

Tackling Challenges to Achieve SDGs in South Asia

Perspectives of Civil Society Organizations



**Asia Pacific
Regional CSOs Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCEM)
South and Southwest Asia
Working Group**

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About the Publication



The people of South Asia (*Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka*) share contiguous geographical space and similar social and cultural ethos that shape the people's life style, belief system, cultural specialties, material practices and social relationships in the sub-region.

South Asia has emerged as one of the most dynamic sub-regions in the world. With inclusive growth and sustainable use of available natural resources, South Asia has the potential to change global poverty. Development of this sub-region is pre-requisite to overcome the global poverty and to achieve the prosperity goals. But, according to UNDP, multidimensional poverty is found significant in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where 83 percent of all multi-dimensionally poor people live. In South Asia 546 million people (31 percent) are multi-dimensionally poor, 200 million of them (37 percent) in a severe condition. The rising inequality is a huge challenge in achieving the SDGs in the sub-region.

While the governments increasingly recognize the political importance of the SDGs we need to see real impacts also transforming how governments work and prioritize policies. While countries in the region continue to have rapid economic growth; the region is being increasingly challenged by widening inequalities within and between countries, between rich and poor and between men and women, impacts of climate change, disasters, resource conflicts, human rights violations, shrinking democratic spaces, and lack of access to food, water, clean air, health care and other essential public services. We challenge the rhetoric on poverty eradication; the fact is that more people are pushed near or below poverty thresholds by dispossession of land, productive resources and natural resources due to policies favoring big business and unaccountable corporations.

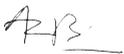
Even as we talk about creating sustainable and decent jobs, more and more people continue to lose their livelihoods due to conflicting policies, corporate onslaught and unequal trade agreements. Even as we talk about strengthening partnerships with CSOs; more and more CSOs, women, human rights and environmental defenders face oppression, intimidation, threats and marginalization within and across the regions. Even as the spirit of the agenda is Leaving No One Behind; people in the region and across the world are being excluded and unheard. It seems there is a growing gap between aspiration and reality.

We are concerned with the slow, unjust and uneven pace of progress, lack of reflections of peoples' priorities in the SDGs' implementation, shrinking space for CSOs in planning, implementation and review, lack of accountability towards the people, undue prominence provided to big business, poor monitoring and review frameworks, that may lead to lacking credibility and accountability of the many produced road maps, strategies and institutional mechanism that countries have produced for the implementation of Agenda 2030.

This book is jointly published by National Campaign For Sustainable Development-Nepal (NAACASUD-Nepal), Public Advocacy Initiatives For Rights And Values In India (PAIRVI) and Society for Roots for Equity, Pakistan on behalf of Asia-Pacific Regional CSOs Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCEM) South and South-West Asia Working Group. Main aim of publishing this book is to discuss the situation and progress made towards achieving SDGs in the sub-region through civil society perspectives. This book is a compilation of country level review papers and articles on SDGs and related themes. The country level review papers have tried to assess progress, issues, problems and challenges related to the implementation process and development targets. Moreover, they have offered some 'way forward' to address the issues and challenges which could be helpful to accelerate the process in achieving the goals in respective countries. The views expressed in the book do not necessarily reflect the views of AP-RCEM and publisher.

We acknowledge all the authors and organizations, who have voluntarily provided the papers and articles. Also, we would like to thank Mr. Hum Prasad Bhandari, who supported us to edit the documents and improve the language.

We are hopeful that this book will be useful to the CSOs working on Sustainable development. Moreover, this book will guide the respective Governments and Development actors of this sub-region to help improve policies, strategies, practices and make their efforts more people centric and human rights oriented.



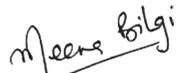
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Contents

1.	Sustainable Development in South Asia: Daunting Challenges, Little Progress	9
2.	Review of Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals	17
3.	SDGs and Bangladesh: Progress, Challenges and Missing Links	24
4.	India and the SDGs	34
5.	Overview of SDG implementation and progress in Nepal	46
6.	SDGs Implementation Policies, Processes & Challenges in Pakistan	56
7.	Sri Lanka Progress Report on Implementing the SDGs	64
8.	Poverty and Hunger in Pakistan	71
9.	Achieving Education (SDG 4) Targets in India	86
10.	Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All: Situation and Priorities for India	91
11.	Decent work and economic growth in the South Asian with specific focus on India	100
12.	Inequalities in South Asia: Ways to address	108
13.	Progress and Challenges of SDG 13 (Climate Action) in Bangladesh	118

14.	An Introspection on Development Cooperation and Partnership (Goal 17) for Realizing SDGs	125
15.	Discrimination Based on Work and Descent Including Caste	132
16.	Persons with Disabilities and SDGs in South Asia	139
17.	Progress, Prospects and Challenges in Achieving Gender Equality, Empowering Women and Girls in Nepal	142
18.	Introduction of South Asia Senior Citizens' Forum	149

Sustainable Development in South Asia Daunting Challenges, Little Progress

Introduction

South Asia houses around quarter of the global population and more than one-third of the world's poor. The per capita income remains lowest. Except for Maldives, where the major industry is tourism and fishing, South Asian economy remains largely agricultural. Industries like textiles and IT have made significant gains recently. The region has the greatest development needs as four LDCs (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal) lie in the region. Economy being largely dependent on agriculture is highly vulnerable to climate change. Most of the countries also suffer huge trade deficits. Sustaining economic growth, reducing poverty and inequality, creating empowering jobs, fighting climate change and disasters, ensuring food security and nutrition, health of oceans and loss of biodiversity, besides violence and grave situation of human rights, governance and corruption remains big challenges. The sub region with the multiple challenges, low resilience and scarce means of implementation will have to work harder to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

Progress on the SDGs in the South Asia

According to the Asia and the Pacific SDG progress Report 2017, the region is on the track to fully achieve only SDG 4 (lifelong education and learning). The region as a whole is regressing on SDG 10 and SDG 16.

As regards the sub-region of South and South west Asia, the report warns that the sub-region will miss 14 goals with the current rate of progress. The region has registered sufficient progress on SDG 7 (Access to sustainable energy) and SDG 10 (reducing inequalities) but the momentum needs to be maintained. There has been very little progress on SDG 2 (Sustainable Agriculture and food), SDG 5 (gender), SDG 14 (Life below water) and SDG 16 (peace, justice, inclusive society and transparent institutions). The sub-region has also registered regression on SDG 8 (decent work and sustained economic growth), SDG 11 (sustainable cities) and SDG 13 (climate action). The sub-region has been a leader in SDG 10 but below regional average in SDG 5 (women empowerment) and SDG 6 (water and sanitation).

As far as specific targets are concerned the South and South West Asia may miss 3 quarters of the targets. 16/60 targets are going in the reverse direction. Most of the targets likely to be achieved are in the SDG 3 and SDG 4. More than half of the targets seen regressing is in SDG 8 and SDG 9. The largest efforts for acceleration of progress needed by the sub region are on Ocean's health (SDG 14), Loss of forest area (SDG 15), safely managed drinking water (SDG 6) and the perception of corruption (SDG 16). The situation has worsened most markedly in the areas of GHG emission (SDG 13) and prevalence of malnutrition (SDG 2).

In the light of the ESCAP reports, let's have a brief survey of progress on other social, economic and environmental SDGs.¹

Poverty reduction and other social SDGs

In the recent past, the sub region has been competing with South East Asia to be the fastest growing region in the world. In mid-2018, South Asia has regained its lead as the fastest growing region in the world.² However, the economic growth in the region has been misleading as it is not being accompanied by improving social, human and environmental indicators. Despite the fact that Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bhutan have lower poverty incidence, India and Bangladesh have significant poverty ratios approx. 22% and 18.5% respectively. India comprises 74% of Sub regions population and higher incidences of poverty in India means that a substantial proportion of population remains in the poverty trap.

As far as SDG 2, sustainable agriculture and food security is concerned, as a region South Asia is the lowest on the index.³ India was ranked 100 among 121 countries listed in the index; it slipped 3 positions from 97 in the previous year. Nepal is best in the region at 72, Sri Lanka (84) and Bangladesh (88) are above India, which is trailed by Pakistan (106) and Afghanistan (107).

In the context of SDG 3 and SDG 4, health and education, public spending on these sectors remain lowest in the countries in the sub region. Malnutrition in

¹ SDG 1 to SDG7 are considered social goals, while SDGs 8, SDG, 9 and SDG 10 are considered economic goals, SDG, 11 to SDG15 are considered climate related or environmental goals, SDG 16 seeks to promote good governance and human rights.

² Lifted by India, South Asia Regains Growth lead, Still lags on jobs, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/04/15/south-asia-focus-growth-lead-jobless-growth-create-more-jobs>, World Bank Press Release, last accessed 19th Sept, 2018

³ Global Hunger Index, 2017, IFPRI, Washington DC.

the region has become legendary. Stunting levels in the under five children in South Asia (35%) are the highest in the world. And the region bears 40% (59 million) of the global burden of the stunted children. The regional average also masks the wide disparity in the national stunting levels-stunting in Pakistan is twice as prevalent as the global average. Between 2000 and 2017, the number of children in South Asia declined by about 30 million from 89.2 million to 59.4 million, however between last three years the reduction has been around 7-8 million, which shows that the progress has slackened.⁴

The region also remains critical in gender equality and according the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report. The report says that recent years have seen dramatic slowdown in progress towards workplace gender equality. At the current rate of progress economic parity between the sexes could take another 1000 years. The progress in the region has been negligible and the region has the second lowest score on the index after North America, which has registered a regression. Western Europe is expected to be the first to close the gap in 47 years.⁵

In water and sanitation (SDG 6), only 45% of the population in the sub-region had adequate sanitation in 2015, with about 960 million practicing open defecation.⁶

Economic goals, SDG 7, SDG8 and SDG 9

ESCAP report notes good progress on SDG. However, it seems that data on access to electricity in the region is misleading. Bhutan and Maldives have 100% access to electricity, Pakistan and Sri Lanka around 90%, Nepal 85% and India around 80%. Despite this fact power shortage in Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and India make up famous stories. Despite progress on SDG 7, 27% of the sub regions population lacked access to electricity, compared with just 2% in East and North East Asia.

Economic growth in the sub region has hardly created employment opportunities, which is major concern for the SDG 8 (decent work and sustained economic growth). 1.8 million people reach working age in

⁴ Four out of ten of the world's stunted children live in south Asia, UNICEF, <http://www.unicefrosa-progress-report.org/stopstunting.html>, last accessed 19th Sept, 2018

⁵ Why it could take 1000 years for men and women to be equal in South Asia, 26th Oct, 2016, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/10/1000-years-till-gender-equality-south-asia/>, last accessed on 19th Sept, 2018

⁶ Achieving the Sustainable Development goals in South Asia, UN ESCAP, 2017

South Asia every month, but employment rates have been falling rather than increasing. The fall in employment rates have been particularly strong in India, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Accompanied with the fact that more and more women are falling off working population across the sub region except Nepal; raises a serious concern. Presence of large scale informal sector has been impeding the progress on SDG 8. Informal sector work is characterized by long working hours, low or no benefits, poor social security etc. among the five countries having high proportion of workers in the informal sector, four lie in the sub region.⁷South Asian countries will have to create 11.7 million jobs every year to arrest further decline in the employment rates.⁸

As for SDG 9, a recent study (UNESCAP 2017), “Asia Pacific countries with Special Needs Development Report 2017,” shows that calculated infrastructural indices of all south Asian countries, except Maldives, are much lower than even average developing countries in the region. As for the industrialization target under SDG 9, while the LDCs are supposed to double their share of manufacturing to the GDP by 2030, all south Asian LDCs, except Bangladesh, are off track as they are experiencing premature deindustrialization.⁹

Reducing inequality (SDG 10), though the sub region has registered better progress than other sub regions; it’s yet a formidable challenge. Despite reduction in poverty, it remains one of the most unequal regions in the world. Countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have registered sizeable rise in income inequality during 1980-2015. Most of the south Asia countries end up in the bottom 20 in terms of Commitment to Reduce Inequality Index (CRI).¹⁰ India ranks 132 out of 152 and most of other south Asian countries except Nepal and Maldives fare even worse.¹¹

⁷ Are South Asian countries ready to meet the targets of the SDGs by 2030, Selim Raihan, 2nd July, 2017, the daily star, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/op-ed/economics/are-south-asian-countries-ready-meet-the-targets-sdgs-2030-1426864>, last accessed 25th Sept, 2018

⁸ Achieving the Sustainable Development goals in South Asia, UN ESCAP, 2017

⁹ Are South Asian countries ready to meet the targets of the SDGs by 2030, Selim Raihan, 2nd July, 2017, the daily star, at <https://www.thedailystar.net/op-ed/economics/are-south-asian-countries-ready-meet-the-targets-sdgs-2030-1426864>, last accessed 25th Sept, 2018

¹⁰ The CRI Index has been prepared by Oxfam and Development Finance International and ranks countries on three indicators of government spending on education, health and social protection, tax structures and labour.

¹¹ South Asia Losing War Against Inequality, Bharat Dogra, 16th Aug, 2017, <https://thewire.in/external-affairs/south-asia-inequality>, last accessed on 19th Sept, 2017

Environmental goals, climate change and disaster

South Asia is particularly vulnerable to climate change with half of the population living in areas that are projected to become moderate to severe climate hotspots by 2050. Despite this fact, there is not much emphasis on moving towards low carbon resilient development pathways. The ESCAP report notes regression on SDG 11 and SDG 13 in the region, while largest efforts are required in health of oceans (SDG 14) and loss of forests (SDG 15).

There are major implications of climate change impacts on agricultural yield, increasing stress on water, greater frequency of droughts, floods and cyclones. The countries need to align adequate resources on research and development of climate resilient crops, climate proofing of infrastructure and flood control, better protection to farmers in the form of crop insurance and social protection to rural households. Urban poor also need equal attention due to the fact that many of the cities in the region including Karachi, Dhaka, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata have huge urban informal settlements housing millions without much safety against natural or climate related hazards.

Currently floods account for half of all disasters in the region. From 1970-2010, floods affected about 82% individuals hit by disasters and were responsible for 80% of total economic losses.¹²

More than 400 people died in the recent Kerala floods in India alone which affected more than 4.10 million people. The economic losses have been pegged at US \$ 3 billion. More than 1000 people died in floods across South Asia in 2017 which affected more than 41 million.¹³ In Bihar, an eastern state of India alone, more than 400 people have believed to have died. In Bangladesh which suffered worst flooding in 40 years 140 lost their lives, 8 million were affected and nearly 700,000 homes were damaged. Estimated value of GDP affected every year by inland flooding in four countries of India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal is about US \$ 22.15 Billion.¹⁴ It is estimated that floods may cost South Asia more than US \$ 215 billion a year by 2030.¹⁵

¹² World Bank and Global Facility for Disaster Reduction & Recovery and Bloomberg.

¹³ More than 1000 Died in South Asia Floods This Summer, Jeffrey Gettleman, Aug.29, 2017, New York Times, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/29/world/asia/floods-south-asia-india-bangladesh-nepal-houston.html>, last accessed 19th Sept, 2018

¹⁴ Total GDP based on 1020 data compiled by BS Research Bureau, Source World Resources Institute, Business Standard

¹⁵ Floods may cost South Asia \$ 215 billion a year by 2030, 15th Sept, 2017, Business Standard, at <https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/graphic-floods-may-cost-215-billion-a-year-for-south->

Migration has been an important adaptation and survival strategy. In Bangladesh alone, 15 million people are expected to be displaced due to environmental degradation of the country's coastal zone. The major migration corridor in South Asia are between Bangladesh-India, Afghanistan-Pakistan, India-Pakistan and Nepal-India. There are currently about 32.30 Million and 0.81 Million migrants from Bangladesh and Nepal respectively in India. Pakistan is home to 23.26 million Afghan migrants.¹⁶ However, these migrants are being increasingly seen as security threat resulting in violent attacks on migrant communities. South Asia is already considered second most violent place to live on earth after Iraq. In 2016 about 20% of all conflicts in the world took place in this region and resulted in about 22% of all conflict related deaths. Climate induced migration will worsen these existing tensions. Large destination countries like India and Pakistan are moving towards sending these migrants back. The large-scale trafficking of women and children across borders in the region is another matter of grave concern. Barring Afghanistan, no other South Asian country has signed the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

Good governance and human rights

South Asia is also witnessing a worrying trend of violations of human rights and increasing assault over human rights defenders, environmental defenders and journalists. Press freedom is declining according to a report by UNESCO and International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).¹⁷ The report documented 35 killings of journalists and media reporters including ten journalists killed in the deadly attack in Afghanistan on 30th April, 2018. The report highlighted near zero conviction in killings. In a positive development last week, the IFJ noted a significant impunity breakthrough with the sentencing of nine people in India, including the mastermind, who were found guilty for their role in the brutal murder of Indian journalist Jyotirmoy Dey seven years ago. The IFJ again noted the increasing impact of internet shutdowns on press freedom in South Asia,

asia-by-2030-117091400031_1.html

¹⁶ A storm of climate change migration is brewing in South Asia, Simritkaur and Harpreetkaur, University of Delhi, 17th June 2018, EASTASIAFORUM at <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/06/17/a-storm-of-climate-change-migration-is-brewing-in-south-asia/>, last accessed 19th Sept, 2018

¹⁷ Clampdowns and courage, Launch of the South Asia press Freedom Report 2017-18, UNICEF at http://www.unesco.org/new/en/newdelhi/about-this-office/single-view/news/launch_of_the_south_asia_press_freedom_report_201718/, last accessed 19th Sept, 2018

with 97 incidents documented in IFJ monitoring during the period. India is leading the charge with 82 shutdowns, followed by Pakistan with 12. Old colonial laws and new draconian laws are routinely invoked in the region to curb freedom of NGOs, and discriminated groups face violence from both state and non-state actors.

Conclusion

Growth alone does not create inclusivity and environmental protection and at times militates against social inclusion that environmental sustainability. South Asia is a very good case in point. The experience of last two decades emphasizes that special efforts should be made towards inclusion, job creation and protecting environment. Current trajectory of growth has to be curated to create jobs, make growth inclusive, make infrastructure resilient and reduce inequality including gender inequality. Special emphasis on agriculture (as the sub region is largely agrarian) and nonfarm opportunities, targeted interventions in job creation and providing social security in pockets of poverty, and focused efforts on particular disadvantaged communities, as well as creating a balance between economic imperatives and environmental considerations will take the sub-region closer to achieving the SDGs. These imperatives demand greater role for the state in providing basic services (health and education, water and sanitation, electricity and clean cooking fuel), and closer regulation of economic and industrial activities having potential of damaging environment. These cannot be left to market forces alone.

The sub-region has huge financing gaps. It is estimated that the sub region will need US \$ 2.5 Trillion by 2020 and US \$ 4-5 trillion by 2030 to close their infrastructure gap.¹⁸ Providing social services (health, education and energy for all, employment, income security for the elderly and the disabled etc.) may amount to the need for investment up to 10% of the GDP in case of India to 20% of the GDP, in case of Bangladesh.¹⁹ There are other costs to move along low carbon development pathways. India alone would require US \$ 2.5 trillion over 15 years for implementing its NDCs. Countries in the region are constrained by low tax GDP ratio, nascent south south cooperation, low technological capacity, and almost nonexistent regional trade cooperation besides poor data. Manifestly, these resources will have to

¹⁸ *Achieving the Sustainable Development goals in South Asia, UN ESCAP, 2017*

¹⁹ *ibid*

be supplemented by sustained international public finances, where ODA and Green Climate Fund have critical role.

(This paper is written by Ajay Kumar Jha on behalf of entire CSOs of South Asia. Mr Jha is associated with Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society (CECOEDECON), India. CECOEDECON works on natural resources conservation, food sovereignty, livelihoods, climate change and sustainable development with a rights based approach and engages in both policy and practice at sub national, national, regional and global level. The organization has also consistently engaged with UN processes and forums including UNGA, ECOSOC, UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNHRC, and UNEP.)

Review of Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals

Brief Background

Afghanistan is located in the heart of Asia and has a population of around 35 million. After decades of conflict in Afghanistan, the international community assisted the shattered nation to organize new frameworks for governance, society and the economy. Poverty and inequality within the country remain major issues. In 2015, 36 percent of the people still lived below the poverty line. School enrollment has increased significantly since 2001 with 8.7 million students with girl population of 39 percent. The number of functioning health facilities have increased from 496 in 2002 to more than 2,400 in 2016. Access to electricity remains one of the lowest in the world. Afghanistan joined the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2004. In the 10 year MDGs report, Afghanistan achieved nine targets, 15 were on track, two achievable within 0-2 years, two difficult to achieve, 23 off track and 24 were either not on target or did not have available data.

In terms of achieving SDGs, improvement was made in primary education enrollment, a few health indicators, and some global partnership. Progress was made in women's political participation and women's literacy rate, sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation. For Afghanistan, the limitation to achieving SDGs is the lack of data and information, poor technical capacity, inadequate resources, and insecure conditions.

The SDGs' global targets and indicators have been nationalized and the Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan which is the main focal point ministry in realization of SDGs has identified and introduced national targets and indicators. In nationalization process, the 17 SDGs were divided into 8- socio-economic sectors to simplify planning and implementation process for the respective line ministries and agencies. Government agencies were obliged to align all the SDG targets and indicators with their development plans and policies.

The nationalization process, mechanism and plans which were developed for achievement of SDGs, are fine, but realization of Afghanistan SDGs suffers from lack of a proper and comprehensive coordination within the stakeholders, civil society, media, academic institutions and many other relevant parties.

The lack of coordination has caused serious concerns to the implementation of the goals and indicators. On the other hand, lack of resources and data have been another concern; Afghanistan's economy has become dependent on the international community's financial aids. Afghanistan is facing serious challenges in terms of data, proper data is not available based on which policy and plans should be initiated. Therefore, the overall Afghanistan-SDGs are facing challenges and couldn't attain their full objectives in the past years.

Political leadership

Ministry of Economy in Afghanistan is leading the SDGs under supervision of the Council of Ministers and the President. The President directly works with the cabinet for coordination and planning of SDGs in the cabinet meetings. National Budget Entities and the Provincial Development Council closely work with each other under the Supervision of Ministry of Economy for the SDGs planning and coordination. In fact, Afghanistan envisions to become a self-sustaining community, full of hope and prosperity, with a developed job-creating economy, an active private sector, and sustainable environmental protection.

There has not been any proper coordination mechanism with the parliament of Afghanistan. The SDGs are not monitored by the parliament; therefore, the role of parliament in SDGs remains defective. As mentioned, mainly the cabinet with Ministry of Economy oversees the implementation and coordination of SDGs in Afghanistan and there is not any mechanism in which the MPs take part in monitoring or implementation of SDGs. To speed up the implementation of the SDGs and to ensure the reporting against the national indicators and targets, only an Executive Committee on the SDGs was supposed to be established within the Office of the Chief Executive to issue recommendations and practical solutions to the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers, chaired by the Ministry of Economy. But there has not been any update on achievement of the Executive Committee, no monitoring or progress was published.

Currently, the High Council of Ministers oversees and supervises the nationalization, alignment and implementation process of the SDGs in the country. The Council ensures all budget entities have fully included the SDG targets and indicators in their development strategies and policies. The SDG Secretariat has been established within the Ministry of Economy

(MoEc). The Ministry has been entrusted by the Government to work on the national documentation of the SDGs implementation and to coordinate the development efforts of various sectors, and to report on these efforts biannually and annually to the High Council of Ministers and the Cabinet.

Policy and Enabling Environment

The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework is the Government's plan to achieve self-reliance and increase the public welfare. It aims to build a productive and broad-based economy to create jobs. The SDGs Secretariat at the MoEc is responsible to implement awareness programmes and technical workshops for different stakeholders, but, it has not properly come to practice as it was supposed to be. It was supposed that the traditional means of communication will be coupled with new technologies, such as social media, to spread the message as well as implementing the process of data collection, but it has been very weak. Based on the requirement and obligation of the implementation of SDGs, the government of Afghanistan must support funding modalities that foster stronger collaboration among civil society, academia, youths, gender entities, the business sector, development partners, UN agencies and other relevant institutions. Nevertheless, no such comprehensive mechanism is in place. In order to achieve effective and efficient programming, the involved stakeholders must emphasize coordination between themselves as well as alignment of their efforts to the Afghanistan SDG targets and indicators.

Considering that there are enormous gaps and challenges in terms realization of SDGs due to technical capacity and lack of resource, there has not been any baseline indicators or any third-party monitoring to oversee the progress of SDGs in Afghanistan. In addition, the Ministry of Economy has little focus on capacity building and building a proficient technical team. As a result, the SDGs are not likely to be attained completely.

National Framework for Implementation of the Afghanistan-SDGs

At the country level, Afghanistan has developed many policies, strategies and frameworks including Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) 2008-2013. This national strategy served as Afghanistan's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and used the pillars, principles and benchmarks of the Afghanistan compact as a foundation.

Poverty reduction is an ultimate goal of economic development for the government of Afghanistan. The ANDS consisted of 3 pillars, 8 main sectors, 17 sub-sectors, 86 outcomes and 276 development goals (SDGs). The overall purpose of the 8 main sectors of the ANDS is to help government institutions to align their development priorities, budget allocation and their development programmes with the Afghanistan-SDGs' targets and indicators. The pillars or main goals of the ANDS are:

Security: It aims to achieve nationwide stabilization, strengthen law enforcement, and improve personal security for every Afghan. Based on the current security situation of Afghanistan, the target and objective of this pillar has never been achieved, as there is no nationwide stabilization, poor implementation of laws in most of the provinces, and the rule of law has always been a big concern for citizens and civil society organizations. The personal security of Afghanistan's citizens is another concern for everyone within the country.

Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights: It is necessary to strengthen democratic processes and institutions, human rights, the rule of law, delivery of public services and government accountability. The performance of the government in this sector also has been very weak compared to its commitment to meet the SDG targets and indicators. The recently conducted parliamentary election (October 2018), with no result yet, evidenced that the electoral capacity of the Government of Afghanistan has not been institutionalized and stabilized yet. The democratic process of Afghanistan came under question, the citizens and the civil society organizations lost their trust on the electoral institutions/commissions and the electoral process of Afghanistan. The situation of human rights is not good in Afghanistan, especially, violations of women rights in the remote areas are still very high. The laws and policies, including the EAW law is not properly implemented. The role of women and other marginalized and vulnerable groups including people with disabilities, minorities, internally displaced persons and returnees is very weak, they do not have equal participation in the social, cultural, economic and political process and decision making. The public service delivery including provision of quality health care facilities and quality and/or inclusive education is not sufficient and efficient.

Economic and Social Development: As a pillar this focuses to reduce poverty, ensure sustainable development through a private sector-led



market economy, improve human development indicators, and make significant progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Considering the huge amount of money and resources invested by the international communities during the past 18 years, there has not been any considerable economic growth in Afghanistan. There has not been any long lasting social development programme and project implemented that can ensure the social welfare of the citizens of Afghanistan. For the time being, the unemployment rate is very high throughout the country. There is no sufficient job and/or income generation and livelihood development opportunities available. The private sector has not been well developed; they are not able to create jobs by employing the people in their firms. The overall situation in Afghanistan shows that the socio-economy of the country did not have a well progress as it was expected. Afghanistan seems to be very much behind its target towards achieving the SDGs.

SDGs Nationalization Process

However, the nationalization process of the SDGs' targets and indicators started with series of symbolic national consultation conferences, seminars, meetings and workshops. The government of Afghanistan pretends that the ambitious global targets and indicators have been critically reviewed by different stakeholders in the country with realization of national context and circumstances, but in practice, there is no substantial change to show the progress towards achievement of SDGs. The government of Afghanistan claims that the global ambitious targets and indicators have been refined and nationalized with great efforts of different stakeholders in the county, the national consultation process reshaped the global targets and indicators into 125 national targets and 190 national indicators.

Challenges and Barriers

Based on the Afghanistan agriculture production trend analysis, Afghanistan is a food deficit country. In a typical year Afghanistan's cereal deficit is estimated over one million tons. In a poor agriculture year this number can reach up to two million tons. Such variation is caused by below normal rainfall during March to June, crucial for the development of rain fed crops. Considering the current Afghanistan SDGs, the plans lack sufficient strategic plans which can contribute to the development of agriculture. The main challenge is lack of a proper monitoring mechanism by third party to review the progress of SDGs. The Afghanistan SDGs

have not been monitored and the progress was not reviewed by civil society organizations. The role of CSOs as third party to supervise and monitor the implementation of the SDGs in Afghanistan have been ignored.

Possible ways to achieve SDGs

Financing the SDGs: SDGs will require substantial resources, given Afghanistan's financial instability and dependence. With support from the international community, innovative funding mechanisms will be required to achieve the SDGs.

Formalizing partnerships: Afghanistan's efforts towards the achievement of the Agenda 2030 will require dedicated partnerships between the Government, civil society organizations and private sector actors, in close cooperation with the United Nations and international partners. However, there is vast lack of coordination among these parties which has caused many flaws in the implementation of the SDGs.

Localization of SDGs: At this stage, the emphasis has been put on the nationalization of the SDGs. Nonetheless, efforts will be made to build awareness on the SDGs and adjust the national targets and indicators at provincial level.

Data Availability and Management: Data collection, analysis and dissemination is a big challenge. Efforts must be made to build a comprehensive database that will make available all SDGs-related information and will facilitate the disaggregation of data.

Afghanistan's relevant authorities should keep track of its progress towards the realization of the SDGs.

The objectives of the SDGs and the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) are cross-cutting and both should eventually result towards sustainable development of Afghanistan; supporting the means of implementation of one will fuel realization of the other.

Afghanistan should plan to move beyond its history of war and poverty and begin the long journey to prosperity. The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) should present a long-term development narrative for Afghanistan by providing consistent high-level guidance to

government and other stakeholders. It should also articulate the immediate and long-term development priorities, highlight the key reforms and outlines, and priority investments needed to achieve the SDGs in these critical areas.

It is necessary to design an inclusive framework for Afghanistan-SDGs in order to engage all stakeholders including government and non-government organizations, civil society, policy and research institutions, academia, the media, and the public in all phases of the implementation of SDGs, by setting up inclusive committees.

