

Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Preparedness of India

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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are also known as Global Goals were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the people and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. At its heart there are 17 SDGs which are an urgent call for action by all countries-developed and developing in a global partnership. The present study tries to analyze the performance of India regarding achievements of SDGs by 2030. National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog has been assigned the role of overseeing the performance of SDGs in the country. The SDG India Index and dashboard is computed by NITI Aayog since 2018. The study also discusses the major challenges States and Union Territories are facing in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and tries to suggest some measures to improve the performance of the SDG index score of India.

Keywords: Poverty, Peace, Sustainable Development Goals

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I. Introduction

The term Sustainable Development first came into eminence in the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) in 1980. Gro Harlem Brundtland was the first who introduced the concept of Sustainable development. Sustainable development is a process which meets the needs of current generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as Global Goals were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the people and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart there are 17 SDGs which are an urgent call for action by all countries-developed and developing in a global partnership.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To discuss the evolution of concept of Sustainable Development Goals.
2. To analyze the performance of SDGs in case of India.
3. To investigate the performance of SDG wise in case of states and Union Territories.

The present paper has been divided into four sections. Section-I deals with the concept of Sustainable development and its evolution. In Section-II we have analyzed performance of India regarding achievement of Sustainable development Goals on the basis of composite score computed by NITI Aayog. In Section-III we have discussed Performance of SDGs in different states and Union territories. Section-IV deals with the conclusions and policy implications.

Section – I

Concept of Sustainable Development Goals and its Evolution

The objective of sustainable development is open to many different interpretations but a comprehensive view point and integration of social, economic and environmental objective is needed to fully understand the sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development was supposed to reconcile economic, social and ecological dynamics was first introduced almost forth two years ago (IUCN 1980). The idea of “sustainability” is key to understand sustainable development. The notion of sustainable development- emerged from a critique to growth--- a central point in the neo-classical economics. Theorists believe in growth models that address this issue. The modified version of Solow’s model constitutes the dominant element in the neo-

classical theory's response to the issues related with sustainable development. Sustainable growth is in line with environmental protection. According to Neo-classical economists the objective of sustainable development should reflect the need for societies to maintain the capacity to produce well being overtime and to ensure at the minimum that the future generations have access to the same level of well being as present generations. Sustainability may be defined in this context, as the "non-decline" over time, of individual well being which can be measured depending on the type of analysis by that level of individual utility, income and consumption". Growth needs to happen in line with environment protection. Here it is worth mentioning that in mid 1950s, Simon Kuznets tried to establish a link between environmental problems and economic growth. Criticizing the Meadows Report (1972), Wilfred Backerman (1972:336) presented this most optimistic of viewpoints concerning the capacity of modern economies to manage environmental problems. Backerman (1992: 482); Gene Grossman and Alan Kruger (1993, 1995) etc. also support the view that in the early stages of economic growth, environmental degradation happens; but when society and economies become richer, the sustainable development begins to happen. Some economists say that sustainable development is the sixth stage of economic growth. There was a consensus among the economists during 1950-1995 on the self-correcting nature of economic growth leading to the solution of environmental problems of SO₂ and CO₂. An "inverted-U" shaped relationship was not established for physical resources- the relationship seems to exist, but it may not be "systematic".

The relationship between environmental economics and sustainability and sustainable development goals is well established. There are four strategies to establish the link. The inclusion of natural capital in the System of national Accounts (SEEA); Green consumerism, Fiscal policy and De-growth models. The SEEA is correlated with sustainable development goals: SDG1 (No Poverty); SDG3 (Good Health and Well being); SDG6 (Clean water and sanitation); SDG14 (Life below water) and SDG15 (Life on Land).

Green consumerism aligns with SDG3 (Good health and well being) SDG12 (Responsible consumption and production); and SDG13 (climate action). Fiscal policy is related with the SDG1 (No poverty); SDG3 (Good health and well being); SDG13 (climate action); SDG12 (Responsible consumption and production); SDG14 (Life below water); and SDG15 (Life on land). Lastly the de growth economic model aligns with SDG1 (No poverty); SDG7(Affordable and clean energy), SDG9 (Industry, Innovation and infrastructure); 11 (Sustainable cities and communities); SDG12 (responsible consumption and production), and SDG13 (Climate action).

