
Aligning Developmental Programs to Implement SDGs in India: Challenges and the Way Forward

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Abstract

United Nations Agenda 2030 for sustainable development provides seventeen sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. India also committed to SDGs and signed the declaration to implement SDGs in the year 2015. India being home to one of the largest poor population in the world, the success of Agenda 2030 to large extent depends upon how India implements and achieves its SDGs targets. To this end, the Government of India has integrated SDGs with the national policy framework to achieve the targets of SDGs. Now, the development agenda of India primarily focus on five P's- People, Planet, Peace, and Prosperity & Partnership. The present study provides insights into the progress being made by India to achieve SDGs through the review of various development programs. This paper maps various government schemes and development programs being implemented to achieve SDGs in India. Further, the paper also presents key bottlenecks and execution challenges to implement and achieve SDGs targets in India.

Keywords: Sustainable development, Sustainable development goals (SDGs), developing economies, India

Introduction

Development of planet depends on the overall development of its human beings and ecosystem that can only achieved by the sustainable growth and development of peoples and effectively utilization of available resources of country without any harm. The United Nations member state (193 members) has adopted the 2030 Agenda entitled “Transforming Our World” in 2015 for the sustainable development of the member’s states and its peoples in the sustainable Development Summit held from 25-27 September 2015 at Headquarter of UN, New York (United Nations, 2021). The goal of this agenda is to ensure the development of each country and its people in terms of prosperity and peace to make this planet a better place full of happiness by ending the poverty, hunger everywhere, promoting gender equality and ensuring good health to all by

maintaining the ecological balance. United Nation (UN) development agenda has developed 17 goals with 169 associated targets known as sustainability development goals (SDGs) that reflect the complex and interrelated nature of social, economic and ecological well-being parameters. The 17 SDGs have different goals and target to address the major issues of society. SDG-1 aims to ending all kind of poverty. The SDG-2 target to provide food security to all on the other hand SDG-3 works towards promoting good health and well- being of each section of society. SDG-4 focuses to provide a quality education whereasSDG-5 aims to remove gender inequality and providing equal opportunity to girls and women. SDG-6 targets to provide clean water and sanitation facilities to all, the SDG-7 target to facilitate the use of affordable and clean energy. SDG-8 focuses on the economic growth whereas promoting the industrialization, innovation and infrastructure are the goals of SDG- 9. SDG-10 targets to reduce inequalities exists in society, the SDG-11 aims to promote and create sustainable cities and communities. SDG-12 target the responsible consumption and production for sustainable growth, the climate action for making pollution free environment to our future is the goal of SDG-1. SDG-14 target the marine life and people depend on oceans, on the other hand SDG-15 target the life on land, SDG-16 works for maintaining peace, justice and strong institutions whereas SDG-17 promote the strengthening of global partnerships for achieving the target of all the goals. In India NITI Ayog implements the SDG Index and measure the success of the SDGs goals. NITI Ayog introduced SDG India Index-Baseline Report 2018 that reports the progress of States and Union territories in implementation of SDG goals (NITI Ayog, 2021a).

Role of SDGS in India

The priorities of Government of India are to generate and provide employment to all skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled population of country, economic growth, providing food security and clean water to all, energy security by utilizing the available resources, disaster resilience and removing gender and class inequalities with aim to adopt transparent governance and restore its natural capital. In order to achieve the priorities, there are certain emerging challenges include climate change, increasing inequities, and lagging human development indices, increasing population, lack of finance and so on. To overcome the challenges and work towards achieving the target for a sustainable growth of country and its people and ecosystem Government of India adopted the UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 framework. In 2018, NITI Ayog launched the first edition of SDGs index. The second edition launched in 2019-20. The progress of SDGs performance of Indian states and union territories are monitor through the SDG India Index and Dashboard, developed by the Vertical (NITI Ayog, 2021b). The adoption of SDGs performance index is helpful in meeting the desired target to end poverty and providing food security, clean drinking water, sanitation facility, quality education to all and stopping gender inequalities in society (Kumar & Prakash, 2019a; Panda & Mohanty, 2019). It is also helpful in promoting the different techniques to increasing agriculture productivity, boosting the infrastructure development, fostering innovation along with maintaining the ecological balance and sustainable development. NITI Ayog prepared 13 out of 17 SDGs India Index (leaving out Goals 12, 13, 14 and 17) that measures the performance of states and union territories on set of

62 national indicators. Policymakers, businesses, civil society and the public use the SDG India Index measurement for decision-making and research (NITI Ayog, 2021b).