Considering the tenuous nature of socio-economic development in Afghanistan, the nation needs continuous support of international partners, civil society organizations, and private sector to achieve SDGs.

(This paper is written by Mohammad Shafaq, Afghanistan Young Greens Organization (AYG), Afghanistan. AYG was established in 2013 as an NGO in Afghanistan. The overall objective of AYG is to advocate for ecological sustainability, grassroots democracy, civil peace and empowerment of women and youths. Its vision is to build ecofriendly and self-sustainable communities in Afghanistan by enhancing productive human and natural resources. Its mission is to empower the Afghan youths for tackling the challenges of economic, social, cultural and political issues in Afghanistan. AYG is working through assessments, surveys and researches; as well as doing evidence based advocacy for sustainable development with an overall goal of promoting the culture of green thinking; and sustainable use of natural resources.)

SDGs and Bangladesh: Progress, Challenges and Missing Links

Reducing Inequality and Internal Resource Mobilization Should Get Priority

‘Despite various challenges Bangladesh is on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goals’, a recent government report claims. The report titled Sustainable Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report 2018 says, Bangladesh is performing well in various aspects including poverty reduction, gender equality, electricity, sanitation and annual GDP growth. The first three SDGs pertain to ending poverty, hunger and improving public health and Bangladesh has made good progress on all three and is on track to achieve the targets. Of the 17 targets under the three SDGs, four have already been met, six are on track and five need more attention.

Among the challenges identified so far, one of them is the lack of proper data. Bangladesh has data for only 70 indicators out of the 232 prescribed by the United Nations to assess progress of SDGs.¹ Bangladesh government also highlights the need for improved international cooperation and support to meet 41 of 169 targets that fall within the 17 SDGs.²

Even though the government official report shows Bangladesh is likely to achieve almost all the SDGs within the stipulated timeframe, there are some challenges which will be hard for the government to overcome. There are some issues which are not getting adequate focus in the development discourse in Bangladesh. Lack of proper data and quality of the existing data are one of the major concerns. Secondly, inequality between the rich and the poor, as well as urban and rural people is evident, but this is not getting proper attention. Next, illicit finance flow is eating a huge chunk of Bangladesh potentials but people are reluctant to discuss more. Likewise, youth unemployment is another big hurdle which is hard to address. The subsequent paragraphs highlight these hurdles for Bangladesh in achieving the SDGs within the stipulated time. Additionally, it highlights Bangladesh’s success in achieving the MDGs. This may be inspiring and encouraging to achieving the SDGs too. Another theme the report discusses is

¹ *The Daily Star online, February 3, 2019*

² *The Daily Independent online, February 3, 2019.*

the government level initiative, especially integration of SDGs in government policies.

Bangladesh Progress in SDGs: Need of International Cooperation

According to Bangladesh progress report, the progress on reducing extreme poverty measured by \$1.90 a day and proportion of government expenditure on services (health, education and social protection) as share of the total government expenditure is on track. The country is likely to achieve the SDG on clean water and sanitation. Currently, 87 percent of the population has access to safe water sources and 61 percent has access to safe sanitation. Bangladesh has made an upward shift in average annual growth rate to more than 7 percent in recent years from the above 6 percent rate over the last decade. This coupled with slower population growth has led to increasing per person GDP growth and the country is on the track to achieve the 2020 target.

The SDG 9 pertains to providing resilient infrastructure, sustainable industrialization and innovation and much still needs to be done. However, the proportion of population covered by mobile network has reached close to 100 percent in case of 2G technology.

The 2020 milestone in case of 3G technology was achieved in 2017. The SDG 10 entails reducing inequalities and the government has not fared well on this front. The government has been following a pro-poor development strategy, which includes acceleration of economic growth and reduction of poverty and inequality. The country is on the track to achieve SDG 14, 15 and 16. The goals entail conserving the oceans, seas and the terrestrial ecosystems.³

SDGs Integration in Government Policies

Bangladesh government is positive and enthusiastic regarding the SDGs. Prime Minister of Bangladesh has already demonstrated her commitments towards the SDGs. She has established an Inter-Ministerial Committee on SDGs Implementation. The Committee comprising secretaries from 20 Ministries/ Divisions coordinates SDGs monitoring and implementation. The

³ *Bangladesh Planning Commission, Sustainable Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report 2018 (December, 2018)*

Principal Coordinator (SDGs Affairs), a newly created high level position in the Prime Minister’s office, heads the Committee. GED is the secretariat for the committee to coordinate implementation at the policy level along with monitoring and reporting SDGs status.

Commitment and enthusiasm of the Prime Minister has been also reflected in the policy level. One of major important development policies of Bangladesh is its Five Year Plan (FYP), all the 17 goals of SDGs are already integrated into the running 7th FYP. Among the 17 goals, 14 goals (82%) are thematically fully aligned, 3 goals (Goal 14, Goal 16 and Goal 17) of the SDGs (18%) are partially aligned with the 7th FYP⁴. It is rationally expected that achievement of the FYP objectives and targets will contribute towards achievement of SDGs. Bangladesh’s achievement in implementing the 7th FYP will be rewarding internationally for fulfilling the global commitments. The 7th FYP has made a reflection on the core goal of SDGs especially in ending poverty in all its form. Bangladesh has achieved remarkable success in reducing the poverty in last few decades. Nevertheless, about a quarter of the population of 160 million is still living below the poverty line, hence setting that target is a necessary condition to eradicate poverty with delineating 7.4% expected annual growth rate that was suggested by SDGs (SDG 8.1). The following table reflects the major SDGs’ targets that are integrated with government 7FYP.

Integration of SDGs in 7FYP⁵

SDGs	Integrated Issues (Development Targets in 7FYP)
SDG 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the headcount poverty ratio by about 6.2 percentage points (from 24.8% to 18.6%). • Reduce in extreme poverty by about 4.0 percentage points (i.e. 8.9 % in 2020). • Increase spending on social protection as a share of GDP to 2.3%. • Create Lagging Region Fund

⁴ *The Dhaka Tribune, February 4, 2019*

⁵ *Equity and Justice Working Group Bangladesh (equityBD): SDGs and country process in Bangladesh: The Missing Links and where Assistance is an Obligation of International Community especially in Climate Compensation and Stopping Illicit Flow (March, 2017)*

<p>SDG 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate of Food Transfer Programme as suggested by National Social Security Programme. • Reduce proportion of stunting among under-five children from 36.1% to 25%. • Reduce proportion of underweight children among under-five children from 32.6% to 20%.
<p>SDG 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce under 5 mortality rates from 41 to 37 per 1000 live births. • Reduce maternal mortality ratio from 170 to 105 per 100,000 live births. • Increase immunization of measles (percent of children under 12 months) to 100 percent. • Increase births attended by skilled health staff to 65 percent. • Reduce total fertility rate to 2.0 • Increase contraceptive prevalence rate to 75%
<p>SDG 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve 100% net enrollment rate for primary and secondary education. • Ensure quality education at primary, secondary and tertiary education. • Increase percentage of cohort reaching grade 5 to 100% from current 80%.
<p>SDG 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise Gender Parity Index in tertiary education from current 0.70 to 1.0. • Increase the ratio of literate female to male for age group 20-24 to 100% from the current 86%. • Increase the share of female officers (Grade-9 and above) in the public sector to 25% by 2020.

<p>SDG 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make safe drinking water available for all rural and urban population. • Increase the proportion of urban population with access to sanitary latrines to 100 percent and 90 percent for rural population.
<p>SDG 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase generation of electricity to 23,000 MW. • Electricity coverage to be increased to 96%. • Increase energy efficiency by 10%
<p>SDG 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attain average real GDP growth rate of 7.4% per year over the plan period. • Raise total revenue from 10.7% of GDP to 16.1% by FY20. • Create 12.9 million additional jobs during 7th FYP including some 2 million jobs abroad. • Increase foreign direct investment (FDI) substantially to \$9.6 billion by FY20 from present \$1.57 billion.
<p>SDG 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on fast tracking a number of transformational infrastructure projects. • Increase the contribution of the manufacturing sector to 21.5% of GDP by FY20 from 17.8% of FY15.
<p>SDG10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase spending on social protection as a share of GDP to 2.3% of GDP. • Reduce Income Inequality from 0.458 to downward.
<p>SDG 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to improved water source for all urban dwellers. • Ensure sustainable urban development that supports increased productivity, investment and employment.

SDG 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Action Plan
SDG 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate environmental, climate change and disaster risk reduction considerations into project design, budgetary allocations and implementation process. • Establish 500-meter-wide green belt along the coast.
SDG 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop law and regulation in pollution control including sea vessel and ship breaking industries.
SDG 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase productive forest coverage to 20 percent with 70% tree density.
SDG 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all persons are able to live securely under the rule of law. • Enhance integrity and control corruption. • Strengthen right to information (RTI) and access to information process. • Make parliamentary process effective.

Government has also developed a mapping document including all ministries, divisions and agencies by SDGs and target for fast track implementation. Bangladesh's long-term development plan (7FYP) and SDGs were both launched in the same year of 2015. Hence opportunities have been created for government to align the development strategies in view of 2030 global goal. The mapping document includes the development ministries, divisions,

agencies and authorities by SDG targets for them to implement and achieve.

The 7th FYP has made a primary financing estimation which is amount of US\$ 403.8 billion from both public and private sectors for the fiscal year of 2016-2020⁶. But this amount does not reflect the need or demand based financial allocation to achieve the SDG targets. Experts say that in achieving the SDGs in Bangladesh, domestic resource mobilization need to be raised at least by 18 percent from the present 12.1 percent over the next 5 to 10 years, but the projection of domestic resource mobilization is far behind (14.2-16.2% of GDP) in the 7th FYP⁷.

The 7th FYP states that all these spending plans will essentially entail that the budget size be increased to about 21.1% of GDP⁸. At least 5 percentage points financial allocation will be needed to increase in relation to GDP at the terminal year of the 7th Five Year Plan. The overview and analysis of budgetary expenditures says that the investment in social sector (poverty, health and education) was less than 9% of GDP in last year during MDGs and it would be increased by 13.9% during the 7th FYP (Page-167). So it easily can be said that government projection of financing is insufficient indeed. The investment from private sector was also found to be stagnant and moving around 24-25% of GDP in last couple of years which needs to be at least 35% per annum during implementation of the 7th FYP.

Challenges: Difficult but not impossible to address

Bangladesh is one of the most affected and vulnerable countries due to climate change in spite of the fact that it is one of the least carbon emitting countries. Per capita carbon emissions rate (in 2015) in the United States is 15.53 metric tons, 10.19 metric tons in Russia, and 6.59 metric tons in China⁹. In 2016, CO₂ emissions per capita for Bangladesh was 0.46 metric

⁶ *Equity and Justice Working Group Bangladesh (equityBD): SDGs and country process in Bangladesh: The Missing Links and where Assistance is an Obligation of International Community especially in Climate Compensation and Stopping Illicit Flow (March, 2017)*

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ *7th FYP of Bangladesh Government, Chapter-5 “Investment Program and its Financing”*

⁹ *Information has been collected from the website of Union of Concerned Scientist (<https://www.ucsusa.org/global-warming/science-and-impacts/science/each-countrys-share-of-co2.html#.XGvjWC2B1QI>)*

tons¹⁰! It is sensibly proven that Bangladesh is the victim of consumerism of rich countries. A recently released World Bank report says that by 2050 the temperature of Bangladesh will increase from one to one and a half degrees and approximately 134 million people will be affected due to that. During this period, the loss of Bangladesh will be about 174 billion dollars. Due to climate change the life expectancy of the people of the country can fall below 6.8% by 2050.¹¹ According to Germany-based international organization German Watch, Bangladesh is the 9th most affected countries in the world due to climate change¹².

To ensure appropriate investment to achieve SDGs, Bangladesh needs to focus on internal resource mobilization. To do that, Bangladesh needs to control the illicit finance flow. Illicit financial flow of \$5.9 billion was out of Bangladesh in 2015, as estimated by the Washington-based Global Financial Integrity. The research group has estimated the 2015 illicit capital flight, calculated to have ranged from \$2.7 billion to \$5.9 billion. The 2014 illicit capital flight is estimated to have ranged from \$6.06 billion to \$8.97 billion. The 2019 report placed Bangladesh in the top 30 countries, among 148 countries.¹³ The Central Bank of Switzerland observed that while overall, the level of illicit financial flows from developed countries to Switzerland is declining, at the same time it is skyrocketing out of Bangladesh.¹¹ At the end of 2014 total of Swiss Franc 0.50 billion (Tk.4,554 crore) were deposited by Bangladeshis¹⁴.

Country like Bangladesh will need huge investment for basic infrastructure like roads, rail and ports; power stations; water and sanitation and also for the sector like agriculture and rural development, climate change mitigation and adaptation, health and education. But recent trends of Bangladesh in

¹⁰<https://knoema.com/atlas/Bangladesh/CO2-emissions-per-capita>

¹¹ World Bank: *South Asia's Hotspots : Impacts of Temperature and Precipitation Changes on Living Standards* (June, 2018)

¹² David Eckstein, Marie-Lena Hufils and Maik Wings, *Global Climate Risk Index 2019: Who Suffers Most from Extreme Weather Events? Weather-related Loss Events in 2017 and 1998 to 2017*, Germanwatch (December 2018)

¹³ *The Global Financial Integrity, Illicit Financial Flows to and from 148 Developing Countries: 2006-2015*, (January 2019)

¹⁴ Annual report "Banks in Switzerland 2014" published by central bank of Switzerland – Excerpted from EquityBD, http://www.equitybd.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Paper_Illicit-Flow-Pol-Economy_Final.pdf

investing to the important sectors are not up to desired level. Budgetary allocation on social security is about 2% of GDP in FY 2010-2015 period, average allocation for the health sector is about 0.7% of GDP during FY 2003-2014. WHO suggests the allocation should be 5% of GDP. Education gets 2% of GDP during FY 2003-2014, while UNESCO suggests the allocation should be 6% of GDP. Average allocation for the agriculture and food security was 10.3% while it was around 1.3% of GDP during FY2010-2015.¹⁵

If the economic growth is not shared equally and fairly, and if the resources are not distributed properly, sustainable economic growth is not possible. Rather it creates other types of economic crises. Development and income inequality are much evident in Bangladesh, creating another challenge for the sustainable development. The incidence of poverty is higher in rural areas than that of the urban areas and the rate of poverty reduction is also higher in rural areas (1.24 percent) than that of the urban areas (1.13 percent)¹⁶. The Household and Income Expenditure Survey of 2010 estimates incidence of poverty at 31.5 percent at the national level, 35.2 percent in rural area and 21.3 percent in urban area. Regional disparities are also apparent. It has been found that, the highest decline in poverty incidence occurred for Dhaka division; after Dhaka it is Chittagong and Sylhet. Poverty in Barisal is found stagnated and it is found to have increased slightly in Khulna¹⁷. Gap between individual incomes is also evident in Bangladesh. The HIES 2010 shows the clear gap between bottom 5% (the poorest of the poor) and the top 5% (richest of the rich). The survey shows that the income accumulating to top 5% of the households was 24.61%, and it was only 0.78% for the bottom 5% households. Gaps are also evident in the social indicators for the poorest and richest quintiles in Bangladesh. For example, one research finds that households which have less than Tk. 2,000 income per month (\$29) are sending almost 25% fewer of their children to school than those who are in the Tk. 8,000 (\$115) and above income group. 12% of children from households living on incomes below Tk. 2,000 per month had never been enrolled in school, while a quarter had started school but dropped out. Among

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ Samiya Ferdousi, Wang Dehai' *Economic Growth, Poverty and Inequality Trend in Bangladesh, Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities (February, 2014)*

¹⁷ *ibid*

families earning more than Tk. 8,000 per month, 2.6% of children had never been enrolled and 10.6% had dropped out of school.¹⁸ Child malnutrition rate in poorest quintile is 50 while it is 21 in richest quintile. Likewise, primary school completion rate in poorest quintile is 65 and it is 97 in the richest quintile¹⁹. So, inequalities and regional disparities issues must be addressed in order to ensure proper and adequate implementation of the SDGs.

(This paper is written by Md. Mujibul Haque Munir, COAST Trust, Bangladesh (www.coastbd.net). COAST Trust is an independent and progressive national NGO in Bangladesh. COAST has affiliation/partnership with several international organizations including UNHCR, UNICEF. Its main objective is to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the poor and vulnerable coastal people through its intervention like financial and technical support, disaster risk reduction, social justice, primary health care, non-formal education, alternative power structure, etc. It is engaged with policy level advocacy and campaigning with its advocacy wing EquityBD (www.equitybd.org). COAST pro-poor interventions are contributing to SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14 and 16.)

¹⁸ Altaf Hossain and B. Zeitlyn. *Poverty and Equity: Access to Education in Bangladesh*. In: CREATE Pathways to Access Series, Research Monograph Number 51. (2010)

¹⁹ World Development Indicators 2014, <http://data.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/wdi-2014-book.pdf>

India and the SDGs

Brief background and introduction

India adopted the SDGs in September 2015 and since then reiterated its commitment to the SDGs several times. The Prime Minister of India declared in the SDGs Summit that “much of the development agenda of India is mirrored in the SDGs today.” The world is looking towards India with much expectation as India having 1/7th of the global population, 1/3rd of the world’s poor and undernourished children, is critical for the success of the SDGs. If the SDGs have to succeed, it has to be achieved in India. Despite significant economic growth in the last three decades, India still faces a number of development challenges.

Indian society is an agrarian society with 70% of the population out of its 1.3 billion population almost completely dependent on agriculture. In 2011, 21.9% of the population was found to be living below the national poverty line while the proportion of the employed population below \$1.90 purchasing power parity a day was 21.2%.¹

The country was spotted to 130 position_out of 189 countries in the human development rankings released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2018.² For every 1,000 babies born in India in 2016, 43 die before turning 5. As per the data the 14.5% population is found to be undernourished. The maternal mortality ratio is 174/10,000 live births (2015) while neonatal mortality rate is 25 per 1000 live births (2016). The ratio of Tuberculosis Incidences is 211/ 100,000 population. 38.4% children under the 5 years of age suffer from stunting while prevalence of malnutrition (Wasting) among Children under 5 Years of Age is 21%.³

India has been ranked among the bottom 10 countries in a new worldwide index released on the commitment of different nations to reduce inequalities in their populations. UK-based charity Oxfam International’s ‘Commitment

¹ Poverty in India <https://www.adb.org/countries/india/poverty>

² India ranks 130 on 2018 Human Development Index <http://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/sustainable-development/successstories/india-ranks-130-on-2018-human-development-index.html>

³ *ibid*

to Reducing Inequality (CRI) Index' ranks India 147th among 157 countries analysed, describing the country's commitment to reducing inequality as "a very worrying situation" given that it is home to 1.3 billion people, many of whom live in extreme poverty.⁴ Inequality has come up as a major challenge for the country and its impact is clearly visible in indicators on gender, health and education etc. Between 1990 and 2017, India's HDI value rose from 0.427 to 0.640, an increase of nearly 50%, indicating rapid progress in poverty eradication. However, when India's HDI value was discounted for inequality it fell to 0.468, or a loss of 26.8%.⁵

The challenges related to women also seem extremely critical who remain significantly less politically, economically and socially empowered than men. Women hold only 11.6% of parliamentary seats and only 39% of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education as compared to 64% males. Female participation in the labour market is 27.2 % compared to 78.8% for men.⁶

Increasing unemployment rate of 6.1% (2018)⁷, high population in urban slums (24%), and data scarcity on important indicators for human development are major concerns for the country while fast changing climatic conditions pose threat to the already vulnerable population. Another challenge before the country is curbing ever-increasing hate crimes. 218 incidences of hate crimes were reported in 2018 against people from marginalised groups, especially Dalits, according to the Amnesty India of these, 142 were against Dalits, 50 against Muslims, and eight each against Christians, Adivasis, and transgender persons.

India's vulnerability profile is increasing. India was among the top three most disaster hit countries in 2015, with economic losses amounting to \$ 3.30 billion (UNISDR, 2016). The report of the UNISDR titled "Human Cost of Weather Related Disaster," says that India has 19 disaster events including

⁴ India in bottom 10 in Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index <https://www.oneindia.com/india/india-bottom-10-commitment-reducing-inequality-index-2790366.html>

⁵ India moves one rank up in HDI, inequality stays a major concern <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/uc1VFgQLWpwh2uuukk68zEJ/India-moves-one-rank-up-in-HDI-inequality-stays-a-major-con.html>

⁶ India moves one rank up in HDI, inequality stays a major concern <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/uc1VFgQLWpwh2uuukk68zEJ/India-moves-one-rank-up-in-HDI-inequality-stays-a-major-con.html>

⁷ Unemployment rate at four-decade high of 6.1% in 2017-18: NSSO survey https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/unemployment-rate-at-five-decade-high-of-6-1-in-2017-18-nss-survey-119013100053_1.html

floods, droughts and heat waves in 2015.⁸ Of the 27.5 million people affected by floods in 2015, 16.4 were in India. India also witnessed 2248 deaths in 2015 due to heat waves.⁹

Though the number of deaths due to disasters has decreased, on an average 20,000 lives are lost in India every year due to natural disasters.¹⁰ More than 2000 persons every year die to exposure to extreme cold or heat and a similar number of even more due to lightning.¹¹ Data varies from agency to agency even within the government. The Union Home Ministry admits a very small fraction of these deaths. According to the Ministry, in 2015, 1543 persons died in India due to natural disasters, which damaged about 1.65 M households and affected crops over an area 3.357 M ha.¹²

A study by Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) say more than 22 per cent of the damages caused by natural hazards—such as drought, floods, storms or tsunamis—are accounted for by the agriculture sector. According to study, during drought period, agriculture absorbs up to 84 percent of all economic impacts. Within the agricultural sector, 42 per cent of assessed losses were that of crops (\$13 billion), with floods being the main culprit, responsible for 60 per cent of crop damages, followed by storms (23 per cent of crop damages).¹³

The global assessment report (GAR) 2015, produced by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) says India's average annual economic loss due to disasters is estimated to be \$9.8 billion. This includes more than \$7 billion loss on account of floods.¹⁴ A total of 98.6 million people were affected by natural disasters in 2015 of which 92 percent were caused by

⁸The number of only exceeded by China (26 events) and the US (21 events). India is followed by cyclone hit Philippines (15) and Indonesia (11 events)

⁹ Tragedies of 2015: Havoc caused due to natural disasters, YESHA KOTAK | Thu, 31 Dec 2015-08:00am , Mumbai , DNA webdesk, <http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-tragedies-of-2015-havoc-caused-due-to-natural-disasters-2157547>

¹⁰ From 25066 in 2010, it has come down to 20201 in 20114, Fewer People Have Died in the Last 5 Years Due to Natural Calamities, Devanik Saha, 05/12/2015 The Wire, <https://thewire.in/16766/fewer-people-have-died-in-the-last-5-years-due-to-natural-calamities/>

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² At least 1,543 deaths in 2015-16 due to disasters, New Delhi, <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/J7p-W41xsgeeq8sysu19seI/At-least-1543-people-killed-in-201516-due-to-disasters.html>

¹³ <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/fao-quantifies-impact-of-natural-disasters-on-agriculture--49026>

¹⁴ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Disasters-cost-India-10bn-per-year-UN-report/article-show/46522526.cms>

climate change buoyed by a powerful El Niño impact.¹⁵

In addition, a major concern now is to tackle the air pollution. In a recent report by IQAir AirVisual, a data provider seven of the top 10 most polluted cities on the list and 15 of the top 20 and 25 of the top 50 are in India.¹⁶ Similar concerns were raised by the findings of the Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health which highlighted the huge economic burden and health costs that pollution poses for India as well as countries around the world. The Commission had last month published a report which found that pollution caused over nine million deaths worldwide in 2015 while Pollution killed as many as 2.5 million people in India, highlighting that pollution disproportionately affects the poor.¹⁷

Political leadership and institutional set up

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) has the twin mandate to oversee the implementation of SDGs in the country, and also promote competitive and cooperative Federalism among States and UTs. The Prime Minister is the Ex-officio Chairman of NITI Aayog, which is headed by a vice chairman nominated by the Prime Minister. It monitors implementation and reports at the national, regional and global levels. NITI Aayog encourages states and union territories to share inter alia any new knowledge or good practices from various fields to fast track the implementation of SDGs across the country and provide platforms for interaction and knowledge sharing.

NITI Aayog has mapped out SDGs and related targets on Central Ministries, Centrally Sponsored/Central Sector Schemes and other government initiatives. Several States have conducted a similar mapping of their Departments and schemes/programmes and have set up their SDG Cells or Centres for Excellence for coordinating SDG implementation.¹⁸ NITI has also organized Consultations on particular SDGs as well as national and regional consultations. NITI Aayog has released a draft Three-Year Action Agenda covering the years 2017-18 to 2019-20. The Action Agenda addresses the specific challenges

¹⁵ <http://www.firstpost.com/india/natural-disasters-cost-india-3-30bn-in-2015-heres-why-we-should-be-very-worried-2622940.html>

¹⁶ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/air-pollution-crisis-can-india-ape-china-in-tackling-the-problem/articleshow/68336415.cms>

¹⁷ http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/61645202.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

¹⁸ An Overview of SDGs in India <http://niti.gov.in/writereaddata/files/NITI-Aayog-SDG-Presentation-to-States.pdf>

facing the country and details measures to fast track the national development agenda. NITI Aayog has also done a goal wise mapping of nodal ministries and programmes and schemes linking them with SDG targets and goals. NITI Aayog has constituted a task force with participation by Central Ministries and States for regular review of SDG implementation in the country.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is tasked with developing a national data framework, collecting and reporting on data to show progress on the indicators. MoSPI has developed National Indicator Framework comprising 306 indicators to track progress of all States and UTs.¹⁹ The draft national Indicators on the SDGs were put in June 2017 in the public domain.²⁰ But after that the progress has been very slow. India has not been able to finalize the national indicators even after 18-20 months.

As far as sub national processes are concerned, there is complete lack of understanding on how to proceed. Officially most sub-national governments have carried out a mapping of the SDGs and targets to the departments and programmes in their respective states. NITI Ayog has organized consultations with States /Union Territories on implementation of SDGs with focus on structures for implementation of SDGs, mapping of schemes/programmes, indicators and monitoring system, capacity development measures, innovations initiated and challenges faced at various levels. However, much of the work still seems to be happening only on the paper, and results on the ground are yet to be seen.

States have also been asked to prepare Vision 2030 in order to achieve the SDGs. Many of the states are in the process of preparing Vision 2030, but there is no information in the public domain on the process, purpose, participants etc. India's Voluntary National Report (VNR) in the HLPF listed 12 states which have prepared the vision 2030. A few other states like Uttarakhand have released their Vision 2030 document. However, only few states (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Punjab, Haryana, Jharkhand) have made their documents available in the public domain. A cursory glance of these documents does not reveal any transformation in approach or methods and

¹⁹ <http://www.mospi.gov.in/national-indicator-framework>

²⁰ A consultation on Draft National SDGs Indicators was organized by PAIRVI on 6th April 2017 at Delhi wherein more than 100 organizations attended and provided feedback/recommendations on indicators on all SDGs. Representative of the Niti Aayog, RIS, NIPFP and all major organizations working on the SDGs besides partners from 10 states attended the consultation. Final comments from around 60 organizations were also compiled and submitted to Niti Aayog.

lacks Leave No One Behind (LNOB) markers.²¹ Civil society organizations have also organized several consultations in the states to expedite the process and take the discussion beyond the portals of the government and to the CSOs and other stakeholders.²²

Parliamentary oversight

India started well on the parliamentary oversight however; the initial enthusiasm seems lost as we progress more deeply into the implementation of the SDGs. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Lower House of the Parliament of India, has organized briefing sessions on the SDGs for Members of Parliament, including bringing together legislators from South Asia and other BRICS nations. The Speakers' Research Initiative was also launched to provide SDG-related insights to the Members of Parliament. India has also organized Women Parliamentarians Conference, SAARC Speakers Conference and BRICS Women Parliamentarians Forum on the SDGs.²³ Also speaker has scheduled half-day discussion on each session of the Parliament, however that is not being followed.

It is felt that despite these initiatives the knowledge on the SDGs remains low among the Parliamentarians, there is limited participation in the policymaking and very little role in monitoring and reporting. None of the members of the Parliament were informed of or participated in the Voluntary National Report that India presented in 2017 in the High Level Political Forum (which is the main UN Institution tasked with providing political guidance, monitoring the implementation of the SDGs and encouraging exchange of best practices).²⁴ Most importantly, their individual role in enhancing information and awareness and seeking accountability is almost invisible. This is truer in case of State legislatures and their members are concerned. Even though states have embarked upon making action plans for the SDGs, there has been almost no debate in the legislatures and among

²¹ *ibid*

²² *Beginning with 2015 PAIRVI has organized consultations in Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, some of them attracting highest level of political attention brining in more people and stakeholders in the discussion and at times developing local support groups to carry on the conversation and monitor the progress.*

²³ *Speakers Research Initiatives, Parliament of India, <http://sri.nic.in/search/node/sdg>*

²⁴ *Ajay K. Jha, ENHANCING PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT OF THE AGENDA 2030 AND THE SDGS, PAIRVI*

the members. This undermines the critical role that state legislatures have in terms of localizing the SDGs and ensuring greater accountability for delivery of the Agenda 2030.²⁵

Action Plan

In 2018 Niti Aayog has come up with a three-year action agenda. There are two other documents in the pipeline, namely, the seven-year policy strategy and the 15-year long-term vision. It's been said that the 15-year vision is also somewhat coterminous with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN). However, the action agenda is not focused specifically on the SDGs, but rather addresses several development challenges that India faces.

Finance is a major constraint for achieving SDG goals as India has huge financial requirements. An exercise by Development Alternatives provided the minimalist financial assessment for India to achieve the SDGs and projects a financing gap of USD 8.5 Trillion over a period of 15 years.²⁶ There is no official estimate of how much financing will be required to implement the SDGs. However, there are a number of estimates of financial requirement as far as implementing National Action Plan on Climate Change, state plans and implementing the Nationally Determined Contributions. This suggests that the government is more focused on implementing the NDCs in preference to the SDGs, which is a broader and more complex agenda.

