IMPLEMENTING THE SDGs IN INDIA

Poverty, Hunger and Gender



March 2021

Queen Mary University of London
NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA UNIVERSITY
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ECO FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVES
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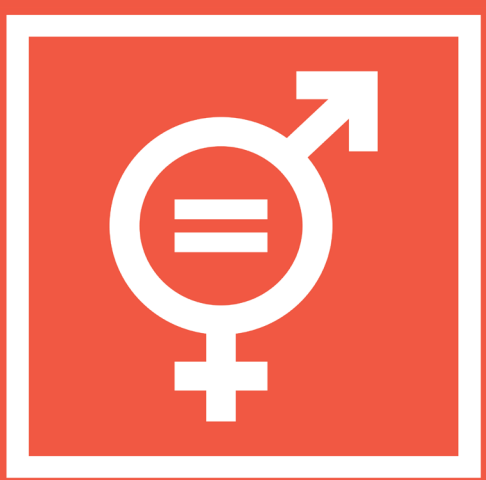
Sustainable Development Goals



Poverty



Hunger



Gender

Background

Not only India ranks an abysmal 131 on the Human Development Index (HDI), its rank in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) is equally disappointing at 94 out of 107 assessed countries. Gender, along with other social factors, is an overarching phenomenon that plays a defining role in understanding and analysing the overall development paradigm, especially in traditional and developing societies.

The researchers who contributed to this report tried to identify and document the pathways for the implementation of the SDG framework in the Indian context, especially the implementation structures, status of achievements, and key gaps. Research on methodologies and tools adopted also led to the identification of shortcoming of the processes and methods used. The research specifically reflects on the adequacy of methodologies and tools as applied in the context of social, political, geographical and financial diversities in India. While the common development goals do lend cohesion to efforts under way, ramifications of the exercise being anchored at the federal level may or may not be entirely relevant to all the 30 states and union territories of the country.

This research forms the initial basis for close collaboration between the British, European and Indian partners involved and is expected to be further strengthened through subsequent projects.

We hope that this report, its conclusions and recommendations, already make a contribution to advancing SDG implementation in India. The insights gained certainly help establish a common methodological framework and research agenda among the project partners with a view to eventually completing the picture covering all SDGs and all 30 states and union territories of India. Of course, the availability of resources and the overall prevailing conditions remain key to whether this will happen (see also the Way Forward section at the end of the report).

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IMPLEMENTING THE SDGs IN INDIA: POVERTY, HUNGER AND GENDER

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ACRONYMS

EFSA	—	Eco Foundation for Sustainable Alternatives
FOGGS	—	Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability
GIF	—	Global Indicator Framework
HLPF	—	UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
HLSC	—	High Level Steering Committee
ICDS	—	Integrated Child Development Services
MDMS	—	Mid-day Meal Scheme
MoSPI	—	Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation
NFSA	—	National Food Security Act
NIF	—	National Indicator Framework
NITI Ayog	—	National Institute for Transforming India Ayog
NLSIU	—	National Law School of India University
QMUL	—	Queen Mary University of London
SDGs	—	Sustainable Development Goals
SSD	—	Social Statistics Division
TPDS	—	Targeted Public Distribution System
UT	—	Union Territory

I. Introduction

For most of the 20th century policy makers had been preoccupied with economic development. A paradigm shift in the way development is defined was propelled by the need to consider social dynamics, equity, access and utilisation of resources, and implications for people and the environment. Holistic and sustainable development encompasses a range of social, economic, and environmental factors.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated 169 targets were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at the start of its 70th Session in September 2015 with effect from 1st January 2016. Though not legally binding, the SDGs have become de facto international obligations with the potential to reorient the domestic priorities of countries during the subsequent fifteen years. Countries are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for achieving these Goals. It is to be noted that in a way the SDGs are only the guidelines and monitoring tools to orient and assess the national development processes. Implementation and success solely rely on countries' own sustainable development policies, plans and programmes. The 2030 Agenda that encompasses the SDGs also underscores that quality, reliable and disaggregated data would be needed for measurement of progress on the targets and to ensure that No One is Left Behind.[1]
The SDGs provide a framework for countries to track the progress made on different developmental fronts and many countries are increasingly using these goals and the corresponding targets to determine their development priorities. A country of more than 1.3 billion people, about one-sixth of humanity, India is a world on its own, with stark contrasts, bright and less bright points. In the context of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda, a successful implementation of the SDGs in India would mark significant progress for their achievement worldwide, because of the sheer magnitude.

In light of this intention, the report that follows presents the results of the project "Implementing the SDGs in India: Poverty, Hunger and Gender", which has been supported by Queen Mary University of London and brought together a group of partners from India and Europe. The overall aim was to map and assess the trajectory of sustainable development in India through the lens of SDG implementation. The report is based on an analysis of Indian implementation structures for the SDGs in general, with a specific focus on three of the 17 SDGs, namely:

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
Goal 2: Zero hunger; and
Goal 5: Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

I.1. Why SDGs 1, 2 and 5?

These three SDGs were selected by the research partners as initial case studies because India seems to be particularly struggling with the effects of poverty, food insecurity and gender imbalance, which are at the foundation of achieving all other SDGs

In the context of India, as well as in many other postcolonial developing countries, poverty eradication has been high on the agenda for policy making. Resourcelessness and penury have resulted in lack of purchasing power leading to a widespread hunger-like situation. With a largely agrarian economy 70% dependent on rainfed agriculture, poor rainy seasons and droughts have often led to widespread starvation. Even with the gradual attainment of self-sufficiency in food grain production India is home to a quarter of the hungry people in the world, and this phenomenon is linked to inequitable distribution of wealth and resources.

Multidimensional poverty and hunger seem to be the priority areas of intervention in the case of all developing countries. Both poverty and hunger get accentuated with the cross section of gender, leaving women and young girls with multiple vulnerabilities. This situation gets further aggravated by the fact of gender-based deprivation in a largely patriarchal society with intergenerational consequences that make it even more challenging for developing countries to overcome poverty and hunger. Being an overarching issue, gender provides an opportunity to engage in the discussion of issues that affect nearly half of the population.

India's ranking in the global indices pertaining to poverty, hunger and the status of women has remained far from satisfactory over the past few decades despite the country's overall economic growth. The country ranks no. 131 among the world's states on the Human Development Index (HDI), and no. 94 out of 107 assessed countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI). Gender issues remain problematic, with stories of sexual abuse that come up periodically in the news being just the tip of the iceberg.

The above three SDGs were selected by the research partners as initial case studies because India seems to be particularly

[1] *http://www.mospi.gov.in/overview-sdgs*

struggling with the effects of poverty, food insecurity and gender imbalance, which are at the foundation of achieving all other SDGs. The goal remains to eventually assess India's performance in terms of sustainable development covering all 17 SDGs through a series of interconnected research projects, and suggest ways to escalate the progress towards full SDG attainment.

I.2. What Exactly are We Looking at in this Report?

The report tries to document the pathways for the implementation of the SDG framework in the Indian context, also reflecting on the adequacy of methodologies and tools as applied in the context of social, political, geographical and financial diversities in India

The SDGs provide a framework for countries to track the progress made on different fronts of sustainable development, and countries increasingly use these goals to determine their development priorities. Like other countries India too has assigned indicators to each of the targets under all SDGs, put in place the mechanisms to assess and track the progress made under each of these targets and to incentivise the achievement of these targets in a time bound manner. This exercise understandably has implications for the priorities of the federal government, as well as at the level of different states within India, from the point of view of utilisation of financial, human and even natural resources.

The research was carried out with the state of Karnataka as a geographical reference point for SDG implementation

The researchers who contributed to this report tried to identify and document the pathways for the implementation of the SDG framework in the Indian context, especially the implementation structures, status of achievements, and key gaps. Research on methodologies and tools adopted also led to the identification of shortcoming of the processes and methods. The research specifically reflects on the adequacy of methodologies and tools as applied in the context of social, political, geographical and financial diversities in India. While the common development goals do lend cohesion to efforts under way, ramifications of the exercise being anchored at the federal level may or may not be entirely relevant to all the 30 states and union territories of the country.

Due to the limited time of the project (December 2019 to June 2020) and the COVID-19 pandemic that disrupted travel as well as the operations of universities, public offices and other relevant entities, the research was carried out with the state of Karnataka as one geographical reference point for SDG implementation. Karnataka was selected because of the fact that two of the primary Indian partners are based there and thus had easier access to the necessary material and knowledge of the situation on the ground. While as will become clear, this one state is not representative of India as a whole, reference to a particular concrete case study adds an additional dimension to the more abstract aspects of this report. In this way it was possible to advance the project even under conditions of travel freeze and social distancing imposed because of the pandemic.

I.3. The Research Process

An analytical approach was adopted that involved critical review of official data available in the public domain and juxtaposing it to the experts' opinions and ground level realities

The expansive nature of the topics covered that entailed critical understanding of factors that influence and perpetuate multidimensional poverty, widespread hunger and malnutrition, along with their gendered manifestations, required a combination of research methods to be applied. Largely, an analytical approach was adopted that involved critical review of official data available in the public domain and juxtaposing it to the experts' opinions and ground level realities.