SDG Index and performance

Sustainability Index is an index, that measures the progress of country on different parameters like health, education etc. which are essential for ecological efficiency of human development. Sustainable Development Standard 2030 Agenda adopted by UN Member states to prepare a blue print for making the world a happy and prosperous place for humans to survive (Kumar & Prakash, 2019b). SDG India Index first launched in December 2018 to evaluate and monitor the progress of different states and Union territories on various parameters like health, infrastructure, sustainable development, education etc. and ranks them on basis of their progress (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation GOI, 2021). In its first edition 13 goals with 62 indicators were covered which increased in third edition, now 16 goals with 115 indicators are covered in second edition. The index developed in collaboration with United Nations to measure the performance and progress of different states and union territories based on 115 indicators including national interest issues. The score of index ranges between 0-100. Categories based on Index score are aspirant: 0-49; performer; 50-64; front-runner; 65-99, achiever; 100. Score helps the government to take measurable action to fill the gap. As per 2021 NITI Ayog Report 15 states/UTs are in the performer category whereas 22 states/UTs in the front-runner category. India overall score in 2020-21 is 66, which shows improvement of 6 points from last year, which signifies that there is positive output in the initiatives taken by government for sustainable development. Among the different states, Kerala hold first rank with score of 75 followed by Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam stand at last position in terms of performance based on the index. The top gainers states of 2020-21 are Haryana, Mizoram and Uttarakhand with gain of 10, 12 and 8 points respectively. Among Union territories, Chandigarh bags top position with 79 points. In 2019 number of front-runner states/union territories were 10. In 2021, 12 more states/union territories made their score as front-runner (score range 65-99). As per report of 2021 India ranks in terms of Environmental Performance Index (EPI) is 168 out of 180 countries, 172nd rank in environmental health category and as per report of Yale University, India ranked 148th in category of biodiversity and habitat. At global level, the rank of India is 117 with 61.9 points out of 100 on 17 SDGs adopted as 2030 Agenda, which is two-place slip from last year 115th rank. The major reason behind this dip in rank are the challenges of SDG 2 (ending hunger), SDG5 (Gender equality) and SDG 9 (innovation, sustainable industrialization) that are remained in country (Surana et al., 2020; NITI Ayog, 2021b).

Implementation of SDGs in India

SDG 1: No Poverty

The targets of SDG 1 is to eradicate poverty by 2030 of people living on less than \$1.25 a day from everywhere in world and ensure that all men and women have equal rights to available economic resources. Government of India has taken several measures against poverty by launching different schemes and program.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is one of the popular initiatives taken by Indian government against poverty. The scheme generated over 2 billion person-days of employment in rural area. Pradhan Mantri JanDhanYojana (PMJDY) launched in 2014 under which 280 million new accounts have been open with deposits amounting to INR 639 billion (USD 9.9 billion), it connected the mass with banking financial services. To empower women Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana involve one female member from poor family to be part of Self-Help Group. Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) promotes institutional deliveries among women from remote areas. Elder population, widows and differently-abled individual are provided pension under the National Social Assistance Programme along with life insurance, personal accident insurance as well as pension for workers in the unorganized sector. National Health Mission, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) are launched to provide primary health care facility to all people and address the maternal and child malnutrition in child and women. The Right to Education Act is another milestone to provide free and compulsory education to all children of 6-14 age groups. To fulfill the dream of home for poor people living in rural areas, 5 million houses in under the 'Housing for All by 2022' is to be built. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwal Yojana launched in 2016 that provide more than 22 million free LPG connections to poor people. This scheme also saves the time of women and girls whose most of the time was engaged in collecting woods or other fuels for cooking food and that time they can utilize in education or doing other productive work. National Rural Drinking Water program was launched which covered more than 77% of population with 40 liters of water supply per capita per day. More than 39.5 million toilets have been built so far and 193,000 villages and 531 cities have seen the end of practicing open defecation under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India Mission). Prime Minister's Rural Roads Programme connected 70% of rural areas by roads using Green technologies for constructions of roads. The National Disaster Management Plan, 2016 focuses on disaster management and risk reduction caused by natural disaster to cultivated land and effects people as well SDGs (Prakash et al., 2018).

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

The goal proposes to end hunger, achieve food security and promoting sustainable agriculture. The target is to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030, address the issues of pregnant and lactating women, need of adolescent girls, and increase the agriculture productivity by following sustainable agriculture and proper disaster management. Some of the most notable programs initiated in India to achieve SDG2 targets are:

With aim to end hunger Food Security Act provides food-grain to 75% of the population in rural areas and 50% of the population in urban under the targeted Public Distribution System at affordable prices. Along with this, 35 kg of rice or wheat every month is provided to poorest households in subsidized rate. Mid-day meal scheme facilitates with cooked nutritious food to more than 100 million children studying in primary school. 652 Agricultural technology management agencies provide quality seed, manures and techniques to farmers including crop insurance. As per 2021 NITI Ayog report the average productivity of fruits increased by 42.3% and that of vegetables by 52.8%. Activities such as horticulture, livestock farming and fishery

linked with cropping system to increase productivity. Various agriculture reforms like e-trading, validity of single license across states, direct purchase of agriculture produce are pursued in cooperation with state government. More than 62 million Soil health cards are issued to farmers to provide them soil crop-wise nutrient management recommendations and enabling them improve crop productivity as well as soil fertility under the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA). Organic farming area and production has increased and CHOUKA SYSTEM technique for recharging the ground water developed. In this system small rectangular dykes with an entry and exit point are built to recharge ground water. This technique is very effective and now widely used (NITI Ayog, 2021b).

