



POSSIBLE CHALLENGES ON INDIA'S PATH TO REALIZING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Abstract: In pursuit of sustainable development, global economies have banded together. This stands in stark contrast to earlier approaches, in which governments actively sought to advance their economies. Several natural resources have been exhausted and ecological balances have been upset because of nation's competing for economic development. This effect manifests itself in various ways, one of which is the acceleration of global warming. A solution that would make the world a better place for generations to come is urgently required because this endangers human life as we know it. To guarantee that development occurs in a manner that preserves and passes on to future generations undamaged natural resources, the phrase "sustainable development" was coined. This paper attempts to understand and analyze the challenges that India faces in reaching its Sustainable Development Goals and presents solutions to overcome them.

Index Terms - Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Global Warming, Natural Resources.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development has emerged as a prominent term within the international community. The pursuit of expansion and excellence has resulted in an imbalance in economic development between nations, leading to the depletion of some natural resources and thus disrupting the ecological equilibrium. Given that this poses a significant risk to the survival of humanity on our planet, it is imperative that we take immediate action to establish a secure and sustainable environment for future generations. Sustainable development refers to the practice of ensuring that development occurs in a manner that preserves natural resources and allows them to be passed on to future generations without being depleted or damaged. A set of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been formulated with the objective of creating a more affluent, equitable, and secure world by the year 2030. The 193 Member States at the UN General Assembly Summit in September 2015 accepted them as part of their Sustainable Development agenda. India has signed the summit and is firmly dedicated to the 2030 agenda.

This paper aims to comprehend the possible challenges faced by India in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. The report also endeavors to propose strategies to address the obstacles.

II. THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), implemented on 1 January 2016, are an enhancement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 1. In India, significant advancements have been achieved in the areas of universal primary education, gender parity in education, and global economic expansion with regards to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Nevertheless, there was a sluggish advancement in the enhancement of health indicators pertaining to death rates, illness rates, and other environmental elements that contribute to unfavorable health conditions. The Indian government is currently endeavoring to align the initiatives undertaken to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have a broader and more comprehensive reach. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are as follows:

Table 1 - Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 1	No Poverty	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
Goal 2	Zero Hunger	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
Goal 3	Good Health and Well-being	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
Goal 4	Quality Education	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
Goal 5	Gender Equality	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
Goal 6	Clean Water and Sanitation	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
Goal 7	Affordable and Clean Energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
Goal 8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
Goal 9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
Goal 10	Reduced Inequalities	Reduce inequality within and among countries
Goal 11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
Goal 12	Responsible Consumption and Production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Goal 13	Climate Action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
Goal 14	Life Below Water	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
Goal 15	Life on Land	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
Goal 16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
Goal 17	Partnerships for the Goals	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Source: <https://www.iso.org/sdgs.html>

The Sustainable Development Goals have been established based on the universal principle of ensuring that no individual or group is excluded or left behind. In relation to India, the national development objectives of the country align closely with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). India is anticipated to have a significant impact on the global achievement of the SDGs and is likely to assume a prominent position in deciding their success.

India's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is evident in its alignment with the national development strategy, as exemplified by the motto of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas (Collective Efforts for Inclusive Growth). According to the SDG India Index, which assesses progress at the regional level, the government has established a strong model for localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This model focuses on adopting, implementing, and monitoring the SDGs at the state and district levels.

III. MEASURES TAKEN FOR IMPLEMENTING SDGs IN INDIA

NITI Aayog, the primary intellectual organization of the Government of India, has been given the responsibility of overseeing the coordination of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). States have also been recommended to conduct a comparable mapping of their systems, including centrally supported initiatives.

3.1. India's progress across the SDGs.

3.1.1. Sashakt Bharat - Sabal Bharat (Empowered and Resilient India)

India has effectively elevated approximately 271 million individuals out of multidimensional poverty through the means of economic growth and empowerment. Improved accessibility to nutrition, child health, education, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, and housing has resulted in decreased disparities, particularly among individuals in precarious circumstances.

3.1.2. Swachh Bharat - Swasth Bharat (Clean and Healthy India)

India successfully accomplished universal rural sanitation and significantly decreased rates of stunting, child mortality, and maternal mortality as a result of the Clean India Campaign and the National Nutrition Mission. Ayushman Bharat has established universal health coverage by implementing the world's largest health protection system. This scheme offers an annual coverage of USD 7,000 to 100 million families, benefiting about 500 million people.