While there is a globally defined uniform framework of SDGs and corresponding targets, the research was undertaken with a focus on one large country - India. The status of the SDGs in other countries, their relevance and level of achievement is outside the purview of this research, while such a comparative analysis could be part of the research in subsequent phases.

Information was largely sourced from secondary sources that included official documents of UN agencies, the national and state governments and other public bodies. Targets and indicators for the three selected SDGs were analysed in the country specific context with a view to ascertaining their relevance. A limited amount of primary data was used, mainly to corroborate the findings and support the arguments. Sources of primary data included interviews with experts and key people involved in the SDG planning and implementation process. Although, owing to the limitations on time and financial resources, and later, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, no primary data was actually collected as part of the project, such data that were available from other projects[2] undertaken by the authors were used in this project too.

[2]*Two of the report's authors who are engaged in food security and hunger related work in Karnataka, India consolidated the insights from their field engagement towards demonstrating the actual status of SDG 2 in India.*

II. SDG Implementation in India

India is a land of contradictions and disparities where poverty and prosperity, excessive food production and hunger, coexist. The world's largest democracy is home to the largest number of hungry people in the world and the largest number of children who are malnourished. Despite having made considerable progress in GDP growth. According to the World Bank, the Gini coefficient (a measurement of distribution of income across population) in India was 0.38 in 2011, having previously increased from 0.43 in 1995–96 to 0.45 in 2004–05.[3] According to the 2015 World Wealth Report, India had 198,000 high net worth individuals (annual income over $1 million) with a combined wealth of $785 billion. And yet FAO estimates in 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2019' report that 194.4 million people, equivalent to 14.5% of the population, are undernourished in India. Also, 51.4% of women in reproductive age between 15 to 49 years are anaemic.[4] The SDGs offer a framework for a more balanced and equitable growth.

The global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals has been developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and agreed upon at the 48th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission held in March 2017. The global indicator framework includes 231 unique indicators.[5] India is committed to the fulfilment of the SDGs, with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) and the National Institute for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog the key government departments/agencies entrusted with the task to plan SDG implementation and monitoring. MoSPI also represents India at various UN fora concerning SDG-related statistical activities.

II.1. Overall Framework of SDG Implementation and Monitoring in India

India has adopted an elaborate framework for planning, implementation and monitoring of all the 17 SDGs on its territory

India has adopted an elaborate framework for planning, implementation and monitoring of all the 17 SDGs on its territory. MoSPI was tasked, in consultation with concerned Central Ministries/ Departments, to develop a National Indicator Framework (NIF) for monitoring the progress of the SDGs and associated targets in the country. The NIF developed by the MoSP was designed to scientifically measure the outcomes of the policies to achieve the targets under different SDGs. The NIF also aimed to provide appropriate direction to the policy makers and the implementers of various related schemes and programmes.

MoSPI has the responsibility to establish coordination mechanisms with various line Ministries/Departments and other data source agencies relating to national as well as global SDG Indicators. A SDG Unit was created within the Social Statistics Division (SSD) of the Central Statistics Office under the MoSPI, to act as the country's SDG Data Focal Point for coordination of data related activities and SDG global monitoring. This Unit also has the responsibility of assisting Indian States & UTs to establish a monitoring framework at their level, and to develop the capacity of various statistical institutions at all levels.



https://newsmobile.in/articles/2015/12/18/whats-causing-malnutrition-among-indian

[3] *https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?end=2011&locations=IN&start=2011&view=mapHigher GINI Coefficient means higher inequalities.*
[4] *https://www.indiafoodbanking.org/hunger*
[5] *https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Global%20Indicator%20Framework%20after%202020%20review _Eng.pdf Please note that the total number of indicators listed in the global indicator framework of SDG indicators is 247. However, twelve indicators repeat under two or three different targets*

Another important body is the High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC)[6] under the chairmanship of the Chief Statistician of India and Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The Committee consists of Secretaries of data source Ministries and NITI Aayog as members and Secretaries of other related Ministries as special invitees to periodically review and refine the NIF for monitoring SDGs with associated targets. The HLSC considers and approves the methodology for computation of new additional and modified national indicators, and also has the power to constitute sector-specific sub-committees viz., Technical Advisory Committee under the chairmanship of Director General, MoSPI, to examine and suggest addition/ deletion/ modification of indicators and their methodology for the National Indicator Framework. The recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee are to be submitted to HLSC for its consideration and approval. The HLSC may also recommend new surveys to collect data for the indicators where data is not available on the recommendation of the Technical Advisory Committee. MoSPI conducted regional workshops for localisation of the indicators for covering all States & UTs.

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), chaired by the Prime Minister of India, is the premier policy think tank of the Government and has been given the overall responsibility of SDG implementation and of aligning government schemes/ programs to the SDGs

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), chaired by the Prime Minister of India, is the premier policy think tank of the Government and has been given the overall responsibility of SDG implementation and of aligning government schemes/ programs to the SDGs. Thus, NITI Aayog facilitates and coordinates the implementation of SDGs in the country and also has the responsibility of comparative analysis of SDG achievement in the States and UTs.



ndian-kids/

[6]*Gazette Notification regarding constitution of High Level Committee: http://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/Gazette%20notification.pdf*
[7]*Sustainable Development Goals: Vision 2030, Uttar Pradesh, July 2019, available at http://planning.up.nic.in/Go/SDG/VISION%20Doc%20Eng.pdf*

II.2. Subnational Systems

With monitoring from the centre, via NITI Aayog and MoSPI, it is the individual states and union territories that are ultimately responsible for the implementation of the SDGs in India

With monitoring from the centre, via NITI Aayog and MoSPI, it is the individual states and union territories that are ultimately responsible for the implementation of the SDGs in India. There is a wide variety, from serious state government dedicated secretariats and action divisions to simply having had a few workshops to sensitize state and local government officials about the SDGs. NITI Aayog itself held a National Workshop in February 2018 on capacity development for localizing the SDGs for the states/UTs and other stakeholders; a March 2018 National Consultation involving central ministries, and states/UTs to discuss policies, implementation strategies and best practices; a workshop in August 2018 with business and industries; and in 2018 its Task Force on Implementation of the SDGs met just twice.

Although new statistical data is not available for 2019-20 NITI Aayog continues to organize workshops for capacity development and localization. The Task Force has the mandate to meet regularly and to discuss matters of significance that have arisen since its last meeting. The federal structure of India allows adaptation of SDG tracking at state level. In most of the states, the respective State Planning Departments have the responsibility to monitor the indicators and report on their achievement to MoSPI and NITI Aayog.

Exploratory research suggests that different state departments have devised varied processes within the guidance framework of NIF to undertake this task. For instance, Uttar Pradesh has largely relied upon institutionalisation of SDGs into the existing governance structures through standardisation of the process of consultation, consolidation of relevant data in common formats, and consensus building on strategies.[7]

An analysis of state preparedness and active collaboration in advancing the SDGs in general shows huge variation, as demonstrated with examples here

An analysis of state preparedness and active collaboration in advancing the SDGs in general shows huge variation. To illustrate that one may point to the contrasting structures created by a selection of states. Andhra Pradesh, for example, has delegated responsibility to the state Planning Department, and within that department has initiated a Vision Management Unit as the 'technical hub' to direct efforts and to work with the Department of Economics and Statistics, which is charged with conducting surveys to collect new data. This activity is derived from the "Vision 2029" document formulated by the state government, which contains a detailed SDG framework and an action plan for the implementation of the SDGs. The role of the Vision Management Unit is to set up a real-time outcome monitoring system on the progress of the SDGs, and is expected to publish an annual status report on progress. SDG priorities are aligned with the state budget, so financial support is guaranteed.

This comprehensive planning and implementation (the positive outcomes of which are reflected in Andhra Pradesh's high score in the NITI Aayog ranking of states), contrasts with that of Arunachal Pradesh, which has one "Nodal Department" concerned with the SDGs (the Finance Planning and Investment Department), has a vision document "under preparation", proposes a satellite-based monitoring geo-mapping system with the status of "being developed", has managed one sensitization workshop for senior staff, and has no specific items in the state budget related to the SDGs. Chattisgarh is in a similar position, approaching the SDGs through one undefined nodal agency, has a SDG Dashboard in preparation, has a Gram Panchayat development plan based on the SDGs also "being prepared", and a Sports Policy and draft Youth and Disability policy in progress "based on the SDGs". Jharkhand, very low in the state rankings, claims to have held capacity building programmes on SDGs 2,3, 5, 6, 8, 11 and 16, but not, significantly on SDG #1, although poverty levels in the state are high. The state government claims that SDG indicators have been "identified" and that a Dashboard is being operationalized and that this "would enable monitoring of SDGs".



https://blog.ipleaders.in/homeless-india-schemes/

[7] *Sustainable Development Goals: Vision 2030, Uttar Pradesh, July 2019, available at http://planning.up.nic.in/Go/SDG/VISION%20Doc%20Eng.pdf*

Our reference example, the state of Karnataka, has constituted a state-level Advisory Committee under the Chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, a state-level Monitoring and Coordination Committee under the chairmanship of the Additional Chief Secretary, and 17 Goal Committees chaired by retired senior civil servants

Kerala, one of the most successful states in relation to both SDG #1 and others, has extensive training programmes, a toolkit developed from prior experiences, capacity building programmes for different stakeholders (not only state government staff) and has incorporated the SDGs into its state budget. Tamil Nadu, ranking at the top of the scores, has, among other things, established a High Power committee chaired by the Chief Secretary, the senior-most civil servant in the state, to oversee progress towards the SDGs. Haryana has given responsibility for implementation of the SDGs to its Finance and Planning Department, and has created a SDG Coordination Centre in collaboration with the UNDP India office, has created a vision document from which an action plan is being derived based on the set of indicators included in that document, and has a monitoring and evaluation framework under preparation. The state has held capacity building workshops for all government departments, and the SDGs goals are aligned with the state budget. Interestingly, only about 50% of states and UTs had any specific budget arrangements to address the SDGs.