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

This goal aims to achieve good health and well-being of all the people in the world. The target of this goal is to provide health care to all and end the epidemics, reduce maternal mortality rate, illness and deaths due to various diseases and proper vaccination program for good health of all people. Following actions have been taken by the government to implement SDG 3 in India; 'India New-born Action Plan' launched to achieve the target mentioned in global 'Every New-born Action Plan' by 2030. ICDS, Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram and JSY programs are launched for good health and well-being of people. Tablet based application ANMOL (Auxiliary Nurse Midwives Online) is launched by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and used by Auxiliary Nurse Midwives to record and update all the health related data of beneficiaries. National Vector Borne Disease Control Program was launched to prevent communicable diseases in country. National Strategic Plan was launched to eliminate TB by 2025. For prevention of non-communicable diseases, national non-communicable diseases cell has been established along with 36 and 318 Cells at the state and district levels respectively. 71 cardiac care units and 61 Day-care centers for Chemotherapy are established in various places. National Health Mission, one of the largest centrally sponsored scheme (about INR 267 billion (USD 4 billion) launched to improve the infrastructure of health facilities. Health insurance cover of INR 100,000 (USD 1,563) through National Health Protection Scheme of government is initiated for people. Aardram programme launched by Kerala provide patient friendly services and ensure atleast one fully equipped hospital with all super specialty services in each district of state. For promoting indigenous and alternative systems of healthcare Ministry of AYUSH was established in 2014 (NITI Ayog, 2021a; Khan et al., 2018; Kyaw, 2020).

SDG 5: Gender Equality

The goal is aimed to bring gender equality and promote women empowerment in the society. The target of SDG 5 is to remove complete gender discrimination with girls and women by 2030 and ensure the safety of girls and women in public as well as private sphere by eliminating forced marriages, female genital mutation and ensuring violence free environment. India has taken several measures to promote women empowerment and gender equality to achieve these targets. Some of the notable initiatives are as follows:

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) movement initiated for promoting and educating the girl child. The Ministry of Health and family Welfare as well

Ministry of Human Resource Development promotes the development of for girls and women, their education, protection and survival. Lack of proper sanitation and menstrual hygiene management is also one of problem that results in school dropout of girls(Srivastava, 2018). This issue was solved through the sanitation program initiative of government. For women employment government has launched several programmes like, Mahila E-Hat for promoting online marketing platform, StandUp India project was launch in 2016 to provides loans to women, Mahila Shakti Kendra at village level are set up to establish women empowerment centres. NITI Ayog launched an online contest named “Women Transforming India” in partnership with United Nations, India and MyGov to award the best crowd sourcing stories of women who did tremendous job in any field. Indian Parliament passed the Maternity Benefit Bill that will provide 26 weeks paid leave at time of pregnancy to women employee. One stop crisis centres are being established across the country that provides the services includes medical assistance, psychosocial counseling, legal aid, shelter as well as a video conferencing facility to facilitate police and court proceedings (Comptroller and Auditor General of India, 2021, (NITI Ayog, 2021a).

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

This goal aims to promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, encourage innovation and build sustainable infrastructure. The target is to build good infrastructure, link villages with roads, restructure the industries, adopt clean fuel technology and promote research and innovation for sustainable development of industries and its people by 2030. India has taken following ambitious programs to develop sustainable infrastructure.

As per report of NITI Ayog, India has constructed more than 8,231 km of national highways and connected the villages with main roads to improve transportation facilities. To reduce carbon 8000 km cycle track is also in progress in 106 cities. INR 25 trillion (USD 390I billion) invested to lay 3,500km of railway lines. The Indian railway also set up an INR 350 billion (USD 5.5billion) Railways of India Development Fund (RIDF) to serve as an institutional mechanism for raising funds from the market for infrastructure development of railway sector. Eight National Investment and Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs) are approved along the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor; three are being set up in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Odisha. PradhanMantri MUDRA Yojana (Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency) introduced to promote small-scale business entrepreneurs by providing them easy credit. With reforms in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), FDI limits enhanced to 100% with 49%. With these reforms in FDI, a record-breaking USD 56billion inflow took place in latest fiscal year. A dream project of government, which attracted huge investment in manufacturing sector, is Make in India, which increased the input of FDI and 7.5% growth experienced during last 3 fiscal years. High-speed broadband connectivity is provided to 2, 47,864 villages under the initiative taken by Bharat Broadband Network Ltd. DigiLocker facilitated the digitization of documents (driving license, school certificates etc.) and make it easy access by people. India comes in top five in space exploration. In respect to published paper and patents, it ranked 9th and 12th in the world. Atal Innovation Mission is a recent initiative taken by the government for development of

innovation and entrepreneurship. For the holistic development of students, more than 500 Tinkering Laboratories are being set up in schools across the country. Further, for tracking and identifying promising innovations in the country the India Innovation Index Framework has been launched.

