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BT POLICY WATCH

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

SDGs for UN approval INDIA WILL MOVE TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Recently academicians and industry stakeholders met in Delhi to discuss various development goals of the global South which have been chalked out by world leaders. As India is an integral part of the global South, these goals, a draft of which will soon be placed before the United Nations, will also influence India's future policy making. However, the 17 goals and 169 indicators which were laid down have drawn flak and apprehensions by Indian stakeholders as being convoluted and unimplementable. **A Bureaucracy Today report.**

By Nishita Chokkhat

Since India has been moving into the middle income country category extracting sustainable development goals has become significant for its economic growth. The United Nations Development Goals (SDGs) drafted by world leaders and the UN member states are set to address issues related to poverty in its many dimensions, education, skill development and environmental sustainability of the global south. As of now, 17 goals and 169 indicators have been laid down which are to be rolled by the United Nations. India as a part of the global South is equally striving to attain sustainable development across all spheres.

Adhwaj Singh, Chairman and Managing Director, IPE Global, is of the view that the initial focus which was on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set the tone for India which was working in different directions without a resolution. He adds, "The MDGs gave us an indication of what is really measurable, be they indicators around poverty, education, health, literacy or goals related to them. With a set of indicators and goals India now has at least an overall target to achieve."



Dr. JACO CILLIERS
Country Director, UNEP India

is a hope and anticipation on India's role in helping the world setting up agendas not just at the policy level but also addressing it at a practical level."

MAKING THE RIGHT POLICY

There is no denying the fact that though the challenge for each country is to make its right policy, the biggest constraint will be the implementation of that policy. "By studying the indicators and goals of the previous MDGs India has made the best policy, especially related to its social sector. Whether it is the Jitters, the Smart City project, the Swachh Bharat Mission or the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation the problem has always when in their proper implementation," Adhwaj Singh tells **Bureaucracy Today**.

Among the 17 proposed SDGs and 169 targets, the most important one is SDG 8 that aims to "promote sustained, inclusive and automatic economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all". India has realised the importance of "full and productive employment" and laid down its policy in line with skill development for "inclusive growth". The Modi-led NDA Government has repositioned skilling people from the remotest areas and is deriving schemes which would create job opportunities for them.

The CSIP along with the Ministry of Skill Development has rolled out initiatives for skilling people. "We are also working on very large programmes specifically for poor women to create job opportunities for them in the private sector," infers Dr. Jaco Cilliers.

Adhwaj Singh is of the opinion that "job will be automatically available the moment there is economic development, skill



SUNIL MITTAL
Former President
Secretary

PROF AKHLESH KHANNA
Director Institute for Human
Development

ADHWAJ SINGH
Chairman, IPE Global

development on its own will not be as successful unless it is linked to other schemes/programmes."

INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION

Among the goals set for sustainable development much larger emphasis is accorded to "inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all". Prof Akhlesh Khanna, Director of the Institute for Human Development, feels that education as a part of the SDGs provides much larger chance to a country like India. He says, "In India we should stop seeking enrollment in private institutions and look beyond the Right to Education at the primary school level."

While the general feeling among people is that India should move up to free and compulsory secondary education unlike the earlier goal which was narrow and restricted in the primary level, education as a sector needs practical reforms. "There is a discourse going on presently for incorporating secondary education in the Right to Education in India which may be helpful," Sharma affirms.

The Sustainable Development Goals are a new universal set of targets and indicators that UN member states will be expected to use to frame their agendas and national policies over the next 17 years. The SDGs follow and expand the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were agreed by governments in 2000 and are due to expire at the end of this year.

FLIPSIDE

There is broad agreement that though the MDGs provided a focal point for Governments on which to hinge their policies and overseas aid programmes, they have been criticised for being too narrow. Similar fate is foreseen for the SDGs if they are not meticulously implemented. Sunil Mittal, former Union Revenue secretary says, "What we can look forward to is a set of sustainable goals with a right framework which are achievable but this is not the case here. As a matter of fact, how the United Nations is taking this forward is also not understood because all signatory countries of the UN Charter espouse human rights but here in India we are not talking about human rights anymore which is an important contradiction."

Experts feel that the new SDGs have several goals, targets and indicators akin to the MDGs. Similarly Prof Sharma remarks, "We need to focus on the gritty of every issue and streamline actions rather than relying on things in big documents and books."

Mittal says, "There is a reasonable apprehension among some experts, which even worries me also, that the UN getting involved in trying to reform these goals is only going to make the matter more difficult. After all, the UN is run by developed countries and it's their money which goes into it." However, he also adds, "Although we must also recognise that UN initiatives were good and it wanted to help the global South which majority has poverty-related issues." ■

and your feedback to
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Seventeen proposed SDGs are:

- 1) To end poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- 2) To end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
- 3) To ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- 4) To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- 5) To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- 6) To ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- 7) To ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- 8) To promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
- 9) To build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation.
- 10) To reduce inequality within and among countries.
- 11) To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- 12) To ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- 13) To take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (taking note of agreements made by the UNFCCC forum).
- 14) To conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- 15) To protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.
- 16) To promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- 17) To strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.