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Sustainable Development Goals: Implementation and Challenges in India

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development is one of the major principles that is quite effective to control, prevent and abate the environmental pollution. It comprises of three pillars which seek for the overall continuous development. These pillars are: economic, social and environment. However, post to the Stockholm Declaration, the environmental laws got revolutions and thus resulted in enactment of several legislations. But alongside these laws, some principles were also added as the complimentary to such legislations. The sustainable development principle is duly recognized by the United Nations. This principle is set by the United Nations General Assembly and to achieve the objectives of this principle some goals are also set by it. In 2015, to achieve the objectives of such principle 17 goals were set, which were targeted to be achieved them by the year 2030. In this particular study, it has been tried to analyze the implementation of such principle in India and also tried to explain that how far it has been achieved till date.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations, U.N.E.P., Environment.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'Sustainability' is derived from the Latin word *sustinere*, which means to *tenere* or hold and it also can be understand in the meaning of 'support', 'maintain' or 'endure'. In the same context the whole term Sustainable development means the development which is to be maintained uniformly and continuous. The sustainable development was first time used in the Cocoyoc Declaration on Environment which held at Cocoyoc (Mexico) between 8-12 October, 1974. This was chaired by Barbara

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Ward, the President of the International Institute for Environment and Development. It was jointly sponsored by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Later the term was initially coined by the WCED (World Commission on Environment and Development), also known as Brundtland Commission. In its report, 'Our Common Future', published in 1987, the sustainable development was defined as "*the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*" Even after the effective meeting of Stockholm Declaration in 1972, after 10 years, some global environmental challenges were grown. When in 1983 UN General Secretary, Javier Perez De Cuéllar appointed the chairperson of the commission, Gro Harlem Brundtland, it was realized at the time that there was heavy loss to the human environment and natural resources. Therefore, it became the need of the time to focus and accomplish the sustainable development and UN decided to establish the Brundtland Commission. This commission focused on overall challenges like reducing low-income countries poverty, developing productivity, industrialization, economic growth, and obviously environmental protection.

Three Pillars of SD

The SD has three pillars which are interrelated to each other and the accomplishment of themselves makes the true meaning of sustainability. These pillars are:

- ✓ Environmental Sustainability
- ✓ Economic Sustainability
- ✓ Social Sustainability
- **Environmental Sustainability:** The environmental sustainability refers to the sustainability of the natural resources. We live in the environment and dependent to the natural resources. So, to maintain the sustainability it is needed that the resources we are using or consuming must be within the proper care and limits. There are various natural resources like air, water, coal, petroleum, etc. some of them are renewable and some are non-renewable and to maintain the environmental sustainability it is necessary to consume these resources so that these are not going to be exhausted. It is also needed that there shall be more and more afforestation, less population, and a proper balance between other pillars of the sustainable development.
- **Economic Sustainability:** This pillar of the SD requires that human has the right to business or trade to enhance the economy of the nation. But he must act with responsibly without damaging the other resources. In other words, it can be said that economic development is also the requisite of SD but it should be away from harm to environment, human and other natural resources. The processing of materials and the use of renewable energy are the main aspects of the development of the economic base.
- **Social Sustainability:** The social sustainability means the ability or capacity of the society, or of any social system, to coherently achieving a good social well-being. Social sustainability guarantees achieving the social well-being

of a community, an organization or a nation, which can be sustained to the eternity. The social sustainability is also defined by the Western Australia Council of Social Services (WACOSS): *“Social sustainability occurs when the formal and informal processes; systems; structures; and relationships actively support the capacity of current and future generations to create healthy and liveable communities. Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected and democratic and provide a good quality of life.”*

The principles by which this pillar was created are as follows:

- Combating social exclusion and discrimination: supporting reintegration, supporting gender equality, reducing the gender wage gap, promoting education, encouraging dialogue and realizing universal social rights. In other words, it aims to help people all over the world.
- Promote solidarity: helping to reduce social inequalities by collaborating with local and international associations and projects, and prioritizing fair trade products which guarantee an appropriate income for farmers and help to promote sustainable agriculture.
- Contributing to the well-being of stakeholders: facilitating social dialogue, encouraging information exchange and transparency, aligning working hours with employee profiles and making buildings accessible to people with reduced mobility.

The principle of the four pillars of sustainable development asserts that in order to live fully, it is necessary to pay attention to all four pillars of sustainable development and then support them. Although they sometimes overlap, it is important to identify the specific type of green business to focus on, as all four types have unique characteristics. Businesses must make a strategic decision about how to effectively incorporate the chosen approach into their policies and practices.

Alongside this the social sustainability has few dimensions:

1. amenities and infrastructure
2. social and cultural life
3. voice and influence, and
4. space to grow¹

Few more dimensions are given by the Noble Laureate, *Amartya Sen* as following:

- Equity
- Diversity
- Interconnected Cohesions
- Quality of Life

¹ Woodcraft et al (2011) Design for Social Sustainability, Social Life, London.