The above discussion well-establishes the link between environmental issues and SDGs and the importance of Environment Economics in resolving the issues related with SDGs with the help of environmental economics. The inter relationships among the SDGS goals as well as the linkage of economic growth with sustainable development has also been theoretically established. No, it is time to trace the evolution of sustainable development efforts.

The SDGs for 2030 evolved from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for 2015. The MDGs were a set of eight international development goals with 18 quantifiable targets for the year 2015 set by the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000. There was a significant political and economic change throughout the world due to MDGs. Despite of this change and economic growth, the countries were facing many challenges like environmental degradation, increase in energy consumption, depletion of natural resources etc. To overcome these challenges SDGs came into existence in 2015 with more universal, comprehensive and inclusive nature of goals compared with the MDGs.

Sustainable Development Goals at a Glance



Source: www.un.org.in

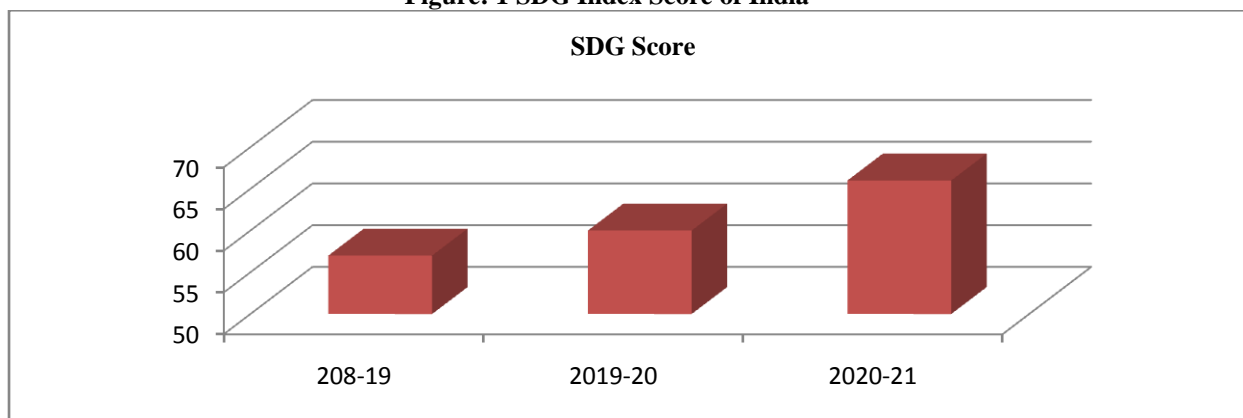
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of seventeen point's target that all the members of United Nations agreed to work upon for the better future of the country. SDGs are an intergovernmental agreement formulated to act as a post-2015 development agenda, its predecessor being Millennium Development Goals. It is a group of 17 goals having 169 targets and 304 indicators as proposed by United Nations General Assembly's Open working group on Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030.

Section-II

Performance of Sustainable Development Goals in India

National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog has been assigned the role of overseeing the performance of SDGs in India. The SDG India Index and dashboard has been released by NITI Aayog since 2018 with an objective to track the progress and problems of all States and Union territories in India. The SDG index is a measure of progress achieved by states and UTs on parameters like health, education, gender, economic growth, institutions, climate change and environment.

Figure: 1 SDG Index Score of India



Source: NITI Aayog SDG India Index

The above figure (1) shows that India's SDG index score has shown an improved performance from 2018-19 to 2020-21 computed by NITI Aayog. The SDG index score was 57 in 2018-19. The score reached to 60 in 2019-20 and 66 in 2020-21. This rise in the score was due to the country wide improvement across clean water and sanitation (SDG Goal 6) and affordable and clean energy (Goal 7). The improvement in the score indicates that the country overall has progressed forward in its journey towards achieving the SDGs.