As far as reporting is concerned, India presented its VNR in July 2017 at the HLPF, which specifically looked at the goals under review. At the 2017 HLPF, India's report focused only on 7 of the 17 goals—poverty eradication (SDG 1), hunger and nutrition (SDG 2), health and well-being (SDG 3), gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 5), industries and infrastructure (SDG 9), life below water (SDG 14) and global partnerships (SDG 17).²⁷ Government of India's justification for selective reporting was that these specific goals were the focus of this year's thematic discussions

²⁵ PAIRVI works on enhancing parliamentary oversight of the SDGs implementation and has engaged members of parliament and state legislatures through dialogues, consultations, policy briefings and one on one engagements.

²⁶ Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in India: A Study of Financial Requirements and Gaps. https://www.devaltd.org/images/L3_ProjectPdfs/AchievingSDGsinIndia_DA_21Sept.pdf

²⁷ <http://niti.gov.in/content/high-level-political-forum-2017>

at the HLPF. To further obfuscate this matter, civil society was not given an opportunity to respond to its government's VNR, neither to congratulate nor to question showing its preparedness for the achievements of the SDG goals.

In December 2018 India published 'SDG India Index: Baseline Report 2018,' prepared by NITI, which highlights the progress being made by States and Union territories by presenting a comprehensive picture across economic, social and environmental dimensions. Key aims of the Index are to: identify indicators that "best capture the essence of the SDGs" in a manner that aligns with official data available across all states and UTs; and bring the SDGs to the fore of policy dialogue, formulation and implementation among central ministries as well as subnational authorities, within the broader "framework of cooperative and competitive federalism."²⁸ India's overall score is 58. Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, have all with composite scores in the upper 60s (on a scale of 0-100) while states like Assam, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh appeared to be the laggards in a ranking of states. On particular SDG areas, the average score for the states is lowest for SDG 5 on gender equality (36), SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities (39), SDG 9 on industry, innovation, and infrastructure (44), and SDG 2 on zero hunger (48).²⁹ The Index is accompanied by a dashboard that allows users to visualize states' and UTs' performance, both in the aggregate and against specific SDGs.

However, SDG India Index 2018 is not a comprehensive representation of overall baseline since it is constrained by limited data availability. The Index uses only 62 priority indicators from 13 goals while four SDGs (Goals 12, 13, 14 and 17) were not included in the Index, due to state-level data gaps. SDG 17 was not included given that indicators have not been identified by the NIF for this goal. In addition, the index takes into account some process and scheme level indicators pertaining only to Government of India's interventions on the SDG targets. Selection of indicators for index is based on the criteria that emphasize availability, coverage across States and UTs and ownership by the Ministries. Indicators emerging from the State schemes have not been included. The Indicators focus largely on data sources emerging from central official statistical systems and the respective Union Ministries/Departments. State schemes and their data sources have not been tapped for this exercise.

²⁸ *India Index Report Provides Baseline for Performance across SDGs*

<https://sdg.iisd.org/news/india-index-report-provides-baseline-for-performance-across-sdgs/>

²⁹ *ibid*

Assigning equal weightage for all indicators across all Goals may also lead to biased results. Additionally, some indicators may be less relevant to some States. For example, indicators like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) have less relevance in States like Punjab and Haryana because they have already been performing better on these targets. Thus, their progress on these schematic indicators will seem less in comparison to other states but it does not signify that these States are poor performers.³⁰

Partnerships

Recently NITI Aayog and the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) signed a three-year partnership for the sustainable development at the Government and Business Partnership Conclave in New Delhi on 08-August-2018.³¹ The conclave was organized by NITI Aayog, CII and the United Nations (UN). This partnership focuses on specific activities that seeks to develop: 1. Vision and Action Agenda for businesses and industries to contribute to SDGs; 2. Annual Status Reports; 3. Sector-specific Best Practice.

In addition, on September 28, 2018 NITI Aayog and United Nations in India signed Sustainable Development Framework for 2018-2022.³² The focus areas include poverty and urbanization; health, water, and sanitation; education; nutrition and food security; climate change, clean energy, and disaster resilience; skilling, entrepreneurship, and job creation; and gender equality and youth development. Across outcome areas, the UN will support the Government of India on south-south cooperation, in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs. The total planned budget outlay for the implementation of the UNSDF 2018-2022 is approximately INR 11000 crore, of which 47 percent is planned to be mobilized through the course of implementation from multiple sources, including the private sector and the government. It was told that the UNSDF was framed following a highly participative process, in consultation with government entities, civil society representatives, academia, and the private sectors. In reality the CSO's participation was very limited and only a few CSO's with

³⁰ SDG India Index-Baseline Report http://niti.gov.in/writereaddata/files/SDX_Index_India_21.12.2018.pdf

³¹ <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=181656>

³² <http://in.one.un.org/un-press-release/niti-aayog-and-united-nations-in-india-sign-sustainable-development-framework-for-2018-2022/>

good reach to the government were cherry picked for the discussions.

While officially the CSO's participation is always highlighted in the reports and events, in reality they are not consulted and given due importance. For example, on 19 July 2017, India presented its first VNR at the UN. While the report makes a strong pitch for partnerships, in reality it pays only lip service to the partnerships except that with business and industries. While the official presentation describes civil society organizations as "key stakeholders", the report makes only a perfunctory one paragraph reference to them and their imprimatur on the report is impossible to discern.³³

Availability and accuracy of Data

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) is tasked with the overall responsibility of coordinating the SDGs. It collates data from various government agencies, monitors implementation and reports at the national, regional and global levels. The decennial census by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner under the Ministry of Home Affairs is the largest single source of statistical information in India. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is the nodal agency for the development of the statistical system in the country and coordination in statistical activities among agencies at the Centre and in states. MoSPI undertakes large-scale nation-wide statistical exercises. Its Central Statistics Office is entrusted with preparing national accounts, including Gross Domestic Product and other macro-economic aggregates. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) is responsible for conducting large-scale sample surveys, including the Annual Survey of Industries and crop statistics, on a national basis. The Directorate of Economics and Statistics (DES) is the apex body responsible for the coordination of statistical activities at the state level.

In 2012, GoI adopted the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP) to facilitate access to government owned shareable data to promote data sharing for national planning and development. The NDSAP applies to all data and information created, generated, collected and achieved using public funds provided by GoI directly or through authorized agencies by various ministries, departments, organizations, agencies and autonomous bodies. The Department of Science and Technology is the nodal

³³ <https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/Qm14u4S1WtbhU30TmNBOoJ/For-a-greater-global-role-take-SDGs-seriously.html>

department for all matters connected with overall coordination, formulation implementation and monitoring of the policy. An important component of the government's efforts to ensure open and easily accessible data is the National Informatics Centre (NIC) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information. NIC is the custodian of e-Government and e-Governance applications as well as a promoter of digital opportunities for sustainable development. Through its information and communication technologies network "NICNET", NIC has "institutional linkages with all the ministries and departments of the central government, 36 state governments and Union Territories, and about 708 district administrations of India."

Despite these efforts, serious challenges remain for India's data infrastructure and its ability to monitor implementation of the global goals. Data needs to be specific, measureable, accessible, reliable and timely. However, a majority of the government departments and their data collection agencies are not yet computerized and the majority of digital records are not machine-readable.³⁴ Lack of inter-operability of data and low levels of proactive disclosure of information by the government hampers access to information.

The level of specificity in government data is inadequate and leads to opacity. The responsible agencies do not maintain data disaggregation based on age, sex and cause. Furthermore, data released by the government is not timely and often delayed. There are also concerns with the reliability of government data. Discrepancies in figures exist within government ministries and departments.³⁵

In addition, the problem is also with the integrity of data. Earlier in February 2019 a controversy broke out when the National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO) job survey for 2017-18 that recorded a surge in the unemployment rate to over 6 per cent, a 45-year high. But the report was not released and Niti Aayog called it a "draft report. However, the former acting National Statistical Commission (NSC) Chairman who resigned because the report wasn't released, rebutted the claim and told that this was the "final report" and it needed no further approval.³⁶

³⁴ <http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/download/SDG%2016%20India%20Mapping%20the%20Datscape.pdf>

³⁵ *ibid*

³⁶ <https://indianexpress.com/article/business/economy/niti-aayog-calls-adverse-job-report-a-draft-ex-stat-head-says-no-its-final-5563724/>

Conclusion

India started well but somewhere seems to have lost the momentum. Even after the three years of start of the implementation, there seems to be no concrete action plan, direction and visualization, financing plan or monitoring and reporting process. The institutional mechanism is yet to evolve and engagement with stakeholders remains peripheral. Financial challenges, data availability, and taking the discourse to sub national and local levels are the major barriers. These challenges are further compounded by lack of urgency, dedicated institutions, interdisciplinary and interdepartmental coordination, and meaningful participation of stakeholders including the CSOs. Unless these issues are addressed, the progress on the SDGs cannot be optimized

(This paper is written by Dr. Chetna Joshi and Ajay Kuma Jha, Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society India (CECOEDECON). CECODECON has 35 years' experience of working on development in a rights based approach. It works in more than 500 villages on issues ranging from community based natural resources management, sustainable agriculture and food security, traditional knowledge, gender, institutional development of local governments, trade, climate change and sustainable development. It leads a pan Indian coalition on environmental and climate justice called Beyond Copenhagen. CECOEDECON works at various levels from local to global and worked connects and works with several UN agencies. It engages with people and major groups, policy makers and media, and youth and women on the SDGs.)

Overview of SDG Implementation and Progress in Nepal

Introduction

Nepal lies between two economic giants India and China. Although a small country, it is diverse in terms of caste, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, ecology and biodiversity. Despite being rich in natural resources, it is one of the least developed countries. Nepal is ranked 149th (0.556 HDI-medium human development) in terms of human development. Nepal has been reducing poverty, yet the achievement has not been as expected. As of now, about 21.6 percent people are below the poverty line. The situation reflected by multi-dimensional poverty indices is even worse, 28.6 percent. Its economic growth rate was 6.64 percent in the last fiscal year. Primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of economy cover 28.2 percent, 14.2 percent and 57.2 percent respectively¹. Per capita income is about US\$ 1,004 (*MOF 2018*) and national economy is heavily dependent on remittance (31 percent).

Access to basic services like education and health in social sector is increasing in the country. In the academic year of 2017, the net enrolment ratio for primary level was 97.2 percent, basic level was 92.3 percent and secondary level 43.9 percent. Similarly, gender equality has been attained in secondary level education. A total of 87.9 percent of the population have access to potable drinking water and 94.0 percent of the total population have been benefited from basic sanitation services².

The pace of economic development is very slow in Nepal. Over the last 50 years, the decadal average growth rate ranged between 2 to 5 percent. Amidst the persisting stagnant economy, the county also suffered political instability and decade-long armed conflict between the Maoists and the government. Nepalese society is still faced with many social problems like child marriage, violence against women, discrimination based on age, sex and caste and many more. Over the decade, the economic instability and lack of well-paying jobs have forced many youths to migrate overseas. Reconstruction works are still going on after devastating earthquake in April 2015.

¹ *Draft Approach Paper (2019/20-2024/25), NPC/GON*

² *Economic Survey 2018, MOF/GON*

In 2015, Nepal promulgated a new constitution which is more progressive. Series of elections were held in 2016 and 2017, so at present Nepal has elected people's representatives at federal, provincial and local governments. Presence of majority government is historic opportunity to accelerate development in the country, however Nepal is undergoing transition from unitary to federal system. Amidst this situation, Nepal has planned to graduate from LDC status by 2022.

Nepal embraced 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015. Nepal is in the process of integrating the SDGs into national agenda, development plans and programmes.

Enabling environment for implementation of SDGs

Nepal has completed most of the ground work for implementation of SDGs. Various initiatives have been undertaken by the government in order to adapt SDGs. The most noticeable effort is establishment of high level institutional mechanisms for strategic guidance, coordination and monitoring, and integration of SDGs into national plans, policies and budgets. The initiatives are led by the National Planning Commission (NPC), the apex body that formulates national plans, policies and programmes.

The idea of leaving no one behind is in line with the agenda of new Constitution of Nepal which aims to build a prosperous, egalitarian and pluralistic society with its overarching guidance to all development policies, plans and programmes. The government has started to mainstream SDGs in national planning and budgeting system. The current 14th periodic plan (2016/17-2018/19), and other sectoral plans, policies and their targets are being aligned with SDGs. Specific SDG codes are assigned for all national programmes in the national budget. However, with the county moving from unitary to federal system, it is yet to align and incorporate SDGs at the sub-national level planning and budgeting processes.

Three high-level committees have been formed to implement SDGs. The Steering Committee is chaired by the Prime Minister; Implementation, Coordination and Monitoring Committee is headed by Vice-Chair of NPC, and eight thematic groups are headed by NPC Members. The eight thematic groups include economic development, social development, sustainable production and gender mainstreaming, agriculture and drinking water, energy and climate change, infrastructure development, good

governance and coordination. The membership of the coordination and working committees is broadly representative of the public sector, private sector, civil society and development partners. On the other hand, National Assembly (upper house) has formed a parliamentary committee namely “Sustainable Development and Good Governance Committee”.

Nepal took part in Voluntary National Review (VNR) process in 2017 and presented a country report “National Review of SDGs” in HLPF 2017 in New York. Government of Nepal has grouped SDGs in social, economic and environment categories. Goal 5, 16 and 17 are categorized as cross-cutting goals. NPC produced SDGs Status and Road Map 2016-2030 that identified 489 national indicators, set milestones and targets to achieve SDGs by 2030. Similarly, the NPC has developed SDG data portal where province wise data are available and a separate website (<http://sdg.npc.gov.np>) on SDGs has been launched. Government wants to develop partnership with province and local governments, private sector, cooperative, civil society and NGOs, international development organizations, regional cooperation organizations, South-South cooperation, and stakeholders of monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Government has strategies to mobilize internal resources, local and province revenues, private and cooperative investments, as well as development cooperation.

Moreover, the Government has estimated budget required to achieve the SDGs for three fiscal years 2018/19-2020/21. SDG Need Assessment, Costing and financing Strategy 2018, formulation of planning and monitoring guideline to local and federal governments, and review of sectoral plans and strategies in order to align with SDGs are some important steps taken by the Government. Further, Government has promulgated a number of new laws to implement the fundamental rights. Government of Nepal is now in process to formulate 25-year visionary plan with roadmap and slogan “Prosperous Nepal: Happy Nepali”. Also, the Government is preparing 15th five-year national plan by mainstreaming SDGs and setting national goals, objectives and strategies.

Initiatives taken by concerned stakeholders

The private sector is helping government for implementing the SDGs through job creation and infrastructure development. The Federation of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), which commissioned a study ‘sustainable production and consumption pattern in Nepal’, is working

directly in relation to SDG 12. Similarly, the cooperative sector has taken initiatives under the slogan of ‘Cooperatives for Sustainable Development.’

CSOs have formed the Nepal SDG Forum in February 2016, which has identified 23 constituencies and 19 thematic groups. Major groups including women and girls, persons with disability, indigenous people, youth, and CSOs have been working on SDGs through their own initiatives. They are mainly involved in creating awareness and publicity of SDGs at province and local level. CSOs have organized reviews of SDGs in partnership with NPC and UNDP. NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) published Handbook on SDGs in Nepali language in 2017. Moreover, different CSOs and their networks are publishing their reports, books and IEC materials as per their working thematic areas. On behalf of CSOs, NFN published a *Civil Society Report on Implementation of SDGs in Nepal* in July 2017. National Campaign for Sustainable Development – Nepal has been formed to support localizing SDGs and engaging with local governments.

The development partners have shown interest in supporting government’s efforts. Most programmes and projects supported by Nepal’s development partners are implemented through government systems and support is mostly aligned with national programmes and priorities. These partners have taken initiatives to align their ODA with the intervention in infrastructure development, hydropower generation, enhancing agricultural production, mitigating climate change impacts and conservation, social sector development (especially improving quality of education and healthcare) and inclusive development and governance.

Issues, challenges and barriers to achieve the SDGs

Though different initiatives are going on in achieving SDGs, for a low-income county like Nepal with limited resources, capacity, technology and innovations, realizing SDGs is a real challenge. Identifying goal specific programmes and cross-cutting intervention, and their implementation and monitoring are other challenges.

More than six million people still live in poverty. Dependence on remittance economy has compromised financial stability. Inequality between rich and poor, and different sections of society including women and girls continues

to grow³. Inequality is manifested through disparity in access to quality education, health service, economic opportunities and other public services. Without a concerted effort to tackle inequality and pursue policies that benefit many rather than the richest few, the poorest and most marginalized Nepalese will continue to be excluded from progress. Therefore, Leave No One Behind, which is the core principle of 2030 Agenda has not fully internalized in national system. In addition, natural disasters, environmental degradation and adverse impacts of climate change are key challenges of the country. Tackling regional imbalance of development is also a major challenge as multi-dimensional poverty of Karnali and Province # 2 are 51.2 percent and 47.9 percent respectively, in contrast to 12.2 percent of Province # 3⁴.

Transformation of state from unitary to federal system is protracted. Tug of war is seemed between federal and province governments. Province level governments are not yet fully effective and functional. On the other hand, local governments have not been able to deliver as per the aspiration of the people. These scenarios clearly indicate poor capacity of the governments at all three tiers. Development projects are not completed on time and development benefits are not being equitably distributed. Governments are not able to spend allocated budgets on time on the one hand, volume of irregular public expenditure is gradually increasing on the other. Lack of vertical and horizontal cooperation, coherence and coordination among the different levels of government and their agencies are clearly observed.

SDGs are already in the fourth year, but most of the people, people's representatives, government officials, academia and CSOs are not adequately aware about the SDGs. Lack of coordination and consultations among the key development actors remains a major challenge to achieve SDGs. Though institutional arrangements have been set for the implementation of the SDGs, they are not fully active. The high level committees on SDGs are not meeting regularly. This shows insufficient political commitment, negligence of government and its agencies. VNR was held in 2017, but it was not inclusive and participatory as supposed. VNR Report was prepared without consultations at province and local levels. Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) including indigenous

³ HAMI, Oxfam Nepal and SAAPE (2018). *Fighting inequality in Nepal: The road to prosperity*. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/fighting-inequality-nepal-road-prosperity>.

⁴ Draft Approach Paper (2019/20-2024/25), NPC/GON



people were properly and adequately consulted, but the contributions of CSOs were not fully acknowledged and their suggestions and comments were not incorporated in the report. Parliamentary oversight is seeming weak as they are shadowed by executive body of the government, and judiciary is losing its credibility.

Meaningful participation of MGoS and civic space is slowly shrinking in the country. Although, the situation is not that much serious, CSOs are continuously facing operational problems and harassments in case of renewal of registration, access to resources, tax clearance, project approval etc. as many hassles are imposed on them. Politicians and government bureaucracy have negative mind-sets against civil society and NGOs. Government is likely to bring new CSO law which has provisioned some restrictive provisions that discourage CSOs to work freely. This is against the spirit of national constitution and ICCPR. Moreover, the laws and regulations which are going to be formulated by province and local governments are most likely to be unfavourable to the CSOs. Civil society, CSOs and NGOs are becoming weak in the last few years. Status of Press Freedom Index (31.96), Civic Space Index (obstructed category) and Democracy Index (5.18 Hybrid democracy) indicate declining democratic space and civic freedom in the country. Interestingly, laws and regulations are formulated without public consultations that directly affect the lives of the ordinary people.

Achieving SDGs will be difficult unless the state is able to address the systemic issues, structural barriers and attitudinal problems such as caste system; feudal mind-set; deep-rooted patriarchy; unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunities; bad and poor governance; status-quo mind-set; over politicization of public institutions; business as usual; neo-liberalism and privatization of essential public goods and services; rampant corruption; and impunity and political unaccountability.

Country is not able to attract foreign investment, despite stable government. That means, Government has failed to create an enabling environment to attract and encourage domestic and international investment which could promote production and productivity in the country. With the transformation of county to a federal system, the major challenge is to mainstream the SDGs into provincial and local level planning and budgeting system. Since the institutional framework for province and local level are new and still striving, integrating and localizing SDGs into planning

and implementation is a challenge. Besides, the elected officials of local governments are not well educated on the SDGs.

Access to new technologies and innovations is another challenge because of lack of knowledge and affordability. The country has not been able to invest sufficiently in research and development. Science, technology and innovation are neglected and country is not able to exploit academia and think-tanks.

SDGs require huge financial investment, particularly in gaining economic growth, enhancing quality of public service and reducing risks from disaster. Ironically, the government is not able to spend allocated development budgets.

Weak database and lack of disaggregated data by sex, age, caste/social groups, disability status, geography, and income hinder in getting the SDG interventions focused to the target. This also hinders the measurement of progress with different social segments especially poor, Dalits, women, and minorities.

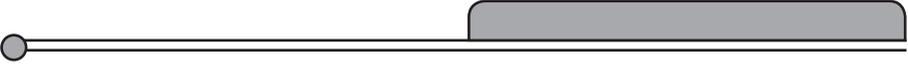
Nepal suffered devastating earthquake in 2015 and now reconstruction works are going on including construction of private houses and public infrastructures to restore basic public services such as education, health and connectivity.

Apart from above challenges, rugged topography of the country itself remains a challenge. It is prone to disasters like earthquake, landslide, floods, avalanches, fire and epidemic. Thus these natural disasters in addition to a climate change create additional layer of challenges.

Recommendations to achieve SDGs

Achievement of SDGs requires commitment at all levels and by all stakeholders supported by adequate resources and capacity. For this raising adequate awareness and internalization among all key development actors at all levels about SDGs is urgently needed. Translating provisions of constitution in actions through appropriate policies, laws, plans and budget allocation is the best way to achieve the SDGs.

Nepal needs to develop inclusive macro-economic package and implementation and need to move forward for self-reliant economy and reduce all forms of poverty and inequalities. Rapid, sustainable and employment oriented economic growth; ensuring access to affordable and



quality education and health services; sustainable development of settlements and cities; increasing production and productivity; social protection; building peaceful, inclusive and just societies; sustainable and optimum utilization of natural resources including land, water, minerals, biodiversity, forest etc.; planned development of tourism sector; and accountable and people-centric governance systems are key to achieve SDGs in the country. Programmes of national pride should include soft projects such as economic empowerment of poor and women. We should be honest to overcome systemic issues, structural barriers and attitudinal problems. In case of Nepal we must ensure integrity of political society. Gender equality and social inclusion, environmental protection, good governance, and capacity development should be cross-cutting interventions in every efforts of development. Adaptation and mitigation of climate change and disaster risk management are major areas to be worked in the country since Nepal is highly vulnerable because of them. Sustaining peace through conflict prevention and sensitivity only can lead to peaceful society.

25-year long-term visionary plan (2019/20-2044/45) and 15th National Plan (2019/20-2024/25) should be right instruments to achieve the SDGs and to realize the national slogan “Prosperous Nepal: Happy Nepali”. All development efforts should be based on human rights and environmental safeguards. Similarly, province and local level development plans and programmes should be focused on achieving SDGs and national dreams. Nepal should maintain good relation with two neighbouring countries and able to receive benefits from them. Also, Nepal needs to take advantage from international cooperation and regional cooperation mechanisms to fulfil financial gaps. But, emphasis should be given to increasing domestic resources to minimize dependency syndrome.

Equally important is coordination and cooperation between all development actors. It is urgent to break silos and build culture of partnership. The governance system should be strong with effectual institutional mechanism that fosters both vertical and horizontal coordination and cooperation between the government’s agencies and other relevant agencies. The governance institutions should be capable enough to foster rule of law, support human rights, control corruption, and promote transparency and accountability. Civic surveillance should be made stronger to check corruptions.



SDGs cannot be achieved without full supports of local governments. Well-functioning of the provincial and local governments would help in implementation of plans and policies at every level of government and help in localization of SDGs. The capacity of the stakeholders, especially of government agencies at all levels is necessary so that they could deliver the programmes and budgets and ensure the aspirations of right holders. So, country should conclude federalization process as soon as possible and need to end conflict between federal and province governments. Federal government should be honest in this regard. Similarly, local and province governments should minimize their dependency on federal government.

Capacity of national statistical systems should be improved so that disaggregated data by sex, age, geography, caste/ethnicity, ability and poverty status are up to date and readily available. If so, country would be able to track the progress on national and local targets, specifically in reaching the furthest behind. Governments should dare to establish multi-stakeholder mechanisms and intensify monitoring process to ensure the delivery of plans, programmes and budgets. Parliamentarians, Parliamentary Committees, National Human Rights Commission, Constitutional Bodies, and media should play important role in monitoring of SDGs' progress.

Similarly, the country needs to increase investment in science, technology, research and innovations in productive sectors, invent for sustainable solutions, and provide enabling environment for private sector investment. There should be an enabling environment for civil society/CSOs and their roles should be strengthened in the entire process. Governments at all levels need to guarantee open space for CSOs and fulfil the rights of people to participate in public affairs. CSO-led mechanisms should be formed at province and local levels and they should be vibrant and work effectively by building their delivery and monitoring capacities.

Without ensuring meaningful participation of youth, we cannot imagine sustainable future. The youth population welcomes demographic dividend but Nepal has to concentrate how to utilize and maximize the benefits. Nepal also needs to attract and retain its diaspora labour force by encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship.

(This paper is jointly written by Daya Sagar Shrestha and Rabi Wenju, National Campaign For Sustainable Development Nepal (NACASUD-Nepal). NACASUD-Nepal envisions to build equitable, inclusive, peaceful, just, resilient and prosperous society. It steadily promotes sustainable development and principle of Leave No One Behind by coordinating and partnering with stakeholders. It supports to formulate necessary policies and plans to build inclusive and just society, engage with government, non-government, international organizations and other agencies at all levels, and implement targeted programmes for poor and marginalized groups.)

SDGs Implementation Policies, Processes & Challenges in Pakistan

Background

Pakistan's latest estimated population is 204,924,861 (excluding the autonomous regions of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan). This makes Pakistan the world's sixth-most-populous country, just behind Indonesia and Brazil. Including Azad Kashmir, the population would be 211.819 million. Gilgit Baltistan region has an additional estimated population of 1.8 million. One third of its population is in the youth and adolescent category with 28 percent of the population falling in the age bracket 15-29 yrs.¹ With a median age of 22.7², Pakistan is one of the world's youngest countries.

Pakistan faces many developmental challenges. According to UNDP's human development index, Pakistan ranks 150th in the world with an HDI of 0.562³. The Global Gender Gap Report 2017⁴, by world economic forum, placed Pakistan as the second worst country on gender equality. Pakistan ranked 143rd out of 144 countries, worst in the South Asian region with an average remaining gender gap of 34% as noted by the index. In south Asia, Pakistan has one of the highest infant, neonatal and maternal mortality rates and the total contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) is only 35 percent which includes the traditional methods as well. Pakistan is the fourth worst country for women according to rankings of the Women, Peace and Security Index. Of the 153 countries ranked for women's inclusion, justice and security, Pakistan was ranked at number 150, with the highest discrimination against women in the world and the lowest financial inclusion⁵.

As stated earlier, Pakistan has a very young population. The well-being and health of young people are the crucial cornerstones of development. Opportunities and services that cater to youth, including in the domain of

¹ http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2013_CapturingDemoDivPak.pdf

² <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/pakistan-population/>

³ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/PAK>

⁴ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf

⁵ <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index/>

sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are the responsibility of the states. ‘Youth bulge’ in Pakistan’s population has been called the potential ‘demographic dividend’⁶ but concerns remain that in the absence of facilitative and enabling policy and service framework from the State, this dividend could turn into a “disaster”⁷ or become useless.

A retrospective review of the 15-year era of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reveals several issues and challenges that hindered Pakistan’s progress. War against terror started in the region with the commencement of MDGs in 2000 and later, the devastating earthquake in 2005, countrywide floods in 2010 and 2012 impacted the economic stability of the country and hence considered as the main challenges towards appropriate implementation of MDGs. After the 18th amendment in 2010, almost 27 ministries and subjects like health, population, youth, social welfare and women development were devolved to the provinces and it became provincial responsibility to legislate on these subjects, develop policies and plans and implement actions. While the attainment of MDGs was declared a national objective, they were not sufficiently embedded in the public policies and resource allocation processes both at national and provincial levels. Less than desired localization of MDG agenda from government and political stakeholders, in addition to limited coordination between different tiers and sectors of government resulted in low awareness of MDGs and consequently, lack of effort.

With the adoption of 2030 Agenda, attention turned to the national level, where governments at federal and provincial levels are working with a range of stakeholders, and struggling to establish a framework for implementation that identifies a realistic set of locally appropriate targets and indicators. In this context, it is much appreciated that government has already commenced the process of implementation of SDGs by approving National Framework for SDG targets and indicators, notifying Parliamentary Task Forces on SDGs to oversee the implementation of national priority framework, establishing SDG Units at Planning Commission of Pakistan and at P & D departments at provincial headquarters.

⁶ http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2013_CapturingDemoDivPak.pdf

⁷ <http://www.pakdiscussion.com/forum/showthread.php/45044-Demographic-dividend-or-disaster-Malee-ha-Lo><http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/pakistan-population/dhi-23rd-October-2012>

Policy and Institutional Interventions for the Implementation of SDGs

The national parliament of Pakistan adopted the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and SDGs on March 16, 2016. The Parliamentary Secretariat on SDGs was established under the aegis of Speaker of the National Assembly to provide support to the elected representatives. Six parliamentary task forces on SDGs are formed at national, provincial and regional levels comprising of elected representatives from the respective assemblies: national, provincial (Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan) and regional (Azad State of Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan) Assemblies. Planning Commission of Pakistan (PCP), the apex national body of all types of national level planning, development and reforms, was made responsible to take lead in the implementation process of SDGs. PCP at the first step aligned the SDGs with seven pillars of Pakistan's vision 2025 that includes:

- 1) Education health and social development
- 2) Achieving sustained, indigenous and inclusive growth-tax collection, export orientation, diaspora mobilization,
- 3) Democratic governance, institutional reform, modernization of the public sector,
- 4) Energy, water, food security,
- 5) Private sector and entrepreneurship-led growth,
- 6) Skill development, information and communication and linkages with international markets,
- 7) Modern transportation infrastructure and regional connectivity,

Prime Minister's SDGs Support Fund was launched worth of PKRs 136 billion and SDGs units were established under the aegis of Planning Commission of Pakistan at Federal and Provincial levels with the support of UNDP and Planning and Development Departments at Islamabad, Lahore (Punjab), Karachi (Sindh), Quetta (Balochistan), Peshawar (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Muzaffarabad (Azad Jammu & Kashmir) and Gilgit (Gilgit Baltistan). Federal SDG Unit in the Planning Commission is effectively coordinating progress with provincial SDG Units. All tiers of government need to establish horizontal and vertical partnerships for coordinated efforts to achieve meaningful progress on SDGs.