- Democracy and Governance
- Maturity

Therefore, on the basis of these dimensions, it can be said that social sustainability is not limited into just well-being but it is vastly meant to equity, diversity, quality of life etc.

If, further these three pillars of sustainability when brought together in the combination of two, they result into various propositions also as follows:

- Social + Environmental Sustainability = Equitable
- Social + Economic Sustainability = Bearable
- Environmental + Economic Sustainability = Viable

Scope and importance of Sustainable Development

Unlike other laws or legal principles Sustainable Development is not among those which is limited to a particular region. It has its omnibus presence and applicability and also it appeals and calls every nation to come forward and take some serious steps in environment preservation. The SD not only meant to the environment protection but it means to develop all around viz., economically, socially and environmentally. This principle focuses over those nations and communities who are fearlessly and carelessly wasting the renewable and non-renewable sources. It not only alarming for everyone but it still helpful to get rid off the brutal situations that we are going to face in future.

This concept focusses not to punish but it restricts only and motivates people to conserve the human race. Austerity is the only way that this principle teaches us how to preserve the natural resources and also the limit so that future generation can also enjoy the same.

The importance of Sustainable Development is too much for the progress of any nation. It is suitable for all round development as it focuses directly or indirectly to the economic growth, safe environment, strong health, hygienic food, quality education, pure water, fresh air, peaceful society etc. These are many folds that are related to human race by several ways. For the survival of the human race SD is very much needed. If it is not going to take care of the surroundings then it shall be the disaster for the planet in very less time.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The sustainable development goals are those objectives which are intended to be achieved by 2030. It is required by every nation to adopt the resolution and try to achieve the target by 2030. These goals are actually based on those three pillars which are the pat of Sustainable development. These three pillars are interconnected to each other and very much required to accomplish the objectives of sustainable development. These sustainable goals were set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. There is a collection of 17 goals and are intended to be achieved by 2030.

These goals are included in the United Nations Resolutions which is known as **Agenda 2030**. The motto of the SDGs is: *"A blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all by 2030."*

Fig 1: Sustainable Development Goals²

Goal 1	End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
Goal 2	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
Goal 3	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
Goal 4	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
Goal 5	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
Goal 6	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
Goal 7	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and
Goal 8	productive employment and decent work for all.
Goal 9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
Goal 10	Reduce inequality within and among countries
Goal 11	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
Goal 12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
Goal 13	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy.
Goal 14	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
Goal 15	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
Goal 16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
Goal 17	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Source: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

² www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

Measuring the Progress of SD

The progress of these SDGs is done under two major steps:

(i) Targets and Indicators, and (ii) Reviews of Indicators.

First one means, that each goal has typically 8 to 12 targets and each target has further indicators ranging between 1 and 4. These targets may be either “outcome” targets or “means of implementation” targets. It is denoted by number system and number+ lower case letters. The number system means here the target to be attained and the combination of the two characters shows that ‘how the SDGs are to be achieved. For example: SDG 1 (“End poverty

in all its forms from everywhere”) have 5 targets which are labelled as 1.1 to 1.5 in addition it has two targets which are “means of implementation targets” and these are labelled as Targets 1.a and 1.b.

The second step is to review the indicators. These indicators are reviewed by UN Statistical Commission. These indicators were last time reviewed in 2020 by the 51st session of the Statistical Commission and will be reviewed again in 2025.

Sustainable Development and India

The Sustainable Development is an important principle which is just evolved for the overall human development. It has already discussed that it is based on three vital pillars which covers up the whole development of human.

In India, to attain the sustainable development goals, the Government of India has set up a separate organization which is named as NITI Aayog i.e. National Institute for Transforming India. This also connotes to the Policy Commission as per its Hindi meaning “*uhfr vk;ksx*”. This body of the Government of India can be called as *the public policy think tank*. It has been established with the aim to achieve SD Goals with cooperative federalism by fostering the involvement of State Governments.

India is the country with diversity. It has at various cultures, traditions, climate etc. It is very clear here to implement any principle uniformly. So, to achieve the SD goals it is very difficult to achieve very accurately. Alongside that a governmental body NITI Aayog is working on it but in true sense the its working feels ambiguous to us. It has been working hard but it seems to be on documents or in spoken words. However, there are so many policies working for the all-round development and to achieve such goals, but every time when we try to face the reality in practical it merely looks like paper work or zingy speech. It is not the matter to say condemn the Government or say something, nope. It is a big concern to go through the roots, not at the top level but at every level like central, state, district, talukas, municipal, towns, gram panchayat etc.