Table: 1 SDG Index Composite Score of India (2018-2020)

SDG Goal	Composite Index 2018	Composite Index 2019	Composite Index 2020
SDG 1	54	50	60
SDG 2	48	35	47
SDG 3	52	61	74
SDG 4	58	58	57
SDG 5	36	42	48
SDG 6	63	88	83
SDG 7	51	70	92
SDG 8	65	64	61
SDG 9	44	65	55
SDG 10	71	64	67
SDG 11	39	53	79
SDG 12	90	55	74
SDG 13	Not calculated	60	54
SDG 14	Not calculated	Not calculated	Not calculated
SDG 15	Not calculated	66	66
SDG 16	71	72	74
SDG 17	Not calculated	Not calculated	Not calculated

Source: NITI Aayog

SDG 1 (No Poverty): The objective of SDG1 is to eradicate poverty from India till 2030 not only in monetary terms but in all forms and dimensions. India's SDG composite score has improved from 2019 to 2020 regarding this goal. Various Govt. schemes like Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojna, MGNREGA, Health Insurance, and Maternity benefit scheme etc. are playing an important role to achieve SDG1.

SDG 2 (Zero Hunger): The SDG aim to end all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030. The composite score of India has declined in 2019 and 2020. The score was 48 in 2018 but it deteriorated to 35 in 2019 and slightly improved in 2020. No doubt there are various hunger fighting initiative have been taken by the Govt. of India such as National Nutrition Mission, National Food Security Mission, Zero Hunger programme, Mid-day Meal Programme to reach out the goal till 2030. Despite of the various initiatives the score has declined which is serious concern for us. The fall in index may be due to COVID-19 situation.

SDG 3 (Good Health & Well being): Good health is essential to sustainable development and the 2030 agenda reflects the complexity and interconnectedness of two. It takes into account widening economic and social inequalities, rapid urbanization, threats to climate and the environment, the continuing burden of HIV and other infectious diseases. India has shown a remarkable performance in the achievement of this Goal as the score has shown a jump from 52 in 2018 to 74 in 2020.

SDG 4 (Quality Education): Achieving inclusive and quality education for all reaffirms the belief that education is one of the most powerful vehicles for sustainable development. Union Cabinet has approved New Education Policy (NEP 2020) on 29th July, 2020 which is in aligned with the achievement of SDG 4 till 2030. The policy aims to transform India's education system by 2040. The score has remained almost same from 2018 to 2020.

SDG 5 (Gender Equality): Ending all discrimination against men and women is a basic human right and is a prerequisite for sustainable development. The composite index has shown an improved performance during the period under study. The improved performance may be attributed to various initiatives taken by Government like Beti Bachao beti Padhao (BBBP), Mahila Shakti Kandra (MSK), Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Sukanaya Samridhi Yojna, Skill Up-gradation and Mahila Coir Yojna etc. along with the reservation of seats for women in Panchyati Raj Institutions.

SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation): India has the world's second largest population but just 4 percent of portable water. Nearly 600 million Indians face high to extreme water stress; and by 2030, the country's water demand is projected to be twice the available supply. India's SDG score has shown improvement in 2019 but it declined slightly in 2020. Due to the Swachha Bharat Mission launched in 2014, India has achieved sanitation coverage of 100 percent in rural areas. 633 districts and 35 States/UTs have been verified to open defecation free in December 2019.

SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy): Energy security is necessary for socio-economic development of any country. The SDG score of India has shown a marvelous performance as the score reached to 92 in 2020 from 51 in 2018 due to the 100 percent electrification in all states except Chhattisgarh.

SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth): SDG score has shown slight decline in case of India during the period under study.

SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure): The SDG composite score improved in 2019 but deteriorated slightly in 2020. However, India's rank in Global innovation index has improved in the year 2020.

SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities): The SDG composite score decline in 2019 and 2020 which shows that inequalities has not reduced significantly rather increased in the COVID-19 period.

SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities): The SDG score of India has shown a marvelous performance as the score reached to 79 in 2020 from 39 in 2018. The improved score is due to flagship schemes introduced by Govt. like Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Smart Cities Mission, Metro rail projects etc.

SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production): The SDG score declined in 2019 but improved in 2020.

SDG 13 (Climate Action): The SDG score was 60 in 2019 but declined to 54 in 2020.

SDG 15 (Life on Land): SDG score is found to be constant i.e. 66 during the period under study. Various initiative have been taken by the Government of India to meet this target such as Green Highways Policy 2015, the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats Programme, The programme on conservation of natural resources and ecosystems etc.

SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong institutions): The score was 71 in 2018 but increased slightly in 2019 and 2020. To achieve this target India has taken many initiatives like Right of Information Act (RTI), Aadhar which is one of the world's largest unique identification national projects.

