

**INDIA AND THE SDG'S TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE OF ALL****Bikramjit Kaur, Ph. D.***Assistant Professor GCCBA – 50, Chandigarh***Abstract**

*“Development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.*

*-Brundtland commission on World Commission on Environment and*

**Development**

*India's success in sustaining high growth and poverty alleviation will substantially contribute to achieving the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals. The year 2015 is a landmark year for global development - the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the world is set to adopt a new set of transformative and universal sustainable development goals (SDGs). At this juncture, when the framework for the next phase of global development is being formulated, it becomes critical to assess the achievements of the MDGs in India. Improving the lives of 1.4 billion Indians would make a major dent in the goal of improving the lives of all humanity. The process of doing so will bring forth technologies and pathways to progress that can be shared with other developing countries to enable them to also share in the increased prosperity. The paper focuses on strategies for sustainable development which are necessary for survival of our present generation as well as for the coming generation. An attempt is also made to study India's progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the challenges that India faces in achieving sustainable development goals.*

**Keywords:** *Sustainable development goals, Present and Future Generation, Millennium Development Goals.*



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**Introduction**

An agreement by member states to establish a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was one of the main outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), popularly known as the Rio+20, convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012. The idea of having SDGs was introduced in the run upto Rio+20 by the Governments of Colombia and Guatemala, and later supported by many countries. The new sustainable development agenda seeks to ensure that the momentum generated by the millennium development goals (MDG's) is carried forward beyond 2015 — to achieve not just substantial reductions in poverty, hunger and other deprivations but finally

end them to provide a life of dignity to all. Sustainable development ensures the well-being of individual by integrating social development, economic development, and environmental conservation and protection. The most frequently used definition of sustainable development is ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’ The meaning of needs is something that is necessary for the organism to live a healthy life. It is necessary for the sustainable development that the policies and technologies should be green so that environmental ability meets present and future generation in equal manner. It was coined in 1987 by the United Nations-appointed World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland Commission after its chair, former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland.

### **Definition of Sustainable Development**

“Development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

### **-- Brundtland commission on World Commission on Environment and Development (1987)**

Last month, 193 countries gathered together at the UN Summit on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to adopt an ambitious new global development agenda. Along with other world leaders, Prime Minister Modi too expressed India’s commitment to work towards achieving these goals by 2030. Comprising 17 goals and 169 targets the SDGs expand on the millennium development goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000 which are due to expire this year.

## IT'S 2015. NOW WHAT?

The new post-2015 development agenda builds on the Millennium Development Goals, eight anti-poverty targets that the world committed to achieving by 2015. Enormous progress has been made on the MDGs, showing the value of a unifying agenda underpinned by goals and targets. Yet despite this success, the indignity of poverty has not been ended for all.

The proposed framework has 17 Goals and 169 targets:



The United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda will be held from Sept. 25 to 27, 2015, in New York and convened as a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly.  
SOURCE: SUSTAINABLEDEVELOPMENT.UN.ORG



The sustainable development goals (SDGs) are a new, universal set of goals, targets and indicators that UN member states will be expected to use to frame their agendas and political policies over the next 15 years. The SDGs follow and expand on the millennium development goals (MDGs), which were agreed by governments in 2001 and are due to expire at the end of this year.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of the study are delineated below as:

- To focus on strategies for sustainable development which are necessary for survival of our present generation as well as for the coming generation.
- To study India's progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.
- To examine the challenges that India faces in achieving sustainable development goals.

### **Research Methodology**

The research is a descriptive study based on secondary data collected from various books, magazines, journals, newspapers, and various websites of internet etc.

### **Strategies for Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development, at present time is a most concern phenomena. Globally every country including most developing country like India and China thinks very much about it

because they realise that their future generation must be suffer to lack of resources which is obviously most central to survive. This phenomenon comes after Second World War. The concept of sustainable development is not related only future generation but also with the present generation. There are three sources of finance for the SDGs: domestic in-country resources, traditional aid, and private finance. The main source of financing for the SDGs will be resources from developing countries themselves, through domestic revenues like taxes which should be applied towards development outcomes. Even assuming that they will grow, these resources will not be enough to self-finance poverty reduction for the foreseeable future in many countries.