KARNATAKA: The state of Karnataka, to take our reference example, is located in South India. For Karnataka it is the state Department of Programme Planning and Implementation that is the nodal department for coordinating all activities related to SDG planning, implementation and monitoring at state level. This department has the responsibility to report progress made to NITI Aayog.

The government of Karnataka is keen to ensure that the implementation of SDGs in the state is judiciously prioritized and adopted in accordance with local challenges, capacities and resources available. The state government has established a distinct Technical Cell for monitoring SDGs related activities. A dedicated portal[8] has been created through which information regarding SDGs including goals, targets and indicators will be shared, monitored and updated by all concerned departments. The state has constituted a state-level Advisory Committee under the Chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, a state-level Monitoring and Coordination Committee under the chairmanship of the Additional Chief Secretary, and 17 Goal Committees chaired by retired senior civil servants for the finalization of indicators and to implement the SDGs in the state. All concerned state government departments have mapped relevant departmental schemes to the SDGs, targets and indicators which is coordinated by the Planning Department and estimated the Budgets for 2022 and 2030.[9]

The Idea Crowd-sourcing Platform[10] is another innovative initiative of the state government. This online platform enables inputs from citizens through structured but open ended suggestions pertaining to all the SDGs. The efficiency and effectiveness of this platform could not be determined in the context of this report. In terms of overall performance, Karnataka's SDG India Index score currently ranges between 36 and 88 per cent depending on the indicator (see definitions in the section "SDGs 1,2 and 5: Status in India" below). On average, Karnataka State is recognized as a 'Performer' by the Federal Government with a score of 52 per cent.



[8] *https://planning.karnataka.gov.in/info-2/Human+Development+Division/Sustainable+Development+Goals/en*
[9] *https://karnataka.gov.in/storage/pdf-files/Revised%20SDG%20Introduction%2006122019.pdf*
[10] *https://planning.karnataka.gov.in/info-3/Idea+Crowd+Sourcing+Platform/en*

II.3. Other Actors

A substantial number of other stakeholders, beyond the federal and state/UT governments and government-related agencies, are involved in monitoring and implementation of SDG #1 and other SDGs; they include major international humanitarian NGOs, indigenous NGOs and religious organizations

A substantial number of other stakeholders, beyond the federal and state/UT governments and government-related agencies, are involved in monitoring and implementation of SDG #1 and other SDGs. These include major humanitarian aid NGOs such as Oxfam which has a substantial presence in India, ActionAid India, Save the Children. There is also a large number of indigenous NGOs and religious organizations, themselves often very "close to the ground" in their knowledge of grass-roots realities, which are in practice involved in SDG related activities, although they may not specifically identify their activities as such.

In spite of the above, and the clear synergies that could be created, there appears to be substantial unwillingness on the part of state agencies, whether at the national or local levels, to consult with or draw upon the expertise of NGOs and university researchers

In spite of the above, and the clear synergies that could be created, there appears to be substantial unwillingness on the part of state agencies, whether at the national or local levels, to consult with or draw upon the expertise of NGOs and university researchers, or to incorporate the large body of sociological and anthropological data and insight that exists in the country on matters related to the SDGs. Quite the opposite is true in terms of cooperation of non-state actors with UN agencies, especially with the UNDP.

In any case, some of the most detailed commentary on the SDGs has come from non-state actors. Two major examples are the RIS Work Programme on Sustainable Development Goals, (Action Aid India), and Technology and Action for Rural Development, (Development Alternatives Group) both of which have published extensive analyses of the SDG situation in India.

The former report[11] notes the non-comprehensive implementation framework for the SDGs across the country, lack of systematic financing, and the failure to incorporate the knowledge and connections of NGOs. The latter report[12] has a focus on finance which it refers to as "The Elephant in the Room", and is a close analysis of financial requirements for meeting the SDGs, and the large gaps in such dedicated financing Only half of the states and UTs have any specific budgetary allocation for meeting SDG targets or monitoring progress towards such goals.



[11] *available at www.thebetterindia.com/sustainable-development-goals.*
[12] *available at www.devatt.org*

II.4. Aspirational Districts Programme

The 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' Programme aims to expeditiously improve the socio-economic status of 117 districts from across 28 states

The 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' Programme aims to expeditiously improve the socio-economic status of 117 districts from across 28 states. It is a NITI Aayog program, directed by a central agency. The three core principles of the programme are - Convergence (of Central & State Schemes), Collaboration (among citizens and functionaries of Central & State Governments including district teams), and Competition among districts. Driven primarily by the States, this initiative focuses on the strengths of each district, and prioritizes the attainable outcomes for immediate improvement.

The programme focuses on 5 main themes - Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure, which have direct bearing on the quality of life and economic productivity of citizens. 81 data-points are tracked regularly through a dashboard.[13]

Table 1.1: Themes, weight, and number of data-points

Theme	Weight	Data-points
Health & Nutrition	30%	31
Education	30%	14
Agriculture & Water Resources	20%	12
Financial Inclusion	05%	06
Skill Development	05%	10
Basic Infrastructure	10%	08
Total	100%	81

To enable optimum utilization of their potential, this program focuses closely on improving people's ability to participate fully in the burgeoning economy. Districts are prodded and encouraged to first catch-up with the best district within their state, and subsequently aspire to become one of the best in the country, by competing with, and learning from others in the spirit of competitive and cooperative federalism. Evidence-based ranking of the districts is carried out according to 49 key performance indicators.[14] This methodology apparently was aimed at optimising the potential and maximising the outputs while also encouraging districts to excel by juxtaposing them with those that have lagged behind.



[13] *See http://championsofchange.gov.in/*
[14] *See https://niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2018-12/FirstDeltaRanking-May2018- AspirationalRanking.pdf*

III. SDGs 1, 2 & 5: Status in India

A characteristic that SDGs 1,2 and 5 share is that all three of them are based on the most urgent issues to be dealt with in India. NITI Aayog released in December 2018 a SDG India Index: Baseline Report 2018 and Dashboard (SDGII 2018) prepared in collaboration with the United Nations and other stakeholders. The SDGII has been envisaged as a comprehensive index to measure progress of the states/UTs with respect to SDG implementation. The index was based on 62 priority indicators pertaining to 13 Goals and 39 Targets. The Baseline Report provides the basis for selecting the priority indicators, identifies data challenges, benefits and limitations of the Index, and seeks to promote competition among state governments by ranking them on SDGs, using a defined methodology.

The subsequent report Sustainable Development Goals India Index 2019 (SDGII 2019) showed improvement over the inaugural version, with indicators directly borrowed from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's National Indicator Framework (NIF), while another 20 are modified versions of NIF indicators and 12 were developed by NITI Aayog in consultation with Union (i.e. federal) ministries. This alignment of indicators was expected to pave the way for better coordination among government agencies for tracking India's performance on the SDGs.

Another noteworthy improvement was the broader coverage of goals, targets and indicators. While in the first edition, Goals 12, 13 and 14 were not included, only Goal 17 has been left out of the second round for ranking sub-national governments due to the absence of any relevant indicators in the NIF. Additionally, while SDGII 2018 covered 39 targets and 62 indicators, SDGII 2019 spans 54 targets and 100 indicators. Overall, India's score has improved from 57 to 60, with notable progress on SDGs 3, 6, 7, 9 and 11. However, a lot remains to be done as regards Goals 1,2 and 5.

III.1. SDG #1: End Poverty in all its Forms Everywhere (by 2030 to Eradicate Extreme Poverty (Living on less than US$1.25 a day))



https://www.businessworld.in/article/UK-Lauds-India-s-Efforts-To-Reduce-Poverty-Stress-On-Growth/08-11-2014-75387/

Although data shows a decline in poverty levels over the years since 1993, it is estimated that 21.9% of the Indian population still live below the poverty line

The COVID-19 crisis and the national government's unilateral imposition of a complete lockdown and cessation of all economic activities except essential services (principally hospitals, pharmacies and retail food outlets and delivery services, but excluding all forms of road, rail and air transport) have, since April 2020, thrown the Indian economy into turmoil and displaced hundreds of thousands of migrant and temporary workers from their means of livelihood, suggesting at least a short-term, but possibly much longer, retreat from SDG 1.

