

# Sustainability {Self-Development Goal 4 & India}

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## Abstract

It was at an historic UN Summit in September 2015, the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” was adopted, and on 1st January 2016, the 17 SDGs {Sustainable Development Goals}, came to be reckoned as having come into force by the UN. Though not mandatory, all countries would mobilize all efforts to end poverty in all forms, try to overcome all inequalities and jointly work towards climate change. This was to promote prosperity, at the same time protecting our planet! Gro Harlem Brundtland’s “Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: United Nations”, became the starting point for all countries to formulate systems and procedures. The commission had felt that if all the developing nations were on the same trajectory as those in Europe and North America, the world was sure to face a crisis in constrained resources, stressed eco-systems and widespread poverty. Brundtland’s reports seem to be coming through across the universe in the form of debilitated habitats, climate changes, and migration of humans due to lack of facilities!

This paper deals with sustainability of academic HEIs {Higher Educational Institutes} in the later part of the 2020s and the sustainability development goals. A mere collection of material regarding Sustainability-SDG4 and India. This paper contains a large number of quotes from various sources and is compiled only to highlight the necessity of all agencies to follow the sustainability needs for India.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Millenium goals, SDGs, UN Agenda, Competition, Accreditation, SDG4

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## I. Introduction

UNESCO {United Nations Educational & Social Organization} had also been organizing a series of conferences and meetings to highlight the global crisis in education - one of “equity and inclusion, quality and relevance” drawing attention to the loss of indigenous languages in the near future- a task which could contradict Sustainability Development Goals {SDG 4 – Education}. More pessimistic, but also realistic estimates claim that “90-95 percent of ethnic languages will become extinct or seriously endangered by the end of this century”. “Equity and Inclusion, Quality and Relevance” was the main theme to eliminate the domination of any language in the world, and to bring in equity and inclusion – with particular reference to the developing world – nations in Africa, and Asia Pacific regions.

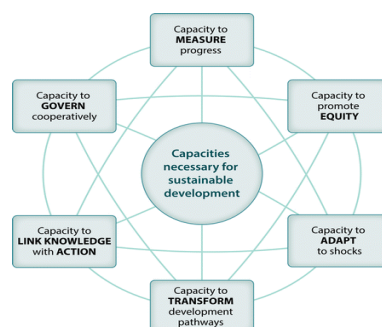


Fig. 1. Sustainable Development Requires Six Central Capacities  
{Courtesy - William C. Clark and Alicia G. Harley -2020}

In the process of developing pathways towards sustainability, Fig.1, the authors have identified “six capacities towards sustainability: Measuring sustainability development, promotion of equity, accept shocks and surprises, transform the system towards sustainability, link knowledge obtained with the action needed, and devise governance procedures for people to collaborate and work together”.

## **Sustainability**

### **Philosophies & World Summit**

“Sustainability” is the ability to exist and develop without depleting natural resources for the future. The United Nations defined sustainable development in the Brundtland Report as development that meets the “needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Right across globally at all forums and conferences, including the United Nations {UN} General Assembly, one could see all nations unanimously reaffirming the Brundtland Commission’s vision and ideas – to ensure fairness, equity, and ensure the needs of both this and future generations. Planners need to take into account sustainability seriously, one of careful balancing of development philosophy, along with maintaining nature, viewing all aspects of conservation, embracing concerns for the community, of people where you intend to develop, their cultures kept intact, and a commerce of sustainable economy.

### **The United Nations World Summits on Social Development Copenhagen Declaration March 1995**

The Copenhagen Summit on Social Development shortly called as the World Summit on Social Development {WSSD} was attended by most of the 186 member nations, who were involved in the preparation of the Copenhagen Declaration, and in the final session 117 world leaders had participated. This was perhaps the first Summit, besides others earlier and later, that laid the basis for social development globally organized by the UN. “A 25-page declaration with a 100-page Programme of Action” was issued. Topics covered were eradication of poverty, expanding productive employment, promotion of social integration both at international and national levels.

“Ten specific commitments to be carried out were

- to create an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment, that will enable people to achieve social development;
- to eradicate poverty in the world;
- to promote the goal of full employment as a basic priority of economic and social policies;
- to promote social integration;
- to promote full respect for human dignity, and to achieving equality and equity between women and men;
- to promote and attain the goals of universal and equitable access to quality education, the highest attainable standard of health and access of all to primary health care;
- to accelerate the development of Africa and the least developed countries;
- to include social development goals in structural adjustment programmes;
- to increase significantly and/or utilise more efficiently the resources allocated to social development;
- to improve international co-operation for social development”.

The UN Copenhagen Declaration of 1995 could be termed as the precursor of all Sustainability Programmes, from where the Millenium Development and other UN programmes commenced.

### **Millennium Development Goals 2000**

The start of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millenium was marked by a meeting of the UN, marking a symbolic event – Millennium Summit on 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2000 in New York. The Millennium Summit was preceded by a two-year information campaign in 1998, to present a new development programme. It concluded with the Millennium Summit adopting the Millennium Declaration by 189 Member States. This was an Eight Point Declaration setting the Development goals and targets for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium by 2015, was approved by 191 United Nations Member States and 22 International Organizations. G8 countries - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Russia have pledged to support global funding for these projects.