If we focus over the various Indexes on various aspects India seems to be very less scoring in many of them. However, in very few subjects India has grabbed top positions but mostly in those indexes which are meant for Sustainable Development Goals there seems to be some failures.

S.No.	Name of Index	Rank (in 2020)	Total Number of Counries
1	Hunger Index	94	107
2	Human Freedom Index	111	162
3	Human Development Index	131	189
4	World Risk Index	89	181
5	Economic Freedom Index	105	178
6	World Press Freedom	142	180
7	Environmental Performance Index	168	180
8	Gender Gap Index	112	135
9	Global Peace Index	139	163
10	Sustainability Index	77	180
11	Flourishing Index	131	180

These are few subject matters which shows the rank of India globally and we can notice the rank of India not so satisfactory. These indexes actually show the performance of our country to achieve the SD Goals. These indexes are just selected in relation to Sustainable development, the above-mentioned list includes all those factors which are vital for the overall development of human. As we notice it includes peace, human development, gender related index, sustainability, hunger, environment etc. But in my view the performance may be better and the failure may have some very common reasons and it can be also discussed.

INDIA FACING TROUBLE TO ACHIEVE SDGs

However, India has tried all the possible ways to achieve sustainable goals but despite of these efforts it seems not upto the mark while achieving these goals. According to a report India has slipped down to 2 ranks in comparison to the last year. Some major causes of degradation in the rank are the hunger and low food security, gender equality, fostering innovation.

The hurdles in achieving these goals can be so many. These hurdles can be either technical or may be practical. By technical hurdles it means that the criterial of calculation the SDGs is little bit complex and not very easy to deal with that. On the other hand, practical hurdle means those situations that are existed around us and can anytime be arise.

Technical Hurdles

- **Identifying Indicators:** Previous experience suggests that we haven't been particularly successful in choosing pertinent indicators to evaluate results. The definition of quality education has not been successful. Since hand pumps and tube wells are regarded as equally safe as piped water supplies in India,

the official statistics indicates that 86 percent of Indians have access to safe drinking water, which puts us “on pace” to meet the MDG objective for access to clean water.

However, the prevalence of waterborne illnesses and diarrhea-related mortality demonstrates that this is not the case.

- **Funding SDGs:** According to a recent analysis, the cost of achieving the SDGs in India by 2030 is estimated to be \$14.5 billion USD. Given the recent Union government cuts to social sector programmes, there will likely be a sizable financing vacuum unless states allocate a substantial amount of their budgets to the social sector. Even high growth and redistribution are insufficient. Despite significant economic progress, one-third of the world’s 1.2 billion extremely poor people lived in India alone in 2010, according to the United Nations MDG 2014 report. Given these limitations, it is anticipated that, in addition to domestic resources, private money will be a key source of funding for the SDGs.
- **Ownership and Monitoring:** Ownership will present a third major problem, which is related. According to reports, NITI Aayog would be crucial in monitoring development. Members of the Aayog, however, have voiced concerns about their ability to handle this enormous responsibility. Furthermore, ownership will be needed not just at the federal level but also at the state and local levels if states are anticipated to play a significant role (given the devolution following the 14th Finance Commission).
- **Measuring Development:** The final and most crucial point is how to gauge your success or progress. According to the government, it was nearly impossible to accurately gauge progress toward even the MDGs due to data availability concerns, periodicity problems, and poor administrative data coverage.

Despite the fact that the SDGs set broad goals and objectives, it is important to keep in mind that it will be up to national and state governments to establish priorities, choose locally relevant policies, foster innovation, and make sure that a strategy for implementation and monitoring is in place. Then and only then will we have a hope of making sure that the **S** in SDGs also stands for ‘success’.

Practical Hurdles

- **Pandemic:** The pandemic situation is an undesired and unpredictable one. As the whole world faced COVID-19 situation, the daily life was badly affected. The whole country was struggling with food, shelter, education, health etc. These are not only the essential part of human life but also a part of the Sustainable Development. Amid COVID-19 situation these Goals and related database was very difficult to track.
- **Natural Disaster:** Sometimes natural disaster is also the reason of being obstacle to achieve few SD goals in India. Natural disasters like flood or earthquake totally disturbs the human life that makes some impossibilities to achieve

the desired goals. On the one side it is enough technical to measure the goals, and on one side it is very hard to make consistency in human life. Database that is needed for the measure of Sustainable Development goals can be affected by such situations.