Although data shows a decline in poverty levels over the years since 1993, it is estimated that 21.9% of the Indian population still live below the poverty line. The announced national target is to reduce that to 10.95 by the SDG target date of 2030 (NITI Aayog). In terms of status, there is extreme variation between states/UTs on awareness of or active policies towards implementing the SDGs, and this shows clearly in the data, incomplete as it is, on state performance in relation to SDG 1. Using the indicator of 100 as a complete achievement of the goal, Tamil Nadu ranks first with a score of 76, closely followed by Kerala (64), and the Northeastern states of Mizoram (71) and Tripura (71). Middle ranking states include Gujarat (48), Uttar Pradesh (48), Bihar (45), Madhya Pradesh (44),and our focus state of Karnataka (45), and lowest ranking ones include Jharkhand at just 37. Among Union Territories, Puducherry ranks high at 61, but the National Capital Territory (Delhi and environs) comes in at just 30, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli comes in worst at a dismal 21. Interestingly, showing the interrelationship between the different but closely connected SDGs, the UT of Chandigarh, which scores high on some other SDGs, manages only 39 in poverty alleviation. Some small states/UTs have done well, with Goa now having only 5.09% of its population living in poverty, and Andaman and Nicobar reporting just 1%.

[14] *See https://niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2018-12/FirstDeltaRanking-May2018- AspirationalRanking.pdf*

III.2. SDG#2: End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutririon and Promote Sustainable Agriculture



With about 195 million hungry people as per the estimates of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), India doesn't seem to be on track to achieve SDG 2 by the year 2030. Targets especialy pertaining to malnutrition – under-5 children who are underweight and stunted – are way behind where they should be and subsidised food distribution systems have been negatively affected by COVID-19

With about 195 million hungry people as per the estimates of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), India doesn't seem to be on track to achieve SDG 2 by the year 2030. Targets especially pertaining to malnutrition – under-5 children who are underweight and stunted – are way behind where they should be, and a number of the targets are not even being tracked.

Although India has shown improvement in reducing child stunting, with 46.6 million stunted children the country is still home to over 30.9% of all stunted children under five years of age – the highest in the world. India, however, has shown no progress or declining parameters but still bears 23.8% of the global burden of malnourishment, and has the second-highest estimated number of undernourished people in the world after China, according to FAO.[15]

Analysis done by IndiaSpends shows that to achieve zero hunger by 2030 India will have to lift 48,370 people out of hunger every day. India's reduction in undernourished population from 2015 to 2017 was 3.9 million, which is about 10,685 people per day--less than one-fourth needed to meet the SDG target by 2030. Even at its highest reduction of undernourished population – 15.2 million in 2006-2008 – India could lift only 41,644 people per day out of hunger.[16] One of the critical and earliest interventions to prevent malnutrition and disease in children is breast feeding; yet, only 54.9% of Indian babies are exclusively breastfed and only 41.6% of babies are breastfed in the first hour of birth, according to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-16). India has made efforts to counter the trend of slowing decline in malnutrition rates. The Poshan Abhiyan - National Nutrition Mission aimed at reducing malnutrition in women and children was launched in March 2018 and operates under the aegis of NITI Ayong.

India's average score on the NITI Aayog Index is 35 for Goal 2. Goa, Mizoram and Kerala top the list of states doing well on aggregate indices with Index score of 76, 75 and 74 respectively, while Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand are the tail enders with 26, 24 and 22. The majority of the states are lagging behind in achievement of SDG 2 and only 7 out of the total 30 seem to be inching closer to zero hunger. For the performance of all Indian states under SDG 2 see Annex II.

Hunger and Malnutrition in the Wake of the COVID-19 Crisis in India

Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDMS), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), and Maternity Entitlement Scheme, by virtue of being part of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013, make key provisions to ensure the right to food for school children, children under six along with pregnant and lactating mothers, households identified as eligible for receiving subsidized food grains. However, all these schemes were majorly affected by the lockdown imposed by the central government in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. Rapid Assessment conducted by the National Law School of India University (NLSIU) documented the violations of these provisions in Karnataka during the early phase of the lockdown. While there are many other ways in which the lockdown affected and induced hunger, following is an example of the suspension of the legal entitlements leading to widespread hunger among the poor people.

Government Schools, where Mid-Day Meals are provided were shut even before the formal lockdown was announced and this deprived school going children of the mid-day meals as well. This also meant early closure of Anganawadi centres/ICDS Centres and suspension of all the health, nutrition and immunisation services for young children and pregnant and lactating mothers. In one district, dry rations were not provided to pregnant women and lactating mothers. The beneficiaries were asked to maintain physical distancing and wear masks while collecting dry rations. In another district, food grains were not being distributed in all the schools in equal measurement. In some schools only rice was distributed. The students demanded pulses when they noticed that pulses were being distributed along with rice in other schools in the neighbourhood.

[15] *qw http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4646e.pdf*
[16] *https://www.indiaspend.com/india-not-on-track-to-reach-2025-nutrition-targets-or-achieve-zero-hunger-by-2030/*

The fair price shops were not open in many places from morning to evening. On average, a fair price shop is open for 6 hours during a day during the lockdown period. At many places, owners of fair price shops asked the beneficiaries to get their ration cards compulsorily to avail of their rations whereas in other districts this was not the case. In Koppal and Bidar, entitlements were denied due to failure to capture biometrics and other technical issues associated with Aadhar, the Unique Identification (UID). As regards the maternity cash entitlement, it was reported that the fresh registrations under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) and the Mathrushree schemes were temporarily suspended, as prominence was given only to distribution of food. Continuation of these schemes would have provided financial assistance to pregnant women and lactating mothers to purchase medicines and the necessary nutritional supplements.

III.3. SDG #5: Achieve Gender Equalty and Empower all Women and Girls

The root cause of discrimination against women and girls in India is the roles and responsibilities assigned to women and men, perpetuated and promoted by patriarchal social norms and practices. The Indian Government admits that achieving gender equality is a long way to go despite several progressive socio-economic and legal policies and interventions being implemented.

SDG 5 aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women in the public and private spheres and to undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources and access to ownership of property. In India, the root cause of discrimination against women and girls is the roles and responsibilities assigned to women and men, perpetuated and promoted by patriarchal social norms and practices. India has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), whilst gender equality is firmly established in the Constitution. Despite that, India dropped four places, from 2018, to take the 112th rank in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2019-2020.

India presented her initial Voluntary National Review report on SDG implementation at the UN's High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2017. This review brings out the initial steps taken to achieve the SDGs that include SDG 5. The Indian Government admits that achieving gender equality is a long way to go despite several progressive socio-economic and legal policies and interventions being implemented.

According to the SDG India Index 2018 India has set as national targets to be achieved by 2030:

- sex ratio at birth (female per 1000 male): 954;
- seats won by women in the general elections to state legislative assemblies: 50%;
- average female to male ratio of average wages/salaries received per day by regular wage/salaried employees of age 15-59 for rural and urban: 1; ratio of female labour force participation rate to male labour force participation rate: 1;
- women in the age group of 15-49 years using modern methods of family planning: 100%;
- married women aged 15-49 who have ever experienced spousal violence: nil.

The current reality is quite far from these targets, though. The national child gender ratio has fallen over the past three decades from 945 in 1991 to 918 girls per 1,000 boys in 2011, according to Census data 2011. The decline has continued with a ratio of 896 girls per 1000 boys reflected in the NITI Aayog SDG Index 2019-20. The preference for male children is still a predominant factor in India. Instead of being equal, the earnings of females are on average 78% of those of males among the salaried class in rural and urban areas. The rate of crimes against women is unabated at 57.90 (per 100,000 female populations), which means for 100,000 female population 58 women are victims of crimes in India. One in three women experience spousal violence. The proportion of sexual crimes against girl children to a total crime against children is about 59.97 per cent as per the Crime in



https://www.theleaflet.in/21478-2/?hcb=1

India Report, 2017. Only 8.32 % of seats in the state legislative assemblies are held by women. The Report agrees that no state reaches gender parity in electoral politics. 17.5% women participated in the labour force in 2017-18. Only 13.96 % of women are operational land holders in India.

While the composite score for SDG implementation by India has improved, from 57 in 2018 to 60 in 2019, the overall country score for SDG 5 is below 50. That is why the SDG India Index 2019-20 calls for special attention to be paid to this SDG. However, the progress in SDG 5 is interlinked with many other SDGs. The deep-rooted structural barriers are still major causes of the persistent gender inequality in India.

As observed by the United Nations country team, India has achieved gender parity at the primary education level and is on track to achieve parity at all education levels. As of June 2019, however, the proportion of seats in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Indian Federal Parliament) held by women had only reached 11%. It is worth noting, though, that the percentage of women in the Panchayati Raj (local government) Institutions was 46%. India is also confronting the challenge of violence against women. As an example, a baseline study revealed that in New Delhi, 92% of women had experienced some form of sexual violence in public spaces during their lifetime. In 2016, close to a third of total crimes reported against women in India was cruelty or physical violence by the husband or his relative.