India is leading the charge in advocating for collective worldwide efforts to tackle the COVID-19 epidemic. The nation has provided medical aid to other countries and has put into action the SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund with a first donation of USD 10 million. India has implemented several measures domestically to address the COVID-19 epidemic. These include an initial economic stimulus package of USD 22.5 billion, providing complete health coverage for front-line workers, and offering direct cash transfers to support the most vulnerable individuals.

3.1.3. Samagra Bharat - Saksham Bharat (Inclusive and Entrepreneurial India)

Social inclusion is achieved by ensuring that everyone has equal access to nourishment, health, education, and social protection. Additionally, efforts are made to enhance individuals' capacities to engage in entrepreneurship and secure employment. The Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity, which consists of widespread access to bank accounts through the Jan Dhan Yojana, the use of Aadhaar cards as unique identification for over 90% of the population, and the availability of mobile phones, has facilitated increased opportunities for credit, insurance, and Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) to the impoverished. This has resulted in the economic empowerment of over 200 million women, contributing to their financial inclusion.

3.1.3. Satat Bharat – Sanatan Bharat (Sustainable India)

India's climate action initiatives prioritize the implementation of clean and efficient energy systems, the development of disaster resilient infrastructure, and the deliberate restoration of ecosystems. India has achieved its nationally determined contributions by electrifying all of its villages, reducing 38 million tonnes of CO2 emissions per year through energy efficient appliances, supplying clean cooking fuel to 80 million impoverished households, and aiming to install 450GW of renewable energy and rehabilitate 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030. India ranks third globally in renewable power, fourth in wind power, and fifth in solar power. India initiated the establishment of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the International Solar Alliance with the aim of utilizing international collaborations to address climate change and enhance preparedness for disasters.

3.1.4. Sampanna Bharat- Samriddh Bharat (Prosperous and Vibrant India)

India is a rapidly rising emerging market economy characterized by a youthful population and a thriving ecosystem for innovation and industry. India aims to achieve a GDP of USD 5 trillion by 2025, following a path of inclusive and sustainable growth. This will be accomplished by promoting manufacturing, developing infrastructure, encouraging investments, fostering technological innovation, and supporting entrepreneurship.

3.2. UN Assistance for India's SDG Initiatives

The United Nations in India facilitates the involvement of civil society organizations, think tanks, and the Indian media in deliberations and supplementary sessions at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa and the General Assembly in New York.

The UN Country Team in India assists NITI Aayog in addressing the interrelatedness of the goals, ensuring inclusivity, and advocating for sufficient funding to accomplish the SDGs. The UN has provided support for thematic discussions on the SDGs in partnership with NITI Aayog and partners. These consultations aim to bring together state governments, central ministries, civil society organizations, and academia to discuss and debate on specific SDGs.

3.3. Help for state governments

There are five Indian state governments that the UN is helping to make the SDGs more relevant to their areas. These are Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, and Odisha.

IV. CHALLENGES IN ATTAINING SDGs IN INDIA

India has identified four specific areas that are of concern in its efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The following points will be discussed:

4.1. Challenges in Localizing SDGs in India

Firstly, at the State and local government level, the process for policy and budget formulation, planning, enforcement, and monitoring of strategy does not clearly demonstrate the localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Moreover, the implementation of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, which involves the decentralization of money, powers, and officials to local authorities, remains mostly unfulfilled in many states. Therefore, local authorities (both rural and urban) lack the ability to develop plans and allocate budgets for specific areas based on the active involvement of the local population. NITI Aayog, as the central organization responsible for overseeing the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the national level, has not made significant efforts to include states in the process of decentralizing funding, functions, and bureaucrats to local authorities.

4.2. State-Level Challenges in Implementing SDGs

Secondly, similar to NITI Aayog, the State Planning Departments in the States have been established as central institutions to oversee the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals at the State level. Currently, numerous states lack the necessary readiness to implement SDGs due to their limited financial and human resources, as well as their fragmented planning procedures. In addition, there have been minor initiatives to update the policies and improve the allocation of funds based on the specific requirements of the local community.

