

Research Article

Implication of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and India's National Economic Development Programs and policies: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

India has played an important role in shaping the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This has meant that the country's national development goals are mirrored in the SDGs. As such, India has been effectively committed to achieving the SDGs even before they were fully crystallized. As the fastest growing major economy of the world, today, India is uniquely placed to deliver on its commitments to inclusive and sustainable development. Externally the country has played a key role in shaping the SDGs and ensuring the balance among its three pillars; economic, social and environmental. Internally, it has launched many programs to make progress towards these goals. Notwithstanding its scarce financial resources due to relatively low per-capita income, large population and vast geographical expanse, India is committed to achieving within a short period such ambitious goals as universal rural electrification, road and digital connectivity for all, massive expansions of clean and renewable energy, sanitation and housing for all and universal elementary school education. Taking cue from the memorable phrase Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, translated as "Collective Effort, Inclusive Development" and enunciated by the Prime Minister, stakeholders from various walks of life central and state governments, industry, civil society, technical experts and academics are coming together to promote a better future for the country. In this juncture present paper highlighted implementation of sustainable development goals and economic development programmes and policies in Indian Scenario.

Keywords: Civil Society, Economic, Environmental, Digital, Geographical, SDGs and Social.

1) Introduction:

Rapid growth (SDG 8) is the key weapon in any country's arsenal to combat poverty. On the one hand, it creates well-paid jobs, which place necessary purchasing power in the hands of households to access food, clothing, housing, education and health. On the other, it brings ever-rising revenues to the government to finance social spending. India has continued its programme of economic reforms to achieve sustained rapid growth. The reforms have included fiscal consolidation, inflation targeting, improved governance all around, accelerated infrastructure development (SDG 9), curbing of corruption (SDG 16), *Aadhaar* Act Insolvency and Bankruptcy Act, Goods and Services Tax, further liberalization of foreign direct investment and closure of sick units in the public sector. As a result, today, India is the fastest growing major economy in the world. It grew 7.5 percent during fiscal year 2014-15, 8 percent during 2015-16 and 7.1 percent during 2016-17.

Currently, the official poverty line in India is the Tendulkar line so named after India's foremost poverty expert, economist Suresh Tendulkar. There is now compelling evidence that rapid growth India has achieved following the economic reforms initiated in 1991 has led to significant

reduction in poverty. This is shown in the accompanying figure. Between 1993-94 and 2003-04, India grew at the average annual rate of 6.2% and between 2004-05 and 2011-12, at the rate of 8.3%. Both these periods saw a substantial decline in poverty but the decline was significantly sharper during the latter period characterized by faster growth.

2) Methodology:

The study's foundational material comes from secondary sources that trace the development of as historical records, and official documents. Research Reports, The researcher employed academic interpretations of National, State and regional, statistics from the Government of India and State governments and NITI Aayog reports: and The primary data of study applying from books, Journals and academic reports and records etc.,

3) Anti-Poverty Programmes:

Growth has brought with it an increased volume of revenues, which, in turn, has enabled the government to sustain a high level of social spending, thus, targeting poverty directly. An important anti-poverty program has focused on generating employment through public works that help develop agricultural infrastructure, productive assets and entrepreneurship-based livelihood opportunities. The *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act* (MGNREGA) provides a legal guarantee of a minimum of 100 days of wage employment per household every year for unskilled workers in rural areas. The programme generated over 2 billion person-days of employment (SDG 8) during the last year. Women and disadvantaged groups have been the largest beneficiaries (SDG 5 and SDG 10) of the programme accounting for 56% and 39% of person-days of work generated during last year.

Another initiative relevant to this Goal is the *Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana* (PMJDY), which was launched in 2014 for ensuring access to the entire gamut of financial services, including banking, credit, insurance and pension. Under this programme, 280 million new accounts have been opened thus far with deposits amounting to INR 639 billion (USD 9.9 billion). By facilitating the delivering of Government benefits directly into the accounts of beneficiaries and minimising leakages, the initiative has enhanced the effectiveness of several social security schemes in the country (Amit, K., & Madhushree, B. 2020)

Further, the *Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana*, the National Livelihoods Mission, is devoted to creating skilled employment for the poor. The Mission aims to bring one female member each from a large number of poor households in rural areas into Self-Help Groups in a phased manner. In a significant move towards addressing multi-dimensional poverty, data from the Socio-Economic Caste Census, 2011 is being used to identify beneficiaries for development programmes based on various deprivations suffered by households. This is aligned with the policy of ensuring that 'no one is left behind'.