Federal SDGs Unit was assigned to prepare National Framework for SDGs considering the national priorities. Comprehensive consultative process was carried out with stakeholders' engagement. As a result, the National SDGs Framework was prepared with the consultations of 27 ministries and departments, clusters and thematic groups comprising of national, provincial and regional government officials, and representatives from CSOs, private sector and academia. At the Federal level, the National Economic Council has approved the National SDG Framework in March 2018⁸, as a guiding document to achieve SDGs through a localized approach reflecting high priority targets for Pakistan.

The Federal government has approved PKRs 24 billion from the running budget of the year 2018-2019 to allow members of national assembly to submit small developmental schemes of their respective constituencies to the ministry of planning development and reforms for achieving SDGs⁹.

National Action Plan has been devised for the implementation of indicators under SDG 16.

The Provincial Governments have also initiated a consultative and research driven process to develop Provincial SDG Frameworks. These frameworks demonstrate political ownership at the highest level and also serve as a strategy document to guide future development plans and policies.

Provincial governments have already divided the goals into clusters and formed the thematic groups for the localization of SDG indicators in their respective contexts and provincial priorities. Almost all the provincial governments are setting their annual development plans as per the SDGs national and provincial priorities. Government of Punjab has added the annexure III in the PC-I document to mention outcomes of all developmental projects of government contributing towards the national and provincial priority indicators of SDGs. Any project not aligned with SDGs indicators would not be approved.

Initiative Taken by Other Stakeholders

Many civil society organizations, networks and alliances work for the sensitization and implementation of SDGs in their respective geographic

⁸ http://pc.gov.pk/uploads/report/National_SDGs_Framework_-_NEC_2018.pdf

⁹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/436945-govt-approves-rs24-bn-for-uplift-schemes-of-mnas>

areas and through their thematic priorities. However, Pakistan Development Alliance that represents 104 national, provincial and district level organizations from all across the country is specially focusing on SDGs implementation through its interventions keeping in view the challenges related to governance and accountability. Very recently, Pakistan Development Alliance has conducted the country wide SDGs gap assessment titled “Where Pakistan Stands on SDGs in 2018?”¹⁰ The assessment was carried out with the support of national, provincial and district level partner organizations that also provide the information regarding the accomplishments and challenges and way forward in the course of implementation of SDGs in Pakistan. Pakistan Development Alliance is now carrying out the Citizens’ Led Mechanism for the Voluntary National Review of SDGs in Pakistan. The findings of citizens’ review will not only contribute in the national level government report but a Citizens’ Alternate Report on SDGs will also be prepared, published and disseminated in all the concerned stakeholders on the eve of UNHLPF in July 2019 and during UNGA in September 2019.

Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has been asked to review its guidelines regarding corporate social responsibility (CSR) for Pakistani business sector and align them with the SDGs¹¹.

SDGs and Voluntary National Review Process in Pakistan

Pakistan decided to present the National Voluntary Review (VNR) Report in July 2019 and for this purpose a comprehensive process was initiated in October 2018 under the aegis of Planning Commission of Pakistan. National and provincial ministries and departments, SDG units, members of several clusters and thematic groups, CSOs, academics and representatives from private sector were engaged in the stakeholders’ consultation at national and provincial levels. Furthermore, AwazCDS¹² and Pakistan Development Alliance¹³ was assigned to conduct district level stakeholders’ consultations to collect citizens’ voices for the national VNR. AwazCDS and Pakistan

¹⁰ <http://awazcds.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Where-Pakistan-Stands-on-SDGs-2018.pdf>

¹¹ <https://propakistani.pk/2019/01/26/secp-guidelines-for-csr-to-be-aligned-with-sdgs-2030-zubaida-jalal/>

¹² Awaz Centre for Development Services, a national NGO works for the socio-economic development and empowerment of marginalized communities in Pakistan since 1995 and has special consultative status with UNECOSOC since 2012 – www.awazcds.org.pk

¹³ Pakistan Development Alliance is a network of national and district level CSOs working together for the implementation of SDGs with a focus on governance & accountability since 2008 – www.pda.net.pk

Development Alliance with the support of Voluntary Service Oversees (VSO) Pakistan carried out extensive consultations with the engagement of stakeholders from 42 districts¹⁴ of Pakistan through citizens' led mechanism for voluntary national review. Provincial and District partner organizations from among the members of the Pakistan Development Alliance were selected to carry out the district consultations in their respective districts. Two members from each of the districts and provincial lead organizations were provided with extensive training on the prescribed format to conduct the consultations. The reports of the consultations are being collected and the findings are being compiled at the National Secretariat of Pakistan Development Alliance. These findings will be finally contributing to the National VNR Report being prepared by the Planning Commission of Pakistan.

Issues and Challenges to Achieve SDGs in Pakistan

- Data availability, especially at district level, is a big challenge for Pakistan that will impede progress reporting on the 244 SDG indicators. Monitoring, reporting and evaluating progress is a key component of the SDG Framework and it is important that we strengthen the data ecosystem by generating sufficient data and having a robust mechanism to timely report progress for course correction. At the moment, the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) are the only two surveys that carry the bulk weight of SDG indicators.
- Pakistan need sufficient financial resources to achieve SDGs. It is essential that the current processes and capacities to effectively invest public resources are reviewed and strengthened with regard to priority development issues of Pakistan.
- Lack of coordination among various departments, ministries and concerned stakeholders like private sector and CSOs is still a challenge as many of the government officials and departments, CSOs and private

¹⁴ Azaz Jammu & Kashmir (Muzaffarabad, Kotli, Bhimber and Bagh), Balochistan (Quetta, Dera Bugti, Loralai, Sibbi, Qilla Abdullah, Barkhan and Gwadar), Gilgit Baltistan (Astore, Hunza, Gilgit and Skardu), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Abbotabad, Batagram, Charsadda, Chitral, Dir lower, Hari Pur, Mardan and Swabi) Punjab (Bahawal Nagar, Bhakkar, Chakwal, Chiniot, D G Khan, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Narowal, Rajan Pur and Lahore) Sindh (Hyderabad, Ghotki, Tharparker, Mititari, Tando Allah Yar, Sukkur, Khair

Pur, Shaheed Benazirabad Bhutto and Qamar Shehzad Kot)

sector leaders and staff lacks capacity and do not have understanding on how to align their investments and programmes with related indicators of SDGs.

- Shrinking civic space is a big challenge in the route to achieve SDGs in Pakistan. In creating the enabling environment for CSOs, a lot more needs to be done so that they can contribute with full potential to achieve SDGs. There is scope for far greater integration of the civil society and private sector given their leading role in achieving some of the most critical social and economic development goals related to employment, poverty alleviation, environment protection, sustainable production, women empowerment, peace building and others.
- Dysfunctional local governments are another major challenge in course of achieving SDGs in Pakistan. Local governments need to be strengthened further and more resources need to be generated at local level. Nearly 65 indicators are to be implanted by the local government, however, it requires administrative and financial powers.

Recommendations and Way Forward

- The members of parliaments, particularly SDG Task Force members, who have the powers and role to oversight the implementation of SDGs need to be capacitated at greater length regarding the complexities of SDGs and their indicators so that they can review the reports, identify the bottlenecks and formulate the appropriate policies.
- Governments and stakeholders also need to explore alternative sources of financing that can support public funds. This includes the role of private sector and their pool of corporate resources that can be utilized to either improve business practices or invest in new development initiatives. Individual level philanthropic contributions can also play a role in investing in areas that can lead to long term sustainable results.
- Government should review its legal frameworks and policies towards the civil society sector and provide them appropriate space so as to engage fully with the citizens at grassroots level for the sensitization and realization of masses on SDGs implementation.
- Prioritize and invest on interventions that can yield multiple dividends like education, health, women and girls empowerment, renewable

energy, climate change and accessible water and sanitation etc.

- Affirmative actions are required on behalf of government to inspire cross-sectoral collaborations for sharing and adapting good experiences, practices and innovative solutions.

(This paper is written by Zia ur Rehman. He is associated with Awaz CDS-Pakistan and Pakistan Development Alliance. Awaz CDS-Pakistan is registered as not for profit organizations with registrar joint stock companies under Societies Registration Act 1860. AwazCDS-Pakistan's core mission is to develop integrated and innovative solutions in cooperation with partners at all levels to secure the future of marginalized communities especially by creating rightful spaces and choices of. Pakistan Development Alliance is an alliance of 83 national level NGOs/Networks working together on developmental and rights based approaches to address issues in governance and accountability across the country especially in the implementation of SDGs. The alliance is led by AwazCDS-Pakistan and is governed by elected national and provincial executive committees at national and provincial level.)

Sri Lanka Progress Report on Implementing the SDGs

Overview of implementation of SDGs in the country

Background: Since signing on to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) has taken numerous initiatives towards facilitating the Sustainable Development Goals including the introduction of a cabinet ministry on sustainable development, establishing a parliamentary select committee on the SDGs, and enacting the sustainable development act in the parliament. Unfortunately, three years later, by the end of 2018, the same government abandoned the ministry of sustainable development, the parliamentary select committee has been disbanded, and the national sustainable development strategy stipulated by the act is yet to be formulated. The initial momentum towards a transformation created by the political leadership of the government has not been executed by the highly fragmented public administrative system. Moreover, the country lacks vision, direction and institutional arrangements.

Political leadership: With discontinuation of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, the portfolio of sustainable develop has been reassigned to the Ministry of Environment which is a cabinet ministry under the President. For over two decades' sustainable development has been a subject under the Ministry of Environment which has been a reason for the low national priority to it. The expectation that the Ministry of National Policies would finally bring sustainable development into the core of their planning has not been fulfilled. However, the Sustainable Development Council chaired by the Secretary to the President has also been placed under the purview of the Ministry of Environment and is expected to coordinate the national sustainable development policy and strategy. The proclamation on entering into a 'Sustainable Era' made on 2nd January 2017 by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka needs to be implemented by the responsible sections of the government, with the full participation of stakeholders and citizens.

Parliamentary oversight: The Select Committee of Parliament on the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which was established through a motion on 25 October 2016 but has been terminated at the end of 2018. The Select Committee was mandated to make recommendations to ensure that the UN 2030 Agenda for SDGs is achieved in Sri Lanka. The

Committee held five meetings and identified four thematic clusters to focus on: (a) sustainable economic growth (b) health, education and better services for all (c) addressing inequality; ensuring social inclusion and protection (d) climate and disaster resilience, and environmental protection. With the termination of this committee no parliamentary action on the SDGs are currently in focus.

Institutional arrangements: The establishment of a cabinet ministry as in-charge of Sustainable Development was to contribute for an integrated option towards coordinating the sustainable development needs and criteria of the country. Also, the ministry was the national focal agency for coordinating, facilitating, and reporting of the achievements towards implementing the national commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Many challenges now remain due to the lack of clarity on who and how the key SDG related functions would be handled.

Action Plan: Sri Lankan government has so far failed to formulate a comprehensive national SDG policy framework and develop a strategic plan for the implementation. Therefore, no financing plan is drawn and a monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanism for SDGs has not been established. The policy and institutional incoherence are an impediment towards progressing on the implementation of the SDGs while the lack of a plan to localize the SDGs hinders long term aspirations for an inclusive transformation. However, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) with International Finance Corporation (IFC) commenced a programme to enhance and develop environmental and social risk management and sustainable financing practices for Sri Lanka's financial sector. Under this partnership, the Central Bank with the IFC's Sustainable Banking Network (SBN) in 2017 embarked on developing a 'Sustainable Finance Roadmap' to guide the local banking and finance industry, strengthening the capacity of the banking sector to implement such practices, facilitating knowledge sharing with other SBN members; and promoting green investment in the country.

Issues, challenges and barriers to achieve the SDGs in the country

Progress report: The initial momentum towards a transformation created by the political leadership of the government has not been executed by the highly fragmented public administrative system and the country lacks a clear

rationale and process to implement the SDGs. To illustrate some issues, lack of a policy coherence prevents proper mainstreaming, lack of institutional coherence prevents proper integration, lack of a monitoring, evaluation, follow-up and reporting mechanism prevents honest stock-taking, and lack of a sustainable development budgeting and a financing architecture prevents true commitment to transformation. While GOSL presented its Voluntary National Review (VNR) to High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on SDG in July 2018, Sri Lanka is yet to establish a clear national SDG monitoring, evaluation, reporting and follow-up mechanism. Also, the GOSL is yet to agree upon a national SDG roadmap and establish the baseline indicators and streamline the supporting data towards enabling a systematic assessment of the progress with a view to transforming the nation towards sustainable development by 2030.

Sub national initiatives: No substantial efforts have been made towards localizing and decentralizing the development planning based on the SDGs and the district development planning process needs to revert to a format of addressing the recommendations of the 2030 Agenda. While it is globally recognized that local governments have a unique role to play in planning, executing and monitoring of SDGs, in Sri Lanka, they are handicapped by a lack of clearly defined, devolved and decentralized authority. Diffused institutional and legal frameworks, limited human and financial resources, and weaknesses in data systems are hindering effective target setting and monitoring. To rectify these anomalies, sub-national governments should be capacitated with authority, resources and finances. They will also require institutional framework to define, deliver and monitor SDG targets and indicators while assuming that subsidiarity and good governance at all levels are essential to implementing the 2030 Agenda. The ongoing constitutional reforms process provides good opportunities to explore options for localizing the SDGs, through strengthening sub-national bodies and their capacities for greater control over planning, implementing and monitoring of SDGs.

Partnerships: While the Sustainable Development Act¹ was passed in parliament in October 2017 without any public consultations, the establishment of the Sustainable Development Council happened only in mid-2018. The Sustainable Development Council is solely made of government representatives and political nominees without any options for stakeholder participation. This compromises the principles of partnership

¹ SRI LANKA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACT, No. 19 OF 2017



and leaving no one behind. In early 2016, the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife (MSDW) introduced the ‘National Sustainable Development Engagement Platform’ to take forward their flagship initiative themed ‘A Sustainable Nation – An Inclusive Transformation’. However, after a successful year of engaging stakeholders in planning the ‘National SDG Action Plan (2017-2020)’ and the dialogues for ‘Provincial Sustainability Plans’, MSDW officials abandoned the platform. The absence of an official stakeholder engagement platform was badly felt during the VNR process which saw a bureaucratic decision-making approach applied against the 2016 practice of planning through full engagement. The Sri Lanka Stakeholder SDG Platform (SLS SDG Platform) was established in March 2018 by a collective of CSOs, private sector, academia, professional associations, trade unions, etc. to facilitate an inclusive transformation towards sustainable development in Sri Lanka. Objectives of the ‘SLS SDG Platform’ are to facilitate an inclusive transformation and independent monitoring and reporting on the implementation of SDGs in Sri Lanka. Towards ensuring accountability of the implementation of the SDGs, representatives from civil society, business, academia, media, as well as local and national government should be able to congregate periodically to assess our status on sustainability and devise collective strategies for prosperity.

Data: The Department of Census and Statistic (DCS) published a report called “The Status of Sustainable Development Goals Indicators in Sri Lanka: 2017” which compiled baseline data through ongoing censuses and surveys and administrative records, and data compiled by some statistical units of DCS established at other institutions of the national statistical system (NSS) of Sri Lanka. This report includes 12 chapters providing status of SDGs in Sri Lanka except for goals 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17 for which data cannot be compiled by the DCS. Out of 244 indicators, data are already compiled for 46 indicators through ongoing censuses and surveys of the DCS and administrative records. As the report solely produced by officials of DCS and at the least had not included other government institutions, it is limited to its own censuses and surveys and does not provide overall government status on the availability of national data. For example, most of the data for environmental indicators, particularly in goals 12, 13, 14 and 15, are missing as this information is mainly with institutions that manage the relevant theme and issues. The report also does not make any effort to acknowledge and analyse non-public sector information such as from

civil society, academia and private sector. Therefore, this report does not provide an accurate status on the data availability on the SDG indicators.

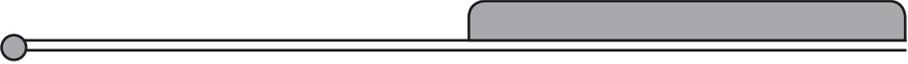
SDGs influence on sectoral policies: For the last four years, Sri Lanka has struggled to formulate a national policy framework that provides direction to the development of the different sectors. The “Vision 2025” policy document² released in September 2017 by the government has not provided any significant relations to implementing the SDGs and falls short of embracing sustainable development as the central planning methodology. Meanwhile the Presidential Expert Committee (PEC) Report on ‘Sustainable Sri Lanka 2030 Vision – Strategic Pathway’ has not gained much ground in policy process. The long delay in formulating the National Sustainable Development Strategy and the abandoning of the National SDG Roadmap and a National SDG Action Plan (2017-2020)³ formulated by Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife (MSDW) in 2016 has created a large gap and the SDG process has been stagnant across all sectors as well.

Voluntary National Review (VNR): Sri Lanka presented its VNR at the HLPF in 2018. Even though the VNR claims a collaborative and inclusive process, in reality it was highly bureaucratic and lacked an honest space for civil society engagement⁴. The VNR process generated limited interest and engagement by the political hierarchy and therefore, lacked leadership and direction. In a bureaucratic process managed by few officials of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Wildlife and Regional Development (MSDWRD) and the hired consultant, stakeholder engagement appeared too superficial for an honest outcome. With strong submission from civil society, the VNR process finally organized a few stakeholder consultations. Conducted in an overly moderated environment, these consultations appeared to be adhering to formalities than actual engagement. As the process demonstrated low flexibility and appetite for actual integration of stakeholder input, the Sri Lanka VNR to the HLPF lacked a sense of collective ownership and fell short of representing the nation’s collective agreement. The Sri Lanka VNR process was limited to input from few central government agencies that were formed into a conveniently

² *Vision 2025, Min. of Finance, 2017, Govt. of Sri Lanka.*

³ *National SDG Action Plan (2017-2020), MSDW, 2017*

⁴ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19677FINAL_SriLankaVNR_Report_30Jun2018.pdf



established task group that lacked whole of government approach. Members from provincial councils and local authorities were not engaged in the process and seriously lacked any sense of representation of issues of local government or people across the nation. The VNR has been a one-off project of the ministry and has not been translated into national languages of Sinhala and Tamil even after the HLPF. There has been no follow on the VNR since HLPF in July 2018.

Voluntary Peoples Review (VPR): The lack of an honest space for engagement in the official VNR process and limited scope of investigation into truthful stocktaking compelled stakeholders to seek an alternative reporting pathway. Therefor the Sri Lanka Stakeholder SDG Platform decided to formulate alternately the Sri Lanka VPR. The VPR is an initiative to monitor and report on the status of implementing the SDGs keeping with the objectives of an inclusive transformation towards sustainable development. It also kicks off the ‘Independent Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Mechanism’ on the SDGs in Sri Lanka. The process of formulating the VPR was intense and investigative in an environment that lacked comprehension on the SDGs, low public awareness, incoherent policy framework, fragmented institutional system, and low support for stakeholder engagement. The VPR was a process that was managed through resource pooling and voluntary contributions. However, with limited space for engagement and contribution in the official VNR process, experts from both governmental and non-governmental entities were attracted to meetings, consultations and reviews conducted for the VPR. The VPR offers a macro analysis on the key aspects of mainstreaming the SDGs, integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development namely environmental, social and economic. Other necessary factors are policy and institutional coherence, financing the sustainable development agenda, and data readiness for monitoring and evaluation. It also offers to provide a stocktaking on the current status and rating the performance on the 17 SDGs through a process of establishing an ‘Independent Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Mechanism’ on the SDGs in Sri Lanka. The 17 reviews are ‘work-in-progress’ and are expected to evolve. In the absence of a formal monitoring, evaluation, and reporting mechanism established by the government, these reviews provide a first attempt to systematically analyse the performance on the SDGs by Sri Lanka.

Possible approaches to achieve SDGs in the country

Major barriers and challenges: With the discontinuation of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, the role of a central facilitation agency for the SDGs is now unavailable at national level. As a permanent secretariat for the loosely operating Sustainable Development Council has not been established and the central role has not been handed over to the National Planning Department, uncertainty and inaction have persisted. Sri Lanka does not have a clear plan and strategy for financing the SDGs. This mainly stems from the lack of a national strategy for sustainable development and implementing the SDGs. This has led to fragmented programmes by different ministries and most of these programmes do not demonstrate a deep sense of accountability based on the SDG indicators that can measure the true impact towards a transformation. SDGs have become merely a project-based operation for multilateral agencies working with the public sector organizations trying to achieve piecemeal outcomes. Some of these externally funded and foreign expert driven programmes have exacerbated policy incoherence and institutional fragmentation. Without any national momentum, stakeholder action has been sporadic. With Sri Lanka facing the challenge of presidential, parliamentary and local elections, SDGs have become the least focus for budgeting and financing.

Conclusion

A national sustainable development policy framework is critically important for Sri Lanka. Under the overarching framework, a national SDG implementation strategy that includes a plan of implementation time horizons, sectoral strategies, financing mechanisms, and a monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanism must be clearly defined. In the dwindling interest of the political and public sectors, stakeholders must ensure that the commitment to 2030 Agenda is upheld by the government. In this case greater awareness, knowledge and skills on the SDGs are vital, particularly for civil society.

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Poverty and Hunger in Pakistan

Introduction

The goal of the paper is to analyze the current state of poverty and hunger in Pakistan with regards to the first two of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the first two goals:

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Sustainable Development Goals are the collection of 17 international goals with 169 targets that were set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. The SDGs comprises of social, economic and environmental development objectives addressing poverty, hunger, health, education, global warming, gender equality, water, sanitation, energy, urbanization, environment and social justice. The target given to achieve these goals is set to be the year 2030 and is often termed as Agenda 2030.

Pakistan

Pakistan is a country of almost 200 million people, where 62% of population lives in rural areas while the rest are part of urban society (Ahmed, 2018). Pakistan Labor Force Survey, 2018 shows that 42.3% of the country's labor forces are part of agriculture sector (Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The agriculture sector accounts for 24% of the national GDP (Bureau of Statistics, 2011). These statistics show that the society is still agrarian; however, further facts also clearly show that it's skewed in favor of the elite. According to the Pakistan Agriculture Census 2010, only 11% families own 45% of agricultural land, whereas 89% small farmers own 55% of the land. It needs to be further highlighted that of these small famers, 64% owns less than 5 acres of land.

The above data already points to the acute concentration of wealth in the hand of a few elite families. The data below provides further insight in the vast quantity of production that Pakistan's agriculture sector is able to

produce. Following provide the outstanding rank that the country has in world agricultural production (Business Recorder, 2011):

- 9th in wheat world production
- 8th in rice world production
- 5th in milk world production
- 4th in sugarcane world production
- 4th in cotton world production

However this magnanimous output does is not reflected in the quality of life of a vast number of the country's masses, where poverty, deprivation and marginalization are the norm.

Poverty

Rural poverty represents the largest portion of poverty worldwide. Out of world's estimated 1.4 billion poor, 70% reside in developing countries' rural areas. Therefore, rural development and transformation remain central to the poverty reduction goal set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (IFAD, 2011).

Pakistan aims to reduce poverty to 9% in 2030 as part of its "End Poverty" agenda but given the general commitment to neoliberal policies it might be a hard target to achieve. The Economic Survey 2017-18 provides poverty estimates that show that 24.3% of the population lives under the poverty line. The indicator set for the poverty line is 2 US dollars per day (Ministry of Finance, 2018). Though the figure is being used here, it needs to be emphasized that this figure has been set by the World Bank and is not acceptable as it fails to catch the abject condition of millions who are above this figure.

Pakistan's first multidimensional poverty report was published by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform in 2016, with technical support provided by UNDP and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), University of Oxford. According to the report, 39% Pakistanis live in multidimensional poverty; poverty in urban areas is 9.3 percent as compared to 54.6 percent in rural areas. It is unfortunate that the Minister for Planning and Development of the time openly acknowledged "the economic gains have not translated into equal poverty reduction and prosperity across all regions and provinces of Pakistan." (UNDP 2016, p

2). The figures for poverty are astounding. According to the report, 73% people in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and 71% in Balochistan live in multidimensional poverty. Poverty in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stands at 49 percent, Gilgit-Baltistan and Sindh at 43 percent, Punjab at 31 percent and Azad Jammu and Kashmir at 25 percent. The immense inequality that resides in the country is obvious from the fact that populations in cities have less than 10% facing multidimensional poverty, whereas certain districts in Balochistan suffer from 90% multidimensional poverty (UNDP, 2016).

This is further corroborated by the UNDP National Human Development Index (HDI) 2017, according to which there is a gradual improvement in the human development from 0.600 in 2009 to 0.681 in 2015 but at the same time there is vast disparity in the provinces across the country. Apart from Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab has the highest HDI - 0.732, versus FATA, which is abysmally low at 0.216. Similarly, the HDI for areas such as Gilgit Baltistan and Balochistan are also low – 0.52 and 0.421, respectively. The HDI 2017 builds its indicators on citizens' access to clean water, clean fuel, electricity, adequate sanitation, roof quality and basic household assets.

According to a report from Oxfam, Pakistan remains one of the least committed countries when it comes to social spending in South Asia. Oxfam has created the Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) Index, which of 157 countries places Pakistan 154, so only three countries are worst than Pakistan when it comes to spending on health, education and social protection (Oxfam, 2018). This shows Pakistan's non-commitment to the first goal of SDGs that is "End Poverty".

A major issue, which needs to be pointed out is the rising labor force and high rates of unemployment. Pakistan has been categorized as one of the youngest nations in the world. 64% of the population is under 29 years of age, whereas 30% of the population is between the age of 29 and 15 years (Kundi, 2018). In the 1990s the labor force increased three times from 11.6 million rising to 35.1 million. The unemployment rose from a low figure of 1.4% to a very high figure of 5.7% (Zaidi, 2018). These figures have been not budged in the past decade. As the Labor Force Survey 2018 shows that the unemployment rate in Pakistan is 5.8% despite the growth rate figures of 5.9% in 2018 (Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

It is well known that amongst the poor, women and children comprise the largest segment; and then these are most prevalent in the rural society. It is no different for Pakistan. As per the 2017 national census, of 208 total population, women at 101 million are 49% of the population, of which a majority i.e. 65 million (64%) live in the rural areas; and 36 million (35%) in urban areas. For a vast majority of women, agriculture remains the source of their livelihood (UN Women, 2018).

Rural women in the rural sector are highly exploited and oppressed. According to the Status on Rural Women Report, “women are concentrated in the agriculture sector, primarily in dairy and livestock. Only 19% are in paid employment and 60% work as unpaid workers on family farms and enterprises. Their unpaid work is valued (using comparative median wages) at PKR 683 billion, is 57% of all work done by women, and is 2.6% of GDP (UN Women, 2018).

Women agricultural workers exploitation can be explicitly seen in wheat harvest. This is very clear from a study conducted by Roots for Equity on rural women’s work in wheat harvesting. The wheat harvest lasts only for about 25-40 days, and in this season women will work for 8-12 hours a day. However, the returns are meager, at the most three maunds (120 kg) of wheat grains are given for harvesting one acre of land. And even this work is being taken away, as there is increasing mechanization. Although for food crops payments are in kind, the earning for wheat harvesting computed came to hardly \$2/day per woman. In Sindh, the daily payment received by each woman was four kilograms of wheat (\$1.2 or Rs 132) per day, and in Punjab, no more than seven kilograms of wheat (\$2.1) per day. Such meager amounts under grueling conditions of work, under a harsh angry sun where temperatures soar to 40°C. Women are forced to carry drinking water, as landlords are not even willing to provide water, let alone food or tea (Sayeed, 2018).

Following are some critical indicators that reflect the quality of life of the common woman and man in Pakistan. According to the Status of Rural Women Report (UN Women, 2018):

“It is estimated that 110 children across Pakistan die daily due to water and sanitation related diseases. A third of Pakistanis lack

adequate sanitation facilities, mostly in rural areas. In Pakistan, 2 million people lack access to clean water because they live in remote areas, 79 million don't have access to a clean toilet, 25 million people defecate in the open, and more than 19,000 children under 5 each year die from diarrhea.”

Lastly, it is important to point out that Pakistan was not even able to achieve the previous sustainability goals that were the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to UNDP, Pakistan was unsuccessful in food security and poverty reduction goals (UNDP, 2012). National MDGs Orientation paper from 2014 shows that out of 3 targets Pakistan was only on-track for one target (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2014). And in 2015 when the monitoring period concluded, a reputable daily newspaper DAWN observed that Pakistan has failed to achieve most of the MDGs as its progress was off-track on 23 out of 34 targets, very unlikely to achieve any of the MDG goals (Shahid, 2015). It has been criticized that the failure in achieving the MDG targets was also due to poor outlays for health expenditure and has lagged behind most countries that had similar profiles to Pakistan (Waqar, 2017).

Hunger

There is no doubt that hunger is caused by poverty, and vice versa, hunger can increase poverty. Global Hunger Index (GHI) is used to measure hunger, and it ranks countries based on four key indicators -- undernourishment, child mortality, child wasting and child stunting. Based on the GHI 2018, Pakistan ranks 106th out of 119 qualifying countries (Global Hunger Index, 2018). With a score of 32.6, Pakistan suffers from a level of hunger that is rated as serious. The last National Nutrition Survey was carried out in 2011 and no current data on malnutrition is available. A compilation of data from various sources on malnutrition provides the following figures (Asim and Nawaz, 2018):

“Pakistan has been reported to have one of the highest levels of prevalence of child malnutrition compared to other developing countries. According to the National Nutrition Survey, 33% of all children were underweight, nearly 44% were stunted, 15% are wasted, 50% were anemic, and 33% were anemic (iron deficiency). In the last two decades, there has been a little reduction in the prevalence of child malnutrition in Pakistan compared to other developing countries.”

