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How to Save Humanity in 17 Goals: ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (SDG 7)Your browser does not support the audio element.Download MP3See transcript

Julien Harou's career started in geology in his current role as a water management and infrastructure researcher now straddles economics and engineering, with a particular focus on using artificial intelligence (AI) to measure Ghana's future energy needs.

Harou is relatively upbeat about progress so far towards achieving sustainable and reliable energy for all by 2030, the seventh of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by the United Nations in 2015. He points out that from 2015 to 2021, the portion of the global population with access to electricity increased from 87% to 91%, and last year about 30% came from renewable sources.

Harou's research at the University of Manchester, UK, incorporates computer modeling and artificial intelligence design algorithms to balance Ghana's long term renewable energy and infrastructure needs. But AI also helps to address the environmental and human health impacts. For example, Ghana's Volta River was dammed in the 1960s to create the Akosombo dam. But its arrival depleted fish stocks and increased weed and algae growth, providing habitat for vectors of waterborne diseases. It's all about compromise and trade-offs, Harou tells the seventh episode of How to Save Humanity in 17 Goals, a podcast series that profiles scientists whose work addresses one or more of the SDGs.

Episodes 7-12 are produced in partnership with Nature Water, and introduced by Fabio Pullizi, its chief editor.

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Hello, this is How to Save Humanity in 17 Goals, a podcast brought to you by Nature Careers, in partnership with Nature Water.

I'm Fabio Pulizzi, chief editor of Nature Water. This is the series where we meet the scientists who have been quietly incrementally working towards the global development targets set by the United Nations in 2015.

World leaders pledged to solve a range of economic, environmental and social issues, and the package of 17 Sustainable Development Goals were born.

Since then, in a huge effort, thousands of researchers all over the world have been tackling the biggest problems that the planet faces today.

In episode seven, we look at Sustainable Development Goal number seven: how to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

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