4) Strengthening Social Safety Nets

The National Social Assistance Programme provides pension to the elderly, widows and differentlyabled individuals. Additionally, three initiatives have been launched to facilitate access to life insurance, personal accident insurance as well as pension for workers in the unorganized sector. The schemes focusing on insurance have collectively reached out to 130 million subscribers.

4.1) Ensuring Access to Basic Services

Enabling access to quality primary education and affordable healthcare forms an important part of the poverty elimination strategy. Under the National Health Mission, a broad spectrum of interventions focused on universalizing primary healthcare is being implemented. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) attempts to ensure that maternal and child malnutrition are addressed in a systematic manner. Further, *Janani Suraksha Yojana* (JSY) provides conditional cash transfers to promote institutional deliveries among women from remote areas. There is a special emphasis on bridging the gaps in human resources for healthcare at all levels of service delivery. Similarly, the National Education Mission is focused on providing universal access to education, bridging gender-related inequities and improving the learning outcomes of students. The Right to Education Act has established an effective legal framework entitling all children (6-14 years) to free and compulsory education based on principles of equity and non-discrimination.

Another ambitious initiative is 'Housing for All by 2022.' Under this program, assistance (e.g. in the form of credit-linked interest subsidies) is provided to poor households for constructing houses. An estimated 5 million houses will be built during the current year for the poor in rural areas. A direct consequence of poverty is food insecurity. To address this problem, the National Food Security Act provides a basic quantity of food grains to nearly 75% of the population in rural areas and 50% of the population in urban areas at affordable prices under the Targeted Public Distribution System. The programme provides 5 kg wheat or rice per person per month at subsidised prices. A related initiative provides the poorest households 35 kg of the subsidized wheat or rice every month.

In order to meet the clean cooking fuel needs of the poor and thereby safeguarding the health of women and children, the *Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana* was launched in 2016. Under the scheme, 50 million Liquefied Petroleum Gas connections will be provided to poor families over the next 3 years. Over 22 million connections have already been provided under the scheme (Dixit, R., Chauhan, A., & Juneja, K. 2025).

Further, there is an emphasis on facilitating access to adequate and safe drinking water as well as sanitation for the entire population. Under the National Rural Drinking Water Programme, more than 77.5 percent of habitations have been covered with 40 litres of drinking water supply per capita per day. Another 18.9 percent habitations have been covered partially thus far. A flagship initiative of the government is the *Swachh Bharat Mission* (Clean India Mission) which aims to ensure an open defecation free India by 2019. Under this Mission, over 39.5 million household toilets have been built during the previous two and half years. Additionally, 193,000 villages and 531 cities have been successful in ending the practice of open defecation. For spurring improvements, cities and village councils are being ranked on levels of cleanliness.

For enhancing connectivity, 70 percent of the targeted rural habitations have been connected by all-weather roads thus far under Prime Minister's Rural Roads Programme. It is envisaged that by March, 2019, all habitations of 500 population or larger will be connected by all-weather roads. Green technologies are increasingly being leveraged for the construction of roads in rural areas. (Bidari, M. R., Saji, A. M., John, A. B., Anjita, P.R., Bhagat, T., & Bhumbe, D. (2021).

5) Promoting Resilience against Disasters

According to the India Disaster Knowledge Network, 85% of the country's land is vulnerable to natural disasters, which affect the poor disproportionately. As mandated under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, there is a comprehensive National Policy on Disaster Management (2009), which articulates a proactive prevention and mitigation approach. The National Disaster Management Plan, 2016 focuses on disaster resilience and integrates the Sendai Framework for

5.1) Disaster Risk Reduction as well as the SDGs:

Significant progress has been made in improving food and nutrition security. Nevertheless, challenges remain. For instance, a substantial reduction in stunted and underweight children has been achieved between 2005-06 and 2015-16. But the absolute levels of stunted and underweight children remain high.

6) Access to Nutritious Food

India's food security programmes are among the largest in the world and cover more than 800 million people in the country by providing affordable access to grains. In recognition of empirical evidence that women pay greater attention to food security, the ration card is issued in the name of the senior most female member of the household. Food governance in terms of responsiveness, transparency and accountability has improved significantly. Nearly 232 million ration cards entitling people to food and other supplies have been digitized. Additionally, 77% of the ration cards have been linked to the unique identity number thereby enabling cash transfers for promoting dietary diversity. Nearly 20 out of the 29 states in India have automated the supply chains and Fair Price Shops (delivery outlets). An online grievance redressal system has also been operationalized across the country.