The World Food Program (WFP) has provided a fact sheet, which provides facts on hunger (Borgen Project, 2018). According to WFP, out of the total of 113 countries in the Global Food Security Index of 2016, Pakistan ranked 78th, with 43% of Pakistan's population faces food insecurity. Of this number, 18% of people in Pakistan severely lack access to food. Further, WFP has also pointed out to the fact that Pakistan houses some of the most malnourished and poorest regions in the world, among which, Tharparkar, Sindh has been included. In Sindh, 50 percent of children below 5 years old are stunted and 19 percent are severely malnourished (Talpur, 2016).

USAID's Food Assistance Fact Sheet from March 2019, which is quoting the WFP, gives further very disturbing data on hunger and malnutrition. The reasons given include ongoing conflict in the country, recurring disasters such as drought, earthquakes and floods, economic instability, all of which particularly impacts the lives and livelihood of the rural communities. According to this data, approximately 60% of the population is facing food insecurity and malnutrition is highly prevalent – WFP reports that 44% of Pakistani children younger than 5 years of age are stunted and 15% suffer from acute malnutrition (USAID, 2019).

The US AID Fact Sheet further states that as of January 2019, about

“26 districts in Balochistan and Sindh provinces, resulting in crop and livestock losses and high levels of household food insecurity, the UN reports. . . . Farming households lack access to sufficient water, seeds and fertilizer for crop cultivation and livestock disease and death adversely affects livestock-rearing communities, undermining livelihoods. Malnutrition levels in drought- affected provinces are alarmingly high. The UN estimates the drought affects 4 million people in southern Pakistan.”

These facts have been time to time also been stated by senior government officials. For instance, Health Secretary Saleh Muhammad Nasar has said, “unfortunately some 44 per cent of the province's children were found stunted, too short for their age and more than half of all households were found either hungry or faced threat of hunger.” (Tribune, 2018). Another news item on malnutrition in Sindh quotes the Chief Executive Officer of a non-government organization HANDS, “nearly half of the children under five years of age in Sindh are stunted due to chronic malnutrition, a condition that has lifelong consequences on their physical and mental

development.” (Tribune, 2018)

Reasons for hunger and poverty

The extremely tragic situation of poverty, deprivation and hunger laid bare above is based on the internal and external economic and social policies that have been pursued by the countries elite hand in hand with imperialist countries. The founding stone for the extreme poverty and inequality in the nation is the failure of land reforms. Only 11% families in the country control not only bulk of the land but also then allow feudal policies to control socio-economic development (Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The landed elite benefit from the industrial agriculture as it allows higher production. With their economies of scale in buying agriculture inputs they are able to keep the sharecroppers and the landless under their political and economic control. A country which is still suffering from a lack of genuine land reform now faces further oppression and exploitation based on land grabbing policies that are being implemented in the country. The Corporate Farming Ordinance was passed in 2001, which later has become part of agricultural liberalization policies. Countries like Saudi Arabia, China and UAE are leasing land in the country freely; they are growing crops for exporting back to their countries (Guriro, 2011). In 2015, Pakistan leased 2,000 acres of its land in Gwadar, Balochistan as a part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to China for 43 years, despite the poverty and hunger faced by the local people (The News, 2015). There are further plans under CPEC to develop nine special economic zone (SEZ) in the country, all of which is based on acquiring land. There is no thought given towards the well being of the local people who have been residing in the region before it started attracting all this economic attention under the guise of local development. Simply put, development does not take place if it fails to augment the lifestyle of the local populous residing in the area; just the opposite in fact.

Should such policies be supported? We are not only losing scarce land but also extremely scarce water resources in the name of a so-called development agenda which is meant to bring prosperity and well being to the people. More than 70 years of the nation’s history has shown clearly that this is not the case,

These are the critical reason for very high levels of illiteracy and poor quality of education in the country. The provinces that are more feudal suffer

from more deprivation than others as is clear from the stark difference in malnutrition and hunger data of Sindh and Balochistan.

Another critical reason for high rates of micronutrient deficiency is rooted in the Green Revolution. The consistent use of chemical fertilizers and hybrid seeds have resulted in food production lacking the essential micronutrients.

It shows the imperialist nature of neoliberal policies where the industrialized countries and their aid agencies are aggressively implementing policies that have made food fortification the norm for fighting malnutrition. Billions of dollars worth of profit was earned promoting hybrid seeds and mechanization in Pakistan; today the same technology has led to extreme conditions of hunger, and the misery of the people is again being used through food fortification policies for earning super profits. Newspaper reports have shown that input costs are consistently increasing, especially for fertilizer (Haq, 2018).

There is no doubt that it is the collaboration of the Pakistani feudal lords, the industrialists and the bureaucrats with first world governments, their corporations, aid agencies and the intergovernmental institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization, World Food Program that such policies are implemented. It is critical to point the collaboration of the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organization in creating a global system of implementing neoliberal policies of deregulation, privatization and trade liberalization. No doubt, adherence to the “Washington Consensus” and its vision countries like Pakistan has led the country to severe debt crisis its faces. Privatization of local resources allows multinational companies to amass profits over our natural resources, and there is no doubt that Pakistan has a plethora of resources, such as minerals, coal among others. IMF in the past decade has ‘micro managing’ Pakistan’s budget and our government has strict instructions to reduce and cut down government spending in services that provide relief to the poor. No doubt, structural adjustment policies have massively contributing to the poverty in the country with adverse effects that is heavily affecting the most vulnerable members of the Pakistani society that are farmers and peasantry.

The WTO has been successful in trade liberalization in agriculture. Seeds, first vanquished through Green Revolution, have now been given in the control of foreign corporations through forceful implementation of the Trade-related

Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) agreement under the WTO.

Pakistan's membership in WTO is also problematic, and farmers across the world have been agitating against the organizations imperialists impositions since its inception in 1995. Its absolute push in demanding for getting rid of import duties and tariffs and opening up local markets has had devastating impacts on local producers. For example, on World Milk Day, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) proclaimed that Pakistan is globally among top three dairy producers, in year 2016-17 alone Pakistan's fiscal year gross production of milk was estimated to be 56,080,000 tons (Ahmed, 2017). Despite this, Pakistan made a whopping purchase worth \$252 million in milk and related products import, a figure that is an increase of 8% in comparison to previous year (Tahir, 2018). Since 2015, the local farmers and milkmen have been protesting and demanding appropriate import duty of 100% on the import of dry milk and whey powder which the government has failed to do so following their trade liberalization policy (Tribune, 2015). On one such occasion the local milkmen gathered around to waste thousand liters of milk in front of the national parliament showing their sheer frustration with the government due to its ineffectiveness in curbing anti-agriculture and anti-dairy farming policies (Tribune, 2015).

Factors that are also playing a major role in fanning poverty and hunger across Pakistan are climate change and environmental degradation. It is a fact that Pakistan has been in the list of top ten countries suffering from the impact of climate change. Global Climate Risk Index 2019 shows that Pakistan suffered a massive loss that worth 384 million in US dollar for the year of 2017 alone.

It needs to be mentioned that globally, Pakistan is only responsible for 0.4% of green house gas emission yet Pakistan is ranked eighth most affected country from climate change in the 20-year span, with 10,248 deaths and loss of \$3.8 billion that is equivalent to 0.5% of the GDP. According to The Long-Term Climate Risk Index (CRI) Pakistan is one of the 10 most affected countries by climate change from 1998 to 2017 (German Watch, 2019). In 2014, due to an unexpected wave of extreme cold, farmers in Sindh suffered losses in their bananas, tomatoes, seasonal vegetables and fruit crops. Growers say that 70% of banana orchards and 80% of vegetable and fruit farms in six districts in the province were destroyed by the cold spell (Bokhari, 2014). In

addition, climate change has also brought a spell of long perilous drought.

The reasons for climate change are well known; it is based on the profit-greedy industrial mode of production pursued by the industrialized countries. And today when a very destitute population has to carry its harsh burden, SMART agriculture is presented as a panacea. The use of hybrid seeds, genetically modified seeds, further mechanization and digitalization are offered as means of increasing production to feed the hungry. However, it needs to be stated that Pakistan has had surplus wheat for a number of years wasting away in its warehouses. These stocks were not given free to highly malnourished populations; they were not even given at subsidized rates. If this is the case, then how is additional production going to drive away hunger?

As has been stated above the country is one of the highest producers in many food crops, including milk and meats. But the fact is that the most needy are unable to access these protein rich diets inspite of the fact that they are responsible for growing them.

A 2016 report from World Bank states that experts have estimated that environmental degradation may cost Pakistan's economy over PKR 365 billion every year (Khan, 2016). No doubt, poor performance in achieving development goals in Pakistan is due to cutting down of productive sources such as the land, lakes and forests to promote foreign direct investment (FDI) and urbanization in the country without any hindsight on the poverty and rising food insecurity that is plaguing the entire nation. Pakistan is recently showing a worrisome trend; the yearly use of pesticide has increased over 61,229 tons in 2000s in comparison to 665 tons in 1980s and 254 tons in 1954 (PAKJAS 2019, p.2).

The fact sheet by WFP, states "that most of the country's budget is spent on issues of national security, rather than fighting hunger. Islamabad devoted \$2 billion to security expenditures at a time when many poor Pakistanis were suffering the effects of sky-high inflation." The question that begs to be asked is that where does the country get the money for security expenditures? In its long relationship with the US and its allies, the government has been given vast sums to beef up its security measures. It is this fight that Pakistan has fought on behalf of the US, starting from the Soviet War in the 1980s that has resulted in such abysmal condition of hunger and poverty in FATA. Similarly, the extremely tragic situation in Balochistan is the result of a long history of

neglect by the country's elite in providing economic and social amenities, which would lead to the prosperity of the people.

Tharparkar, one of the most drought affected area not only in Sindh but Pakistan has been mentioned above. The severity of the issue can be discerned by the number of child fatality in Thar district where more than 500 children suffering from water born diseases and malnutrition have died in 2018 (Dawn, 2018). The case for malnutrition is so strong that a UN report says that the poorest Nigerian women in Africa fare better innutrition than their counterparts in Sindh (UN, 2018).

Conclusion

It isextremely problematic that Pakistani government isenabling global capitalist powers control of the local markets, promotion of unsustainable agriculture practices that have resulted in land and food production to become a source of super profits. No doubt, promotion of neoliberal practices in agriculture sector such as corporate farming and land grabbing for private sector is definitely not helping the cause and instead just swelling hunger and poverty in rural and urban Pakistan.

All this has not only aggravated and exacerbated hunger among rural communities but has also caused environmental pollution especially food pollution, and climate change. In order to get rid of poverty, hunger and joblessness, equitable land distribution must be carried out, which is most critical pillar for attaining both Goal 1 and Goal 2. Further, to attain food security and food sovereignty the control of corporations, especially agro-chemical corporations on our food and agriculture must be eliminated. All this is only possible if the farmers including women are central to decision making in rural economy, and of course agro ecology is made the basis for healthy, sustainable food production systems. Only these measures will guarantee the achievement of SDGs Agenda 2030 in Pakistan.

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(This paper is written by Dr. Azra Talat Sayeed, Mr. Askari Abbas and Wali Haider, Society for Roots for Equity Pakistan. Society for Roots for Equity, formed in 1997, works with the most vulnerable, marginalized communities that include small and landless farmers, women and religious minorities in the rural and urban sector. Roots remains committed to being an active part of communities’ struggle to achieve political, social, environmental and economic justice. Roots aims to organize and mobilize grassroots communities and movements for attaining basic rights; undertake action research in on issues and impacts of globalization, patriarchy, and feudalism; build capacity grassroots leaders and creating a grassroots knowledge base for attaining social justice; and engage with people’s organizations and movements to amplify the voices of the most marginalized sectors of our society, locally, nationally and internationally.)

Achieving Education (SDG 4) Targets in India

SDG 4 states about ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all and has seven targets and three means of implementation. Various regions of the world are at different stages towards achieving the targets. Since South Asia is one of the worst performing regions, it would be important to look into the current status and also the major steps that need to be taken in order to achieve the targets.

While South Asia is home to about 627 million children under 18 years of age -- approximately 36 percent of the total population--it has the largest number of illiterates in the world, around 71 percent, of whom 72 percent are women.

As per the UN progress report, the Asia Pacific region is failing to meet targets for almost two-thirds of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In terms of SDG 4, there are huge populations of vulnerable groups who are denied their right to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. Children and youth in remote areas, people with disability, illiterate women, indigenous communities, caste and religion based discriminated communities, ethnic minorities, Dalits, migrant children, single-parent families, transgender and riot victims have been continually marginalized from education and learning opportunities.

Reliable and transparent data sources, particularly segregated data regarding out of school children, differently able, marginalized youth, girls and children in difficult situation is not available.

Access to quality and holistic early childhood care and education (ECCE) is a major problem in most Asia-Pacific countries. Only half of the children attend early learning programme. Pre-primary is not compulsory in most of the south Asian countries and not part of the basic education cycle. Of the 263 million out-of-school children, adolescents and youth worldwide in 2016, 95.8 million lived in South Asia, a number second only to Sub-Saharan Africa.

As per a report from UNICEF, only 69% of children have access to

early childhood education in South Asia region and an estimated 11.3 million children of primary school age (5.8 million girls and 5.5 million boys), and 20.6 million children of lower-secondary school age (8.9 million girls and 11.6 million boys) in South Asia do not go to school¹.

Status of Education in India

India took a significant step in 2010 by making education at elementary level free and compulsory for all and also introduced a policy on ECCE in 2013. However, the implementation of the Act is appalling, with less than 10 percent of the schools fully compliant to the minimum norms that have been laid down in the Act.

India is facing a major malnutrition crisis as it holds almost a third of the world's burden for stunting, according to a global nutrition report. With 46.6 million children who are stunted, India tops the list of countries.² Further the under-five mortality rate is as high as 42. Research has established that period of early childhood represents the most significant and demanding stage in the developmental continuum of an individual,³ an estimate suggests that despite multiple efforts there are 10 million children less than six years (29 percent of total children population) who are facing development loss in India. As per World Bank, in India, less than 2 percent children have basic requirements in sufficient measure in their most critical years—the right food, proper health care, early learning opportunities, and clean water and sanitation. With this status, India still hasn't made ECCE a legal entitlement. The access to ECCE is as low as 54 percent. The working condition of the caregivers is also a major issue of concern as far as ECCE is concerned.

Moving further from ECCE leads to other set of issues pertaining to elementary education. According to the 2011 Census, the number of out-of-school children in the 5-17 age group was 84 million. However, according to a survey commissioned in 2014 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the number of out-of-school children in the 6-13 age groups was only 6 million. This is a gross underestimation. It is quite unlikely that the number of out-of-school children came down so drastically from 2011

¹ <http://www.unicefrosa-progressreport.org/childdeducation.html>

² economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/66865016.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

³ <https://www.careindia.org/role-early-childhood-education-achieving-sustainable-development-india/>

to 2014, especially given that there were no significant changes in objective conditions, warranting such a miraculous reduction. Various calculations undertaken by CSOs show that the out of school children in India is more than 34 million, almost 15 percent of the children in school going age (6-14 in India). The data further show that out-of-school children came mostly from the rural areas, and a high proportion of them are scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, Muslims and from other economically backward communities.⁴ Another problem with elementary education in India is lack of teachers. Currently more than 900 thousand teachers' posts are vacant in elementary and secondary schools. In addition to this, government has closed/merged almost 2 hundred thousand schools which have led to unavailability of schools at massive scale. Further, dropout at secondary level also needs focus and there is a need to make secondary education free and compulsory. In terms of girls and children from marginalized section, the problem is bigger.

Similarly, higher education in India is also facing challenges with very low gross enrolment ratio of 25.2, much behind countries like China, which currently boasts an enrolment ratio of 43.39 percent⁵. Likewise, 48 percent of the total teachers required are still vacant, allocation of the total budget is stagnant (1.4 percent of the total budget of India). Higher education institutions are lacking the basic infrastructure and facilities for students. Scholarships for underprivileged students are being unconscionably delayed, leading many to skip meals or dropout. In March, the government revealed in Parliament that scholarships worth \$1.255 billion meant for scheduled caste — Dalit and other lower caste—students had not been paid. By March 31, 2018, the end of this financial year, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment owed states Rs 86 billion in unpaid post-matriculation scholarship claims from scheduled caste students. That is nearly three times the amount the Centre has allocated to the scheme for the next financial year.⁶

There are also new policy challenges faced in higher education, for example, UGC Act, which was earlier responsible for the enquiry of financial needs of colleges and institutions has been replaced. While the UGC Act

⁴ *Still too many children out of school*, Muchkund Dubey, Ashok Pankaj & Susmita Mitra, September, 2018

⁵ <https://indianexpress.com/article/education/indias-gross-enrolment-ratio-in-higher-education-up-by-0-7-5012579/>

⁶ <https://scroll.in/article/871448/scholarships-owed-to-dalit-students-rs-8600-crore-what-government-has-budgeted-rs-3000-crore>

mandated the commission ‘to inquire into the financial needs of universities’ and ‘allocate and disburse, out of the fund of the commission’ to the universities (under Section 12 of the UGC Act, 1956), now the Ministry has taken over the direct control over the allocations to be made to the universities, leading to the fear of converting the universities into mere departments of the government.⁷

Child labour is another issue which becomes an impediment for school going age children to attend schools and needs a serious attention. As per a report from Save the Children, 11.8 percent children are engaged in child labour. The recent amendment in the child labour prevention Act to make children employed in family business as legal has worsened the situation.⁸

Major Asks

There is an urgent need for all the countries in the region, including India, to make ECCE a legal entitlement for children up to the age of six. Governments should enact national policies to make ECCE compulsory and part of the basic education. These policies should ensure that children in difficult circumstances have access to holistic, publicly funded ECCE programmes. In the elementary Education, the most pressing need is to identify/map out the number of out of school children and have strong mechanisms to mainstream them to school (more focus to be given to children from most marginalized sections like girl child, migrants, child labour, bonded labour, children with special needs, Dalit and tribal, religious minority and others). Law against the employment of child labour must be stringently implemented. In relation to quality of education, urgent need is to fill the teachers’ positions in educational institutions including schools and institutions of higher education and also increase the percentage allocation to education of the total allocation made by the government. Scholarships offered to the children from the marginalized sections need to be increased so as to help in stopping the drop out of children from higher education. Girl child education must be the focus of all the policies, especially at the secondary and higher education. Child marriage should be eradicated completely. Adult education should focus more on developing the skills amongst the adults for better livelihood opportunity. Also, government should take steps

⁷ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/academia-irked-by-higher-education-commission-of-india-move/article24353769.ece>

⁸ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/health/in-india-38-kids-under-5-are-stunted-one-in-four-girls-is-a-mother-before-20-report/story-F8tNCZfAcqkKYsMqx6SiQK.html>

to engage various stakeholders including CSOs and Teachers Unions in the policy making to have a holistic approach towards education. Equity should be the overarching frame while forming policies and while implementing those policies in order to achieve SDG 4 by 2030 leaving no one behind.

(This paper is written by Noopur, National Campaign for Education, India. NCE India is a network of four biggest teachers' union in India and more than 400 CSOs working towards strengthening Right to Education. It is a country counterpart of Global Campaign for Education (GCE). NCE India strongly advocates for better implementation of SDG 4 through national to local level campaigns and also through lobbying with the government. Judicial advocacy for better implementation of Right to Education Act is also one of the major interventions of NCE India.)

Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All: Situation and Priorities for India

Situation as per government of India reports

As widely known, India has made sanitation and cleanliness a national priority since 2014 and substantial progress has been recorded on this, across the country. The situation as suggested by various studies and reports suggests critical areas for improvement as well. The NITI Aayog, apex body that oversees the SDG situation in India, recently undertook an extensive exercise of preparing a baseline situation of almost all SDG indicators, and the first SDG India Index - Baseline Report 2018 was published in December 2018. As far as the progress against targets of goal 6 is concerned, this report gives us an impression that India is close to achieving all targets; however, there are critical areas for improvement.

SDG-6 situation in India, as reported by NITI Aayog's Baseline Report (Dec 2018)

Target	Indicator	Target	Achievement
6.1: By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all	Percentage of population having safe and adequate drinking water in rural areas	100	71.8
6.2: By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations	Percentage of rural households with individual household toilets	100	82.72

Target	Indicator	Target	Achievement
6.2: By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations	Percentage of districts verified to be Open Defecation Free	100	31.95
6.2: By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations	Installed sewage treatment capacity as a proportion of sewage generated in urban areas (%)	68.79	37.58
6.4: By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity	Percentage of annual ground water withdrawal against net annual availability	70	61.53

The baseline report, however, does not have data reported on indicators 6.3, 6.5, and 6.6, which are respectively around improving water quality, integrated water resource management and protecting as well as restoring water related ecosystems.

Situation based on a detailed analysis

Drinking water: Household level access

According to the SDG India Index-Baseline Report released by NITI Aayog in December 2018, 71.8% population in India has access to safe and adequate drinking water within their premises. While the goal of the national rural drinking water programme is to ensure household level access to piped drinking water to at least 90% of the rural households, the above data is of the habitation level access to drinking water, through various sources. Access to piped water supply is at a very low 18.16% as per the programme MIS¹ data as of 25 Feb 2019. As per this, 55.7% of the total population and 43.09% habitations have access to piped water supply, while the household level access is much below the target of 35% that was set for 2019. Also, keeping the desirable target as low as at 90% provides space for leaving out 10% of population. Given the socio-economic situation and power imbalances prevalent in the society, possibility of the neediest and marginalized communities getting excluded is very high.

While the baseline does not report on the status of water quality, this needs to be seen as a critical priority since it has clear linkage to health, nutrition and other indices. Official figures from Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) state that out of 593 districts for which data is available, we have problems of high fluoride (203 districts), iron (206 districts), salinity (137 districts), nitrate (109 districts) and arsenic (153 districts). The government data clearly points to the deficiencies here: critical gaps have emerged in water quality monitoring and surveillance in many states, with inadequate laboratory infrastructure², shortage of staff³ and insufficient testing of water samples⁴. Ensuring equity in terms of access to safe and clean water would require clear focus on these areas.

NRDWP is implemented as a centrally sponsored scheme with cost being shared between the Central and State Governments. The proportion of funds contributed by Centre was reduced, with an expectation that states will compensate for this with an increase in their allocation. However, a

¹ https://indiawater.gov.in/IMISReports/NRDWP_MIS_NationalRuralDrinkingWaterProgramme.html

² <https://www.indiawaterportal.org/articles/state-drinking-water-supply-schemes-rajasthan>

³ <https://www.newsclick.in/manipurs-leaky-implementation-national-rural-drinking-water-programme>

⁴ <https://www.indiawaterportal.org/articles/nrdwp-poor-show-odisha>

performance audit report⁵ of the programme released by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in 2018 points out that availability of funds for the programme decreased from INR 23,577 crore in 2013-14 to 16,931 crore in 2016-17. The budget allocation further decreased to 6,050 crore and 7,000 crore in 2017-18 and 2018-19 respectively⁶.

The CAG report also states that the allocated funds could not be fully utilized by states, with around 304 crores blocked with the State Water and Sanitation Missions and executing agencies. The report suggests several challenges including delays in completion of water supply schemes, slippage in habitation coverage due to gaps in or absence of O&M plans. Gaps in monitoring, including inadequate involvement of community in monitoring, also emerged as issues. Only five per cent of quality affected habitations have been provided with Community Water Purification Plants. The report further recommends that the NRDWP would require approximately INR 23,000 crore annually till 2030 (at present cost) to achieve SDGs successfully, equitably and sustainably.

Do states have the answer?

Apart from the NRDWP, various state governments have introduced programmes for rural drinking water supply, such as ‘Mission Bhagiratha’ in Telangana, ‘Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal’ in Bihar, ‘Basudha’ in Odisha, ‘Jalanidhi-2’ in Kerala, ‘Sardar Sarovar Canal Based Water Supply Project’ in Gujarat, ‘Jalyukta Shivar Abhiyan’ in Maharashtra, ‘Jal Swavalamban Abhiyan’ in Rajasthan, and so on. However, given the ambitious goals, the current budgets of these schemes may not be adequate, with Mission Bhagiratha being an exception--with a projected allocation of INR 43,791 crores over a span of three years. On the other hand, details of the progress of these state-led schemes and how these schemes are helping the neediest populations are not yet available in the public domain adequately.

Looking at the urban landscape, around 65.5 million people (17.4% of urban population) live in slums of different kinds in India (Census 2011). Here, the situation needs major improvement in order to ensure piped water for all households. However, the current dearth of data, reliable or non-reliable, prevents specific plans on these, which itself is a huge challenge to

⁵ https://cag.gov.in/sites/default/files/audit_report_files/Report_No_15_of_2018_-_Performance_Audit_on_National_Rural_Drinking_Water_Programme_in_Ministry_of_Drinking_Water_and_Sanitation.pdf

⁶ <https://www.prsindia.org/parliamenttrack/budgets/demand-grants-2018-19-analysis-drinking-water-and-sanitation>

address. National Sample Survey 69th Round (2012) suggests that 71% of the slum population had access to water supply provided from a tap (not household connection). With rapid expansion in urban migration, the chance is for reduced coverage, adding to the challenge of ensuring household level piped connections. The issue of water access in slums is also linked to tenure-related rights. Notably, cities like Delhi and Ahmedabad have made efforts in this regard.

Drinking water: Institutional access

UNICEF and WHO's Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) Report 2018 presents data on WASH in schools. According to this, 31% schools in India do not have a basic (improved and available) drinking water service. Further, the Annual Survey of Education Report (ASER)-2018, based on a survey of 15,998 government schools in 596 districts in the country, highlights that 74.8% schools have drinking water access, 13.9% schools lack a facility for drinking water, while 11.3% schools have a facility but drinking water is not available. This report also suggests negligible improvement in this aspect since 2016, when 74% schools had access to drinking water. Similarly, access to drinking water in health care facilities and early child care centres needs substantial improvement too.

Situation of sanitation at household level

The Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G) or Clean India Mission was launched in 2014 under the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, with an aim of achieving open defecation free status by 2019. It has achieved tremendous progress in terms of coverage. From the 38.7% individual household latrine (IHHL) coverage at the time of program inception, it has witnessed tremendous progress in toilet construction, with 98.9% households having access to an IHHL, as per the SBM-G MIS as of 25 Feb 2019. Also, 28 of 35 states/UTs have been declared open defecation free. Around 92% villages have achieved 100% coverage under the SBM-G, of which 87.11% have been verified as ODF⁷. The National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) 2017-18 suggests that 93.4% of the households in rural India which have access to a toilet use it. However, other studies suggest a lower usage compared to this. According to a research released by the Research Institute of Compassionate Economics

⁷<https://sbm.gov.in/sbmdashboard/Default.aspx>

in January 2019, 44 per cent of the rural population in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan still prefer to defecate in the open.

While the sanitation coverage is widespread, this needs to be improved by way of identifying and including the excluded populations for various reasons. Further, as we move towards an open defecation free status for India, some course correction measures would have to be initiated to address some of the second generation challenges, in order to achieve safe and sustainable sanitation. These include improving toilet construction and technologies for addressing the risks of water contamination and for improving access and usage; and addressing behavioural issues around toilet usage and hand hygiene. In addition, introducing appropriate waste management measures including for safe management of excreta matter, and strengthening local level capacities and supply chains for safe and effective operations and maintenance of toilet structures including toilet emptying services are also necessary. Water availability for sanitation is another area that has not been attended yet.

Sanitation in institutions and public places

While some considerable effort has gone in, this is an area that still needs a lot of attention. Community latrines and public toilets both in rural and urban areas have to improve on the operations and maintenance part. Some of the areas that need further prioritization include building improved access for the people with disabilities and older people, and addressing special needs for women and girls.

Situation in schools has seen improvement over the last few years, however there is a long way to go in terms of inclusion of girls and children with disabilities. According to the Annual Survey of Education Report (ASER)-2018, toilets are available and usable in 74.2% schools in the country, while girls' toilets are available and usable in 66.4% schools. Further, 45.6% schools in India do not have a basic facility with water and soap, as stated in the UNICEF and WHO's Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) Report 2018. This report also highlights that only 29% schools in the country have a toilet accessible to children with special needs. Early child care centres called the Anganwadi Centres would require major improvements in sanitation facilities as well. Similarly, while there are schemes and programs like *Kaya Kalp* as well as *Swachh Swasth Sarvatra* for health care facilities, there are still critical gaps about sanitation coverage and operations and

maintenance. Hand hygiene management and waste management are critical areas for improvement at health care facilities as well. One more notable issue is that the conditions and WASH situation in health care facilities in most marginalized locations and districts are far more vulnerable compared to those districts which have relatively better development indices.

Issues of sanitation workers and manual scavengers

While the SDG 6 does not directly cover the issue of sanitation work or manual scavenging, it may be important to see this in the same light. This issue is also clearly linked to the SDG 10 (reducing inequalities) and SDG 16 (Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies). While sanitation work covers a broad range of work that is related to water, sanitation and cleanliness, manual scavenging specifically denotes the removal of human excrement from public streets and dry latrines, cleaning septic tanks, gutters and sewers. The manual scavengers are usually from caste groups customarily relegated to the bottom of the caste hierarchy and confined to livelihood tasks viewed as deplorable or deemed too menial by higher caste groups. Their caste-designated occupation reinforces the social stigma that they are unclean or “untouchable” and perpetuates widespread discrimination. Further, 95% of those engaged in cleaning of dry latrines are women. In addition to the rights abuses suffered by people who practice manual scavenging, constantly handling human excreta without protection can have severe health consequences. According to the National Safai Karamchari Commission, at least one Indian worker has died while cleaning sewers or septic tanks every five days since the beginning of 2017. As a step to address this, a standard operating procedure for cleaning of sewers and septic tanks was recently launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. This however would require a focus on adherence and implementation by the states as well as the local governments.