The Government of India has identified ending violence against women as a key national priority, which resonates with SDG 5. Several national schemes such as the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative aim at equal opportunity and education for girls in India. In addition, specific interventions on female employment, programmes on the empowerment of adolescent girls, the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana on girl child prosperity and the Janani Suraksha Yojana for mothers advance India's commitment to gender equality, and the targets of Goal 5.

As reported in NITI Aayog SDG India Index 2019 there is a gap in gender-disaggregated data systems, female labour force participation is in decline, there are persistent inequalities in women's access to and ownership of land and women's entrepreneurship. To measure India's performance towards SDG 5 eight national-level indicators have been identified, which capture four out of the nine SDG targets for 2030 outlined under this Goal. These indicators have been selected based on the availability of data at the sub-national level and to ensure comparability across states and Union Territories (UTs); they can be found in Annex I.

Nevertheless, the national indicators selected for SDG 5 do not comprehensively capture the historically persisting gender inequalities. In terms of economic empowerment of women only wages in the formal sector have been taken into account leaving out India's 93% labour force in the informal paid and unpaid sector, mainly consisting of women. The major challenges of patriarchal traditions, cultures, practices and private domain economics, such as unpaid work at home, human trafficking, child marriages are the stark realities that impact on gender in the Indian and South Asian societies. These dimensions are crucial for measuring the status of gender equality. Another indicator for political participation and representation of women, women representation in the parliament at the national/federal level is not captured in the report.



IV. SDG Planning and Implementation Methodology in India: Key Concerns

In addition to the gaps in the achievement of targets as per the defined indicators, the analysis done for this report also points towards a number of omissions and problems with the methodology itself. The indicator set for SDG India Index 2019-20 was larger (100 indicators) compared to SDG India Index 2018 (62 indicators), therefore the two indices are strictly not comparable. There are only 40 indicators which are common across the two indices. NITI Aayog already admits to what it terms "data challenges", acknowledges that the data set is incomplete, draws on data released by a variety of central ministries only with their consent, and expresses hope in the SDG India Index in vague terms that "The indicators shall be refined, data collection and reporting processes shall be improved, and the potential for disaggregating data shall be explored over the coming years."

IV.1. Setting Targets and Indicators

India has adopted the Global Indicator Framework and the same has been adapted into the National Indicator Framework to suit the country specific context. While India's adaptation of indicators largely falls within the global directives, contextualisation has fallen short in taking due cognisance of the country-specific situation.

The first Index did not measure indicators of SDG 17 owing to the unavailability of suitable data at the state/ UT level. Only a qualitative assessment of the progress under SDG 17 was included. Full sets of the NIF were not included in the Index due to the unavailability of data at state/ UT level. However, the most critical drawback of the index is that the indicators and data from state/UT statistical systems and non-government sources were not included, to ensure data comparability and uniformity across them. This may raise a legitimate question on the reliability and authenticity of data. A case can also be made to assign unequal weights to certain indicators. However, equal weights were justified on the normative assumption that all SDGs are equally valuable.

Additionally, as noted by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India in its report, "It is evident that the critical task of finalising and promulgating the NIF had been delayed, which had held up identification of baseline data and formulation of national targets for the 2030 Agenda. The States were also yet to firm up their indicator frameworks and baseline data with progress being affected due to delay in finalisation of the NIF. These delays would hamper establishment of a robust monitoring and reporting mechanism required for ensuring time bound and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda."[17] For some indicators, data for all states/UTs are not available. In computing the Index, "null" has been assigned to these states/UTs and they have not been included in the computation. Most of the data used for the 2019 index was about 4-5 years old and may have become obsolete.

As in the case of other countries, India has also adopted the Global Indicator Framework and the same has been adapted into the National Indicator Framework to suit the country specific context. While India's adaptation of indicators largely falls within the global directives, contextualisation has fallen short in taking due cognisance of the country-specific situation. For instance, monitoring system for Goal 2 - Eradicating Hunger and Malnutrition does not seem to have taken due cognisance of many



[17] *Chapter IV: Monitoring and Reporting Report 8 of 2019, available at https://cag.gov.in/sites/default/files/audit_report_files/Chapter_4_Monitoring_and_Reporting_of_Report_No_8_of_2019_Preparedness_for_the_Implementation_of_Sustainable_Development_Goals_Union_Government_Civi.pdf*

contentious issues such as access to productive resources for small and marginal farmers, diversification of food basket, creation of livelihood opportunities and ensuring adequate purchasing power for people, and intersectionality of the issues. This despite the fact that India is home to the highest number of malnourished children in the world[18]. The approach to combat malnutrition, with reference to target 2.2, remains limited to nutrition outcomes such as stunting, wasting and anaemia among children and low BMI and anaema among women in the age of 15 and 45 years age group.

Despite the magnitude of the problem that is faced, the SDG monitoring framework has failed to encompass the much evolved nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive approaches. As a consequence of this, the SDG monitoring framework remains deficient in a number of critical aspects that have a defining role in ensuring food and nutrition security for all. Nutrition sensitive sectors such as health - prevention of diseases, prevention of early pregnancies and child marriages; water, hygiene and sanitation; agriculture - especially the diversification of food crops; education - early stimulation and learning, secondary education for girls; and safety nets. Although some of these have been covered under other SDGs such as those relating to Education or Poverty Alleviation, their direct implications for nutrition security cannot be ignored. Creation of livelihood opportunities, including skill building are other such areas that have direct bearing on purchasing power and food security.

Similarly in SDG 5 as acknowledged by NITI Aayog there is an acute data gap and incomplete coverage of targets for gender equality in several sectors, especially for sexual minorities. India in its/her national indicators for SDG 5 has left out the large section of sexual minorities who have been in the forefront not only in fighting for their rights and dignity demanding the government to change the draconian laws against them but also having an active voice on developmental issues.

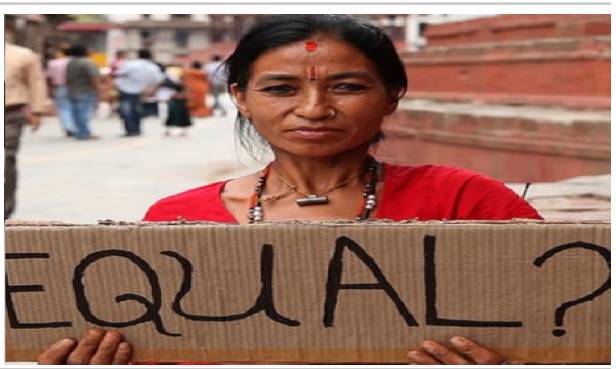


IV.2. Intersectionality

Although the Baseline Report notes that SDG #1 should be linked to several others, and principally the ones concerning Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-Being, Gender Equality and Quality Education, in practice no sophisticated linking has taken place

Related to aforementioned, is the problem of lack of intersectionality and multi-sectionality of the approach as regards food security and nutrition, which has led to compartmentalisation across thematics. This devoids the complex issue of its comprehensive and all-encompassing understanding. Part of the problem is the failure to link the SDGs to one another: #1 (End poverty) for example is closely connected to #2 (Zero Hunger). In other words, a systemic approach is lacking in India as a whole. When aggregate figures are tabulated this becomes evident. With an all-India average of 57, Himachal Pradesh scores 69, together with Kerala, with Tamil Nadu coming close behind with 66. Chandigarh, as noted, low on SDG 1 nevertheless scores an aggregate of 68. Among UTs, Puducherry maintains its score with 65 (and it is, it should be noted, an enclave embedded in the much larger and successful state of Tamil Nadu). Bihar and Uttar Pradesh clock in at 48 and 42 respectively, while Assam, the state that marks the transition from so-called "mainland" India to the hill states of the Northeast scores 49.

Although the Baseline Report notes that SDG #1 should be linked to several others, and principally the ones concerning Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-Being, Gender Equality and Quality Education, in practice no sophisticated linking has taken place, although the statistical and analytical tools now exist for such cross-referencing. This is a major flaw as it leaves the question of poverty "floating" as it were, detached from exactly the conditions that create, enhance and perpetuate it, and which signal its existence just as much as the crude indicator of the income (below US $1.25 per day) measurement, which often means little in tribal, barter or agricultural communities.



[18] *https://niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2018-12/AspirationalDistrictsBaselineRankig March2018.pdf*

IV.3. No Cognisance of Existing Policy and Legal Framework

Diversification of food basket, diverse cropping, safety nets, minimum wages, women empowerment … are not alien to the Indian policy framework.

It is important to note that many of the aspects as mentioned above have found place and have been clearly articulated in the national level policy framework and deserved a direct reference while creating the national framework for indicators. Diversification of food basket, diverse cropping, safety nets, minimum wages, women empowerment and need for inclusion of both direct intervention such as supplementation and indirect interventions such as minimum wage administration, are not alien to policy framework and were integral components of National Nutrition Policy (NNP) 1993. National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013 had also adopted a progressive approach especially through its Schedule III that emphasised the need for agricultural and land reforms, and protecting the interest of small and marginal farmers, among other issues.

IV.4. Gaps in Data Collection and Tracking

A primary concern for those interested in the implementation of the SDGs in India is that not all indicators are tracked and data related to all indicators is not collected, and consequently monitoring of progress is far from all encompassing.

