The global effort to achieve the bold targets set out by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will require a high level of engagement from the business sector, working in collaboration with governments, international agencies, nongovernment organizations and civil society. There is incentive for businesses to engage in these activities, as noted in the January 2017 report Better Business, Better World, which estimated that achievement of the SDGs could open up US$12 trillion in market opportunities by 2030. This provides a compelling argument for businesses to incorporate the SDGs into core growth strategies, value chain operations and policy positions.

In 2016, BD began evaluating how we can further mobilize and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs through our product and service offerings, as well as collaborative efforts across sectors. We mapped our long-term strategy, current business activities and 2020 Sustainability Goal framework against the 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets. Our analysis reviewed the type of impact BD has on the targets (direct / indirect), the location of impacts within the value chain (degree of control) and relevant environmental, social and governance factors (BD-defined sustainability priorities).

As a healthcare company, BD aligns most prominently around SDG 3: ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. BD has many activities to support SDG 3 targets, including technologies integral to the diagnosis and management of infectious diseases; a pipeline of products to help reduce maternal mortality and end preventable newborn deaths; long-standing work to protect the safety of health workers through products and partnerships; business units focused on addressing non-communicable diseases, specifically diabetes and cervical cancer; and partnerships to strengthen the capacity of health systems in developing economies.

While the activities of BD are clearly centered around SDG 3, our 2020 goals reflect the interdependencies that exist among the SDGs and are also well-aligned with SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 9, (industry, innovation and infrastructure). Furthermore, our environmental goals support multiple SDGs and are inherently tied back to healthy lives and well-being for all.

One such example of the interdependent nature of the SDGs is our support of Together for Girls (TfG), which brings together United Nations agencies, governments and the private sector in a shared commitment to end violence against children, with a particular focus on sexual violence and girls.

The Violence Against Children Surveys (VACS), led by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as part of the TfG partnership, have found that an estimated one in four girls and one in seven boys experience some form of sexual violence and, depending on the country, between one in three to one in five females who had sex before 18 report that their first sexual intercourse was forced. About one third of the girls in Sub-Saharan Africa who have experienced physically forced or coerced sex also report a resulting pregnancy, which also affects their ability to go to school and their prospects of earning an income. In addition, girls are about three times more likely to
be HIV positive as an adult if they experience sexual violence in childhood. Together for Girls works to coordinate evidence-based policy and program actions through local engagements with multiple government ministries and civil society. Interventions that reduce the incidence of sexual violence against girls and help girls heal from violence may also lead to improvements in education rates.

Women with more years of education have fewer and healthier children and the curb in population growth that could result would be significant in reducing global carbon emissions; this demonstrates that activity to support the targets of one SDG can also impact other SDGs. BD has been a partner to TfG from its founding in 2009. Most recently, BD provided a three-year grant to TfG in 2014, to support staff and day-to-day management costs for the partnership’s secretariat.

The BD 2020 Sustainability Goals provide one pathway for contributing to the SDGs through our focus on innovative products, promoting access to health, driving environmental efficiency and the empowerment of our associates. We also remain focused on our approach to creating shared value—achieving beneficial commercial outcomes by addressing unmet societal needs—as a lens to consider new ways of contributing to the SDGs that may not already be identified.

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2 These achievements were calculated across four systems: 1) food and agriculture, 2) cities, 3) energy and materials, and 4) health and well-being.