While manual scavenging was outlawed in 1993, the use of men for cleaning of sewers and septic tanks was recognised as manual scavenging only as recently as 2013 in the amendment of The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act. The 2014 Supreme Court Judgment in *Safai Karmachari Andolan v. Union of India* directs that all persons included in the final list of manual scavengers be rehabilitated in accordance with these provisions. However, the official data from 2017 accounted for merely 13,368 manual scavengers in 12 states. This hugely contradicts with Census-2011, which states that a total of 21 lakh

households either dispose their night-soil in open drains or use dry latrines, both of which need to be serviced by manual scavengers. As per the Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC-2011) data of manual scavengers released by the Ministry of Rural Development on 03.07.2015, there were 1,82,505 manual scavengers in the rural areas of the country. An inter-ministerial task force commissioned by the central government reported⁸ 53,236 manual scavengers in 121 districts in the country in June 2018, which does not include the persons who clean septic tanks, sewers and railway tracks. While the prevalence of dry latrines and engaging people as manual scavengers to clean these latrine has reduced after the Swachh Bharat Mission, independent surveys by concerned civil society organizations are also revealing that even after 25 years of legislative ban, this undignified practice and space for the same is still prevalent in the country.

Budget allocations for the rehabilitation of manual scavengers have also declined over years, even though these were based on the very small numbers that the government has projected. The budget in 2014-15 was INR 448 crore, which marginally increased in 2015-16 to INR 470 crore in 2015-16. Further, this was a miniscule INR 10 crore in 2016-17 and 5 crore in 2017-18 and INR 20 crore was allocated to the scheme. As per a press release⁹ by the government in 2015, one-time cash assistance of INR 40,000 has been credited into the bank accounts of only about 6,600 manual scavengers, of the identified 12,700 manual scavengers. However, no expenditure was incurred under the scheme between FY 2014-15 and FY 2016-17 (¹⁰).

In order to achieve these goals, there is a clear need for strengthening the policies around prevention of manual scavenging and rehabilitation of those involved in the practice, and improving their implementation through greater accountability of officials and local municipal bodies involved. The issue of manual scavenging needs to be integrated within the sanitation programmes, by calling for conversion of dry latrines, revamping of current systems of faecal sludge management, taking measures to improve health and safety of sanitation workers and building equity and dignity for this critical group of sanitation workers.

⁸ <https://thewire.in/government/centre-counts-53000-manual-scavengers-in-india-4x-higher-than-last-survey>

⁹ <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/mbErel.aspx?relid=126057>

¹⁰ <https://thewire.in/rights/modi-pays-tribute-to-sanitation-workers-after-five-years-of-ignoring-them>

Way Forward

- 1) Merger of the SDG framework in the local area planning processes and localized monitoring of SDGs will help reduce the gaps in achievement of SDGs in a large way. Coming to water and sanitation, embedding SDG 6 framework in the local area planning (this also being one of the sub-goals under SDG 6), added with appropriate process and outcome indicators for monitoring will give a realistic picture of access, availability and quality of piped drinking water supply. This would require building capacities of community and local institutions and ensuring their involvement and ownership in planning and monitoring.
- 2) Seeing the drinking water related goals in the context of other related issue around water and natural resource management would give a more realistic approach in terms of achieving these goals. Similarly, these should include necessary sanitation safety and sustainability measures including waste management and related processes, and processes and indicators for hygiene management.
- 3) Adequate financing for central and state programmes and schemes should be ensured, including for necessary human and physical infrastructure as well as capacities, along with a robust mechanism for tracking the spending at various levels.
- 4) The issue of improving safety, dignity and secure livelihoods for manual scavengers must be taken up as a priority.

(This paper is written by Kanika Singh, Policy Officer, WaterAid India. Water Aid is an international not-for-profit, determined to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. Working in India since 1986, WaterAid has successfully implemented water, sanitation, and hygiene projects, extending benefits to some of the poorest and most vulnerable communities across 13 of India's 29 States and is engaging closely with various levels of governments for appropriate policy environments. WaterAid India is registered as Jal Seva Charitable Foundation (JSCF) in the country, a not for profit company under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956. For more information, visit www.wateraidIndia.in)

Decent Work and Economic Growth in the South Asian with specific focus on India

Sustainable Development Goal 8 targets the achievement of economic productivity through promotion of inclusive sustainable livelihood opportunities which provide economic security, equitable and dignified work conditions for all. Economic growth is not an end in itself and does not directly measure human welfare.¹ However, it does give an indication of a country's potential to meet people's needs like healthcare, education and employment as well as expand their economic capabilities through creating safe, secure jobs and working conditions. In this manner, SDG 8 in itself interlinks with SDG 1 - eradication of poverty, SDG 4 - quality education, SDG 5 - gender inequality, SDG 10 - reduced inequities, and finally SDG 11 - sustainable infrastructure. This paper will present an analysis of progress on SDG 8 at a regional and national level and through this process highlights some of these interconnections as well.

Analysis of the condition of decent work and economic growth in the South Asian region with specific focus on India

The ILO (2018)² report indicates how, despite economic growth, the South Asia and within it India present a scenario of shortcomings that will impact the achievement of decent work and SDG 8 agenda of inclusive economic growth. The South Asian region³ and India despite showing strong employment growth, driven by a rapidly expanding working-age population have a staggering female labour force participation rate. The region is also characterized by a substantial proportion of youth – especially young women – who are not in employment, education or training (NEET); More than one in five women are NEET. The disproportionate allocation of men in formal technical education like TVET and its gendered nature is another indicator of the lower access of women to equal opportunities for employment in skilled and remunerative jobs.⁴ The informal employment rate is also particularly high in Southern Asia, where almost 88

¹ *The Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (2018) 'Sustainable Development Agenda and Young People: Recognizing Voices and Claiming Rights'*

² *Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook (APESO) 2018, International Labour Organization*

³ *The female labour force participation rate in Southern Asia (27.9%) is among the world's lowest (behind only the Arab States and Northern Africa).*

⁴ *Regional Scoping Paper, 2018, ASPBAE*

per cent of workers were informally employed and hence subject to vulnerable employment. Workers in vulnerable forms of employment are typically subject to high levels of precariousness due to being informally employed and therefore having lesser job security, high working hours, irregular income and no access to social protection. Gender inequality at work is high at 51 points in Southern Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka). The downward trend of gender inequality demonstrates the firmly embedded patriarchal and structural blockage to women's work in the sub-region. This is reiterated by the lack of remunerative employment opportunities, higher incidence of women's participation in low paid, vulnerable casual wage labour, disparate burden of care work, women spending 4.1 times more in unpaid care work than men⁵ due to lack of childcare facilities and unavailability of basic public services like water, which cumulatively hinder women's work participation.

In the **Indian context**, this trend continues. Despite having a large proportion of youthful population, the population to jobs ratio in India is dismal. Additionally there are low level of relevant skills for the types of jobs that are available in the country with only about 5.4% of the labour force being skilled, and the number among women being even lower at 3.4%.⁶ In the Global Gender Gap Report 2018, India features at an abysmally low position, 142 out of 147 countries, in terms of economic participation and is also low on gender parity index. Despite some improvement in development outcomes like gender parity in education, lowering of fertility rates, the female employment rate shows a steady decline. India's declining women's labour force participation rate (23.7%) is reflective of women's conditional access to resources and opportunities and deep-seated gender inequalities like restrictions on mobility, early marriage, high incidence of violence at home and public spaces⁷. The structure of the Indian economy is such that most of the employment is generally in the informal sector with 93% of the workforce either in the unorganized sector or in contractual segments of the organized sector with more or less the same work insecurities as the unorganized sector of the economy. Even more than men, and substantially so, women workers remain stuck in low-value-added but arduous work,

⁵ *Future of Decent Work, 2018, International Labour Organization*

⁶ *Report of 5th Annual Unemployment-Employment Survey 2015-16, MLE, GOI, 2016.*

⁷ *Azad-ASPBAE Study, 2017, Financing Options for Skills for Work of Marginalized Women*

including agriculture where they remain unrecognized as ‘workers’ with the average per day wage/salary earned by a female being less than that of a male. About 80% of the women workers are either self-employed or engaged in casual work⁸. Entrepreneurship and self-employment are being promoted by the government but data shows that most people in the self-employment category have very low earning and are primarily underemployed own-account workers with lack of security nets.⁹

Indian Paradox- Promotion of skills and work and the missing focus on gender and inclusion-The Indian scenario presents a contrast in the promotion of decent work and the agenda of inclusive growth due to the mismatch of the policy context that promotes skill development and employment opportunities with its implementation that is neither inclusive nor sustainable in the provision of ‘decent jobs’. India has a specific policy, The National Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Policy, 2015, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2014, the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)¹⁰ and campaigns “Skill India”¹¹ and “Make in India”¹² set the context of skill development initiatives in the country targeting to skill 400 million people by year 2022. India also has a policy requiring corporate social responsibility contributions to be coursed through the government’s skills development programmes and GOI has entered into partnership with World Bank for financing skills development efforts.

Specific Initiatives for funding and research on Skill Development

- The National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) is a quality assurance and policy research body of MSDE in the skilling ecosystem.
- The National Skill Development Fund (NSDF) was set up in 2009

⁸ Report of 5th Annual Unemployment-Employment Survey 2015-16, MLE, GOI, 2016.

⁹ Azad-ASPBAE Study, 2017, *Financing Options for Skills for Work of Marginalized Women*

¹⁰ PMKVY was launched in 2015 with an aim to impart skills to 2.4 million people (1.4 million new and 1 million through upgradation of skills through the Recognition of Prior Learning).

¹¹ Launched on July 15, 2015 by the Government of India meant “to train over 40 crore (400 million) people in India in different skills by 2022”. See <https://www.narendramodi.in/pm-s-remarks-at-the-launch-of-skill-india--206106>

¹² Launched on September 25, 2014 by the Government of India meant to “facilitate investment, foster innovation, enhance skill development, protect intellectual property and build best-in-class manufacturing infrastructure”. See <http://www.makeinindia.com>

by the Government of India for raising funds from Government and Non-Government sectors for skills development in the country. The Fund is contributed by various Government sources and other donors/contributors to enhance, stimulate and develop the skills of Indians. A public Trust set up by the Government of India, NDSF is the custodian of the Fund.

- The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is Public Private Partnership that aims to promote skills development by catalyzing creation of large, quality, for-profit vocational institutions.
- The National Skill Development Mission (NSDM) was set up in 2015 to create convergence across sectors and States in terms of skills training activities and expedite decision making across sectors to achieve skilling at scale with speed and standards through a co-ordination mechanism.

Gaps in Implementation of Policies-The National Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Policy, 2015 (NSDEP) and various other programmes have tried to incorporate the intent of the SDGs, recognizing the need for inclusive participation. A comprehensive document mapping the SDG goals with related programmes was also shared by the coordinating organization for SDGs in India, Niti Ayog, which indicates inclusion of tribals, minorities and gender focused livelihood and skill initiatives¹³. Despite this effort the rationale of the policies and initiatives are not supported by gender-sensitive mechanisms to provide impetus for women's active participation and to ensure real benefits for women from the policy/programmes¹⁴. The government's priority sectors for skills development until 2022 focus majorly on sectors that have been traditionally male spaces which, given the status quo, clearly do not cater to women. Besides, marginalized women are unable to access skills development training owing to lack of information, rigid application requirements (e.g. even 'beauty and wellness' programmes require class 8 certification) and curriculum/modules, training infrastructure and training location not being gender-sensitive, among other feedback. Meantime, the focus on entrepreneurship for women do not benefit marginalized women who are resource-poor to start with and unable to even consider setting up or running their own enterprises. The provision of the short-term skilling and certification programmes whose ability to

¹³ SDG Mapping(2018) accessed from <http://niti.gov.in/content/SDGs.php>

¹⁴ *ibid*, p.29

deliver marketable skills and employability is questionable and also puts the effectiveness of initiatives like PMKVY in question. Additionally, though the programme envisages to be gender sensitive on paper and has introduced few initiatives such as¹⁵ travel allowances and post training allowances for women (subject to few conditions), in practice the implementation mechanisms are far from being the same. The biggest challenges have been inflexible training schedule, inadequate promotion of soft skills and life skills, non-engagement of trainee’s family, minimal placement and post placement support and absence of a supportive network. Another criticism has been on provision of skill sets that do not match industry job requirements leading to lower placements of people trained under these skill missions.¹⁶

However, it needs to be noted that despite the evidence of glaring inconsistencies, that raise concerns on the actual achievement of SDG 8 and especially the idea of decent work the most vulnerable, the SDG India Index 2018¹⁷ gives a rather limited picture of the SDG goal 8 through the presentation of overarching data (based on selected indicators) which is not disaggregated.

National SDG 8 indicators and target value

SDG Global Targets	Indicator Selected For SDG India Index	National Target Value for 2030
8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 percent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least development countries	1. Annual growth rate of GDP per capita (at constant prices of 2011-12)	10

¹⁵ Incentives under PMKVY to encourage women participation in the skills training include provision of travelling allowance of Rs. 1,000/1,500 per trainee per month depending upon whether TC is within district of domicile of candidate or outside. Similarly, post placement support of Rs. 1,450 per month per trainee is applicable for special group including women for 2 or 3 months’ post training depending on placement within or outside the district of the domicile of the candidate

¹⁶ Azad-ASPBAE Study, 2017, *Financing Options for Skills for Work of Marginalized Women*

¹⁷ Niti Aayog, 2018, *SDG India Index-Baseline Report*

8.5 Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all	2. Average unemployment rate per 1000 persons for males and females	14.83
8.10 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value additional and non-farm employment	3. Percentage of households with a Bank account	100
	1. Number of ATMs per 100,000 population	50.95

Reporting against these aggregate indicators NITI Ayog data shows a healthy GDP growth of 6.5 % and 64 persons being unemployed per 1000 population (which masks the huge gender differences in employment). The former indicator being closer to the target, while the latter is very far away from the target till 2030, 14.83 (see table 1 above). What needs to be highlighted is the fact that such overarching measurement indicators mask the obvious and existing vulnerabilities especially for the marginalised sections. Therefore, national indicators need to use disaggregated data for more accurate representation of the on ground scenario.

Young marginalized women aspire for jobs with good income along with social security benefits, safety at workplace, dignity and balanced working hours in contrast to their reality of low-paid, contractual jobs with long working hours¹⁸. However as discussed above, the non-inclusive implementation of the skill development policy makes it difficult for these women to access skills that can ensure ‘decent jobs’. It is in this context this report recommends the need for innovative non-traditional livelihoods that disrupt this norm and is based on the ideology of expanding women’s economic opportunities beyond the ‘traditional’ while incorporating a GJSE

¹⁸ Azad, 2016, *Urban, resource-poor, young women’s livelihood aspirations and opportunities*

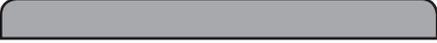
framework¹⁹ to help women combat deep seated economic and social inequalities. This model thus enables women to sustainably use the skills to gain livelihoods with dignity and exercise control over their lives and bodies²⁰. It also creates more sustainable and gender inclusive prospects for marginalized women. Many feminist initiatives today have realized this need and are training women in the traditional soft skills, but also in non-traditional livelihoods such as masonry, electrician work. Studies have also shown that young women are keen on acquiring and accessing non-traditional opportunities, and are convinced about their abilities to engage in these occupations.²¹

As a way to transcend limitations of job opportunities for women and facilitate jobs with higher pay and room for professional growth, groups working on Non Traditional Livelihoods are opening up spaces to expand women's productive engagement by training women in jobs and professions traditionally 'reserved'/undertaken by men, e.g. taxi and auto driving, masonry, carpentry, hollow blocks making, LED bulb making, solar panel installations, mechanical repairs (hand pumps), retail delivery, electrical installation and management, etc. In the context of social change, NTL therefore challenges the status quo helping women to access remunerative livelihood options that have been traditionally male dominated, making way to enable decent and sustainable jobs, thereby attempting to reach 'some of the farthest and marginalized sections of the population'. However, to enable women to sustain their work participation, there is need to also create a supportive system, an entire ecosystem that helps them combat the deep rooted socio-cultural barriers that have been systemically inhibiting women from entering 'public' spaces and workspaces. There is a need to create compassionate and gender sensitive workspaces compliant with labour laws related to minimum wages, maternity benefits, promoting the sexual harassment of women at workplaces act as well as addressing issues around domestic violence through creating a network of support from private to public spaces i.e. sharing of care giving work, safety from gender based violence at home and in public spaces, public transport as well as creation of

¹⁹ GJSE framework includes a pedagogic model that incorporates a rights based training, including information on gender and legal rights, sexual and reproductive health, self-defense along with professional training like english communication, work readiness and professional conduct. These help marginalised women not only negotiate spaces at home but even be prepared for the market

²⁰ As evidenced in the case studies in the Azad-ASPBAE Study, 2017, *Financing options for Skills for Work of Marginalized Women*

²¹ Azad, 2016, *Urban, resource-poor, young women's livelihood aspirations and opportunities*



a gender sensitive organizational spaces. Evidence from Azad's experience of enabling marginalized women to become trained as commercial chauffeurs indicates that, GJSE and a supportive network can help women become equal contributors to the GDP of the country and provide inclusive economic growth.

(This paper is jointly written by Amrita Gupta, Susmita Chaudhary and Anita Borkar, who are associated with Azad Foundation India. Azad Foundation is a professional feminist organization working across social and religious divides to enable resource poor women to empower themselves by engaging them in viable non- traditional livelihood options. It is committed to breaking patriarchal boundaries and structures so that the women can exercise control over their lives and live a life of dignity. Azad foundation wants to do this through transformative capacity building programs around the self and the skills needed for non-traditional livelihoods like professional driving, based on adult learning principles.)

Inequalities in South Asia: Ways to address

Introduction

The presence of poverty, insecurity and inequalities continues to be a scandal in the world where knowledge and resources exist to ensure healthy and dignified lives for all. While a few consume in an extremely unsustainable manner and accumulate soaring wealth, millions of others have no access to adequate food, safe drinking water, proper sanitation, housing, health, education and justice. Women, children and socially excluded people still comprise the vast majority of people living in poverty and face harsh discrimination - and often violence - on a daily basis. Furthermore, today, marginalisation is seen everywhere – from the poorest to the richest countries. Millions of people across the globe are suffering from discrimination, hunger, sickness, illiteracy, oppression and other forms of poverty due to a system of unsustainable development which is leading to inequalities, exclusion, climate change and further exclusion of socially and economically marginalized communities.

Given the context of stark inequalities in the world today, it is necessary to fight it with a focus on gender inequalities and socially excluded people including women, people with disabilities (PWDs), indigenous communities, *Dalits* (group of people discriminated based on descent and work), and other marginalised groups.

Inequality in South Asia

From the Gini index, which is based on consumption expenditures per capita, inequality in South Asia¹ is not alarming. However, other sources suggest existence of high levels of inequalities from extravagant wealth at one end to lack of access to the basic services at the other. South Asia performs poorly in terms of opportunity. Access to basic services is partial and has a complex interrelation with birth, gender, and geographical locations.

Agenda 2030 and Inequalities

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted by the heads of states of 193 countries in the UN General Assembly on 25th September 2015, now tipped as ‘Agenda 2030’ go far beyond the MDGs

¹ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/20395>

and offer the hope of a future where people live in harmony on a safe and sustainable planet. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs include goals on inequalities, peace, decent work, justice and transparency while also vowing to end violence against women and children, human trafficking and dangerous climate change. They are based on an understanding that issues of poverty, inequality, unsustainable consumption pattern, environmental degradation, corruption and increasing conflicts are all inter-linked.

The Agenda 2030 offers civil society a new framework to initiate a critical shift away from the current unsustainable development model, which has led to growing inequalities. But there is a lot of rhetoric. Only the proper implementation of Agenda 2030 will fulfil its slogan of ‘leaving no one behind’!

The following SDGs deal with various forms of inequality

- 1) Goal 10, the most prominent goal on inequality, for reducing inequality within and among the countries.
- 2) Goals 1 and 2 focus on poverty and hunger respectively.
- 3) Goals 3 and 4 address equitable and inclusive access to health services and quality education.
- 4) Goal 5 deals with gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.
- 5) Goals 6 and 7 emphasize access to water and energy for all.
- 6) Goal 16 provides for the institutional environment and framework under which the SDGs will address inequalities. These are peaceful and inclusive societies, accountable and inclusive institutions and access to justice for all.

It is important to mention that the Agenda 2030 are far from perfect and it is only one framework to address inequality and poverty.

Inequalities in various countries in South Asia

Oxfam has come up with a Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index². As per its 2018 report the 8 south Asian countries have the following global ranking.

² <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620316/tb-cri-index-statistical-audit-170717-en.pdf;%20jsessionid=9AF96002DB4C0030537F4C15F4A6874E?sequence=4>

S. N.	Country	CRI
1	Nepal	139
2	India	147
3	Sri Lanka	102
4	Pakistan	137
5	Bangladesh	148
6	Bhutan	152
7	Afghanistan	127
8	Maldives	68

Six out of the eight South Asia countries are in the bottom 30 of these 157 countries in terms of the CRI index. This is a grim situation as nearly one out of every four people in the world live in South Asia and the struggle against poverty is very acute in this region.

India fares very badly, ranking 147th out of 157 countries on its commitment to reducing inequality – a very worrying situation given that the country is home to 1.3 billion people, many of whom live in extreme poverty. Oxfam has calculated that if India were to reduce inequality by a third, more than 170 million people would no longer be poor. Government spending on health, education and social protection is woefully low and often subsidizes the private sector. Civil society has consistently campaigned for increased spending. The tax structure looks reasonably progressive on paper, but in practice much of the progressive taxation, like that on the incomes of the richest, is not collected. On labour rights and respect for women in the workplace India also fares poorly, reflecting the fact that the majority of the labour force is employed in the agricultural and informal sectors, which lack union organization and enforcement of gender rights.

Pakistan and India could be spending far more on health, education and social protection than they are doing. Interestingly, in these countries there has been a rapid rise in private education in the absence of good state provision, which in turn further entrenches both economic and gender inequality.

The financial district of Dhaka in Bangladesh has witnessed sound economic growth. However almost 40 million people in Bangladesh still live below the national poverty line. There is often great variation in entitlement to minimum

wages in Bangladesh. The garment workers are entitled to 5,300 takas (\$68) a month, the lowest minimum wage of all garment workers globally and well below the international poverty line. And worse, workers in other sectors in the country are entitled to only 1,500 takas (\$19) a month.

Tax compliance is a significant issue, as the number of income tax payers in countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan and others is very low. Instead of broadening their tax bases by enforcing taxation on companies and individuals, countries tend to rely upon VAT and other indirect taxes.

Country specific discussion

Inequalities in India: the Dalits, Tribals and Muslims³

In India, some communities like the Dalits, Tribals, Muslims, children, persons with disabilities, and women face different forms of inequalities and discrimination. Some of the communities' status is discussed below.

The Dalits: Based on the Varna System, Caste is a concept indigenous to India. There are estimated to be 170-200 million Dalits (which literally meaning broken people, previously this group was known as the untouchables), constituting 17% of the India's population at the bottom of the caste system. The caste system continues to determine political, social and economic life of the people in Hindu societies. Dalits are typically considered low and impure based on their birth and traditional occupation, thus they face multiple forms of discrimination, violence, and exclusion from the rest of society. One out of every six Indians frequently faces discrimination and violence and is denied of basic human rights and dignity for being 'Dalit'. Caste-based social systems extend beyond India and more than 260 million people worldwide suffer from this 'hidden apartheid' of segregation, exclusion, and discrimination (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

The Tribals: The tribal population in India is 8.6 percent of the population in 2011 census. These are very vulnerable groups. A stark marker of tribal deprivation is high child mortality. An average Indian child has a 25% lower likelihood of dying under the age of five compared to an Adivasi child. Under-five mortality rates among tribal children remain high (at about 96 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2005 compared with 74 among all children). In

³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11145Social%20exclusion%20and%20Inequality-Study%20by%20GCAP%20India%20.pdf>

rural areas, where the majority of Adivasi children live, they made up about 11% of all births but 23% of all deaths in the five years (National Family Health Survey, 2005-06).

Access to healthcare is poorer among indigenous people. For instance, only 56% of ST children were taken to a health facility for treatment of fever and cough in 2005 compared with 67% of non-ST children. Mothers of indigenous children are also less likely to obtain antenatal or prenatal care from doctors or have an institutional delivery. Generally, absenteeism of doctors is a perpetual problem in rural and particularly areas with an indigenous population. In fact, in most states in India, Scheduled Tribes live in physically isolated hamlets, in remote regions and districts and in hilly and forested areas with poorly staffed health centres. Limited coverage of all-weather roads makes transportation in emergencies virtually impossible, even if health centres were attended by medical personnel.

These groups stay in the terrain full of forest and mineral. The multinational companies and the government owned enterprises have deceptively occupied their lands and natural resources but the groups have hardly got any benefits. The people who oppose such proposal of displacement from their land due to large scale development projects face the wrath of the state and the company and are criminalized in process.

The Muslims: In India, Muslims form the largest religious minority group, constituting 14.2% of the total population (Census, 2011). Nationally, the proportion of Muslims to the total population rose from 13.4 % in 2001 to 14.2% in 2011 to the total population. The Indian state of Assam recorded the highest proportional increase of Muslims amongst the state's inhabitants, it rose from 30.9% in 2001 to 34.2% in 2011. Several studies have highlighted out various expressions and incidents of denial of rights, marginalization and social exclusion of Muslims across India.

There are disproportionately large numbers of Muslims living in poverty. The Sachar Committee report calculates that almost one-third (31%) of the Indian Muslims are living below poverty line. Similarly, the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) notes that three out of every ten urban Muslims are poor (that is, living on a monthly income of Rs.550 and less). And, one in five rural Muslims are below poverty line with an average monthly income of Rs.338.

Recommendations⁴

Oxfam India is calling upon the Indian Government to act on growing inequality and create an equal India. Following are the recommendations:

- Promote inclusive growth by ensuring that the income of the bottom 40% of the population grows faster than of the top 10% so that the gap between the two begins to close. This can be done by encouraging labour-intensive sectors that will create more jobs; investing in agriculture; and effectively implementing the social protection schemes that exist.
- Seal the leaking wealth bucket by taking stringent measures against tax evasion and avoidance; taxing the super-rich by re-introducing inheritance tax, increasing wealth tax, reducing and eventually do away with corporate tax breaks; creating a more equal opportunity country by increasing public expenditure on health and education.
- Bring data transparency, produce and make available high quality data on income and wealth. Regularly monitor the measures the government takes to tackle the issue of rising inequality.

Exclusion and Inequality in Afghanistan⁵:

Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world with nearly 40 percent of the population living below the poverty line. Government institutions are weak and not able to deliver basic services.⁶ Violence and insecurity pose increasing risks to the welfare of Afghan households⁷.

Social exclusion is one of the newest concepts in Afghanistan, and is becoming increasingly prevalent both in academic literature supporting development analysis and in emerging policy and strategy notes of development agencies. A report by DFID proposed following conceptual framework for viewing social exclusion in Afghanistan based on the primary source of the exclusion. They are, a. Social Identity: includes race, ethnicity, religion, sect, gender and age; b. Social Location: includes remote areas, stigmatized areas and war or conflict areas; c. Social Status: includes health (disability and disease),

⁴ <https://www.oxfamindia.org/blog/15-shocking-facts-about-inequality-india>

⁵ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11149StudyonInequalities.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/countries/afghanistan>

⁷ <http://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/three-threats-afghanistan-s-future-rising-poverty-insecurity-sluggish-growth>

migrant status (refugee or IDP), occupation and educational level.

Inequalities are closely associated with exclusion in Afghanistan. For women and girls, the determinants of exclusion are patriarchal social structures; fundamentalist religious and cultural interpretations and ideals; culturally and historically shaped beliefs and attitudes about gender roles; women as vulnerable/corruptible bearers of culture and “honour”; lack of education; lack of human rights awareness; lack of protections from the state; lack of access to justice.

Participation of women in decision making and in other spheres of society remains very limited. Violence against women is still a major challenge in Afghanistan. Women continue to be brutally punished by different forms of violence. Access to health facilities is poor and access to quality education cause a high number of girls to drop out of schools⁸.

For the children and young people, determinants of exclusion are dependency on adults, deeply entrenched beliefs regarding children’s abilities and rights as citizens resulting in exclusion from decision making processes at all levels, vulnerability to domestic and school based violence, lack of protection from the state and access to systems of justice.

The religious minorities face forms of exclusion, which is the legacy of conflicts, political manipulation, and sectarian discrimination. Various minority ethnic groups also face inequalities and exclusion.

The residents of insecure areas are vulnerable to insurgent recruitment; and exposed to violence, death, displacement, lack of services, and general insecurity which generates exclusion and inequalities.

Ways to address them

To address poverty and inequality, it is important to achieve improvements in security and in overall economic performance, which are difficult under current conditions⁹.

Focusing on education of the poor children, skills development programmes for adults are important ways to address poverty and inequalities in long term

⁸ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/countries/afghanistan>

⁹ <http://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/three-threats-afghanistan-s-future-rising-poverty-insecurity-sluggish-growth>

through better skills and income¹⁰. Designing and implementation of sound macroeconomic policies is an area that needs urgent attention. To widen the social security base is the need of time. Formalization of businesses should further be strengthened in order to widen the tax base. Steps should be taken to stop illegal flow of funds within and outside the country. Small and microfinance programmes in the country have been helpful for the poor for small-scale entrepreneurship with less interest rate. So, this should be encouraged.

Inequalities in Pakistan

Progress has been made across in Pakistan, but simultaneously inequality has also risen. In Pakistan the 18 million richest people's total consumption is 1.5 times more than the poorest 72 million people¹¹. Inequality has been witnessed across race, gender, geography and economy.

The number of out-of-school children in Pakistan is the 2nd highest in the world. Pakistan scores last in women participation in the work force among SAARC nations. Country spends a meager two per cent of GDP on education. Women own less than 3 per cent of the land. "Pervasive gender inequality manifested in different dimensions in Pakistan, which means that women's work is devalued and they end up working in low-paid jobs and bear the undue burden of unpaid care work. Around 87 per cent of female employees in Pakistan earned less than minimum wage." (Mohammad Qazilbash, OXFAM Country Director in 2018). One of the major reasons for rising disparity in Pakistan is lower wages of workers and infringement of labour rights.

Ways to address

Inequality in Pakistan is structural. Government needs to regularize, restructure and redesign its economy and the way business is run. Policies and actions to reduce gender inequality is the need of the hour. Ending inequality demands increase in spending on education to at least 4 percent of GDP.

Factors like the erosion of workers' rights and the excessive influence of big business over government policy-making should be addressed.

¹⁰ http://outlookafghanistan.net/topics.php?post_id=16471

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1178703>

Government should curb tax avoidance, and increase spending on public services such as healthcare and education.