Section-III

State/UTs Wise Performance of Sustainable Development Goals in India

One of the major concerns about the progress of achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in India is the unequal performance of states. Based on the goal score, the states were classified into four categories under each goal.

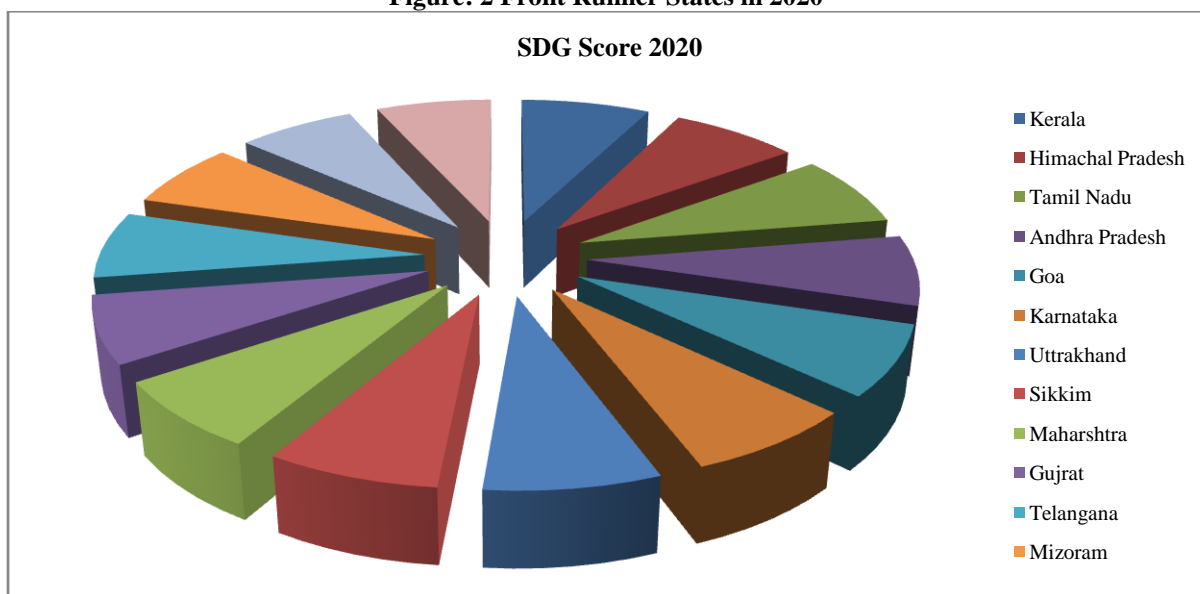
Achiever: When the index score equals 100