**SDGs need to:**

- f- Be universally applicable
- f- Include common but differentiated responsibilities
- f- Include a proper implementation framework
- f- Have accountability mechanisms that define and clearly specify the roles of various stakeholders
- f- Encourage democratic participation and transparency

**Table 1: Possible Set Of Sustainable Development Goals (Sdgs)**

Possible Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Potential Sub-Goals	Example of Linkages with Cross-Cutting Objectives
<b>Ensuring sustainable energy for all</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal access to modern energy</li> <li>• Enhancing energy efficiency</li> <li>• Protecting the environment by increasing share of renewable energy</li> <li>• Cleaning the fossil fuel sources of energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poverty eradication: Reduces time and income poverty</li> <li>- Gender equality: Reduces the time and physical burden on women and also creates livelihood opportunities for women</li> <li>- Employment creation: Facilitates promotion of household level enterprises and creates livelihood opportunities in renewable energy sector</li> <li>- Environmental health: Reduces indoor air pollution and improves environmental health</li> <li>- Human health: Improvement in environmental health also promotes human health</li> <li>- Resource efficiency: Promotes energy use efficiency</li> </ul>
<b>Ensuring universal access to potable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to reliable clean water supply to households including safe drinking water</li> <li>• Improving water use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poverty eradication: Reduces time and income poverty, and is essential for ensuring food and energy security</li> <li>- Gender equality: Reduces the time and</li> </ul>

<b>water and sanitation</b>	<p>efficiency and reduce water loss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water resource conservation and management</li> <li>• Access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation and hygiene</li> <li>• Addressing contamination and pollution of surface water and overuse of groundwater</li> <li>• Managing wastewater based on concept of reduction/omission, treatment, reuse/ discharge</li> </ul>	<p>physical burden on women who collect the water from source improving their health and education outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Environmental health: Proper sanitation, particularly solid waste and wastewater management, prevents contamination of the environment and natural resources</li> <li>- Human health: Reduces the physical burden on women and children, who collect the water from source; proper sanitation reduces other health risks</li> <li>- Employment creation: Water and wastewater management can create employment opportunities for local inhabitants</li> <li>- Resource efficiency: Promotes water use efficiency and management</li> </ul>
<b>Ensuring sustainable cities and safe and secure human settlements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to shelter for all</li> <li>• Promotion of green buildings</li> <li>• Improvement of public transport in the more populous cities</li> <li>• Encouraging green cover and open spaces in cities</li> <li>• Ensuring resource use efficiency (water, energy, materials) of construction</li> <li>• Improvement of road infrastructure in cities</li> <li>• Improving infrastructure of non-motorized transport</li> <li>• Reducing the number of traffic accidents resulting in death or serious injury</li> <li>• Promoting environmentally sound waste disposal, treatment, and recycling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poverty eradication: Reduces urban poverty and improves quality of living</li> <li>- Gender equality: Reduces the time and physical burden on women in the household, positive social impacts on women with access to shelter and transport infrastructure</li> <li>- Environmental health: Improved public transport and use of renewable energy reduces environmental pollution</li> <li>- Human health: Improved indoor climate in buildings has a positive impact on human health; increased share of non-motorized transport and public transport reduces air pollution and improves human health</li> <li>- Employment creation: Well-managed cities can provide an economic environment capable of generating employment opportunities</li> <li>- Resource efficiency: Promotes resource use efficiency of different kinds by improving public transport and promoting green buildings</li> </ul>
<b>Fostering disaster risk reduction and creating resilience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having in place early warning systems</li> <li>• Reducing the risk of disasters</li> <li>• Improving rehabilitation and resettlement for all disasters</li> <li>• Arrangements for long-term disaster recovery</li> <li>• Disaster resilient infrastructure</li> <li>• Adopting and implementing policies and plans that integrate comprehensive and multi-sectoral measures to strengthen resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poverty eradication: Reducing the risk of getting affected by disasters reduces the chances of falling into poverty; disaster risk reduction protects development investments and helps societies to accumulate wealth in spite of hazards</li> <li>- Gender equality: Promotes gender parity in educational outcomes by reducing negative impact on education (which is higher for girls); reduces vulnerabilities and helps build capacities of women and girls placed at heightened risk of disaster</li> <li>- Environmental health: Reduces environmental degradation and improves natural resource management</li> </ul>