Inequality in Nepal¹²

More than 8.1 million Nepalese live in poverty. Women and girls suffer more because many are engaged in unpaid care and household work. More than one-third of Nepal's children under five years are stunted, and 10% suffer wasting due to acute malnutrition.

Wealth of richest 10% of Nepalese is more than three times that of the poorest 40%. Land inequality is the oldest and most fundamental type of wealth inequality.

Patriarchal norms are deep-rooted and reinforced by laws and institutions that are skewed against women and girls. Child marriage is norm and it damages the prosperity of women. Progressive laws are also often poorly implemented or ignored in practice.

Crony capitalism has flourished in Nepal under regressive monetary and fiscal policies. There has been a significant accumulation of trade-based wealth and a highly corrupt bureaucratic apparatus has facilitated the nexus between political elites and unethical businesses.

Without a concerted effort to tackle inequality and pursue policies that benefit the many rather than the richest few, the poorest and most marginalized Nepalese will continue to be excluded from progress.

Ways to address

The government should prioritize and implement progressive land reform, to achieve a more equitable distribution of land in favour of the landless and poor farmers; reform the tax system by implementing more progressive taxation, reducing exemptions, and ensuring tax avoidance, evasion and illicit flows; prioritize investment in inequality-busting sectors like education, health and social protection.

It should stop commercialization and privatization in favour of free universal health and education systems and a basic social protection floor for everyone. It should implement minimum wages and protections for all workers,

¹² *FIGHTING INEQUALITY IN NEPAL: The road to prosperity* BY OXFAM, SAAPE AND HAMI

including in the informal sector and take action to end the exploitation of women, children and minorities in all forms.

Conclusion

Due to space constraint, we could not discuss the situation of other countries. However, there are similarities of causes of inequalities in all the South Asian countries. There are structural reasons for rising inequality across the region particularly after the advent of neo-liberal era. The onslaught of privatization has shrunk the role of the state on social sectors. The economic system itself has generated more wealth for the rich at the cost of poor. To address inequality in the region, the state should reassert itself to give social security and invest in human development. Patriarchal norms and practices have to be fought through progressive legislations and awareness. Tax reforms ought to be adopted to generate more resources and fund the welfare schemes. Particularly vulnerable groups ought to be taken proper care by the state. Mechanisms ought to be put in place for redistribution of resources. Agenda 2030 must be implemented in letter and spirit to get to this end.

(This paper is written by Pradeep Baisakh associated with Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP). GCAP is a global campaign which supports people in their struggles for justice and brings individuals and organisations together to challenge the institutions and processes that perpetuate poverty and inequalities. Together, we defend and promote human rights, gender justice, social justice, climate justice and the security needed for the dignity and peace of all.)

Progress and Challenges of SDG 13

Climate Action in Bangladesh

Prologue

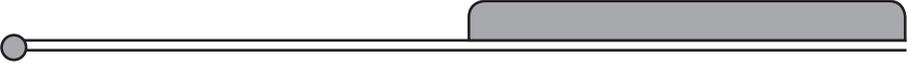
Bangladesh, the largest delta in the world, is highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change and disaster. The negative impacts of climate change are threatening the livelihoods and existence of around 160 million people in the country particularly the poor women. Bangladesh is often cited as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change threats. The country was ranked sixth among the world's top 10 countries most affected by extreme weather events in the last 20 years, according to the Global Climate Risk Index by think-tank German Watch¹. Except volcanic eruption, all other common hazards are found here with variation in magnitude. Many of them are repetitive and are concentrated in particular areas. Vulnerability to disaster risk and the climate change is related to different level of immediate casualty, loss and damage, various biophysical factors, but also to social, cultural, and economic ones. Socio-economic aspects that affect vulnerability in Bangladesh include the country's dependence on infrastructure, agriculture and other resource-dependent sectors, its economic growth and poverty (which forms a vicious cycle with disaster and climate change effects), health, gender, population density and migration etc.

Inter-linkage between Climate Change and Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh

It is increasingly evident in Bangladesh that climate change and sustainable development agendas are no longer parallel streams of actions. They are both fundamental for building a low-carbon and climate-resilient sustainable future. As such, international and regional cooperation is essential to connect the two agendas in order to accelerate a pro-poor and pro-people holistic development in the country.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, UN member states pledged to ensure “no one will be left behind” and to “endeavour to reach the furthest behind first”. However, the economic effects of climate change also contribute to a potential increase in poverty in Bangladesh. Some of the most serious

¹ *Global Climate Risk Index by think-tank Germanwatch 2017*



effects of climate change have already concentrated in areas that also have the highest concentrations of poor people. The failure of achieving SDG 13 climate action related targets will particularly undermine the least developed countries' (LDCs) ability to achieve the SDGs. Achieving many of the SDGs hinges on combating climate change. Likewise, Paris Agreement has set the stage to address climatic challenges through various adaptation and mitigation efforts paving way for realizing SDGs. Encouraging an integrated approach when implementing the SDGs, Paris Agreement, and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction can create opportunities for affirmative synergies at national level.

Brief Assessment of Target-wise Progress under SDG 13

Target 13.1: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries

Bangladesh is exposed to severe climatic and environmental hazards like floods, river erosion, cyclones, droughts, tornadoes, cold waves, etc. Furthermore, climate change has substantially increased the frequency and intensity of existing climatic events. Impacts of climate change are visible in Bangladesh in the form of temperature extremes, erratic rainfalls, tropical cyclone and increased number of intensified floods, droughts, and prevalence of rough weather in the Bay. (GED 2015).

Over the years, the country has improved its disaster response mechanism significantly reducing death tolls during disasters. Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) has prepared Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies of Bangladesh (2016-2020) in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and other international protocol ratified by the Government of Bangladesh². Bangladesh government also developed the National Disaster Management Plan 2016-2020. The Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD) is being revised by coordinating relevant ministries.

² Sustainable Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report 2018 by General Economic Division (GED), Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, Bangladesh Government published with the support of UNDP Bangladesh, December 2018.

Target 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning

Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP)

BCCSAP (2009-2018) was the key climate change national plan and basis for climate investment in Bangladesh which is currently being revised at national level to make it consistent with the adoption of SDGs, Paris Agreement and emerging challenges. BCCSAP provides an overall framework for action, recognizing the need for adaptation and highlighting the GoB's willingness to follow a low carbon pathway towards achieving development. BCCSAP is a strategy/plan and a basic reference for aligning investments with climate change objectives. Six thematic areas with 44 programs (and 145 actions) have been identified within these thematic areas. The thematic areas are (1) food security, social protection and health; (2) comprehensive disaster management; (3) infrastructure; (4) research and knowledge management; (5) mitigation and low carbon development; and (6) capacity building and institutional strengthening.

A roadmap for developing the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) was prepared in 2015, supported by the Norwegian Government. Institutional arrangements have been set up for the NAP process.

Climate Change and Gender Action Plan (CCGAP)

The underlying principle of the CCGAP (2013) is the transformative nature of gender interventions. CCGAP also has the potential to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of climate change and socio-economic development responses.

The Government of Bangladesh has prepared and enacted the Climate Change Trust Act 2010 to redress the adverse impacts of climate change. Bangladesh was the first government to set up a trust fund namely 'Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund' to create national resource for climate change investments with the aim to support implementation of the BCCSAP.

In the implementation of these policies and strategies, various institutions are involved. The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is the focal ministry for climate change and led the development of the NAPA and BCCSAP. Although, effectiveness of the institutions

involved in climate change adaptation is often hampered by limited capacity (e.g. in MoEFCC), lack of coordination, and limited participation of small farmers, marginalised populations, women’s group and fishers in planning and decision making process.

Target 13.3: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning

Priorities for climate change adaptation and mitigation are also elaborated in a number of sector policies and plans, including the Coastal Zone Policy, the National Water Management Plan, the National Water Act, the Master Plan for Agricultural Development in the Southern Region of Bangladesh, the National Agricultural Policy, and the Food Policy’s Plan of Action. In most of these, the focus is on adaptation.

Bangladesh’s mitigation contribution covers the power, transport and industry sectors. Under a ‘business-as-usual’(BAU) scenario, GHG emissions in Bangladesh in these sectors are expected to represent 69% of total emissions by 2030³. The government has recently approved the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Bangladesh aimed at tracking the implementation progress of SDGs in the country.

In line with the Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), all countries are also supposed to ensure awareness, education and capacity building to tackle climate change with the developed countries also promising to support these efforts in the developing countries. Bangladesh has successfully been able to create an increased awareness level on climate change in many areas like early warning mechanism and inclusion of climate risk areas into the national curriculum at primary and secondary school level. However, a localisation approach is required toward strengthening climate and disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk priority linking it to the key targets of SDG’s, Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework of Action on DRR and translating those through national level risk reduction and adaptation mechanism.

³ Sustainable Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report 2018 by General Economic Division (GED), Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, Bangladesh Government published with the support of UNDP Bangladesh, December 2018.

Key Challenges

Under the current disaster scenario and climatic trends, the challenges in addressing the root causes of vulnerabilities as well as risk reduction in Bangladesh remain formidable. The major vulnerabilities and obstacles are inseparable from the very issues confronting the development such as the population question, poverty, rapid urbanization, gaps in access to basic services and many others. Towards building climate resilience, investing in creating strong institutional mechanism as well as enabling environment for enforcement of the priorities are crucial. Focus should also be given for technical innovation, creating of adequate contingency fund, and visionary leadership.

Significant relevant knowledge and technical capacities exist in the climate change and disaster as well as SDG sectors in Bangladesh, along with necessary international strategies and frameworks for action. Yet these assets and sector have not been brought together efficiently in a coherent and effective way, with the sustained participation of all fields of expertise under a shared responsibility. We need to act on that to achieve systematic national and global reduction of the risks. However, based on the review of past successes and failures in reducing disaster risks, and the Hyogo Framework for Action, steps should be taken to identify the learning and those should be context specific to find out where and to what extent risk-reducing adaptation measures are required. Besides, a horizontal learning and sharing platform with a strong base of knowledge management is necessary to promote use of knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels. Specific steps should include collating and disseminating good practices, and undertaking public information programmes on local initiative.

The government alone cannot implement the SDGs nor the Paris Agreement and it is very important to engage civil society as well as robust and accountable private sector.

Developing countries like Bangladesh have limited resources in terms of institutional capacity, knowledge, technical skills and most importantly finance. Increasing South-South cooperation will help countries learn from other countries' experiences and provide a platform for knowledge sharing

and capacity building⁴.

Way Forward

South Asia is one of the most vulnerable regions impacted by climate change. Almost half of its population live in areas that are projected to become hotspots by 2050 under carbon-intensive scenario. In the last 20 years, Bangladesh has emerged as a successful nation in combating climate change and disaster risk and provided an enabling environment on risk reduction to promote and motivate those outside of the sector to see resilience building as a shared responsibility. Now time has come to justify the paradigm shift from conventional response and relief practice to a more comprehensive risk reduction approach. Under the existing international cooperation framework, the government should promote the mutually benefitting regional and international cooperation of all actors and agencies globally.

Furthermore, we need to flag for a just and gender-responsive climate framework and eco-system based approach. The approach can have different forms but fundamentally it must respect and promote human rights and gender equality; ensure sustainable development and environmental integrity; require fair, equitable, ambitious and binding mitigation commitments in line with the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) for all including indigenous peoples rights and Dalit issues in the country as well as in this region. Community-based adaptation actions will not be sustainable if local communities are not engaged and are not technically and financially able to implement them. This needs to be supplemented with capacity building of the local community, whenever there is a gap in the understanding of climate change impacts and adaptation actions. Above all, the government shall come forward to take the lead to ensure that the SDGs paradigm should be inclusive and invest more on institutional capacity building which will bring benefits to, and will alleviate the plights of the vulnerable people who are most affected by the disasters and effects of climate change.

⁴ Policy Brief “Climate and Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh: Two Strands of the Same Rope” By Shababa Haque, Naznin Nasir, Alina Schulenberg and Saleemul Huq, May 2007, ICCCAD.

(This paper is jointly written by Shaila Shahid, Climate Change, DRR & Gender, International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), Bangladesh, and Md. Zakir Hossain, Krisoker Sor (Farmers' Voice), Bangladesh. ICCCAD is one of the leading research and capacity building organizations working on climate change and development in Bangladesh. ICCCAD's aim is to develop a world-class institution that is closely related to local experience, knowledge and research in one of the countries that is most affected by climate change. Krisoker Sor (Farmers' Voice) is a tiny Farmers' Research Institute evolved from the local community itself through a non-conventional way of institutional formation and development. Since started dreaming and conceptualizing the Institution; Krisoker Sor is working to developing a Holistic Way of living by using research to foster local development.)

An Introspection on Development Cooperation and Partnership (Goal 17) for Realizing SDGs

The global community continues to struggle with finding innovative and effective ways to realize the sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015. Governments and larger international community, viz, UN agencies, developed and developing countries, large corporate bodies embark on devising innovative financing solutions. But civil societies have still remained skeptical based on the persisting and emerging realities in development cooperation and partnerships. Goal 17 of SDGs stresses that SDGs can only be realized with a strong commitment to global partnership and cooperation, and envisaged realization through increased development cooperation relying on Official Development Assistances (ODA), by enhancing the multi-stakeholder partnership for financing, and through South-South Cooperation and Triangular cooperation as financing means.

Development Cooperation and ODA

The Target 17.2 of SDG 17 outlines developed countries should fulfill their ODA commitments to by delivering 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) for ODA to developing countries and at least 0.20 percent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries (LDCs). The target maintains that ODA will remain at the core of financing source to deliver long-term sustainable development. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) emphasized that traditional ODA cannot fulfill SDGs and the trillions in private sector need be leveraged, with incentives for private sector to achieve SDGs.

The focus on ODA as major source of financing for SDGs needs serious introspection. The general pattern with ODA is marked by declining flow and other challenges in its reporting, affecting the quantity and quality of ODA. Donors failed to fulfill their commitments of 0.7 percent of GNI. In 2017, ODA stands at USD 146.6 billion, a decrease of 0.6 percent from 2016 in real terms and only five OECD-DAC countries met the UN target of providing ODA to the tune of 0.7percent of their GNI. The Finance Act for 2015 of France provides a decrease of 2.78 percent of ODA allocation and a further decrease of 7.31 percent until 2017, which is seven years of continuous decline of ODA of France. Canada recorded significant fall in its aid from US\$ 5.65 billion in 2013 to US\$ 4.91 billion. The counting

of financing for providing in country asylum to refugees as ODA, such as Australia's diversion of US \$340 million of the aid budget towards onshore asylum seeker processing including detaining asylum seekers in difficult conditions affects the quality of ODA¹. Similarly, Denmark registered significant increase by counting refugee cost as ODA, up to 5.5 percent of total ODA in 2013. The failure to fulfill ODA commitments will significantly affect the realization of SDGs. There should be separate commitments and allocation for asylum seekers and also for climate finance.

Donor countries continue to prioritize their economic and political interest in provision of aid and is best revealed with the changing ODA policies in countries like Australia, Canada, New Zealand that merged their aid agencies such as Australian Aid (AusAID), Canadian International Cooperation Agency (CIDA) with their Foreign Ministries as Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to serve the economic and political interest of the respective countries. Japan also revised its ODA charter in 2014 to align its aid policy closely with its national security policy and its own commercial interests and explicitly to encourage Japanese private sector². Australia's New Development Policy and Performance Management Framework for Aid adopted in June 2014 interpret aid as to further the country's commercial and national interest ahead of poverty reduction or SDG goals. Earlier, AusAID launched its AUS \$127 million Australian Mining for Development Initiative in October 2011, which led to official promotion of ODA for sustainable mining in developing countries. The substantial use of public money to leverage private sector, such as Australian mining companies in Papua New Guinea and other parts of Africa only led to the increased concentration of economic wealth in corporations, while also fostering conflicts³. Today, countries like Canada, Australia and France continue to promote mining and extractive industries in the pretext of sustainable development, violating indigenous peoples' rights, such as in the Philippines.

¹ "Australia: Economic Growth as the Panacea for Poverty", T. Narayanasamy and Claire Parfitt, *The Reality of AID Global Report 2014*

² "Japan's ongoing revision of the ODA Charter", Akio Takanayagi, *Reality of AID Global Report, 2014*

³ "ADB, JICA Establish \$1.5 Billion Fund to Invest in Private Infrastructure", ADB News Release | 30 March 2016

<https://www.adb.org/news/adb-jica-establish-15-billion-fund-invest-private-infrastructure>

The ODA is increasingly utilized to advance the economic and political strategic interest of countries in the region⁴. Japan, one of the major donors in Asia, is using its ODA to counter Chinese influence in South and South East Asia, as evidenced by the increased investment in infrastructure, energy and climate projects in Burma, Bangladesh, India etc causing much tensions⁵. Indeed, the Karen Peace Support Network, a network of nearly 30 ethnic Karen organizations in Burma/Myanmar, denounced JICA for their blueprint for infrastructure development such as roads and industrial estates in the war-torn southeast as premature and warned it will exacerbate conflict in the region and facilitate the exploitation of resources from Karen areas⁶. In Bangladesh and North East India, Japan teamed up with ADB and JICA to finance key infrastructure that would deter Chinese investment under its Belt and Road Initiative, causing much tension. The use of aid to further the political and commercial interest of donor countries will consolidate the economic power of the donor countries while relegating recipient countries and communities into impoverishment. For long, the provision of aid by donors has been problematic due to its failure to realize the real objectives of eradicating poverty, but rather for aggravating poverty and inequality.

Development Cooperation, Partnerships and Concerns

Another concern is the emphasis on multi-stakeholder partnership and focus on partnership with the private sector. Target 17.6 of SDG17 outlined to enhance Global Partnership for Sustainable Development with multi-stakeholder partnerships. Target 17.7 further insisted on promoting effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships for an effective partnership. On partnerships, OECD insisted to implement the SDGs and targets; but they focus again on governments, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and civil society to work together and unlock required financial resources and share technologies etc. Together with UNDP, OECD supports the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC),

⁴“Japan’s Investments in India Unveil Growing Economic Partnership”, By Melissa, *India Briefing*, September 19, 2017

⁵“Japan & Bangladesh agree to help realize early return of Rohingya refugees”, *The Japan Times*, May 15, 2018

⁶ *Myanmar: Karen groups say JICA’s blueprint for development “premature & flawed, potentially exacerbating conflict”*

“Critique of Japan International Cooperation Agency’s Blueprint for Development in South-Eastern Burma(Myanmar) Full Report (English)”, September 2014, *Karen Peace Support Network*

which brings different stakeholders to discuss development issues. However, it is critical to assess the goals, the targets and the gaps in relation to the nature and impacts of ‘partnership’. GPEDC is currently working on Private Sector Engagement Policy expected to be finalized by July 2019, which again heavily emphasizes private sector financing to realize SDGs. There are many concerns expressed with the overt focus on private sector role in promoting sustainable development.

OECD pursued innovative financing measures such as Blended Finance in ongoing reforms of OECD DAC to guarantee risk for private sector to mobilize private finance, viz pension and insurance fund etc to finance SDGs⁷ even though a clear guideline for social, environment and human rights safeguard is absent. There is a focus to create an enabling environment for financing by private sector with policy reform, subsidies, safeguards of their engagement, and provide incentives, guarantees and returns. There’s impetus to use ODA to leverage private investments or public-private partnerships especially in infrastructure, energy and climate finance projects⁸. A primary modality for development cooperation and subsequent partnerships with private sector for development has been through Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) of the donor countries and multilateral financial institutions, such as World Bank’s International Finance Corporation. In Asia, ADB has entered into an agreement with the JICA in March 2016 to establish a new fund to support private infrastructure investments across Asia and the Pacific.

Leveraging private sector through ODA by major donors like Japan, Australia and Canada in extractive industries, energy projects, water and sanitation, agribusiness etc led to severe human rights violations. The extensive road building in India’s North East with ODA financing by JICA, ADB etc led to much violations. In April 2017, the JICA signed an agreement with India Government to provide over 67 billion yen (\$610 million) for Phase I of the North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project. Phase 1 will see the enhancement of National Highway 54 and National Highway 51 in Mizoram and Meghalaya⁹. The road building will support the construction

⁷“OECD and the Sustainable Development Goals: Delivering on universal goals and targets”, OECD Office Website <http://www.oecd.org/dac/sustainable-development-goals.htm>

⁸“Official development assistance once more under fire from critics”, Gilles Carbonnier, Dossier | Africa: 50 years of independence — Review | Major development policy trends <https://journals.openedition.org/poldev/141>

⁹ JICA to Invest in Improving Transitability by Extending ODA Loan of Approximately INR 2,500 Crore for the North East Road Connectivity Project- Transforming Infrastructure in North East India - JICA Press Release, April 2, 2018

of nearly two hundred mega dams across the Brahmaputra–Barak River system across the north-east region, which will further subject indigenous peoples to impoverishment. ODA financing also leveraged the operation of the Lafarge, the French mining giant in Meghalaya, with much controversy on indigenous rights violations. Japan approved \$1.18 billion to build the coal-fired Matarbari Power Plant in 2015¹⁰. The continued financing of environment damaging projects like Matarbari coal fired power plants and hydroelectric projects in India's north-east that submerged forest and displaced communities cannot be considered sustainable.

The liquefied natural gas project, financed with Australian ODA with a US\$350 million loan in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea has been marred with human rights violations. Local people complained about poor wages and work conditions. Evidence from the construction phase of the PNG LNG project indicates that using ODA for mining governance will not be able to align mining sector profitability with public policy goals for development. Indigenous communities object Korean company POSCO's steel project in Orissa, India due to wide social, environmental impacts and displacement.

New innovative financing proposed for SDGs, such as Blended financing, are marred with community rights violations. The limestone mining operation by Lafarge with financial support from ADB, EIB, IFC, and several other bilateral DFI, the German Development Bank (DEG) in Meghalaya remains a controversial project with social and environment impacts on indigenous communities in Meghalaya. The Lafarge mining involves violation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006¹¹. In Asia Pacific, infrastructure projects in transport, energy are more targeted for public private partnerships (PPP). Exorbitant fees, land grabs, displacement of indigenous peoples marred PPP projects, while also fostering inequality and poverty, thus hindering the realization of SDGs.

Creating enabling environment for private sector in realizing 2030 Agenda will entail deregulation of policies at the cost of community rights. The formulation of the North East Hydrocarbon Vision 2030 in January 2016 will lead to expropriation of land and natural resources by drilling oil and gas from all over North East. Further, the Mining and Minerals (Development

¹⁰“Bangladesh Juggles Chinese, Japanese Interest”, By ASMG Kibria, *The Diplomat*, January 05, 2015
<https://thediplomat.com/2015/01/bangladesh-juggles-chinese-japanese-interest/>

¹¹“Lafarge's India-Bangladesh cement project remains frozen”, Julien Bouissou, *The Guardian*, 20 Aug 2010
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/aug/13/india-bangladesh>

and Regulation) Amendment Bill 2015 has been passed by both houses of parliament of India on 29 November 2015¹². The Draft Forest Policy 2018 already proposed commercialization of forest, much to objections of communities¹³.

The efforts to leverage private sector role in development cooperation and partnerships is associated with increased attacks on human rights defenders and the encroachment of civil society spaces. New laws are formed to prevent human rights organizations received development support for sustainable development, such as the Foreign Contribution and Regulation Act amendment in India in 2010. The pursuance of unsustainable and destructive development processes pushed marginalized communities to the periphery of survival, compelling them to consolidate their struggle for defense of their land, survival sources and for the rights and dignity as peoples. States responded by suppression of communities asserting their rights using security laws, as evidenced across countries in Asia Pacific.

CONCLUSION

Practices on development cooperation and partnerships for SDGs has laid excessive emphasis on private sector role, while sidelining the role of civil societies. In the Development cooperation, most of the donors insisted on supporting their own corporations rather than in developing countries, leading to further consolidation of wealth in donor countries. The billions to trillions narrative for mobilizing resources for SDGs is only rhetoric in poor and fragile countries, where resources are required to leave no one behind. The investment in these countries are more on infrastructures to gain access to extractive resources and market access for limited period of time, that induced conflict and impoverishment. Major DFIs are reluctant to provide guarantee for impactful activities in conflict areas other than extractive, energy or infrastructure projects that can guarantees returns. Many private sectors are reluctant to invest in education due to low returns. With excessive focus on market, the SDG targets will further be missed. Development cooperation highly focuses on privatization and partnerships with private sector impoverishing communities, thus defeating the objectives of SDGs, particularly leaving no one behind. Developed countries should meet their ODA commitments, both quantitative and qualitative.

¹² "Ordinance to facilitate auction of minerals gets green signal from Cabinet", *TheEconomic Times*, Jan 6, 2015

¹³ "PMO Wants to Sidestep Gram Sabha's Consent for Underground Mining" By Ajoy M, *The Wire*, 04 May 2016

States should enforce a strong binding legal framework to regulate the private sector, particularly the multinational corporations and other business activities and ensure their adherence to human rights, accountability standards etc. Small enterprises, as well as community and social enterprises should be supported instead of large corporations. International financial institutions and bilateral donors should ensure formulation and compliance of social, environmental and human rights safeguards for their investment in private sector and in project implementation, in accordance with prevailing development best practice standards. Bilateral donors also need to formulate social, environment and human rights safeguards. A real development cooperation and partnership should be rooted in the recognition and respect of communities' rights and their rightful involvement in all development processes. All forms of repression of civil societies and encroachment of their spaces should be rescinded. Governments should work in partnership with civil society towards meeting SDGs, especially voices of marginalized communities. A true partnership need to be based on mutual respect, instead of an overly focus on commercial impacts. The partnership also needs to uphold development effectiveness principles, respect human rights, foster technologies and financings that benefits the people and nature, ensure accountability of private sector, and align donor country priorities with people's development priorities.

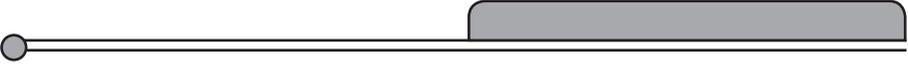
(This paper is written by Jiten Yumnam, Centre for Research and Advocacy (CRA), Manipur, India. CRA Manipur is an indigenous peoples human rights organized based in Manipur in India's North East. The organization focused on promoting sustainable development and human rights of the indigenous peoples of Manipur. The organization undertake research, policy advocacy and campaign to contribute in development decision making towards advancing people's rights and to foster sustainable development based on definition of alternatives and human rights development. The organization promotes self-determined development among the most marginalized and vulnerable communities in Manipur and across India's North East Region.)

Discrimination Based on Work and Descent Including Caste

Introduction

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with its focus *Ensuring No One is Left Behind* in the development planning and implementation has captured and gravitated the world attention. SDGs underscore about people centric approach and principles of accountability, transparency and participation which ensure this developmental methodology as a near perfect model for holistic development. Theoretically, SDGs are especially effective in countries where there exist inequalities with the traditional structures which perpetuate intergenerational inequalities. With all the positive signs through this paradigm shifting global developmental agenda, there are concerns in its reach and impact on the traditionally marginalized and socially excluded communities. SDGs combine various aspects such as and not limited to service delivery, development and environment but the rights-based approach has been not sufficiently addressed. It's been four years since the SDGs are put into place, however, until now it has failed to recognize and include exclusionary variables such as discrimination based on work and descent (DWD) within the comprehensive adopted document as a human rights issue.

Discrimination based on work and descent (DWD) is terminology used to address various forms of discrimination including caste, work and birth-based discrimination. While DWD is often identified with caste-based discrimination and limited to Indian sub-continent, it is a global phenomenon with various communities around the world facing similar kinds of discrimination and exclusion. Some of the major communities who are identified as victims of DWD are Burakumin (Japan), Roma (Europe), Osu (Nigeria and Cameroon), Quilombo (Brazil), Al Mohamasheen (Yemen) and Dalits (Whole of south Asia specially India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Pakistan). The time has come for another paradigm shift *Ensuring No One is Left Behind and Last One First* to assure inclusion of the most marginalized, discriminated and socio-economically excluded population such as DWD, more specifically the Dalits in South Asia who are discriminated based on their caste hierarchy.



Caste discrimination affects an estimated 260 million people worldwide, with almost 220 million from Asia. It involves massive violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Caste systems divide people into unequal and hierarchical social groups. Those at the bottom are considered ‘lesser human beings’, ‘impure’ and ‘polluting’ to other caste groups. They are known to be ‘untouchable’ and subjected to so-called ‘untouchability practices’ in both public and private spheres. ‘Untouchables’ – known in South Asia as Dalits – are often forcibly assigned the dirtiest, menial and hazardous jobs, and many are subjected to forced and bonded labour. Due to exclusion practiced by both state and non-state actors, they have limited access to resources, services and development, keeping most Dalits in severe poverty. Women of these discriminated communities are further excluded both as a result of their class, gender and social standing. Women face the brunt of these practices through violence and atrocities.

They are often de facto excluded from decision making and meaningful participation in public and civil life. Lack of special legislation banning caste discrimination or lack of implementation of legislation, due to dysfunctional systems of justice and caste-bias, have largely left Dalits without protection. Despite policy development and new legislation in some countries, fundamental challenges still remain in all caste-affected countries. The division of a society into castes is a global phenomenon not exclusively practiced within any particular religion or belief system. In South Asia, caste discrimination is traditionally rooted in the Hindu caste system, according to which Dalits are considered ‘outcastes’. However, caste systems and the ensuing discrimination have spread into Christian, Buddhist, Muslim and Sikh communities. They are also found in Africa, other parts of Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific and in Diaspora communities.

The ordering of a society into castes and the ensuing caste discrimination also relates to discrimination based on work and descent. Because caste discrimination involves certain practices prohibited by international human rights instruments, such as the practice of untouchability, the state has a responsibility to protect its citizens against such violations, to punish the perpetrators, and to ensure that they do not take place under its jurisdiction.

Countrywide facts in South Asia about DWD communities

SDG4: Quality Education

In Bangladesh less than one percent of Dalits/DWD have access to higher education, even with quota provided in few universities. Even its most recent 7th five-year plan which talks about Vision 2021 does not specifically focus on Dalits and it is clearly a step back.