NITI Aayog itself admits that there are numerous problems with the data on which it is basing its judgements and ranking of states/UTs. Most of this material is reported by the states themselves, and so a second level of confusion exists as to how and if such data was collected, how representative it is, whether it is state-wide or collected only in pockets (and substantial geographical variation exists within many states), whether states have qualified personnel to design the data collection process, to administer it, and to interpret and accurately report the findings. Further, it remains a matter of concern that an already compromised framework on SDG monitoring is not yet being monitored and tracked. The SDG Index prepared by NITI Aayog is not based on all the indicators so there is a perennial problem with the integrity of data. A primary concern for those interested in the implementation of the SDGs is that not all indicators are tracked and data related to all indicators is not collected, and consequently monitoring of progress is far from all encompassing.

IV.5. Ambiguous Decentralisation

While the local monitoring and implementation systems for SDGs in India are in the hands of the states, the overall goals are largely defined and controlled by the Federal Government…

While the local monitoring and implementation systems for SDGs in India are in the hands of the states, the overall goals are largely defined and controlled by the Federal Government and NITI Aayog which is also a body functioning under the direct supervision of the central government and which compiles and reports overall figures. Along with this, the fact that the SDGs are also internationally developed goals, have led to minimal SDG ownership by state and local governments. The centralised nature of the process has percolated down to the state and then to district/local level governments as well, wherein the lower levels of government systems have been reduced to only data collection systems, as per the directives of the higher level of government.

In the entire process, a large number of state functionaries are consumed by the collection of data... What is certainly missing at the lower levels is the focus on actually achieving the SDGs in practice and mobilizing the resources and methods necessary for that.

In the entire process, a large number of state functionaries are consumed by the collection of data in the formats that may or may not make sense to their own understanding of the issue. What is certainly missing at the lower levels is the focus on actually achieving the SDGs in practice and mobilizing the resources and methods necessary for that. While decentralisation does require a certain amount of autonomy in deciding the indicators, huge variations exist between the apparatus, training, financing, reporting or even being aware of the data required and how to transmit it to the Centre in a form compatible with datasets being submitted by other states. We see here something of a misfit between the demands of the Centre (here represented principally by NITI Aayog and MoSPI), and the individual state bureaucratic apparatus, with it being clear that the Centre has not provided clear and systematic guidelines and training to those identified as responsible for collecting and transmitting data on the SDGs. State level structures vary enormously. This is an important question and needs to be examined as a separate category by itself.

IV.6. From Cooperative Federalism to Competitive Federalism

In the arena of SDGs competitive federalism has manifested in the programme 'Transformation of aspirational districts' that is based on the methodology of ranking the districts in the various categories, namely forerunners, performers and aspirational.

The concept of cooperative federalism that embodied the spirit of cooperation between the central and state governments seems to have been overshadowed by 'competitive federalism'. In the arena of SDGs this competitive federalism has manifested in the programme 'Transformation of aspirational districts' that is based on the methodology of ranking the districts in the various categories, namely forerunners, performers and aspirational. This categorisation of districts has rather led to putting districts and states in defensive mode instead of encouraging them to get into constructive and creative zones. Discussions with some experts have indicated that states with better performance are encouraged by the provision of more resources, and that this may be counterproductive for resource starved under-performing states and districts. However, there is neither any firm evidence nor any direct study that can be used to establish this hypothesis.



IV.7. Missing the Point or Ignoring the Social Context

This system clearly has not been designed to enable system improvement. The rigour has been on data collection and monitoring rather than the end result, which indicates a substantial methodological failure – notably the reliance on statistical indicators which are not tied to the social context.

Consequence of the centralisation and need to compete against other districts has put extra pressure on district/local level officials not only to collect data but to also demonstrate tangible results often within unrealistic time frames. There have been instances wherein claims have been made through data regarding rapid progress in target achievement that is highly dubious. This system clearly has not been designed to enable system improvement and the rigour has been on data collection and monitoring rather than the end result. This latter point indicates a substantial methodological failure – notably the reliance on statistical indicators which are not tied to the social context. Prominent among these are the inevitable questions of caste and gender. Is poverty higher among women or among female-headed households than among men or among patriarchal households? In mixed-caste communities do Dalits, tribals and members of other "backward castes" fare worse than upper or dominant caste groups? Has a migratory history contributed in some way to poverty or relative economic success? Is religion a factor? Does urbanization or proximity to an urban centre influence poverty levels? Do different forms of agricultural activity correspond to different poverty levels? How are land ownership patterns linked to poverty, nutrition and gender (incl. sexual minorities)? Many similar questions could be asked of a much more sociological nature. Many of these can in fact be captured by survey methods, but others require detailed local knowledge that can only be obtained through fieldwork and close attention to details "on the ground". So far the methodology has largely relied on statistical indicators, and the protocols and questionnaires or other means through which such data was collected are not made apparent in the publicly available reports.

V. Analysis and Recommendations

Based on the situation in India regarding progress towards the fulfilment of SDG 1, 2 and 5, a number of observations and recommendations can be made, many of which may be equally applicable to other SDGs in the Indian context.

V.1. Identification of Weaknesses

It is clear that one major weakness at state/UT level is the lack of training and sensitization of government officers in the recognition of what the SDGs are and how they should become the reference framework for other schemes (panchayat, welfare schemes, rural development, etc.) that both reflect the SDGs and are vehicles for their realization.

While central agencies and in particular NITI Aayog and MoSPI have made substantial efforts to collate data on poverty alleviation and progress towards the fulfilment of SDG 1 for example or at least to meet the more modest target of approximately halving the incidence of poverty to a little over 10% by the 2030 target date, their efforts are seriously handicapped by numerous factors. These include non-standardized data collection procedures and lack of consistency in the indicators utilized across states and between the centre and the states. Indeed, NITI Aayog has noted that, of the 62 indicators that it had earlier itself identified, only 40 are shared in common with other data sources (primarily the states themselves). This indicates substantial unreliability in the data and points to the need for rapidly establishing a common reporting regime, sharing the same indicators, and reporting according to a common matrix.

The data on which judgements about the incidence and/or reduction of poverty, malnutrition and gender inequality should be made is highly statistical in nature. While it is indeed necessary to aggregate large quantities of data, this clearly needs to be supplemented by close quantitative research in both villages and urban settings. A great deal of sociological data of this kind exists already but needs to be incorporated into analyses of poverty reduction (or indeed of its increase). The methodology for assessing progress towards SDG 1 as an instance typical of the others, needs to be based on a mixture of sensitive survey work and fieldwork and the incorporation of relevant primary data from sociological and anthropological work, and from the work of NGOs and other agencies concerned with these





issues. This is not only a question of method in the narrow sense, but as noted above, needs to incorporate sociological dimensions of caste, gender, religion and ethnicity, and possibly other factors such as age, and need to note that a crude income measure does not in fact identify all that needs to be known about poverty – nutrition, educational and cultural access, and other factors being necessary to create a multi-dimensional model of poverty, food security and gender parity.

The Federal Government certainly needs to explain clearly to states and UTs the significance of the SDGs as common development and social justice goals, and to get them to recognize that local progress contributes to national progress and to the figures and reality that India can confidently report to the international community. It is clear that one major weakness at state/UT level is the lack of training and sensitization of government officers in the recognition of what the SDGs are and how they should become the reference framework for other schemes and local self-governments (Panchayati Raj institutions, welfare schemes, rural development, etc.) that both reflect the SDGs and are vehicles for their realization.

V.2. Collaboration with Civil Society Organisations

There is a need to bring in a paradigm shift towards a rights based approach to utilise the available resources for maximised impact



Enhancing at state/UT level relationships with NGOs and academic researchers is an important area to be explored and worked upon. Coordination of work to promote the SDGs and to provide a holistic model and to prevent conflict from emerging between goals (poverty reduction and environmental protection for exampl e) cannot be resolved without active participation of civil society.

Good practices need to be documented and incorporated. There are many small NGOs working with innovative models of poverty reduction, rural development, urban gardening, craft promotion, agroecology, cooperatives, alternative energy and numerous other initiatives. While larger structural adjustments in the economy, labour laws, employment practices and so forth are necessary, smaller and locally effective initiatives should not be overlooked. The emphasis on numerical indicators excludes these important activities that collectively make a substantial contribution to poverty reduction, food and nutrition security, gender equity and should be incorporated into a more holistic model.
It has also been noticed that most of the interventions and programmes adopt a top-down approach with least participation of people in the decision-making process. Programmes emerging from such non-inclusive policies tend to be welfaristic in nature. There is a need to bring in a paradigm shift towards a rights based approach to utilise the available resources for maximised impact. Transformative approach in reviewing and framing policies and interventions is a critical need of the hour.

V.3. The COVID-19 Crisis and the SDGs

For SDGs to remain relevant for progress in India, a massive re-alignment exercise will have to be undertaken in full cognizance of the crisis precipitated by COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic has pulled humanity back from milestones it had achieved on various development goals. India has witnessed a surge in COVID-19 positive cases. Rapid Assessments and studies undertaken have pointed towards unprecedented hunger, malnutrition, wage loss, rising poverty, as well specific and aggravated impact on women and girl children. For SDGs to remain relevant for progress in India, a massive re-alignment exercise will have to be undertaken in full cognizance of this crisis.