4.3. Insufficient Domestic Resource Mobilization for SDGs

Thirdly, there has been a lackluster attempt to tackle the concerns and obstacles related to enhancing domestic resource mobilization. In addition, the proportion of central government budget expenditure relative to GDP has decreased from 13.3% in 2014-15 to 13.2% in 2019-20. The central government's limited capacity to gather financial resources will result in a reduction in the amount of public spending on social and economic services at the State and local government levels. This is due to their heavy reliance on transfers from the central government. In addition, the development plans and budget allocations of both central and state governments have not been fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

4.4. Insufficient Funding Undermines Quality of Essential Services.

Furthermore, it was observed that there is a lack of adequate funding for various services such as the old pension scheme, disability pension, widow pension, housing scheme, Supplementary Nutrition Programme, Mid-Day Meal Schemes, Pre-Matric & Post Matric Scholarships for Minorities, honorarium for frontline service providers, school teachers, health workers, and Workers & Helpers of Anganwadi Centre & cooks. This leads to a decline in the quality-of-service delivery by numerous flagship programs and government organizations.

V. MEASURES TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES

5.1. Policy Initiatives

To address the issues described above, policy initiatives aimed at achieving sustainable development goals should prioritize modifications in policy design, establishment of new institutions and development programs, and the enhancement of state and local authorities' governing institutions.

5.2. Enhancing Resources and Collaboration for Effective SDG Implementation

It is crucial to improve our financial resources in order to achieve a lower unit cost of services and provide adequate compensation to staff members involved in the social and economic sectors. Ensuring the sufficiency of personnel and their training should be prioritized in order to effectively fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals. There is a need to create monitoring indicators and a database for the Sustainable Development Goals at both the state and local levels. It would be beneficial for NITI Aayog to regularly collaborate with the Central Statistical Organization (CSO), think tanks, research institutions, and academic organizations, as well as the department of planning and District Planning Committees. This collaboration would provide more comprehensive local level feedback on the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Sustainable Development Goals.

5.3. Funding for the SDGs

The challenge of financing SDGs can be resolved to some extent by strengthening the existing academic infrastructure in the nation. India is a regional hub for higher education and boasts itself for being the hometown of several renowned institutions such as IIT and IIM. These institutions have well developed infrastructure for research. These resources can be pooled and effectively utilised in designing, developing and measuring indicators meant for sustainable development.

In emerging nations such as India, there was initial reluctance to decrease carbon emissions due to two factors: firstly, their per capita emissions were comparatively lower, and secondly, it would entail making concessions in the nation's development. Consequently, a carbon trading system was established among nations, allowing companies to release carbon dioxide within specified limits and receive carbon credits as a result. If a company wishes to surpass the established limit, it has the option to purchase unused credits from another company. Thus, the purchasing company is subjected to penalties for beyond its carbon allowance, while the selling company is incentivized for decreasing its emissions. Governments may contemplate the notion of imposing penalties on companies with larger carbon footprints, requiring them to provide financial support for sustainable development programs in developing and least developed countries.

5.4. The Responsibility for SDG implementation

Given NITI Ayog's skepticism about the potential success of this arduous endeavor, it is imperative for the Indian Government to decentralize this duty. However, it is crucial to bear in mind that the SDGs are focused on preserving and bequeathing natural resources to future generations. The involvement of society is crucial for accomplishing this task. However, it is extremely challenging for a society with a high level of knowledge to utilize its natural resources in a completely ecologically sustainable manner. The evolving social, political, cultural, technological, and ecological circumstances will impose fresh demands on the natural resource foundation, with the constant risk of its misapplication or over exploitation. Thus, an ideal political system would involve decision-making by individuals who would directly experience the effects of those actions. An evolving system that guarantees participation from groups directly connected to the problem is necessary.

Conclusion

India is the most populous country in the world. India's efforts to attain the Sustainable Development Goals have significant global implications. If India successfully attains the Sustainable Development Goals, it will signify that a significant portion of the global community has also accomplished this feat. Therefore, it is imperative for India to establish efficient strategies for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals. The primary problem faced by India is the establishment of effective and adequate approaches for achieving sustainable urbanization. This can be achieved by creating a broad array of methods and implementing them with tight adherence.

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