

# Challenges and Sustainable Development Goals in India



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## Abstract

SDGs make the promise of universality and leaving no one behind. Prime Minister Modi too expressed India's Commitment to work towards achieving these goals by 2030 Comprising 17 goals and 169 targets the SDGs expand on the MDGs adopted in 2000 which are due to expire. Sustainable development through greater integration of its three pillars—economic, social, and environmental. The future we want in support of rights-based, equitable, and inclusive processes that enhance sustainability at global, regional, national and local levels, post 2015, the development agenda will include SDGs, India challenges and needs to have a relook at institutions that are primarily responsible for these goals. In my paper I will deal with research on current international developments and seeks to make suggestion on how India should engage with design of SDGs. It analyses what could constitute a possible set of SDGs from an Indian perspective.

**Keywords:** Sustainable, Development, Challenges, Goals, Environmental, Social, Suggestion.

## Introduction

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was one of the main outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), popularly known as the Rio+20, convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012. The idea of having SDGs was introduced in the run up to Rio+20 by the Governments of Colombia and Guatemala, and later supported by many countries. Sustainable development through greater integration of its three pillars: economic, social, and environmental. It is also expected to guide and contribute to transformative change as stipulated in the Rio+20 Outcome Document, *The Future We Want* in support of 'rights-based, equitable, and inclusive processes that enhance sustainability at global, regional, national, and local levels.

The world is faced with challenges in all three dimensions of sustainable development-economic, social and environmental. More than 1 billion people are still living in extreme poverty and income inequality within and among many countries has been rising; at the same time, unsustainable consumption and production patterns have resulted in huge economic and social costs and may endanger life on the planet. Achieving sustainable development will require global actions to deliver on the legitimate aspiration towards further economic and social progress, requiring growth and employment, and at the same time strengthening environmental protection.

Sustainable development will need to be inclusive and take special care of the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. Strategies need to be ambitious, action-oriented and collaborative, and to adapt to different levels of development. They will need to systemically change consumption and production patterns, and might entail, inter alia, significant price corrections; encourage the preservation of natural endowments; reduce inequality; and strengthen economic governance.

## Objectives of the Paper

1. To analyze the human development, with the eradication extreme poverty, income inequality and unemployment.
2. To analyze the sound infrastructure development and growth.
3. To analyze the pollution, energy, water, reducing the generation of waste and improving their recycling systems.

## Review of the Literature

The concept of sustainable development is the result of the rising global awareness regarding mounting socio-economic concerns and environmental dilemma across the globe. The WCED report, our common future, is considered as the originator of the idea of sustainable development. But as a matter of fact, there are certain major conceptual predecessor that have led to this WCED's definition of sustainable

development the journey of sustainability concept can be broadly categorized into three historical period .

1. Stockholm , till 1972
2. From Stockholm to WCED (1972 – 1987)
3. Post –WCED (1987 – 1997)

The UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) famously called the “Rio Conference”, or the “Earth summit” lead to drafting of major intercontinental documents such as the agenda 21 ,Rio declaration and standards or desertification , climate change and biodiversity . However critics of the Rio conference have raised strong and often conflicting reactions (O’ Riordan, 2000) . The relation between poverty and environment as an extension for studying, sustainability was highlighted by Middleton O’Keefe (2003:7). Contrary to this Adams (2001) stressed that the focus of the agenda was predominately on other global issues than poverty or inequality. In 2002 world summit on sustainable development, a new target was proposed to bring down the number of people without access to sanitation to halve by 2015. Every day tonnes of waste are produced in many forms like poisonous gases , particulate matter .Chemicals and solid matter due to varied production and consumption activities , It is resulting in ill-health and premature death caused by pollution in developing countries.(Mc Granohan and Murray,2003). The review of literature gives strong evidence that there is lot of research in this quarter .The present study gives more comprehensive analysis in the area of sustainability.

#### **Methodology**

This paper is based on secondary data which is collected from UNCSDB database, Indian Economic Survey, Indian development report, various research papers and journals. To analyze the collected data, tabulation and graphical representation computer has been used.