Front Runner: When the index score is between 65 and 99, including both

Performer: When the index score is between 50 and 64, including both

Aspirant: When the index score is less than 50

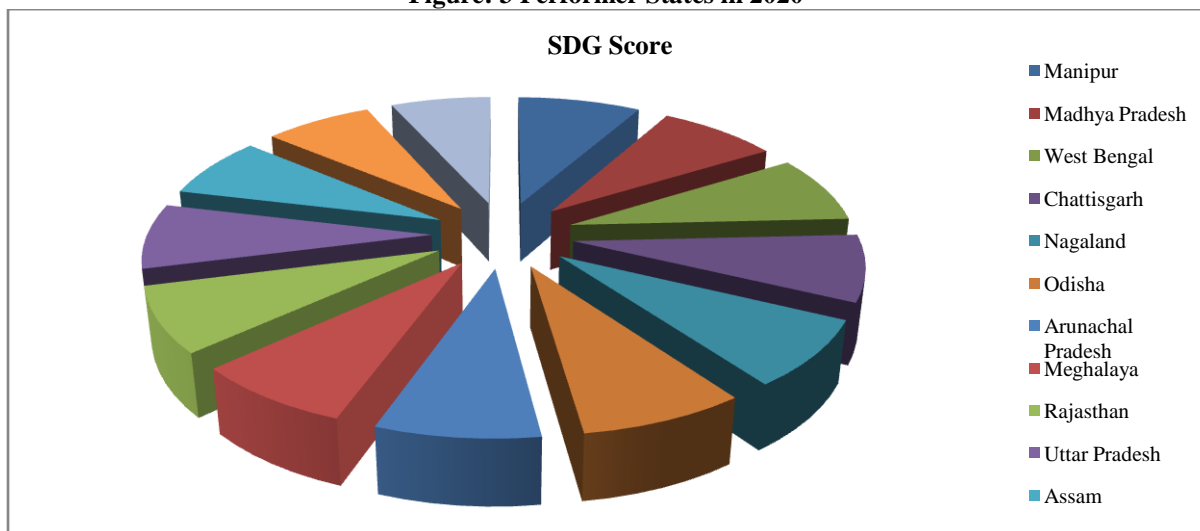
Figure: 2 Front Runner States in 2020



Source: NITI Aayog SDG 3.0

The figure (2) shows that Kerala retained its rank as the top state with a score of 75 in 2020. Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh took the second spot while Goa, Uttarakhand, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh shared the fourth spot with SDG score of 72. SDG score of Maharashtra was 70 whereas Gujarat and Telangana’s score was 69. Tripura was at the bottom with a score of 65.

Figure: 3 Performer States in 2020



Source: NITI Aayog SDG 3.0 (2022-2021)

The figure (3) shows that under the category of performer states in composite SDG score Manipur was at the first position whereas Bihar was in the bottom of list.

Table: 2 SDG Score of Union Territories in 2020

Union Territories	SDG Score
Chandigarh	79
Delhi	68
Puducherry	68
Lakshadweep	68
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	67
Jammu & Kashmir	66

Ladakh	66
Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu	62

Source: NITI Aayog SDG 3.0

The above table (2) shows that all the UTs are Front Runner in 2020 except Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu which is in performer state.

Table: 3 SDG Goal Wise Top States/UTS

SDG Goal	Top State UTs With SDG Score	Top UTs With SDG Score
SDG 1	Tamil Nadu (86),	Delhi (81)
SDG 2	Kerala (80)	Chandigarh (97)
SDG 3	Gujarat (86)	Delhi (90)
SDG 4	Kerala (80)	Chandigarh (79)
SDG 5	Chhattisgarh (64)	Andaman & Nicobar Islands (68)
SDG 6	Goa (100)	Lakshadweep (100)
SDG 7	Andhra Pradesh (100), Goa (100), Haryana (100), Himachal Pradesh (100), Karnataka (100), Kerala (100), Maharashtra (100), Mizoram (100), Punjab (100), Rajasthan (100), Sikkim (100), Tamil Nadu (100), Telangana (100), Uttarakhand (100), Uttar Pradesh (100)	Andaman & Nicobar Islands (100), Chandigarh (100), Delhi (100), Jammu & Kashmir (100), Ladakh (100)
SDG 8	Himachal Pradesh (78)	Chandigarh (70)
SDG 9	Gujarat (72)	Delhi (66)
SDG 10	Meghalaya (88)	Chandigarh (100)
SDG 11	Punjab (91)	Chandigarh (98)
SDG 12	Tripura (99)	Jammu & Kashmir (95), Ladakh (95)
SDG 13	Odisha (70)	Andaman & Nicobar Islands (77)
SDG 14	Odisha (NA)	----
SDG 15	Arunachal Pradesh (93)	Chandigarh (85)
SDG 16	Uttarakhand (86)	Puducherry (86)

Source: NITI Aayog SDG India Index 3.0 (2020-21)

Section-IV

Conclusions and Way Forward

The findings of the study indicates that India's overall SDG score has shown improvement which is on account of improvement in performance of providing facilities including clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy among others. Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are the top performer states whereas Bihar, Assam and Jharkhand are the worst Performer states. Among UTs, Chandigarh maintained its top position followed by Delhi. In order to achieve SDGs by 2030 India still needs to improve its performance by addressing the challenging issues like Poverty, hunger, inequality, rising population, funding, COVID-19 pandemic effects etc.

Way Forward:

1. The Government should increase adequate budgetary spending especially in the social infrastructure in order to achieve SDGs till 2030.
2. There is an urgent need to develop innovative policies and strategies to reach the target.
3. Progress against environmental SDGs: Climate Action (SDG13), Responsible consumption and production (SDG12) and protecting life on land and life below water has been very slow and not achievable by 2030 if appropriate action is not taken by states.
4. Fiscal constraints further compounded by COVID-19 impede the ability of Indian member states to address the SDGs in a holistic manner.

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