Other programmes aim to address the nutrition security of specific population groups. For instance, ICDS caters to the nutritional requirements of over 83 million young children and 19

million pregnant and lactating mothers in the country. The Mid-Day Meal Programme delivers nutritious cooked meals to 100 million children in primary schools.

7) Sustainable and Adaptive Agriculture

India is the largest producer of milk, pulses and spices in the world. It also has the largest area under cultivation for rice and cotton. Approximately 55% of India's croplands are rain-fed and it has vast coastal lands under agriculture. Food production in the country is therefore vulnerable to climate change.

7.1) Agricultural Productivity and Farmers' Income

Small and marginal farmers constitute nearly 80% of all Indian farmers. More than 90% of them are engaged in rain-fed agriculture. It is therefore crucial to raise farmers' income by adopting different strategies.

Several states in India have made progress with respect to revising their land leasing Acts along the lines of a Model Act developed by NITI Aayog. The Model Act is aimed at protecting the rights of the tenant while also ensuring that the landowner does not run the risk of losing the ownership of her land to the tenant.

During 2015-17, an area of nearly 1.3 million hectares has been brought under micro-irrigation. The average productivity of fruits and vegetables has increased by 42.3% and 52.8%, respectively, on account of crop spacing, judicious use of water and other inputs. In rain-fed areas, approximately 38,000 hectares have been covered during 2016-17 under the integrated farming system. This initiative links the cropping system with activities such as horticulture, livestock farming and fishery for enhancing productivity. It also helps protect farmers' income against the vagaries of nature.

Nearly 250 wholesale agricultural markets across 10 states have been integrated with the electronic National Agricultural Marketing Platform. A number of other agricultural reforms are being pursued in cooperation with state governments including direct purchase of agricultural produce from the farmer, promotion of e-trading and ensuring the validity of a single trading license across the state.

7.2) Financing the SDGs in India and Status of Official Development Assistance (ODA) Globally

While working towards revitalizing the global partnership for the achievement of the SDGs, India reaffirms the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Despite significant efforts for domestic resource mobilization, India is unlikely to gather sufficient revenues for achieving the SDGs. Therefore, India reiterates that the developed countries have an essential obligation to provide financial assistance to the developing countries, especially for global public goods such as climate change mitigation and control of pandemics, so that they can fully achieve the SDGs. India also highlights the need for international cooperation for curbing illicit financial flows, defining aid unambiguously and establishing robust systems for monitoring commitments made by donor countries. Against this background, India is making all necessary efforts to raise its own revenue resources as described below.

7.3) Improving Taxation Capacity and Compliance

The tax-GDP ratio in India is significantly lower than the average for the BRICS countries. Thus, there is considerable scope for boosting domestic resources by expanding the tax base as well as strengthening the tax administration system. The Indian government has committed to the implementation of an ambitious tax reform agenda, including the Goods and Services Tax (GST) as well as direct tax reforms to increase domestic resource mobilization, while committing to keeping public debt at sustainable levels in the medium term. An innovative tax like the *Swachh Bharat Cess* (Clean India Cess) has also been levied for mobilizing resources for the Clean India Mission. Additionally, implementation of the budget responsibility legislation is ensuring predictable and sustainable budgeting as well as long-term debt sustainability. In India's efforts to improve the efficacy of tax collection, a critical constraint is the absence of adequate global cooperation on capping money laundering and poor progress on mutual administrative assistance in tax matters. Global cooperation that alleviates this constraint will boost the ability of India and the entire developing world to secure the means of implementation for achieving the SDGs.

It is estimated that developing countries lose nearly USD 1 trillion every year on account of illicit financial flows (black money generated through money laundering and adverse practices in

financial transactions like under or over invoicing). International tax havens and tax evasion make it very difficult for countries to mobilize the resources domestically.

India has on several occasions highlighted the scale of revenue loss in developing countries on account of profit shifting practices of multinationals (transfer pricing). One of the important challenges is that developing countries are often required to adhere to standards that have been defined by the developed world. India with support from G77 and China had proposed stronger international tax rules and advocated for an intergovernmental tax body. However, this endeavour did not fructify. The modest achievement for India (hailed as significant in diplomatic circles) has been to introduce new modalities in the constitution of the UN promoted international tax committee (Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters under the Economic and Social Council of the UN).

