easily adaptable to change due to incremental builds and an iterative approach to development. This approach also ensures WBA closely monitors and manages development costs. Tools within the IT platform thus far can be broken down into three categories: Institutional (e.g. Office 365 for Business), Engagement (e.g. Dynamics 365 CRM), Research (e.g. SurveyJS) and Communication (Wordpress).

In 2021, WBA will place an emphasis on tools related to Engagement and Research. For Engagement, there will be an emphasis on the internal capacity and usage of Dynamics 365, our so-called 'Engagement Tool'. This tool has become an important archive of our stakeholder engagement but also our reporting data. Most indicator data required for WBA's newly developed Results Framework is collected through this medium. For this reason, building the capacity and confidence in the Engagement Tool is imperative.

Through consultations with experts, a recommended next integration into the organisation's platform is a data warehouse and visualisation tool. This will fall under the Research category and will be further investigated as a repository for WBA's benchmark-related data moving forward. Alongside the publication of the different benchmarks, the publication tool will be enhanced, and more functionality will be added.

Lastly, after the rapid growth in 2020 we will ensure to use 2021 to rationalise our current software licenses, including ensuring not-for-profit pricing where possible.

Data management strategy

After finalising a more concretely defined data management strategy (DMS) in Q4 2020, WBA will focus on turning this strategy into more than just a document, but an engrained part of our workplace culture through 2021. The DMS will help (1) ensure integrity of WBA data as it expands and (2) provide the support base WBA employees need to develop a more digitalised working culture. This will supplement the policies we already have in place regarding the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). WBA aims to be transparent and share its data, however we also need to maintain (for companies) some privacy on confidential material. This interplay is an important consideration when working with WBA data. Most of the standard data management strategy principles, such as governance and security, will be covered in the new DMS but there will also be an emphasis on workplace culture. WBA will focus on turning this strategy into more than just a document, but an engrained part of our workplace culture through 2021.

Learning question

- What is the core of our data governance to ensure our data remains right and relevant?