<p><b>Protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressing water pollution/f</li> <li>• Promoting water conservation and management</li> <li>• Managing land use change/f Managing waste</li> <li>• Addressing climate change through moderating greenhouse gas emission levels</li> <li>• Combating desertification/f Preserving mountain ecosystems</li> <li>• Conserving biodiversity/f Promoting eco-tourism, forests, and tree cover</li> <li>• Responsible mining</li> <li>• Promoting sustainable procurement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Human health: Reduces hazard impacts on human health and well-being; safer, better prepared, and resilient healthcare facilities improve health outcomes</li> <li>- Employment creation: Reduction in losses to economic infrastructure prevents destruction of employment opportunities</li> <li>- Resource efficiency: Prevents loss of resources that comes with destruction</li> <li>- Poverty eradication: The poorest sections of society are the closest to the natural resource base, as their livelihood and daily activities are linked to it; any changes, positive or negative, would affect them the most</li> <li>- Gender equality: Women are more dependent on natural resources and better quality of natural resources enhances the well-being of women in many ways</li> <li>- Environmental health: Reduces degradation and contamination of natural resources and the natural environment</li> <li>- Human health: Improved environmental quality impacts human health positively</li> <li>- Employment creation: Preservation and conservation of natural resources generates livelihoods</li> <li>- Resource efficiency: Prevents loss of resources that comes about with degradation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensuring food security — production, access, and nutrition</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging sustainable agriculture with focus on increasing small landholder productivity and income</li> <li>• Access to healthy and adequate food for all year round</li> <li>• Ending malnutrition amongst all sections of society</li> <li>• Building enduring adequate infrastructure for farming societies, including improved irrigation, storage, and transport facilities, etc.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventing loss and wastage of food</li> <li>• Risk reduction techniques to mitigate the impacts of floods, droughts, etc., on yield</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poverty eradication: Increases income of agricultural farmers, and those related to the agricultural sector</li> <li>- Gender equality: Reduces malnutrition among women, creates improved opportunities for women farmers, etc.</li> <li>- Environmental health: Sustainable agriculture prevents degradation of natural resources and environmental resilience</li> <li>- Human health: Helps reduce stunting and infant/ child mortality related to hunger and malnutrition</li> <li>- Employment: Creates incentive to work in farming</li> <li>- Resource efficiency: Required to promote sustainable agricultural practices and to prevent wastage of resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Promoting human</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal primary and secondary education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poverty reduction: Higher education in many respects would mean income rise</li> </ul>

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**resource development — focus on education and skill enhancement**

- Ensuring quality of education (pupil-teacher ratio, trained, and professional teachers)
  - Reducing drop-out rates
  - Increasing the average years of education
  - Enhancing vocational and/or skill training for the youth
- as well as reduction in inequality
  - Gender equality: Sending girls to school reduces gender inequality and enhances the spill over on other aspects of life such as health and awareness
  - Employment: Higher education and a better skill set creates more capable youth; this would lead to better opportunities for the society as a whole and increase their employability
  - Environmental health: Education and spread of awareness and knowledge reduces misuse of environment and natural resources
  - Human health: Education and awareness promotes healthy behaviour and improves health outcomes.

**Protecting the oceans and marine ecosystems**

- Protecting the oceans and marine ecosystems by banning/reducing the use of practices that may cause irreversible damage to the ecosystem
  - Restoring the damages caused to the ecosystems
  - Ensuring sustainable livelihoods and sustainability of other economic activities dependent on the ecosystems
  - Reducing/preventing ocean acidification
  - Preventing overexploitation of the coastal areas
  - Reducing the pollution and the waste disposed in coastal areas and the oceans
  - Reversing the effects of loss of habitat in the oceans
- Poverty reduction: As a link to sustaining livelihoods of the fishing community
  - Gender equality: Women are highly involved in fishing activities and this would reduce their vulnerability
  - Environmental health: Helps preserve biodiversity and a multitude of environmental/ecosystem services
  - Human health: Pollution of coastal areas increases health burdens on the communities living close to the coastal region

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\* The term ‘completed’ is used because enrollment may not necessarily imply that they have finished their education.

**Source:** Based on stakeholder consultations.

**India’s Overall Performance on the Mdns**

The MDGs originated from the Millennium Declaration adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2000. The MDGs consists of eight goals, and these eight goals address myriad development issues. The eight (8) Goals are as under:

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Goal 8: Develop Global Partnership for Development

Eighteen (18) targets were set as quantitative benchmarks for attaining the goals. The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) in 2003 provided a framework of 53 indicators (48 basic + 5 alternatives) which are categorized according to targets, for measuring the progress towards individual targets. A revised indicator-framework drawn up by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on MDGs came into effect in 2008. This framework had 8 Goals, 21 targets and 60 indicators. India has not endorsed this revised framework.



Source: UNDP

One of the most common critiques of the MDGs has been their limited and vague scope and the fact that they set such low bar targets leading to “defining development down”. Lant Pritchett and Charles Kenny have argued that having poverty targets set at just halving the proportion of people with income less than \$1.25 per day, or ensuring universal enrolment etc. meant that even if targets were met, “billions could still be living on less than \$2 a day, with only the most basic literacy and numeracy, lacking access to basic medical care, living in houses without indoor sanitation, working in subsistence agriculture or hawking on the

street to make money”. If MDGs were minimum standards, the SDGs- integrating environment, social and economic dimensions are one the most comprehensive list of global goals the world has ever committed to. While the number of indicators will be finalized by March 2016, it is expected that there will be 100s if not 1000s of indicators accompanying the goals.

Another significant critique of the MDGs was the process of developing them. As the story goes, MDGs were drawn up by a group of men in the basement of the UN headquarters – so much so- that they almost forgot to include the 7th goal on environment sustainability. The SDGs, on the other hand, are the consequence of 3-year long consultation programmes. From establishing an Open Working Group, to consultative conversations across both themes and countries, the UN even launched an online My World Survey portal asking people to vote to ascertain issues/goals that matter most. Further, while the MDGs were seen much more as applying to the developing world and measured progress via averages, the SDGs make the promise of universality and “leaving no one behind”.