8) Strengthening Sub-National Governments

The states and local bodies will be at the frontline of operationalizing the SDG strategy in India. The fiscal relationship between the national government and the sub-national governments is undergoing a paradigm shift. The Fourteenth Finance Commission increased the share of tax devolution to states from 32% to 42% of the divisible pool. In addition, special purpose grants to secure universal primary education, health, employment, affordable housing, and urbanization provide a solid collaborative fiduciary basis for securing the SDGs. In addition, the Centre also supplements Local Body finances by providing them with appropriate fiscal space. Targeted and adequately financed initiatives to promote inclusion and gender empowerment and addressing the special needs of vulnerable groups are key to India's development strategy.

8.1) Enhancing Efficiency of Expenditures

On the expenditure front, the government has comprehensively restructured the framework of the expenditure budget. This restructuring will enable the government to monitor the results of different public expenditure initiatives in terms of their impact on the SDGs and undertake course corrections when necessary. The introduction of sunset clauses for all public expenditure programmes will allow the government to divest itself from unproductive "legacy" expenditures and deploy the freed resources towards programmes that will contribute to securing the SDGs. A comprehensive public financial management system is now operational that allows the government to track expenditure flows to end objectives in real time, thereby contributing to increased effectiveness in public expenditure management. These significant improvements in efficiency and predictability of public expenditure will play an important role in securing financing for the SDGs (Sahu, D. K., Verma, N., Sharma, M., Jaiswal, P., & Dengani, M.2024).

8.2) Establishing Strong Partnerships with the Private Sector

India has had one of the largest Public-Private Partnership (PPP) programmes globally. Given the substantial financing requirement for SDGs, a continued focus on PPP initiatives as well as addressing challenges in their rollout is crucial.

Given the vast financing needs, it is important that the private sector has access to global finance. To this end, the government has embarked on a comprehensive set of reforms to attract FDI, including opening up key sectors like defence and railways to such investment. Increased private investment will be key to securing high growth, employment and improved productive efficiency. Thus, India has framed consistent policies that open up the economy to FDI so as to accelerate financing from this source; India has over the past year witnessed an increase of 36 percent in FDI inflows despite a 5 percent reduction in global FDI flows. Here too India faces a challenge that requires international action. Subjective assessments of the Indian policy and regulatory environment by global financial institutions and rating agencies raise the costs of private financial flows to India by positing a highly subjective "regulatory risk premium". This particularly affects long-term finance for infrastructure and other investments that are crucial for achieving the SDGs. It would be helpful to the cause of the Indian and global SDGs achievement, if this impediment to the means of implementation were to be addressed through global action (Dash, U., Muraleedharan, V. R., & Rajesh, M. 2019).

8.3) Promoting South-South Cooperation

To achieve the objectives of SDGs in a framework of shared prosperity and destiny, particularly in the region to which it belongs, India has been following the principles of South-South Cooperation in its bilateral and multilateral engagements. This helps to foster the southern narrative on development and sustainability at multilateral forums. South-South Cooperation is particularly beneficial on sharing of best practices, sustainable use of resources available regionally and joint development projects on common challenges (Devanbu, V. G. C., Ravi, H., & Taneja, N. 2020).

8.4) Reforming the Aid System and Honouring Existing ODA Commitments

While domestic resource mobilization is becoming increasingly important, high-income nations that are a part of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) also need to honour their commitments of providing 0.7% of GNI as ODA. ODA is especially important in the context of global public goods such as climate change mitigation, ecosystems and biodiversity as well as pandemics. For instance, at the 21st Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, developed countries reiterated their commitment to mobilizing additional resources to the tune of USD 100 billion every year by 2020 through the Green Climate Fund for meeting the requirements of developing nations.

On average, DAC members only provide 0.3% of GNI with a handful of countries meeting or exceeding the 0.7% level. Ironically, the highest ODA-to-GNI ratio in 2016 was of a non-DAC member, the United Arab Emirates (1.12%). During 2013, it was estimated that if all DAC members had met the 0.7% target, it would have been possible to mobilize an additional USD 184 billion. Further, there is a need for setting clear eligibility standards and ensuring greater transparency with respect to ODA. Currently, there is considerable ambiguity about what counts as aid. For instance, contrary to the spirit of the Cancun agreement, a substantial share of ODA is often counted twice -- as climate finance as well as ODA. Moreover, robust systems for monitoring of aid commitments made by donor countries have not been put in place.