#### **SDGs and MDGs**

The discussions around the SDGs track have been accompanied by an important parallel track on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) beyond 2015, and the Post-2015 Development Agenda is becoming an umbrella term for both the tracks. Unlike the MDGs which was a very top-down, exclusive process, the Post-2015 Development Agenda calls for ‘open, inclusive consultations involving civil society, the private sector, and academia and research institutions from all regions, in addition to the UN system to advance the development framework beyond 2015’. The Post-2015 Development Agenda ‘should build on the lessons learned from working towards achieving the MDGs which have been providing the structure for the UN’s development activities since the Millennium Summit in 2000’. This agenda is due to come into play after the MDGs expire on 31 December 2015.

There is now widespread agreement among many member states in support of a convergence of the two tracks to create one set of development goals. The United Nations Secretary General (UNSG) has echoed this sentiment, saying that the ‘MDGs and SDGs are mutually supporting concepts and the SDGs should accelerate and continue the work begun with the MDGs’.

#### **Strategies**

Sustainable development strategies of India will continue to give priority to human development, with the eradication of poverty as its central goal. Human development requires more attention to be directed towards quality issues as well as coherence at the national level. Human development success depends to a large extent on using the opportunities created by globalization and on minimizing its negative effects. In this context, better management of capital flows and macroeconomic regulations may be necessary and coherence between national development strategies and global decision-making is important.

Urbanization provides new jobs and new opportunities for millions of people in the world, and has contributed to poverty eradication efforts worldwide. At the same time, rapid urbanization adds pressure to the resource base, and increases demand for energy, water, and sanitation, as well as for public services, education and health care. Challenges to the institutional capacities for improving access to sound infrastructure, decent employment, and reducing vulnerability to pollution, natural disasters and other risks, loom large. Upper middle- and high-income countries with urban centres that already have access to basic public services face the challenge of becoming more efficient in the use of energy and water, reducing the generation of waste and improving their recycling systems. Large and wealthier cities, in particular, may have well-managed resource systems but they also have larger ecological footprints.

Climate change impacts increase cities’ vulnerabilities and put further stress on the adaptive capacities of the poor. Similarly, the ongoing economic crisis has increased underemployment of the educated youth in cities of poor and rich nations. Inequalities between rural and urban areas and within urban areas have been persistent features in many developing countries. About 1 billion people still live in slums lacking access to basic infrastructure and services such as water, sanitation, electricity, health care and education. There might be 3 billion slum dwellers by 2050 unless decisive actions are taken.

Sustainable development of urban areas requires integration and coordination, including regarding land-use issues, food security, employment creation, transportation infrastructure development, biodiversity conservation, water conservation, renewable energy sourcing, waste and recycling management, and the provision of education, health care and housing.

#### **The Food, Water, Energy, Environment and Climate Nexus**

An integrated approach to food security and the environment should take into consideration the food, water, energy, environment and climate nexus, while reorienting food production, distribution and consumption. Food security, while minimizing environmental impacts and increasing natural resource efficiency, will require increasing agricultural productivity, in particular in developing countries where agriculture accounts for a large share of gross domestic product (GDP) and where large productivity gaps still exist. Rapid increases in yields are deemed

feasible, in particular where productivity gaps are high. At the same time, the protection of soil quality and crop and grazing land management, including restoration of degraded lands, have been identified as having the greatest agricultural potential to mitigate climate change, in addition to being cost-effective. Additional public investments in agriculture-related research and development will be crucial to increasing productivity.

The private sector will need to play a major role in expanding research, particularly in biotechnology, with a focus on food security. Special efforts are also needed to close the productivity gap of smallholder farms, which offer great potential for engagement in sustainable agricultural practices. Faster productivity gains among a large number of small-scale producers in very different agro ecological regions will require improved dissemination and adaptation of technology to meet their specific needs.

A broad-based rural development strategy has to include infrastructural investments to better connect producers to output markets, including in rural-urban linkages and the improvement of distribution systems and storage facilities. The prospect of new economic opportunities, including institutional changes that facilitate access to input markets, as well as credit and insurance markets, will also encourage smallholders, especially women farmers, in developing countries to increase their productivity.

Social protection mechanisms, including social safety nets, must also be part of a broader rural development strategy to facilitate access of low-income households to food. This will not only protect the most vulnerable against short-term economic shocks, but also contribute to long-term resilience by facilitating their access to food and by strengthening the ability of smallholders to manage risks and adopt new technologies with higher productivity.

