

General Studies – 1; Topic: Poverty and developmental issues

India and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

1) Introduction

- Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, the 17 SDGs, with their 169 targets, depict a plan of action to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental – by the year 2030.
- This agreement marks an important milestone in putting our world on an inclusive and sustainable course.
- India was one of the 193 United Nations member states to adopt the SDGs and commit itself as a stakeholder to meet the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.
- NITI Aayog is the national body primarily responsible for implementing the SDGs in India.

2) India's Progress

- India has played an important role in shaping the SDGs and the country's national development goals are mirrored in the SDGs.
- In 2017 sustainable development goals index, India ranked 116 of 157 countries
- The SDG Index ranks countries based on their performance across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Health**
 - a. India has prioritised strengthening health systems as a non-negotiable strategy towards achieving SDGs
 - b. Synergising collaboration with BRICS countries especially through the 'BRICS Framework for Collaboration on Strategic Projects in Health'.
 - c. National Health Policy, 2017 adopted by India is aligned with the SDG-3 targets.
 - d. National Health Mission (NHM) to achieve the SDG-3.
 - e. Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) and Mission Indradhanush aimed at expanding coverage by reaching the unreached
 - f. India has made significant progress on basic health indicators like Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), institutional deliveries and vaccination coverage.
- **Climate Action**
 - a. Promoting green initiatives like investments in renewable energy, allowing corporates to issue Masala Bonds, green bonds, etc.
 - b. Ratifying Paris Deal and Active participation in Kigali Agreement.
- **Energy**
 - a. Presently India is 4th largest in wind power capacity, rapid increase in Solar energy production and decrease in the cost of unit solar power.
- **Industry**
 - a. Improving ease of doing business, promoting Start-Ups and India is moving up in Global Competitiveness Index with 39th position.

3) Drawbacks

- 62.4% of the total health expenditure is still out of pocket, putting a huge burden on the poor and the middle class
- High number of farmers committing suicide.
- Mandatory linkage with Aadhaar is excluding the most-needy in interior tribal areas

- 22% of population is under poverty and can reverse the progress achieved.
- Gender Equality is still a work in progress as women continue to face problems in access to education, employment, etc.
- Contaminated water, polluted and unhygienic environment are major reasons for health issues.

4) **Concerns / Challenges**

- Rising trend of nationalism and protectionism impede the implementation of the goals
- Industrialised countries are not serving as role models
- Many of the richest countries are nowhere near achieving the global policy objectives but also deteriorate the implementation process for poorer countries because of negative spillover effects.
- One of the greatest obstacles to achieving the global goals are poor performances regarding sustainable consumption and production.
- Lack of credible data will be a major roadblock for India in achieving the global goals.
- The Government of India has cut back on spending for the social sector. As per available statistics, India currently has only 5 % of the funds required to implement the SDGs.

5) **Way Forward**

- World leaders need to strengthen their joint efforts to realise the 17 global goals.
- Politicians, businesses and society altogether must urgently intensify their efforts and commit themselves to this agenda.
- All countries must take up the goals as part of their national development strategies, and ensure that they take responsibility for their impact on the rest of the world
- With combined and sustained efforts at the national and global levels, it will be possible to eradicate poverty and ensure a prosperous world for all.
- A strategy to address the lack of credible data could be a complete decentralization of the data collection process.
- The Government of India should promote and incentivize funding from corporate, business, and other for-profit entities as a crucial source for funding the SDGs.
- Making development efforts participatory and inclusive is an indispensable aspect for sustainable development.
- Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources.
- State governments need to be mobilized to both understand and own the SDG targets, and engage in implementation accordingly
- Constitute a Parliamentary Forum on SDGs which can be tasked with providing direction, oversight and monitoring to the implementation process.

6) **Conclusion**

- Achieving the SDGs in a country as diverse as India will definitely be a Herculean task, but not unachievable.
- We need to clearly identify priorities, have locally relevant and people-centric development policies, and build strong partnerships.
- The government also needs to have a focused plan for tracking and evaluating impact and scaling up successful interventions.
- The SDGs are a direction and a vision for India to ensure prosperity and growth—both social and economic.