Looking at these comparisons, at least in both process and target setting, the SDGs definitely appear to be a significant step up from the MDGs.

### **Challenges That India Faces In Achieving Sustainable Development Goals**

The challenges of sustainable development and its consequences are clearly visible. It’s only invisible if we not want to see.

**Population** is a major challenge for the sustainable development. In the beginning of the 21st century the population of the Earth reached 6 billion, and is expected to level out between 10 and 11 billion over the next 50 years. The basic challenges will be shortages of drinking water and arable land for food production.

**Poverty** is another major challenge because almost 25% of the world’s population lives on less than USD 1 per day.

**Inequality** continues to be a serious obstacle to sustainable development with the number of people suffering from undernourishment. The fall of food prices over the past 30 years may have contributed to increases in consumption, but in many regions of the world arable terrains are limited, and the creation of new ones has a destructive effect on the remaining ecosystems. In the future, the growth of food production should not come at the expense of nature. By 2010 the current step of biodiversity loss should be significantly slowed.

**The shortage of drinking water** in many regions of the world is a major barrier to sustainable development. It is expected that, at the current rate of development, every second person will suffer from water shortage by the year 2025.

**Human health** is also an obstacle in sustainable development. In many cases, deaths in developing countries are avoidable. Humanity should direct more attention and money in the coming years to the struggle against diseases. The imminent task is to reduce the death rate among children under five years of age by two-thirds, and the death rate of young mothers by 75% by 2015.

**Consumption of energy** is a major challenge for the sustainable development. Consumption of all forms of energy is continually rising. The improvement of access to reliable, sustainable and environmentally friendly energy sources and services, as well as the creation of national programmes for energy effectiveness, is a particularly important task for the next 10-15.

### **Challenges for India in Attaining Sdg's**

The SDG proposals will ensure momentum generated by MDGs is carried through to 2030 to end deprivations. SDGs include four sets of challenges for India namely (i) completing the unfinished MDG agenda with a higher level of ambition of ending – not just reducing all deprivations; (ii) strengthening critical development drivers such as economic growth, industrialization, employment creation and reduction of inequality within and between countries, basic infrastructure including energy, and governance and institutions, without which many social and environmental objectives would not be easy to reach; (iii) strengthening the sustainability dimension to address new and emerging challenges such as deteriorating environment, unsustainable consumption and production patterns that are rapidly depleting natural resources, the need to effectively mitigate and adapt to climate change, and develop livable urban areas; and (iv) accessing the means of implementation including transfer of advanced sustainable technologies from developed countries and harnessing India's frugal engineering capabilities for pursuing low carbon development pathways.

**1. Defining Indicators:** Past record indicates that we have been not very successful in setting relevant indicators to measure outcomes. Quality education has not successfully been defined. India's myopic definition of "safe" drinking water (with hand pumps and tube wells considered as safe as piped water supply) means that official data suggests 86% of Indians have access to safe drinking water and, as a result, we are "on track" for the MDG goal on

drinking water. However, the number of waterborne diseases and deaths due to diarrhoea clearly indicate, this is not the case.

**2. Financing Sdg's:** A new study estimates that implementing SDGs in India by 2030 will cost around US\$14.4 billion. Given the recent cut in social sector schemes by the Union government, unless states devote a significant portion of their resources on the social sector, there is likely to be a significant funding gap. High growth and redistribution itself are also not enough. According to the United Nations MDG 2014 report, despite high economic growth, in 2010, one-third of the world's 1.2 billion extreme poor lived in India alone. Given these constraints, it is likely that domestic revenues aside, private finance could be a crucial source for financing the SDGs.

**3. Monitoring And Ownership:** Relatedly, a third significant challenge is going to be with respect to ownership. Reports suggest that NITI Aayog will play a significant role in tracking progress. However, members at the Aayog have expressed reservations on being able to take on this mammoth task. Moreover, if states are expected to play a pivotal role (giving the devolution post 14th Finance Commission), it will require ownership not just nationally, but also at the state and local level.

**4. Measuring Progress:** Lastly but most importantly is the question of measuring progress or achievement. By the government's own admission, non-availability of data (particularly in respect to sub-national levels), periodicity issues and incomplete coverage of administrative data, made accurate measuring progress of even MDGs virtually impossible.

SDGs provide broad goals and targets, it will be up to the national, and state governments to identify priorities, decide appropriate locally relevant policies, harness innovation and ensure that an implementation and monitoring plan is in place. Only then we will have any chance in ensuring that the 'S' in SDGs, also stand for successful.

### **SConclusion**

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

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