SDG 14: Life Below Water

This Goal aims to conserve water sources and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Main target is the sustainable development of marine life, its protection and management of coastal ecosystem by reducing pollution of all kinds by 2025 and sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture, oceans, marine life and tourism by 2030. To achieve the target government took the following initiatives:

Government of India supports research and development activities for growth of mangrove biodiversity and more than 15,000 ha of mangroves have been planted in Gujarat. India is a part of the regional initiative 'Mangroves for the Future', being coordinated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Highest population of fishing communities spread in around 3,600 fishing villages. A large number around 14.50 million depends on fishing. For the sustainable development of the population engage in fishery, government has launched Potential Fishing Zone Advisory programme. A government has formulated Integrated National Fisheries Action Plan, 2016 envisages connecting 15 million beneficiaries and paid emphasis to check that there may be no adverse effect on marine species. Online Oil Spill Advisory System launched in 2015 to predict the movement of oil spills. Sagarmala scheme; launched in 2016 by the government, for the holistic development of coastal communities.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

The goal of SDG17 is to revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. The target of the goal is to achieve 0.7 per cent of ODA/GNI to developing countries, and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries, increase North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation to improve the revenue generation and tax policy along with technology and high speed internet connectivity to all by 2030.

For achieving the SDGs, huge funds are required and it is tough to arrange sufficient revenue. Therefore, to raise the fund required to meet the goals of SDGs India is taking several steps including the expansion the tax base along with strengthening the tax administration system. Reforms in tax like Goods, Service Tax (GST), and direct tax to increase domestic resource mobilization are the few steps taken by government. Swachh Bharat Cess (Clean India Cess) levied to generate fund through this tax for clean India mission. Public-Private Partnership (PPP) programmes helps in addressing the issue of funds for SDGs requirement. In this programme government, collaborate with private players to complete huge projects like highways construction etc. Apart from this FDI is also important one of the sources to generate huge capital for completion of SDGs goals and targets and India has witnessed the increase of 36% in FDI over the past year. South-South Cooperation principle is followed by India in its bilateral and multilateral engagements, which is particularly beneficial on sharing of best practices and

sustainable use of available resources. Civil Society organizations and other stakeholders also provide significant inputs towards the development of the measurement framework. Moreover, with technical support from the UNDP, the India is developing dashboard to strengthen the mechanisms for SDG monitoring and reporting.

Challenges in implementing SDGs in India

India face a number of challenges in implementation of SDGs in India. These are the population, financial limitation for implementing different programme and schemes, lack of coordination between state and union, climate change and lack of resources to small farmers, lack of proper communication, problem of poverty, imbalance of money, income, affordable health care, rural-urban, gender inequality, etc. As per the report of UNMDG 2014, one third of the world 1.2 billion extreme poor population lived in India, despite the high economic growth in 2010. India's expenditure is around 0.6-0.7 percent only in R&D, which is very less as compared to advanced countries. The definition of quality education or safe water is very myopic. The infrastructure developments do not meet the benchmark, even the internet connectivity is not up to the standard and reach. Implementation of SDGs in India by 2030 will cost around USD14.4 billion which alone central government cannot bear. Therefore, support from state government is also required to fill the financial gap in achieving the 17 SDGs target by 2030. The major challenge is monitoring of the scheme. For this NITI Ayog with support from central as well as state government can do well for proper implementation of schemes and their evaluation and monitoring.

Conclusion

India, being home to one-sixth of the entire population of the world holds the key to the success of SDG Agenda 2030. The government of India has adopted a 'whole of society approach' to implement and achieve SDGs in India by engaging state-level government, local government, corporate, civil society, local communities and other concerned stakeholders. Evaluation of various government programmes indicates that India has made considerable progress across various SDGs. It has achieved 100 percent sanitation, enhanced access to electricity, drinking water, food security, basic education, child health and reduced inequality in the society. These results have been achieved with robust SDGs localisation model by consistent development, implementation and monitoring of various programs and schemes at the state and district level. However, apart from financial constraints, there are number of challenges that need to be addressed in order to achieve SDGs targets in India. The effective governance and proper coordination between central, state, and district level administration will determine the achievement of SDGs in India.

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