- **Internal Disturbances:** Another major problem while achieving the SD goals is some internal disturbances. Here disturbances mean various other issues which are being faced by the nation time to time. It includes political issues, economical crisis, chaos in public tranquility etc. However, these disturbances are very unpredictable and hard to explain in few words.
- **Localizing the SDGs:** When it comes to localizing the SDGs, the process of creating policies and budgets, planning, implementing, and monitoring strategy at the level of State and local governments does not clearly represent the SDGs. Additionally, most States have yet to implement the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act's provision for the devolution of finances, functions, and functionaries (3Fs) to local governments. As a result, both rural and urban local governments are unable to establish local budgets and plans for the people in their respective areas. NITI Aayog, which serves as the national nodal body for monitoring the SDGs' implementation, has not made any concerted efforts to pressure States to transfer 3Fs to local governments.
- **Local Level Supervising SDGs:** The State Planning Departments/Boards in the States have been designated as the nodal agency to supervise the SDGs' implementation at the State level, similar to NITI Aayog. Given their capacity in terms of adequate financial and human resources and the decentralized planning processes they use, many States are currently not prepared for the implementation of the SDGs. Additionally, not much has been done to improve financial allocations and restructure programmes in accordance with perceived local requirements.
- **Lacking Financial Resources:** There hasn't been much effort made to solve the problems and obstacles that would make it easier to mobilize more domestic resources. Because State and local governments rely heavily on transfers from above, their inability to mobilize financial resources will result in a reduction in the amount of public spending on social and economic services. Additionally, the SDGs have not been properly incorporated into the budget and development plans of the Union and State Governments.
- **Inadequacy in Policy Implementations:** It was found that the unit costs of services like the housing programme, old pension schemes, Supplementary Nutrition Program, Mid-Day Meal Schemes, Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarships for Minorities, honoraria for front-line service providers like school teachers, health professionals, Workers and Helpers of Anganwadi Centers, and cooks, were not adequate. This results in many flagship programmes and governmental organisations providing subpar services.

However, Niti Aayog is continuously working with all capability to achieve the sustainable development goals. but still on the basis of some research there is a need for more helping hands to speed up the progress. Here are some suggestions for effectively working to achieve sustainable development goals. It is not necessary to be followed but still they can be Followed up summed up as follows.

1. Sustainable development is the overall development of a nation. it includes human industrial social environment development. As a guardian of the state, always look forward for the all- round Human Development. For this purpose, the government has various schemes and policies. Government also launched many initiatives for the betterment of human life. for example, swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Beti Bachao beti padhao etc. So, to achieve some of the goals desired for sustainable development goals. These policies, schemes or initiative must be followed up by every citizen of India seriously.
2. As it is well known that NITI Ayog is working very well to achieve such goals. But it is very difficult for a single unit or body to entertain with every aspect. Therefore, unlike NITI Ayog, it is much needed here there should be some other authorities at local level. As the NITI Ayog is working state, should also consider the same to make some strategy to achieve such goals. This initiative to organise some authorities at state level and also to downwards level within the state will definitely help to sort-out the work.
3. It is also needed that there must be some awareness programme to disseminate all these sustainable development goals and their importance. Despite publicising the political party symbol, & wasting the time and money over other unnecessary things. The importance of sustainability must be shared with the citizens.
4. Also, when authorities are being established at state or lower level there must be prepare fund allocation for smooth functioning of the body established. Fund allocation with proper way will help the authority to achieve the desired target with ease.
5. Achieve Public Participation; Sustainability is not only limited to the authority or government of a nation. But this is the important span of time which is being calculated for the better future of the human being. So, it is very much needed or mandatory for the purpose. Unlike a research they must help and support the authority, or related authorized person by making right data transaction.
6. accurate Data Collection is one of the needs by the authority and it is needed and expected that the data which is being published must be accurate here. The accurate means that it must not only the paper work. The data must tally with the ground reality.

CONCLUSION

Environment has been in existence with the evolution of Homo-Sapiens. So, the

environment problems generated from the ancient era or vedic era environment has been contaminated and also was protected. However, the way of securing or preserving the environment was unique or ethical. But during that time sustainability was not too much eyed. Now, in modern days we are facing environment. Various incidents and various nation have awaited the entire human being to be aware about the environment conservation.

Several wars in modern era like World war I and World war II had made much disaster not only to the human but also to the environment. In 1972 Stockholm declaration made several changes to the legislation of several nations later in 1987 the concept of Sustainable Development came into light by the Brundtland Report and in it consequences Millennium Development goals were set in 2000 to be achieved by 2015.

Then in 2015 another second time Sustainable Development Goals were set to be achieved by 2030. Now, here are living and starving towards these goals.

There are 17 goals to be achieved at certain perimeter, by 2030. In this study, the progress of sustainable development goals in India has been discussed & it is also tried to find out the obstacles while achieving target. However, it is not a easy task to complete the target but still there is enough opportunities and unique ways to achieve the aim. There are several recommendations made under the study, that might help if considered. There may be still some unambiguity to understand or accept these recommendations but it is hope, it mat work as a hint for some betterment. NITI Ayog is enough sound body to overcome every obstacle & will achieve the target by 2030 hopefully.