8.5) Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) for SDGs

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda established a new mechanism for making technologies available to developing countries for implementing the SDGs known as TFM. India, through its submissions, has highlighted that urgent delivery of technology development, deployment, dissemination and transfer to developing countries requires a suitable response. This includes a continued emphasis by all countries on the enhancement of enabling environments, facilitating access to technology and financing that leverages private sector resources.

8.6) Data, Monitoring and Accountability

The Indian Statistical System functions within the overall administrative framework of the country. Central and state ministries are responsible for collecting statistics on a subject depending on whether it is a part of the central, state or concurrent lists of the Constitution. MoSPI has overall responsibility for statistical coordination in the country including defining standards as well as ensuring quality and timeliness of statistics. At the state-level, the Directorate of Economics and Statistics performs a similar function in alignment with the overall standards determined by MoSPI.

8.7) Legal Framework for Data Collection

Primary statistical information is collected under the legal provision of various Acts and Rules. In addition, MoSPI has notified Survey Guidelines in 2011 for conducting all-India Surveys. It is mandatory for government agencies to follow these guidelines while conducting nationwide surveys so that consistency in quality can be ensured. In May 2016, the Government of India notified the 'Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics' adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in 2014. Data collected by a private agency under the 'Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics' and the Survey Guidelines notified by MoSPI may be considered for SDG monitoring purposes, following validation by a government Ministry. MoSPI regularly organizes conferences with data producers and users to provide updates identify gaps in data and statistical methods and initiate necessary course correction (Girish, B., Surendran, J., Vishma B, K., Jyothika, V., & Tahreem, S. 2023).

9) Monitoring Framework for SDGs

Efforts are underway at the national-level for finalizing the indicators that will enable monitoring of the progress made on the SDGs. Additionally, there is an emphasis on assessing and improving the availability of data as well as putting in place transparent monitoring systems. India appreciates that tracking the SDGs effectively will require mechanisms to be established for generating a set of data that is broader, more disaggregated and available at shorter intervals of time as compared to the data that is currently utilized for reviewing development efforts. Disaggregated data is vital as it enables the formulation of effective policies for targeting specific disadvantaged groups and geographical areas in the country.

10) Summary

A number of goals in the SDGs do not require the government to deliver public services, but instead to develop and enforce the necessary policy and regulatory frameworks. Given the interrelatedness of the goals and targets, the government is also considering setting up a high-level Committee headed by the Chief Statistician of India to oversee the monitoring framework for SDGs at the national-level. Steps are being taken to strengthen the statistical system in the country through adequate financial and human resource investments. There is also a focus on bridging the gaps and identifying new sources for meeting the growing data requirements. For instance, it has been decided that Labour Force surveys providing employment/unemployment estimates will be conducted on a quarterly basis for urban India and annually for the country as a whole. Additionally, it is proposed to carry out Time Use surveys, which will serve as an important source of data for assessing gender-related economic disparities. Further, several initiatives are being launched for modernizing the data system including e-collection, e-dissemination and use of space technology for household surveys. While national efforts are paramount, global technical support is also important in various areas including developing methodologies for data collection as well as monitoring and evaluation. This is especially relevant in the context of the fact that a number of the indicators for tracking SDGs at the global level are not necessarily readily measurable at the country level.

11) Conclusion

India will continue to pursue the implementation of the SDG agenda through close collaboration between the national and sub-national governments as well as active participation of all other relevant stakeholders. Bi-annual reviews will be conducted with the state governments for identifying good practices as well as challenges and undertaking the appropriate course corrections. The SDG implementation process has started yielding valuable insights. Documentation and dissemination of such experiences coupled with the extension of technical support for resolving problem areas will be the key functions of a knowledge management system to be coordinated at the national level. Relevant ministries and stakeholders for each of the SDGs have been already identified. Given the interconnectedness of the SDGs, relevant strategies for enabling collaboration among different actors will be developed as part of the overall implementation process. Additionally, consultations and capacity building activities at the national and regional levels will be continued. Expertise provided by different stakeholders is being leveraged for carrying out various exercises related to the implementation of the SDG agenda. In order to promote systematic and regular access to such knowledge, NITI Aayog is promoting a national network of resource institutions called *Samavesh*.

Apart from integrating the SDGs into its on-going national and sub-national policies and programmes, India will continue to focus on nurturing partnerships at the regional and global levels. It will work towards ensuring a greater flow of finances and technology from developed countries - in alignment with their explicit commitment in the context of the 2030 Agenda - to developing and least developed nations. India believes that with combined and sustained efforts at the national and global levels, it will indeed be possible to eradicate poverty and ensure a prosperous world for all.

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