VI. Way Forward

While this report has brought out a number of issues that need to be addressed in the context of India's SDG implementation, there are many more areas that require further work both in terms of research and in terms of interventions towards implementation.

Further research: There is an obvious need to expand the scope of the present report both in breadth - covering more SDGs, and in depth - to analyse the legal frameworks and institutions that have primary responsibility for achieving the three SDGs in question. Research on SDG systems and structures in other countries, especially those that are doing better, will be of interest to all those concerned with India's as well as other developing countries' movement towards achieving the SDGs. A comparative analysis with focus on the identified SDGs may provide further insights into accelerating the achievement of these SDGs in India.

Steps towards implementation: Another possible pathway is to build on the findings of this initial research and focus on ways to contribute to the better implementation of the three SDGs (poverty, hunger, gender) in Karnataka state and/or India as a whole by formulating and offering capacity building courses for:

a. State and federal officials and other public authorities involved in the implementation of the SDGs;
b. NGOs and community-based organisations that advocate for the implementation of one or more of the SDGs;
c. Private sector entities that want to contribute to SDG implementation by strengthening their own CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) activities.

SDG implementation is contingent, at great measure, on the capabilities of the institutions entrusted with the implementation and monitoring the implementation of the relevant policy, legal and programmatic provisions. Researchers intent on intensifying the progress towards one of the SDGs see value in engaging with the independent human rights commissions – for instance Child Rights Commissions, Women's Commissions and State Food Commissions[19] – with a view to orient them towards the SDGs. This would, on one hand, encourage these commissions to take cognisance of their issues being part of the SDGs and thereby intensifyig SDG implementation at sub national level. On the other hand it would lead to making these commissions much more effective in articulating their recommendations based on the SDG framework, and pressurising the state governments to take desired measures.

A combination of the above would also be possible. A final decision will be made by the project partners on the basis of responses to this report and the possibility of further funding by QMUL, the UK Government, the European Union or other multilateral organisations.



Photo by Ron Hansen on Unsplash

ANNEX I

Indian National Indicators, Targets and their Current Status for SDGs 1, 2 and 5

Targets		National Indicators		National Target	Current Status
Goal 1 – End Poverty: Current Status in India 2019-20					
1.1	By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day	1.1.1	Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, 2011-12 (in percentage)	10.95	21.92
		1.1.2	Poverty Gap Ratio, 2011-12 (in percentage)	-	-
1.2	By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions		No national indicator developed		
1.3	Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable	1.3.1	Percentage of households with any usual member covered by a health scheme or health insurance, 2015-16 (in percentage)	100	28.70
		1.3.2	Number of Beneficiaries under Integrated Child Development Scheme - ICDS, (win number)	-	-
		1.3.3	Persons provided employment as a percentage of persons who demanded employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)	100	85.26
		1.3.4	Number of Self Help Groups (SHGs) provided bank credit linkage, (in lakhs)	-	-
		1.3.5	Proportion of the population (out of total eligible population) receiving social protection benefits under Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)	100	36.4
		1.3.6	Number of senior citizens provided institutional assistance through Old Age Homes/Day Care Centers funded by the Government, (in number)	-	-
		1.3.7	Number of beneficiaries added under Employee's Pension Scheme (EPS) during the year, (in number)	-	-
		1.3.8	Coverage of New Pension scheme (NPS)	-	-

1.4	By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance	1.4.1	Percentage of Population getting safe and adequate drinking water within premises through Pipe Water Supply (PWS) (similar to 6.1.1)	-	-
		1.4.2	Proportion of population (Urban) living in households with access to safe drinking water & sanitation (Toilets)	-	-
		1.4.3	Percentage of households electrified, 2019-20 (similar to 7.1.1)	-	-
		1.4.4	Proportion of homeless population to total population, 2011 (in percentage)	-	-
		1.4.5	Number of accounts (including deposit and credit accounts) of scheduled commercial banks per 1,000 population, (in number) (similar to 8.10.2	-	-
		1.4.6	Number of telephone subscriptions as percentage of total population, (in percentage)	-	-
		1.4.7	Proportion of households having access to toilet facility (Urban & Rural),(in percentage) (similar to 6.2.1), 2015-16	-	-
1.5	By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters	1.5.1	Number of deaths attributed to extreme climate per 1,00,000 population (similar to Indicator 11.5.1 and 13.1.2)	-	-
		1.5.2	Number of deaths attributed to extreme climate per 1,00,000 population (similar to Indicator 11.5.1 and 13.1.2	-	-
1.a	Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions	1.a.1	Proportion of domestically generated resources allocated by the government (Central & State) directly to poverty reduction programmes		
		1.b.2	Proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection), (in percentage)		
1.b	Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions	1.b.1	Proportion of budget earmarked under gender budget	-	-

Goal 2 - End hunger: Current Status in India 2019-20

2.1	By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round	2.1.1	Percentage of children aged under 5 years who are underweight	0.9	33.4
		2.1.2	Proportion of beneficiaries covered under National Food Security Act 2013 Ratio of rural households covered under public distribution system where monthly income of highest earning member is less than Rs 5,000	1.29	1.01
2.2	By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons	2.2.1	Percentage of children under age 5 years who are stunted	2.5	34.7
		2.2.2	Percentage of children under age 5 years who are wasted	-	-
		2.2.3	Percentage of women whose Body Mass Index (BMI) is below normal	-	-
		2.2.4	Percentage of pregnant women age 15-49 years who are anemic (<11.0g/dl)	25.15	50.3
		2.2.5	Percentage of children age 6-59 months who are anemic (<11.0g/dl)	14	40.5
2.3	By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment	2.3.1:	Agriculture productivity of wheat and rice	5033.34 (hectare) kg	2516.67
		2.3.2	Gross Value Added in Agriculture per worker	1.36	0.68
		2.3.3	Ratio of institutional Credit to Agriculture to the Agriculture output		
2.4	By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality	2.4.1	Proportion of Net Sown Area to Cultivable Land		
		2.4.2	Percentage of farmers issued Soil Health Card		
		2.4.3	Percentage of net area under organic farming.		

2.5	By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed	2.5.1:	Number of accessions conserved in the base collection (-18 degree Celsius) at National Gene Bank.		
		2.5.2	Conservation of germplasm		
		2.5.3	Conservation of fish genetic resource		
2.a	Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries	2.a.1:	Percentage share of expenditure in Intellectual Property Product (R & D) in agriculture to GVA in Agriculture		
		2.a.2	Percentage of total government expenditure in agriculture to GVA in agriculture.		
2.b	Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round				
2.c	Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility	2.c.1	Percentage of Agriculture Mandis enrolled in e-market		

Goal 5 - Gender Equality: Current Status in India 2019-20

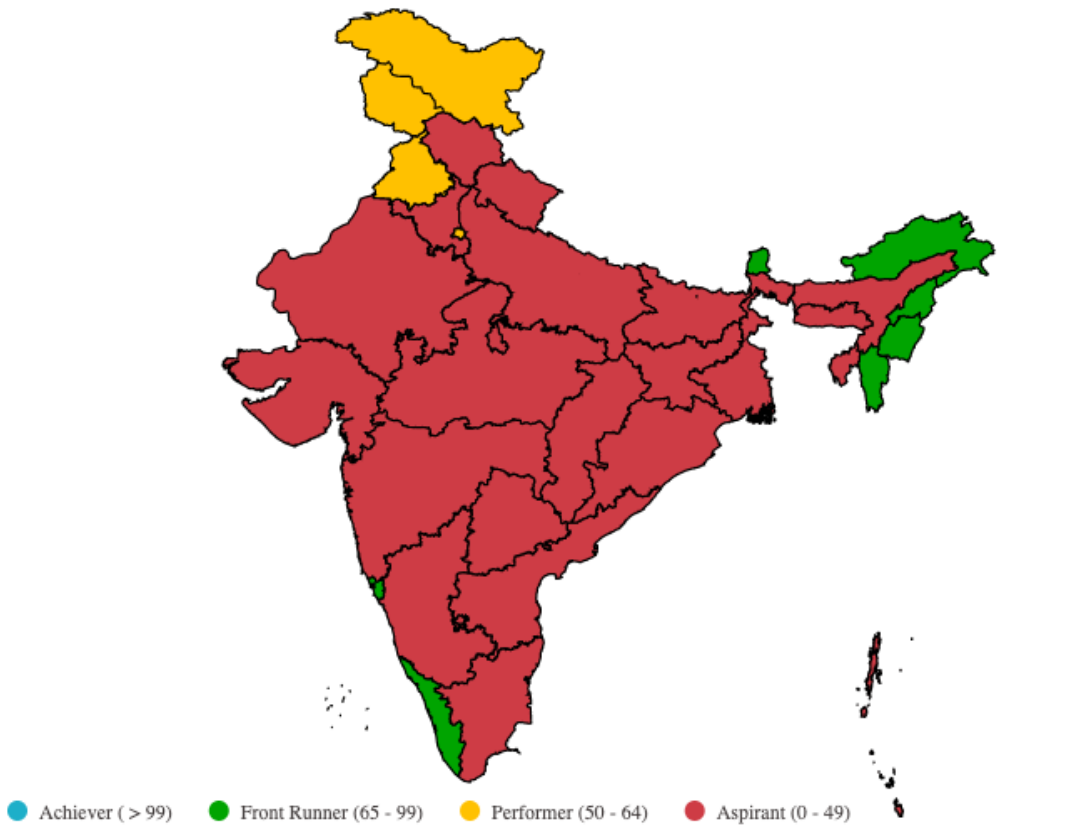
		5.1.2	Female to male ratio of average wage/ salary earnings received during the preceding calendar month among regular wage salaried employees (rural + urban)	1	0.78
		5.1.3	Sex ratio at birth (female per 1000 male)	954	896
		5.1.4	Whether or not legal framework are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non- discrimination on the basis of sex, (in percentage)	-	-
5.2	By 2030 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	5.2.1	Proportion of crime against women to total crime reported in the country during the calendar year, (in percentage)	-	-
		5.2.2	Per lakh women who have experienced sexual crimes during the year, (in percentage	-	-
		5.2.3	Per lakh women who have experienced cruelty/physical violence by husband or his relative during the calendar year, (in percentage)	-	-
		5.2.4	Proportion of sexual crime against girl children to total crime against children during the calendar year	0	59.97
		5.2.5	Proportion of trafficking of girl children to total children trafficked during the calendar year, (in percentage)	-	-
		5.2.6	Percentage of ever married women aged 15-49 years who have ever experienced spousal violence	0	33.3
		5.2.7	Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years), 2011(in number)	-	-
5.3	By 2030 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	5.3.1	5.3.1 Proportion of cases reported under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (early marriage of children below 18 years of age) to total crime against children, (in percentage)	-	-
		5.3.2	Percentage of women aged 20-24 years who were married by exact age 18 years,2015-16	-	-