To reorient food consumption towards diets that are less-resource intensive and more nutritious will also be crucial for food sustainability. In particular, reducing food wastage may contribute significantly to the sustainability of the food system. Currently, it is estimated that 32 per cent of the total food produced globally is wasted. In order to substantially reduce the quantity of food lost and wasted, changes have to take place at different levels of the food chain: production, storage, transportation and consumption. In developed countries, efforts are most needed at the retail and consumer end, owing in part to management practices and consumption habits. In developing countries, interventions are needed at the producer end, before food reaches the market, to address inadequate harvesting techniques and storage conditions. Speculation in land and water has to be addressed at both the national and the international level. More investment funds will be needed to help implement these strategies and to support other countries in developing their own strategies for reinforcing the resilience of food production systems.

### **The Energy Transformation Challenge**

The transformation of the energy system needs to be a core element of the sustainable development agenda, in order to improve the living

standards of people with equity and environmental sustainability. Under the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All Initiative and in other contexts, explicit energy goals have been suggested to end the dependence on traditional biomass as a source of thermal energy; to improve access to reliable, adequate and high-quality electricity; to facilitate convergence to best practices in the provision of energy services; and to ensure that unreliable or low-quality energy sources do not compromise the opportunities of the working poor who are self-employed or run household enterprises.

The latest estimates confirm that emissions trends will likely lead to temperature increases with potentially catastrophic consequences. Even if all currently planned mitigation policies were fully implemented-including expanded use of renewable energy sources and improvements in energy efficiency-a stabilization of greenhouse gas emissions at 450 parts per million (ppm) will not have been achieved by 2050.

### **Financing Sustainable Development**

Responding to the above-mentioned challenges requires large-scale investments. It is recognized that the fulfilment of official development assistance (ODA) commitments is crucial. Innovative financing mechanisms can also make contributions to developing countries in respect of mobilization of additional resources for financing for development. Sustainable financing needs to be ensured across sectors, including agriculture, forestry, energy, health and education, as well as across economic segments, such as small and medium-sized enterprises, infrastructure and innovation, in both developed and developing countries. Special attention needs to be directed towards financing the global commons and global health.

Increased public infrastructure or service delivery in education could also have a positive impact on human development. Without coherent policy interventions, taxing fuel oil consumption alone could reduce promotion rates in primary education, as households' demand for education decreases with decreasing economic activity. A close partnership between local and national authorities is needed to finance the sustainable development of cities. While cities need to raise financial resources from capital markets directly, financial oversight mechanisms must be in place to manage risks so that municipal borrowing does not result in an excess of non-performing loans in the banking system or the incurring of huge financial liabilities by the central government.

Financing strategies for sustainable development in cities can draw upon a wide range of instruments. Bond banks and resource pooling can be useful instruments for reducing risk. Cities in developing countries have successfully issued bonds to finance water supply and sewerage projects. Public-private partnerships can also help raise funds for infrastructure projects, particularly in developing countries with limited access to long-term credit. Public-private partnerships have been used to finance the production of renewable sources of energy and waste management.

The targets and indicators with respect to a goal should reflect all the pillars of sustainable development. India's 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan is titled *Faster, More Inclusive, and Sustainable Growth* and envisions simultaneous achievement of these elements as crucial for the success of the Plan. The Plan says, it must be guided by a vision of India moving forward in a way that would ensure a broad-based improvement in living standards of all sections of the society through a growth process which is faster than in the past, more inclusive, and also more environmentally sustainable. The Plan, thus, calls for more attention to be given to the issue of sustainability. It states, 'No development process can afford to neglect the environmental consequences of economic activity. It is essential that India has a plan in place to engage with positions on the Post-2015 Development Agenda emerging from forums such as BRICS (association of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa), and the G20 (Group of 20 major economies). The SDGs agenda, as it unfolds at the international level, will generate many challenges within the national context that will need to be addressed if progress has to be made.

**Conclusion**

For the achievement of sustainable development in the long run, it is essential to have the right type of goals and indicators that, in addition to being global in nature, should not ignore the national context. There should be convergence of the SDGs and the MDGs beyond 2015. All pillars of sustainable development should be integrated in every SDG that is framed. The role of civil society will be very important for the success of such goals, and therefore, it is important to mainstream them into the planning process. It is also necessary to have clear means of implementation for the SDGs, which can be the building blocks including financing, governance, and availability of technology.

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