



# Issues and Challenges of Development Goals and India – A Study

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## Abstract

This paper attempts to study how **India** which comprehensively cover social, economic and environmental dimensions of development and focus. India, home to one-sixth of all humanity, holds the key to the success of the 2030 Agenda. India in its second VNR has made a paradigm shift to a “whole-of-society” approach with Government of India engaging sub-national and local governments, civil society organizations, local communities, people in vulnerable situations and the private sector. India’s commitment to the SDGs is reflected in its convergence with the national development agenda as reflected in the motto of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas (Collective Efforts for Inclusive Growth). Based on the evidence from the SDG India Index, which measures progress at the subnational level, the country has developed a robust SDG localization model centered on adoption, implementation and monitoring at the State and district levels.

We are at the brink of a global transformation. The international community, through the United Nations, has set in motion a historic plan – 17 Sustainable Development Goals – that aims to build a more prosperous, more equal, and more secure world by the year 2030. . This comprehensive agenda recognises that it is no longer sufficient just to focus on economic growth, but on fairer and more equal societies, and a safer and more prosperous planet. It recognises that the tasks of peace, justice, environmental protection, and industrial development are not disconnected from each other, but part of the same change. It recognises, above all, that global and interconnected challenges can only be fought with global and interconnected solutions. It is an ambitious plan that will require a renewed global partnership between governments, businesses, the civil society, and individuals. As we make progress towards achieving the 169 targets, we will reorient national and global development on a more sustainable, more resilient path. At the core of this global agenda for 2030 is the principle of universality: ‘Leave No One Behind’. It is critical to the implementation of these targets that they should be relevant to all governments and actors. Development in all its dimensions must be inclusive of all people, everywhere, and should be built through the participation of everyone, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised.

*Key words: Sustainable Development Goals, India, UNO, economic growth*

## **Introduction**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. Through the pledge to Leave No One Behind, countries have committed to fast-track progress for those furthest behind first. That is why the SDGs are designed to bring the world to several life-changing ‘zeros’, including zero poverty, hunger, AIDS and discrimination against women and girls. Everyone is needed to reach these ambitious targets. The creativity, knowhow, technology and financial resources from all of society is necessary to achieve the SDGs in every context.

What is UNDP's role? As the lead UN development agency, UNDP is well-placed to help implement the Goals through our work in some 170 countries and territories. We support countries in achieving the SDGs through integrated solutions. Today's complex challenges—from stemming the spread of disease to preventing conflict—cannot be tackled neatly in isolation. For UNDP, this means focusing on systems, root causes and connections between challenges—not just thematic sectors—to build solutions that respond to people's daily realities. Our track record working across the Goals provides us with a valuable experience and proven policy expertise to ensure we all reach the targets set out in the SDGs by 2030. But we cannot do this alone. Achieving the SDGs requires the partnership of governments, private sector, civil society and citizens alike to make sure we leave a better planet for future generations.

The Government of India is strongly committed to the 2030 Agenda, including the SDGs, as evidenced by the statements of the Prime Minister and other senior Ministers at national and international meetings. India's national development goals and its “sab ka saath, sab ka vikas” or “development with all, and for all,” policy initiatives for inclusive development converge well with the SDGs, and India will play a leading role in determining the success of the SDGs, globally. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted, “These goals reflect our evolving understanding of the social, economic and environmental linkages that define our lives.” NITI Aayog, the Government of India's premier think tank, has been entrusted with the task of coordinating the SDGs. NITI Aayog has undertaken a mapping of schemes as they relate to the SDGs and their targets, and has identified lead and supporting ministries for each target. They have adopted a government-wide approach to sustainable development, emphasising the interconnected nature of the SDGs across economic, social and environmental pillars. States have been advised to undertake a similar mapping of their schemes, including centrally sponsored schemes.

In addition, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has been leading discussions for developing national indicators for the SDGs. State governments are key to India's progress on the SDG Agenda and several of them have already initiated action on implementing the SDGs.

### **Objective:**

This paper intends to explore and analyze **India's** commitment to the national development agenda and **Sustainable Development Goals** SDGs. Reinforcing the country's Parliament has organized several forums to develop policy

### **SDG India Index**

With the International Community gearing up for the Conference of Parties to continue the conversations started during the Paris Climate Agreement, India needs to take another at its domestic policy to imbibe the Sustainable Development Goals it set out to achieve. The 17 interlinked Sustainable Development Goals were formulated coherently; acting as a blueprint to bring us in sync with the path of a sustainable future for all.