5.4	Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	5.4.1	Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work.	-	-
5.5	By 2030 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	5.5.1	Percentage of seats won by women in the general elections to state legislative assembly	50	8.32
		5.5.2	Female labour force participation rate (LFPR)	100	17.5
5.6	By 2030 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences	5.6.1	Percentage of currently married women (15-49 years) who use modern methods of family planning, 2015-16 (similar to Indicators 3.7.1 and 3.8.1)	-	-
		5.6.2	Unmet need for family planning for currently married women aged 15-49 years, 2015-16 (in percentage)	-	-
		5.6.3	Percentage of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS,2015-16	-	-
5.a	By 2030 Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	5a.1	Operational land holdings - gender wise, 2015-16 (percentage of female operated operational holdings)	50	13.96
		5a.3	Wages of casual labourers (gender wise) other than public works, (per day in Rs.)	-	-
		5a.4	Average agricultural wage earnings from casual labour work other than public works, (per day in Rs.)	-	-
		5a.5	Exclusive women SHGs in Bank linked SHGs, (in percentage)	-	-
		5a.6	Percentage of adult having an account at a formal financial institution	-	-
		5a.7	Percentage of women having an account at a formal financial institution	-	-
		5a.8	No. of borrowers per 1,00,000 adults (Male & Female)	-	-
5.b	By 2030 Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	5.b.1	Percentage of women employed in IT and ITeS industry, (in percentage), 2017-189	-	-
5.c	By 2030 Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels	5.c.1	Number of Central Ministries and States having Gender Budget Cells (GBCs)		

Source: Targets & Indicators from MoSPI – Govt of India (http://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/NIF2.0_%2031032020.pdf)

ANNEX II

Performance of Indian States on SDG 2 – End Hunger



Boundaries shown in the map are as per Gazette Notification of Government of India S.O. 3979(E), dated 2, Nov, 2019.

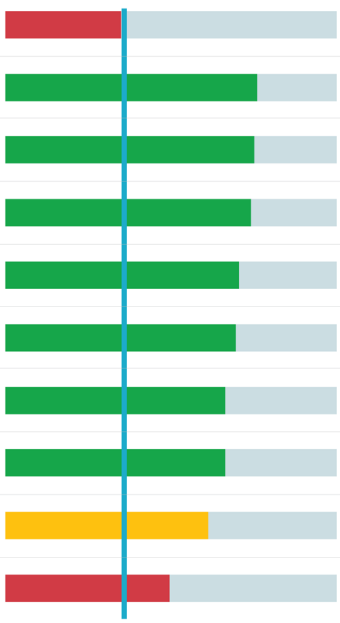
1 Projection of status of SDG 2 in different states of India

AREA	Goal 2	RANK 2019	SCORE 2019	SCORE 2018
India	35		35	48
Goa	76	1	76	80
Mizoram	75	2	75	69
Kerala	74	3	74	72
Nagaland	70	4	70	69
Manipur	69	5	69	74
Arunachal Pradesh	66	6	66	58
Sikkim	66	6	66	67
Punjab	61	8	61	71
Tripura	49	9	49	58
Tamil Nadu	48	10	48	61
Uttarakhand	45	11	45	53
Himachal Pradesh	44	12	44	58
Haryana	43	13	43	53
West Bengal	40	14	40	50
Assam	39	15	39	53
Gujarat	39	15	39	49
Karnataka	37	17	37	54
Telangana	36	18	36	54
Andhra Pradesh	35	19	35	50
Meghalaya	35	19	35	43
Rajasthan	35	19	35	50
Maharashtra	34	22	34	47
Odisha	34	22	34	46
Uttar Pradesh	31	24	31	43
Chhattisgarh	27	25	27	46
Bihar	26	26	26	39
Madhya Pradesh	24	27	24	41
Jharkhand	22	28	22	35

Image 2 : Classification of States as per their performance

Performance category

	Category	States and UTs (shown in alphabetical order)
1	Achiever	
2	Front Runner	Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Goa, Kerala, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim
3	Performer	Delhi, jammu & Kashmir and ladakh, Lakshadweep, Punjab
4	Aspirant	Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Dadra and nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Gujarat, Haryana, himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karanataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal

AREA	SDGs	RANK 2019	SCORE 2019	SCORE 2018
India			35	48
Goa		1	76	80
Mizoram		2	75	69
Kerala		3	74	72
Nagaland		4	70	69
Manipur		5	69	74
Arunachal Pradesh		6	66	58
Sikkim		6	66	67
Punjab		8	61	71
Tripura		9	49	58

The indicator set for SDG India Index 2019-2020 os large (100 indicators) as compared to SDG India Index 2018 (62 indicators) and thereby two Indices are strictly not comparable. There are 40 indicators that are common across SDG India Index 2018 and SDG India Index 2019-2020.

ANNEX III

About the Project Partners

Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) is one of the UK's leading research-focused higher education institutions with over 25,000 students and close to 4,500 members of staff. Teaching and research cover a wide range of subjects in the humanities, social sciences, law, medicine and dentistry, and science and engineering. The University is based in a creative and culturally diverse area of east London and Mile End site is one of the largest self-contained residential campuses in the British capital. Research and education at the School of Business and Management aims at promoting social justice, sustainability and good governance in the management of private, public and voluntary organisations.

Eco Foundation for Sustainable Alternatives (EFSA) is a non-profit organization based in Bangalore, Karnataka state, India. Its ethos is primarily to pursue a social and economic order based on principles of wellbeing and social justice devoid of disparities, and in enabling humanity to coexist with the ecosystem. Activities include sensitization, awareness raising, enhancement of knowledge and empowering the poor and marginalized urban, rural and tribal communities that face the negative impact of globalization, considering alternate options of creating and globalizing responsible and ecologically sustainable societies.

The National Law School of India University (NLSIU) was the first National Law University established in India to pioneer legal education reforms. The University has remained a leader in the field of legal education in India for over 30 years. NLSIU has been ranked No 1 in the National Institutional Ranking Framework in 2018, 2019 and 2020. Over the last three decades, NLSIU has played a significant role in legal research and reform. Its specialised research centres have been repeatedly called upon to shape laws and improve implementation in intellectual property, child rights, food security and environmental laws, among many others.

O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) is a non -profit global university established by the Government of Haryana state, India, fostering excellence in teaching, research, community service, and capacity building and nurturing socially responsible leaders through an eclectic and sustainable approach serving the local and regional communities. Through its work, the University seeks to build bridges across nations, working with national, international, and governmental organizations, and NGOs, and business organizations.

The Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability (FOGGS) is a Brussels-based think-and-do tank, serving at the same time as research and ideas-generation centre, discussion forum and advocacy mechanism. A Public Benefit Foundation under Belgian law FOGGS promotes a Grand Narrative of hope, for a people-centred, planet-friendly, inclusive and sustainable globalisation in a digital world. The Foundation supports tackling major global challenges through a revamped global governance system and engaged, responsible and informed global citizens, and ensuring that the rapid and transformative technological and digital advances contribute to a more just and equitable world, with a better life for all people.

ANNEX IV

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The "Better India" (ActionAid India) site which contains the RIS Work Programme on Sustainable Development Goals is at www.thebetterindia.com/sustainable-development-goals
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March 2021

Queen Mary University of London

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