

## COMMENTARY

# India's SDG 2030 Agenda: Progress, Challenges, and the Road Ahead

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### ABSTRACT

**Background** - Given that it is the most populous nation, India will be key to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **Aim** - This commentary describes the efforts being made from India to uphold the vision of development for the country, "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas," and its integration of the global development agenda. **Methodology** – This study discusses the work done by the institution headed by NITI Aayog in monitoring and implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across the country. **Results** - India has made substantial advancements, and most of its states are 'Front-runners', but specific goals align with major challenges. The remaining goals on Gender Equality, Zero Hunger, and Quality Education are highly concerning. **Conclusion** - The manuscript states the need for basic framework policies, social entrepreneurship, and global alliances. This is to ensure there are no impediments to India's progress in sustainable development and inclusivity for its 1.4 billion people.

### KEYWORDS

Sustainable Development; India; Public Policy; Social Planning; Goals.

### INTRODUCTION

With a population of 1.46 billion inhabitants, India is the most populous country in the world, marking its certainty to play a pivotal role in the sustainable development of one-sixth of the world's population[1]. The SDG 2030 Agenda is a comprehensive global agenda driven by the vision of "Leave no one behind" so that a greater share of attention is given to the need for equal societies irrespective of the country being upper, middle, or lower income[2, 3]. India's commitment to

sustainable growth for all is reflected in its development vision motto – "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas"- that closely aligns with the principles of the 2030 Agenda [4].

The objectives of this commentary are:

- To evaluate the institutional framework and monitoring tools established by NITI Aayog for SDG implementation.
- To identify persistent challenges and regional disparities hindering progress in specific sustainable goals.

- To propose a strategic roadmap involving policy innovation and global alliances to achieve the vision of an inclusive “Viksit Bharat”

#### **Implementation and Monitoring Framework**

The NITI Aayog serves as the nodal institution for achieving this agenda in India, carries out tasks such as mapping national schemes, localisation of SDGs under the whole-of-government approach, and meticulously monitoring progress. This is facilitated through tools such as SDG India- Index and Dashboard, Progress review 2023, Multidimensional Poverty Index, North-Eastern Region Index, etc. These instruments are for ensuring knowledge and data-based decision-making [3, 5]. Keeping in mind India's decentralised governance, the role of the State Government is crucial for progress on the SDGs. This highlights the need to increase social sector expenditure so that it can achieve localisation of SDGs. India has showcased a total of Voluntary National Reviews at the United Nations, the most recent being in 2025, which reaffirms India's 2030 Agenda commitment[6].

#### **Progress and Persistent Challenges**

The SDG India Index and Dashboards 2023-2024 indicate that most states and union territories fall within the ‘front-runner’ score range (65-99.99) while four remain in the ‘performer’ range (50-64.99), showing improvement from 2020-2021. However, some specific goals still lag. Gender Equality (Goal 5 continues to position within the ‘aspirant’ level (0-49.99), highlighting the necessity for urgent actions to be taken in this area. The situation is made more complex due to insufficient and incomplete data. Currently, only 44% of the gender related SDG indicators are being tracked, which makes measuring and monitoring advancement difficult.

With regard to the Performance Score of Goal 2: Zero Hunger, the score has improved from 47 to 52 in 2023, but still lags behind the targets set out for the goal. While most of the goals have moved to the ‘front-runner’ score range, Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) require further work, as baselined from 2020 to 2023, no significant changes were observed in these two goals. In any case, the most recent

data showcases considerable improvements in the context of India's evolution towards the 2030 Agenda[7]. In India, diversity poses several challenges due to the regional differences. Severe malnutrition and gender inequality continue to be major issues in India[8].

#### **The Path Forward: A Vision for an Inclusive Future**

India has a comprehensive approach guided by the Power of partnership and the vision of Viksit Bharat to improve the lives of its citizens and work towards the attainment of the 2030 Agenda[3, 9]. NITI Aayog's efforts in the form of national conferences, workshops with think tanks, and the formation of digital data platforms are important to help advance the SDGs attainment[3]. Yet, issues surrounding climate change, the depletion of resources, and gender inequality require well-structured policies alongside social innovation and grassroots efforts to ensure that development is both sustainable and equitable.

#### **CONCLUSION**

India showcases its commitment and strategic framework to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Though there is progress, it is uneven. The response to longstanding issues like gender inequality, malnutrition, and regional disparities will determine the overall success. The vision of ‘Leave no one behind’ and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 will require a joint effort of the government, civil society, and the private sector, complemented by the right data and strategic policies. This commentary adds to current knowledge by synthesizing the latest SDG India Index data for 2023–2024 with national policy frameworks. It creates an overview on how the motto of India's “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas”, gets operationalized to deliver on the quantifiable global goals, while also providing a pathway to respond to the regional disparities that global reports tend to overlook.

Limitations - The key limitation for this study is the use of secondary research, as this study relies on the institutional dashboards and government reports, which can have reporting lags. Moreover, as a consideration, this paper

focuses on macro-level policy trends and institutional frameworks rather than primary, field-level empirical validation across all diverse regions of India.

#### **AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION**

All the authors contributed equally.

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#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

There are no conflicts of interest.

#### **DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS**

The authors haven't used any generative AI/AI-assisted technologies in the writing process.

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