The Government of India had already reduced its emissions intensity of GDP by 21 per cent compared to 2005 levels by 2018. India's renewables have grown by two and a half times in the past six years, and solar energy capacity by 13 times. Not just that, work on the world's largest hybrid renewable energy park in Kutch, Gujarat has begun recently. In March 2018, Haryana became the first Indian state to have an annual budget primarily focused on the attainment of SDGs. States like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh are making their way up the ladder with an SDG India Index score of 69 while among UTs, it is Chandigarh with a score of 68. The government's efforts, from "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" to "Ayushman Bharat"; from "Clean Ganga Mission" to "Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan", from "Self-Reliance" to "Vocal for Local", and many more have collectively aimed at empowering all citizens equally.

These diverse schemes are in direct harmony with SDGs specifically, SDG 3, SDG 5, SDG 11, and SDG 12. India is, however, ranked 117th among 183 countries on the Sustainable Development Index 2018. Despite some significant efforts, such a low score signifies that there are loopholes in the functioning of the system.

Out of the world's 30 most polluted cities, 21 are in India, hundreds and thousands of rivers and wells have already dried up and our holy rivers, the Ganges and the Yamuna are polluted to the extent that we are finding high proportions of lead in them. Due to increased temperatures each year, we are witnessing more and unparalleled series of floods, cyclones, and hurricanes.

Assam, Bihar, and Chennai are the worst affected. Our wildlife is constantly threatened. Over the past two decades, India has lost some 1.6 million hectares of land – approximately four times the size of Goa. India

generates one-tenth of the total waste produced in the world, which amounts to some 277 million tonnes each year. It is also the third-largest e-waste generator in the world.

The rate of waste generation is so exponential that the garbage mountain at Delhi's Ghazipur is claimed to go higher than the iconic Taj Mahal. The World Bank has already said that it will be next to impossible for India to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals in the coming decade. All this suggests that we have a long way to go.

This is not just the duty of the government but of every institution, corporation, and individual. Climate change has turned into a climate emergency only because people are not willing to accept responsibility for direct or indirect contribution to global warming.

### **Implementation and support**

The following narrative further encapsulates India's progress across the SDGs.

**Sashakt Bharat - Sabal Bharat (Empowered and Resilient India):** India has successfully lifted more than 271 million people out of multidimensional poverty through economic growth and empowerment. Enhanced access to nutrition, child health, education, sanitation, drinking water, electricity and housing, has led to reduced inequalities especially among people in vulnerable situations.

**Swachh Bharat - Swasth Bharat (Clean and Healthy India):** Through a nationwide initiative triggered by the Clean India Campaign and the National Nutrition Mission, India achieved 100% rural sanitation and sharp reduction in stunting and child and maternal mortality rates. Universal health coverage has been institutionalized through Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest health protection scheme which provides an annual cover of USD 7,000 to 100 million families, covering nearly 500 million individuals.

India is at the forefront in the call for joint global action to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The country has extended medical assistance to several countries and has operationalized the SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund with an initial contribution of USD 10 million. Domestically, India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic includes an initial USD 22.5 billion economic stimulus package, comprehensive health coverage for front-line workers and direct cash transfers for the most vulnerable.

**Samagra Bharat - Saksham Bharat (Inclusive and Entrepreneurial India):** Social inclusion is pursued through universalizing access to nutrition, health, education, social protection, and developing capabilities for entrepreneurship and employment. Financial inclusion through Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity – near universal access to bank accounts aided by the Jan Dhan Yojana (National Financial Inclusion Scheme); Aadhaar card (National unique identity number) for over 90% of the population; and expansive access to



mobile phones, has propelled new avenues of credit, insurance, and Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) to the poor, including to over 200 million women, thereby accelerating their economic empowerment.

**Satat Bharat – Sanatan Bharat (Sustainable India):** India's climate action strategies call for clean and efficient energy systems, disaster resilient infrastructure, and planned eco-restoration. Acting on its nationally-determined contributions, India has electrified 100% of its villages, reduced 38 million tonnes of CO2 emissions annually through energy efficient appliances, provided clean cooking fuel to 80 million poor households, and set a target to install 450GW of renewable energy and restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030. Globally, India stands third in renewable power, fourth in wind power, and fifth in solar power. India launched the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the International Solar Alliance to leverage global partnerships for climate action and disaster resilience.