India is the only country with specific plan for ensuring reach of educational benefit targeted to Dalit/DWD communities. The plans like reservations in higher education and post matric scholarships ensure proper facilities for reaching the community. However, the implementation of these plans and budget provided often doesn't match the aspirations the laws provides. Number of students is small in the tertiary education because of high school dropouts. So, there is a need to focus on targeted population with availability of disaggregated data on all spheres.

Gender is a major theme that is addressed in Pakistan but other inequities and discrimination to Dalits and DWD are seldom addressed in policies and budgets or through disaggregated data. No province/ area monitors exclusions to capture a range of vulnerabilities. No system exists to monitor education frameworks through a gender and human rights lens.

Nepal has introduced various new policies with the adoption of the new constitution in 2015, including the rights of Dalits. However, lack of focus on the tertiary education has left most Dalits without proper and quality education. Less than 7 percent of Dalit girls have access to secondary education and less than 2 percent of Dalit girls have access to tertiary education.

Plantation population have seen much of the challenge in the Sri Lanka's developmental aspirations. Less than 0.5 percent of the plantation girls access tertiary education and high dropout rate shows that very limited number of them complete their education.

SDG8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

While Bangladesh government has targeted policies for ensuring government employment for the DWD in the 5th level jobs, much of the population still are doing menial and indecent jobs; many are still under the debt bondage and caste-based occupations.



India and Nepal provide reservations for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) at all levels in government jobs but many of the Dalits are often limited to caste-based jobs and debt bondage. Manual scavenging and other indecent jobs still exist within the community even after having laws to abolish it. Child labour within the community is very high compared to other communities because of the social and economic conditions of the community.

In Pakistan and Nepal, a large population is reported to have been involved in child labour and debt bondage among Dalit/DWD. In Nepal, many Dalit girls have been trafficked for sex work and forced labour. In Sri Lanka too plantation population are often paralleled with debt bondage and forced labour, with no major rights provided to them.

SDG10: Inequality

Bangladesh lacks constitutional and legislative recognition for ensuring the protection and promotion of the laws and policies for empowerment of DWD communities. In India, there are constitutional and legal safeguards and thus have proper policies and provisions to eliminate discriminatory laws. However, actions and implementation is a problem, thus state needs to ensure inclusive and participatory implementation of the policies to promote and empower the people from the community.

In Pakistan there is lack of constitutional and legislative recognition for ensuring the protection and promotion of the laws and policies for empowerment of the DWD community. In Sri Lanka, plantation population needs to be protected by ensuring the rights provided by the constitutional benefits.

There was no mention of Dalits and DWD groups in the voluntary national reviews (VNR) process. The countries focused on the ongoing developmental process within to show their progress towards SDGs, however, the adoption of Leave No One Behind agenda has been severely compromised for economic development based on private actors for development. Within the country processes, there has been very little impact for the most marginalized communities for inclusion in SDG process through decision making, planning, implementation and monitoring of the agenda. Moreover, a clear vision document has not been produced by the respective governments towards achievement of SDGs. Recognition of Dalits in India (two states

who gives constitutional recognition for Dalits) has failed to address the issues of inclusion of Dalits in SDGs.

SDG16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Constitution or law doesn't recognize DWD communities in Bangladesh thus there is no targeted attention of non-discriminatory laws towards them. In Pakistan, a lot of atrocities are reported including cases of abductions, however, in absence of constitutional and legislative recognition and safeguarding institutions, DWDs are continued to be the high-risk groups.

In India Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act safeguards DWD/Dalits from targeted violence and atrocities. Respective commissions are put in place to ensure justice for these communities. However, implementation is weak despite the high number of crimes committed against DWD communities, especially women and children. National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) provides disaggregated data of the crimes and atrocities committed against Dalits and other intersectionality.

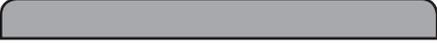
In Nepal, Dalits/DWD now have been constitutionally recognized, and National Dalit Commission deals with the Dalit human rights issues and violations; but Dalits continue to face atrocities and violence. In Sri Lanka, plantation population are seldom able to access services and justice, with issues of atrocities and violence being handled within the plantation management.

SDGs Gaps and progress by CSOs

Caste discrimination can and should be eliminated, but it requires action on many levels. It is not an internal matter, which only a state is obliged to act upon. The international community has a responsibility to act because caste discrimination is a global human rights problem – one of the biggest and most overlooked of our times – which acts against the universal principles of non-discrimination, human dignity and equality.

The United Nations Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination Based on Work and Descent (DWD), 2009 clearly states that “discrimination based on work and descent exacerbates poverty and constraints progress.” It is essential that SDGs put emphasis on the descent (caste) based discrimination if the vision is for any systematic and sizable change (development).

The progress that has been made is, to a large extent, a consequence of the



tireless work of Dalit civil society groups in South Asia. They have also managed to place caste discrimination firmly on the international human rights agenda. UN bodies and EU institutions are paying increasing attention to this issue.

Despite several attempts, the UNSDGs have not acknowledged this categorization and hence it demands for urgent action by all of us concerned at national, regional and most importantly at the level of UN. None of the UNSDG targets or indicators have touched upon the concerns of these severely affected communities worldwide. It has severe impact within the nation states as DWD communities find themselves restricted in addressing their issues at national level due to lack of support internationally or by the countries alike.

Diversity in discriminatory patterns in Asia, Africa, Europe and American continents is the biggest hurdle. It has never been strongly addressed for global collaborative targeted interventions in UN HLPF and UNGA for the inclusion of DWD communities in UNSDGs. There have been a few attempts around the UN SDG events in New York, and Human Rights Council in Geneva by several organizations and networks over the past few years. In Asia, the network with the leaders and activists of communities affected by DWD has emerged and is growing. Roma community leaders in Europe have been in touch on these issues and have participated in joint actions. A dialogue was initiated with comrades and colleagues in Africa and Latin American regions; they have insisted on the existence of discriminatory practices.

Now, there is an urgent need to have an in-depth dialogue on building strong networks and collaboration with leaders from discriminated communities and human rights activists in Africa to take up this issue further to UN HLPF in order for the inclusion of such discriminatory practices as human rights violation in UN SDGs. It is in this commitment a workshop is organized in Dakar, Senegal (9-11 April) 2019. This workshop is a result of an initiative by The Inclusivity Project, Trust Africa and Asia Dalit Rights Forum and support from Amnesty International, Global Call to Action Against Poverty, Free the Slaves, CIVICUS, Save the Children, International Dalit Solidarity Network, Minority Rights Group and Oxfam.

Leave No One Behind and Last One First must be the new agenda for inclusion of the DWD communities through SDG10. The objective is first, to benefit from the progressive goal SDG10 to ensure inclusion and participation of all excluded communities in SDG process. Secondly, SDG 10 is the most intersecting goal with all the other goals including SDG4, SDG8, SDG16 and SDG17, thus the holistic importance of SDG10 should be recognized and same concerns to be raised in UN HLPF.

(This review paper is jointly written by N. Paul Divakar, Rahul Dandge Beena Pallical & Dr. Deepak Nikarhil, who are associated with Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF). ADRF is a platform of Dalits and those working with Dalits in Bangladesh, India, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka committed to the empowerment and emancipation of communities subjected to descent and work including caste-based discrimination and violence (DWDV). ADRF aims at addressing violations of the rights and entitlements of these communities, in particular their women and children, and supports in their noble aspirations and courageous struggles to establish an inclusive society that is marked by equity and equality, dignity, self-governance, justice and freedom.)

Persons with Disabilities and SDGs in South Asia

The 2030 Agenda represents a global compact for transformative development that evolved through an unprecedented process of consultation at national, sub-regional, regional and global levels among stakeholders. It is particularly relevant for South Asia as it integrates economic, social and environmental dimensions of development and leverages the favourable synergies and externalities. The failure of South Asia to exploit these synergies of coordinated development across the three pillars in the past has left the sub-region with vast structural imbalances and vulnerable to external shocks. It has lagged behind other sub-regions in levels of human development and in achieving the MDGs

The inclusion of persons with disabilities in the 2030 Agenda was not accidental, rather it was due to the consistent and dedicated advocacy by persons with disabilities and allies. This advocacy, conducted throughout the negotiation process, solidified the concept that persons with disabilities must be recognised as equal partners in the sustainable development process by Governments, the UN system, civil society and other stakeholders. Within the third year of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation, it is critical that the national, regional and global level policies and actions are integrated and inclusive of disability rights. National-level policies and programming must feed into the global reporting processes that all culminate with the High Level Political Forum. The MDGs did not make any mention of people with disabilities. By contrast, a report by the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda refers to disability in several sections.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have ushered in a new era of global development. Of the 17 SDGs, 5 goals are explicit about disability, and there are no less than 11 references to disability in the SDGs. In order to monitor progress towards achievement of SDGs, the Economic and Social Council of the UN-ECOSOC has planned for an annual review and high-level discussion on selected SDG themes in the form of a High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and a ministerial meeting. The priority goals for review at the 2019 HLPF are Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17.

South Asian countries have made remarkable progress towards achieving the MDGs over the past decade. The unfinished MDG agenda including poverty,

hunger, education and health and provision of other human needs along with gender equality emerge to be the key development challenges for South Asia.

Despite a number of progressive policies that declare equal rights for all, persons with disabilities are still facing discrimination for their basic rights. Persons with disabilities are at a disadvantage regarding most SDGs. Concrete action is needed to make their situations visible in policymaking. We need to recognize the potential of persons with disabilities as contributors to society. The 2030 Agenda, pledging to “leave no one behind,” is an ambitious plan of action of the international community towards a peaceful and prosperous world, where dignity of an individual person and equality among all is applied as the fundamental principle, cutting across the three pillars of the work of the United Nations: development, human rights and peace and security. It is critical to ensure, in this regard, the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and create enabling environments by, for and with persons with disabilities. Historically, women with disabilities (WWDs) have faced the brunt of discrimination in society. There is a gradual change taking place within the development scenario where projects and programmes by national and international development organizations and disabled peoples organizations are including the input and addressing the needs of WWDs.

The sub-region’s success in implementing the SDGs, however, hinges on addressing current capacity gaps and strengthening the means of implementation. Mobilizing diverse sources of finance is imperative to the sub-region in this respect. This includes, but is not limited to, domestic resource mobilization, official development assistance, and harnessing private sector investments and public-private partnerships for sustainable development. Science, technology and innovation agendas in the sub-region must also be aligned with the new sustainable development paradigm and the countries must strengthen their capabilities and capacities in the sector. This requires conducive policies and legal and regulatory frameworks, supported regionally and globally by favourable technology transfer provisions, a global technology facilitation mechanism, and a technology bank for least developed countries. Regional and sub-regional cooperation would play a critical role.



There is a pressing need for Governments, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, academic institutions and the private sector to work as a team to achieve the SDGs. Persons with disabilities, as both beneficiaries and agents of change, can fast track the process towards an inclusive and sustainable development and promote resilient society for all, including in the context of disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action, and urban development.

There is a need to embed the SDGs in local contexts, and communicate their purpose locally to build regional and ultimately national momentum for the SDGs. Tremendous strides have been made in raising awareness of the gender gap. However, there is still a long way to go. Workplaces, governments, healthcare and education systems must be designed to provide a level playing field.

In short, everyone needs to be on board. The vision of achieving these goals needs to be shared collectively. This will enable the process to move forward quickly towards achieving sustainable development and hence a brighter future for all. With increasing lifespans and rising global disability rates, we must factor disability into every development decision we make. For us to come close to achieving the 17 SDGs by 2030, the policies and plans we develop must be based on accurate research and data of population figures.

(This paper is written by Abia Akram and Maira Fakhar, Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP), Pakistan. STEP was conceived and initiated by persons with disabilities themselves in 1997. Being a cross disability organization STEP is committed to mainstreaming disability in development through empowering individuals and organizations of persons with disabilities as well as sensitizing society about rights based approach. STEP has coined the idea of leadership of persons with disabilities in Pakistan to ensure a just, accessible and inclusive community in which the human rights, citizenship, contribution and potential of people with disabilities are respected and celebrated. Promoting volunteerism, awareness campaigns, leadership training, employment exchange, innovative livelihood opportunities, research and information dissemination are major endeavors of STEP.)

Progress, Prospects and Challenges in Achieving Gender Equality, Empowering Women and Girls in Nepal

Introduction

Achieve gender equality and empower women and girls is a stand-alone as well as ‘mainstreaming’ goal of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (SD) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is both an end and means of achieving goals.

Nepal is one of the countries in the South Asia, who has taken leap in women’s political participation and representation after the Promulgation of the Constitution 2015 for transforming Nepal from unitary system into to the Federal Democratic Republic. In fact, Nepal within Asia has the highest percentage of women in National Parliament. The global movements such as ‘the world we want’ and ‘the future women want’ have had influenced in setting the Agenda 2030 for SD and SDGs. These global movements in which Nepalese women and men are part of were able to influence in the national constitution making process which resulted a progressive constitution in South Asia, where women’s rights including safe motherhood and reproductive health and rights are guaranteed as the fundamental rights.

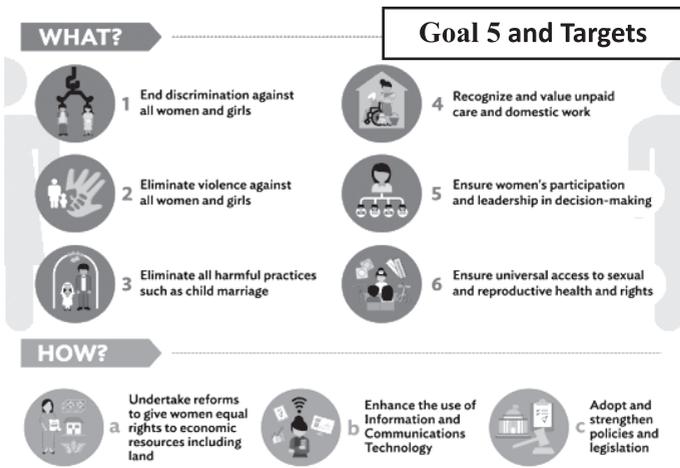
The constitution, as the overarching guide for all is propelling SDGs nationalization and localization in line with principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ and ‘reaching the furthest behind first’ of the 2030 agenda. Committing to the global agenda, the 14th National plan (2016/17-2018/19), and other sectoral plans, policies and their targets were aligned with SDGs and the SDGs implementation roadmap 2016-2030 ¹ was developed based on the baseline -report and the Voluntary National Review Report of SDGs which was presented in the HLPF of 2017.

While developing the roadmap, the National Planning Commission (NPC), the nodal agency of the Government has set additional 21 national indicators (3 in 5.1.1, 2 in 5.2.1, 2 in 5.2.2, 1 in 5.3.1, 2 in 5.4.1, 3 in 5.5.1, 4 in 5.5.2, 2 in 5.6.1, 2 in 5.a.1) with milestones in- line with the global goal 5, its 9 targets and

¹ [file:///C:/Users/Windows%20User/Downloads/Sustainable%20Development%20Goals,%20Status%20and%20Roadmap_%202016-2030%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Windows%20User/Downloads/Sustainable%20Development%20Goals,%20Status%20and%20Roadmap_%202016-2030%20(2).pdf)

17 indicators. The commission also has included a strategy of achieving gender equality, ending all kinds of discrimination and violence in the 15th National plan (Fiscal Year 2019/2020 - 2024 / 25) concept paper of and dedicated a

‘chapter 5 Social Sector’ with sub-sector on women, children, adolescence, senior citizen, people with disability for developing full phase plan, policies and programs. ² Besides, need of SDGs -focus planning adhering to the Social justice and inclusion policy and other policies was stated in the Local level planning guidelines 2018. ³ The NPC has also developed SDGs data portal and with info -graphic presentation ⁴ where province wise data are also available.



Progress in the Implementation of SDG 5

One of the major progresses made in the implementation of SDG 5 is the enactment of various laws by the first Federal Parliament that are required for achieving SDG 5. This progress has been made possible mainly due to the mandatory provision made in the Constitution 2015. The federal parliament needed to pass the bills concerning fundamental rights of the citizens enshrined in the constitution within a year of commencement of the first meeting. The constitution recognizes the rights of women as a fundamental right under Article 38 which, among others, specify that every woman has ‘equal lineage right without gender-based discrimination’. Similarly, the

² https://www.npc.gov.np/images/category/15th_plan_concept_paper.pdf.

³ https://www.npc.gov.np/images/category/local_final.pdf

⁴ <http://sdg.npc.gov.np/data/?request&secid=19,subsecid=73,indid=270,subindid=1974>

Article 18 of the constitution 2015 prohibits discrimination based on sex, guarantees equality before the law, and calls for equal protection under the law. The various acts promulgated in line with these articles along with the provision of making the National Women Commission a constitutional body have somehow prepared grounds for working towards ending all kinds of discrimination against women and girls (5.1).

Similarly, the acts such as Civil Code, Criminal Code, Civil Procedures and Criminal Procedures Acts 2017 passed by the parliament and the four-point resolution motion to end violence against women and girls, an action plan for the implementation of the resolution motion and a formation of high-level mechanism for the monitoring of the implementation by the House of Representative contribute in eliminating violence against women and girls (5.2) and eliminating harmful practices against women and girls (5.3). Likewise, promulgation of the Labor Act 2017, and the Contribution-based Social Security Act 2017 along with the commencement of Contribution-Based Social Security Scheme (the first of its kind in Nepal) and the Prime Minister Employment Program to provide up to 120 days' unemployment allowance per year to jobless women and men aged between 18 and 60 contribute in recognizing the value of unpaid, care, and domestic work (5.4).

The legislative bodies of Nepal- House of Representative, National Assembly, Provincial Assembly, and Village/Rural Municipality Assembly currently comprise of 32.73%, 37.29%, 34.36% and 40.96% women's representatives respectively as a result of the constitutional provision and CSOs movement. This level of women's participation in the legislative bodies, first time in the history of Nepal has prepared strong base for increasing women meaningful participation in decision making in nook and corner of Nepal. This is an achievement to be cherished towards ensuring equal women's participation in decision-making (5.5) by 2030.

Enactment of Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act -2018 guaranteeing the reproductive health services to adolescents and to people with disabilities and requiring all levels of government to ensure that funding is available to fulfill the government's earlier mandate for free abortion care in public health facilities is an another ensuring step towards ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (5.6). Besides, other acts such as the Land Act 2075 in line with the constitutional guarantee of equal

inheritance rights to both sons and daughters, Right to Food Sovereignty Act 2075, Right to housing act 2075, and number of progressive policies such as a) Tax exemptions of 25%-50% (depending on geographical area) available to women during land registration, provided she does not sell the land within three years, b) 35% tax exemption for widows during land registration, c) 50% tax exemption when land is transferred within three generations of daughter or granddaughter, d) obtaining Joint Land Ownership by paying Rs.100 (less than a dollar) etc. help in increasing land ownership of women thereby ensuring women's equal rights to economic resources, including land (i.e.). Implementation of GRB system along with the Presidential Women's Uplift program focused on economic empowerment of mostly those of poor and marginalized communities are some notable means of achieving SDG 5.

Development of ICT policy 2015 inclusive of a special heading "ICT for Youth, Women and Girls' Nepal," and organizing program like "Women in IT: Changing Perspectives -2018", celebrating the 'International Girls In ICT 'day , encouraging women to establish Women in STEM, Nepal like organization etc enhance the use of ICT of women and girls (5.b) in achieving SDG 5. The achievement made towards strengthening policies and legislation for women and girls equality especially the enactments of over 105 acts including those sixteen acts related to fundamental rights is acknowledged highly as a means towards achieving gender equality though these acts are not sufficiently gender -responsive to achieve substantive equality as per the International women's human rights bill (CEDAW) and other Human Rights instruments and Beijing Declaration and Platform of action (BPFA).

Progress towards mainstreaming Gender Equality and Empower Women and Girls (GEEOW/G) in other SDGs

"Progress of SDG on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment depends MORE on how much we can mainstream (in plans, resources, results) in other goals and LESS on how much we achieve on Goal 5 as a standalone goal. Mainstreaming needs in Policies, Strategies, Institutions, Interventions, Plans, Resources, Results- minds, acts and behavior (EVERYWHERE)" says Dr. Bimala Rai Paudyal, former NPC member. However, this is the area where all stakeholders, primarily the government lacking efforts. Not much has happened in mainstreaming i) Equality in human capabilities) ii) Women's Economic Empowerment, iii) Voice, Participation and Leadership

and iv) Safety the four pillars of GEEOW/G in other SDGs apart from adding 289 additional national indicators. There are 54 global indicators spread over goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 16⁵, which make specific reference to these four pillars. Though gender equality is acknowledged conceptually as a mainstream goal as well, there is no mention of mainstreaming GEEOW in the areas as stressed by Paudyal. Moreover, no representation is ensured of women and girls they being the most populated (over 51% population) Major Group of the SD in different committees - High Level Steering Committee, Coordination and Implementation Committee, SDGs Implementation and Monitoring Thematic Committees at the federal level are not yet ensured despite the strong advocacy for inclusivity is made. Similarly, no mention is made to ensure participation diverse groups of women and other groups inclusively in local as well as provincial level for ensuring SDGs in the Local level planning guidance -2018.



Prospects and challenges in Achieving Gender Equality, Empower Women and Girls

Though prospect for mainstreaming GEEOW/G as of today seem bleak, due to the presence of vibrant civil society and media in support of women and girls, legislatures in all three spheres of government -local, provincial and federal, progressive government with majority, various acts etc give prospect s to pursue and persuade the agenda until it achieves as we have more women leaders to change politics, policies and programmes in favor of all people. To console ourselves - we need to consider that the first -three years is for leveling the field legally as not much has happened in the field of implementation apart from enacting acts and producing papers due to traditional mind-

⁵The conceptual framework presented at the Regional consultation on SDGs baseline publication evidence based policy advocacy for gender equality and localization of SDGs in Asia and the Pacific 15-17 November, 2016 Bangkok, Thailand

set. Changing mind-set, social norms and values that are discriminatory to female human being is a herculean task. It requires sustained and systematic efforts at all levels: in families, relationships, households, communities, institutions and society as a whole. Ensuring women's meaningful and respectful participation in decision making demands further empowerment of all women including female parliamentarians/ representatives on one hand. On the other, enlightenment of men is essential simultaneously to change the traditional mind-set and behaviors so as to create conducive and cooperative enabling environment at all levels to for women to function fully. Progress in women's representation in legislative bodies is pre-requisite but not the sufficient condition, the same is to achieve in the Government's executive positions, public service, and judiciary and in the top leadership of political parties and private institutions including CSOs. Much work remains, to achieve gender parity in numbers – and in actual influence - in these institutions and achieve equality in norms and values and relationships.

Roles of Constituency of Women Major Group and Recommendations

Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) as the women's right organization dedicated in achieving gender equality, women's human rights and sustainable development commits to continue its action with a great zeal and conviction. Being a founder of Nepal SDGs Forum and the convener organization of its women and girls constituency and gender justice theme, It has been building the capacity of NGOs, and Gender Focal person and Planning Officers of the government offices, advocating for gender-responsive SDGs implementation at all levels and monitoring the implementation of SDGs 5 at the local level (in some areas) by developing Local women Major Groups' capacity to use community score card with the support of VSO Nepal. It has founded Women Major Group for Sustainable Development in Nepal (WMG-SDN) as a platform of women CSOs and other professionals from private as well as public sectors at the central level and local Women Major Group at the ward-level. It has published Country Report Status of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals in Nepal: Women CSOs Perspectives in 2017, SDGs booklet in Nepali language, Complementary indicators of Goal 5, SDGs App, SDG 5 batches and other IEC materials in Nepali language for awareness building.

6. Recommendations

- Acknowledge women CSOs contribution and ensure their participation in SDGs implementation mechanism at all levels,
- Implement SDGs gender-responsively by all stakeholders including civil society organizations,
- Invest resources on women CSOs to reach the unreached women and girls to ensuring no woman and girl left behind.

(This paper is written by Shanta Laxmi Shrestha, Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) Nepal. BBC Nepal is the Convener of Women Major Group for Sustainable Development in Nepal. BBC Nepal is the national champion for gender equality, empowerment of women and girls. It is the first women NGO established by women, of women for women's human rights, and sustainable development after the Beijing Declaration. BBC has engaged in the 2030 Agenda and SDGs since an advent of post 2015 process nationally and internationally in advocating for standalone goal for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls. BBC, has been engaging fully in Awareness raising, Capacity Building and Network building of Women Civil Society Organizations (WCSOs).)

Introduction of South Asia Senior Citizens' Forum

Population ageing can no longer be ignored. The number and proportion of older persons clearly indicate this as an emerging issue. Today, one in nine persons is aged 60 years or older (11% of the world's population - almost 688 million people). In fact, there have never been so many older people in the world before. And by 2050, there will be many more - more than one in five persons will be aged 60 and over (22 % percent of the world's population or almost 2 billion people).

Population ageing is one of humanity's greatest achievements. It is a success and a triumph. As we celebrate increasing life expectancy, we cannot forget that population ageing is also a challenge. The challenge is to add life to years, not just years to life. Everyone wants a comfortable, enjoyable and meaningful life as they get older. The challenge is to make it a reality for as many older persons as possible.

We are especially concerned with the millions of older poor persons throughout the world, especially women, who are struggling alone to make ends meet, have no access to basic social and health services, and suffer violence and abuse. They need our support. We will never achieve SDGs without addressing the poverty of older persons. It is also time to provide greater support for the countless older women who are caregivers of grandchildren orphaned and affected by AIDS.

We are also very much concerned with such issues as: promoting lifelong health, promoting active ageing, ensuring equal access to basic health and social services, and eliminating discrimination, violence and abuse of the elderly.

At present the region is experiencing a huge demographic transition due to increase in the life expectancy, decline in the mortality and fertility rates including communicable diseases and improvement in the basic health care and living standards. According to UN-DESA at present about 66 percent of world's ageing population live in low and middle income countries, which will rise to 77 percent by 2050 and less developed countries including South Asian region will be the home of these huge ageing population.

These demographic dynamics have huge socio-economic consequences and human rights implications as this population group is not a homogeneous group and their status largely depends on their age, level of poverty, education and social standing which need to be addressed with adequate resources, policy planning and action plan according to Madrid International Plan of Action on ageing.

It is thus important that older persons in the South Asia region soon collectively raise a common voice, to encourage governments for better recognition of realities they face, to better-implement and strengthen ongoing social protection measures through easy access and delivery of basic needs including economic and health security for older men and women. It will also work to strengthen the role of senior citizens in the election process in the South Asia region.

In this context, senior citizens of South Asia organized “South Asia Senior Citizens Workshop” on 11-12 July 2016 in Kathmandu. A regional body called South Asia Senior Citizens’ Forum (SASCF) was established on 12 July 2016, at the concluding session of a two-day workshop on the issues of Senior Citizens in South Asia. Representatives from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Bhutan were present at the workshop. The SASCF was established on the basis of the 36 point Kathmandu Declaration signed at the 18th SAARC Summit in 2014, focusing towards the ‘Special Needs of Elderly Population’ of the region. The forum also reaffirms commitments to the older people’s rights enshrined in the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, and Sustainable Development Goals aiming at leaving no one behind, in order to create an inclusive society for all by 2030.

This forum aims to work closely with the respective governments, NGOs and civil society members of the region in order to improve the wellbeing and protection measures of the ageing population. South Asia Senior Citizens’ Forum has emerged as a unified body to recognize, promote and protect human rights of older people as manifest in the policies, programs and legal instruments for senior citizens in the South Asia region.

This newly established regional body will also maintain a close liaison with the HelpAge International, (the global network which helps older



people claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty so that they can lead dignified, secure, active and healthy lives), Open Ended Working Group at the United Nations, African Union and ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) and other international and regional bodies to exchange views, learn from the experiences of others and act jointly as a pressure group for a UN convention on the rights of older persons.

Major work agenda of the forum in the region include the following:

- 1) Awareness raising and advocacy on the issues of population ageing among policy makers, parliamentarians and people at large.
- 2) Influencing planning process to adopt a ‘life cycle approach’ and budget allocation accordingly so that no one is left behind.
- 3) Creating an age and sex desegregated database of ageing population in the region
- 4) Exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices relating to older people and promote mutual learning and sharing
- 5) Monitoring and watchdog function on the implementation of the ageing policies by the governments in the region and to undertake national and regional periodic reviews for measures initiated and mechanisms evolved as part of the progress achieved in the area of senior citizens’ development
- 6) Advocacy to SAARC Governments for recognition of the principles of providing minimum survival with dignity services in the form of social security, health care, shelter and protection of life and property including protection from violence and abuse.
- 7) Promoting public-private partnership to address population ageing issues in the region.
- 8) Encourage participation of ageing people in the democratic election processes as a strength of the senior citizen community to bargain for their legitimate place in policies, laws and programmes with resource allocation in each country in the South Asian region.
- 9) Advocacy to SAARC Governments for recognition of the need to establish separate ministries/departments for senior citizens’ development in each South Asian country in view of the rapidly expanding percentage of population of senior citizens including the need to form an inter- ministerial committee to mainstream the ageing issues

in the development process.

- 10) Advocacy to Governments for better recognition of the vulnerability of older women and need to prepare specific policies to address adequate protection measures for them on the basis of General Recommendation Number 27 of the CEDAW Convention, and back up such policies with adequate resources and assigned functions

At the end, the delegates constituted a South Asia Senior Citizens' Working Group including Dr. Gauri Shankar Lal Das (Nepal) as Chairman; Chhatra Bahadur Pradhan (Nepal) as Member-Secretary; and Mohammad Edrees Omarzad (Afghanistan), Ferdous Ara Begum (Bangladesh), Sonam Tshewang (Bhutan), Digamber Chapke (India), Anil Kaskhedikar (India), Shyam Sunder Dhaubhadel (Nepal), and Neela Gunasekera (Sri Lanka) as members.

(This paper is written by Chhatra Bahadur Pradhan National Senior Citizens Federation(NASCIF) & Ferdous Ara Begum, South Asia Senior Citizens Forum. NASCIF was established as an umbrella organization with the main objective of protecting the rights, welfare and the best interests of senior citizens in the country. The Federation is a non-political and non-profit making social organization having a national network of the social organizations working for upholding the rights of the senior citizens across the country. It is the only one umbrella organization of the country working closely with Nepal government since last 17 years with its 68 district chapters.)



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