**Sampanna Bharat- Samriddh Bharat (Prosperous and Vibrant India):** India is one of the fastest growing emerging market economies with a young population and burgeoning innovation and business ecosystem. With a GDP of USD 2.72 trillion in 2018-19, India strives to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025, and pursue an inclusive and sustainable growth trajectory by stimulating manufacturing, building infrastructure, spurring investments, fostering technological innovation, and boosting entrepreneurship.

### **Cross-cutting issues**

In the spirit of South-South Cooperation, for realizing the 2030 Agenda, India supports developing countries through the USD 150 million India-UN Development Partnership Fund. In this spirit of regional and global partnerships, and the country's commitment to 'leave no one behind', India steps into the Decade of Action, drawing confidence from its experience in addressing challenges. Government of India will continue to work collaboratively with all domestic and global stakeholders to accelerate efforts for a sustainable planet for future generations. Ever since the SDGs were adopted in 2015, India has taken an active role to promote them at various levels. The Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament of India has organized a special briefing session on the SDGs, bringing together Members of Parliament, legislators from South Asia and other BRICS nations to collectively work towards the realization of these goals. Efforts have also been made to align the India's National Development Agenda to the Sustainable Development framework.

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), a policy 'Think Tank' of the Government, is mandated with the task of coordinating work on the SDGs by adopting a synergistic approach involving central ministries, States/Union Territories (UTs), civil society organizations, academia and business. Key actions undertaken so far by NITI Aayog with the support of its stakeholders include:

- An extensive mapping of the SDG targets with the schemes and programs that the government of India engages in has been developed to record their interlinkages.

- A series of 22 consultations at national and regional levels have been conducted with the stakeholders focusing on different goals, capacity building, evaluation framework, sharing of new knowledge and best practices, and progress mapping.
- The first Voluntary National Review Report on the implementation of the SDGs was presented at the United Nations High Level Political Forum 2017.
- The SDG India Index Baseline report was also launched in 2018 to track the progress of all the States and UTs on a set of 62 Priority Indicators, measuring their progress on the outcomes of the interventions and schemes of the Government of India. The report focuses on 13 out of 17 SDGs (leaving out SDGs 12, 13, 14 and 17).
- A national dashboard has also been developed to present the SDG India Index 2018 analysis and shows the progress of the states and UTs against the goals and targets.
- With the assistance of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) a National Indicator Framework (NIF) has been developed in consultation with Ministries and States/UTs. MoSPI has also been leading discussions at the global level on the indicator framework for the SDGs.

NITI Aayog has also entered into a three-year partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry to engage with the private sector. This initiative aims to showcase the efforts of Indian businesses to the Government and the UN, increase awareness amongst industry, share best practices and build a tracking mechanism for further improving industry engagement to achieve SDGs by 2030.

## Conclusion

Advocating the broad-based consultative process that characterises the new global agenda process, the United Nations in India supported the participation of civil society organisations, think tanks and the Indian media in discussions at intergovernmental negotiations, seminars on financing for development and sustainable development and side sessions at the International Conference on Financing for Development at Addis Ababa and during the General Assembly in New York. The UN in India currently supports state governments in localising the SDGs to address key development challenges at the state level. State governments are key to India's progress on the SDG Agenda as they are best placed to 'put people first' and to ensuring that 'no one is left behind'.

Many of the Government's flagship programmes such as Swachh Bharat, Make in India, Skill India, and Digital India are at the core of the SDGs. State and local governments play a pivotal role in many of these programmes. The UN Country Team in India supports NITI Aayog in its efforts to address the interconnectedness of the goals, to ensure that no one is left behind and to advocate for adequate financing to achieve the SDGs. In close collaboration with NITI Aayog and partners, the UN has supported thematic

consultations on the SDGs to bring together various state governments, central ministries, civil society organisations and academia to deliberate on specific SDGs.

The role of local governments is equally important; 15 of the 17 SDGs directly relate to activities undertaken by local governments in the country. State governments are paying keen attention to visioning, planning, budgeting, and developing implementation and monitoring systems for the SDGs.

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