The areas to be confined to the specified areas as follows:

- to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- to achieve universal primary education;
- to promote gender equality and empower women;
- to reduce child mortality;
- to improve maternal health;
- to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
- to ensure environmental sustainability, and
- to develop a global partnership for development.

## **Sustainability Development Goals**

### **The 17 Sustainable Development Goals Of The United Nations**

The Sustainable Development Goals {SDGs} were born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world. In 2015, the United Nations created 17 Sustainable Development Goals and aimed to achieve them by 2030.

All 193 United Nations Member States agreed on these 17 goals to end poverty, ensure prosperity, and protect the planet, as “The Sustainable Development Agenda - the United Nations”. On 1 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals {SDGs} of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN Summit — officially came into force.

The 17 SDGs were the following:

- Eliminate Poverty
- Erase Hunger
- Establish Good Health and Well-Being
- Provide Quality Education
- Enforce Gender Equality
- Improve Clean Water and Sanitation
- Grow Affordable and Clean Energy
- Create Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Increase Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
- Reduce Inequality
- Mobilize Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Influence Responsible Consumption and Production
- Organize Climate Action
- Develop Life Below Water
- Advance Life on Land
- Guarantee Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
- Build Partnerships for the Goals

### **Niti Aayog & SDGs**

In India, NITI Aayog {National Institution for Transforming India} is a non-constitutional, non-statutory, executive body and replaces the erstwhile Planning Commission of India. NITI Aayog was entrusted with the formulation, governance and realization of the ‘Sustainable Development Goals’. They have laid out a uniquely ambitious and comprehensive agenda for global development by 2030. NITI Aayog is the nodal institution for achieving SDGs in the country, leading the 2030 Agenda with the spirit of cooperative and competitive federalism.

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations has been sceptic of “ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Of the 4 in 5 out of 104 countries studied, the world is far behind in providing quality education despite the slow progress being made”. As far as India is concerned, the SDGs set of 17 Goals and 169 targets had to be selected on the basis of the availability and collection of the initial data through the Government of India, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation {MoSPI}.

To quote “The National Indicator Framework is the largest monitoring framework in the country, comprising of 306 indicators. It consists of nationally defined indicators corresponding to national priorities and needs. Guided by the MoSPI’s National Indicator Framework, NITI Aayog constructed a draft list of 62 Priority Indicators.

Much of our country’s National Development Agenda is reflected in the SDGs. There has been a little difficulty in converging data, all 29 States and 7 Union Territories use varied data monitoring systems. Due to other constraints, India had to go slow on Goals 12 {to sustain consumption and production patterns} 13 {to combat climate change}, 14 {to conserve/sustainably use the oceans and marine resources} and 17 {strengthen means of implementation and revitalize global partnership for sustainability} due to other logistics and constraints.

### **India and SDG 4 - {Education}**

*Under the sustainability development goals, India had identified and set special targets to be followed; they are as indicated for SDG 4, hereunder:*

*Target 4.1 and 4.2: free, equitable, accessible, and quality primary and secondary education with childcare development.*

- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan {SSA}: SSA focused on providing free and compulsory education to all children aged 6 to 14 years.
- Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan {RMSA}: RMSA aims to enhance the enrolment rate in secondary schools and improve the quality of education by providing resources, infrastructure, and teacher training.
- Mid-Day Meal Scheme: Hitherto, the students of poor family backgrounds were not able to get a square meal a day. This scheme was launched with the aim to improve school attendance and nutrition among students by providing free midday meals in government schools.

*Target 4.3 and Target 4.4: Affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university. Increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills.*

- National Skill Development Mission {NSDM}: NSDM was to provide skill development and vocational training opportunities to equip the youth with relevant skills for employment. It includes schemes like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana {PMKVY} and Skill India Mission.
- Community Colleges: The concept of community colleges has been introduced to offer vocational and skill-based courses at an affordable cost. These colleges collaborate with local industries to provide practical training.
- Polytechnic and ITIs: Polytechnic Colleges and Industrial Training Institutes {ITIs} offer technical and vocational courses at the post-secondary level. These institutions focus on skill development and prepare students for a wide range of technical careers.

*Target 4.5: Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure access to all levels for the vulnerable population {People with disabilities etc.}*

- Gender Sensitization: Gender sensitization programs in schools and communities have been taken to raise awareness about the importance of gender equality in education.
- Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao {BBBP}: While primarily focused on gender equality and female empowerment, BBBP also promotes girls' education as a means to empower women and ensure their participation in society.

*Target 4.6 and 4.7: Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults achieve literacy and numeracy. Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.*

- National Education Policy {NEP} 2020: The NEP 2020 is a comprehensive reform in the education sector that aims to transform the Indian education system. It emphasizes holistic development, flexible curriculum, technology integration, and increased funding for education.
- Digital India Initiative: The Digital India campaign seeks to enhance digital literacy and access to information and communication technology {ICT} in schools and rural areas. This initiative aims to improve the quality of education through technology

Most of these have fund allotments under the National Plan, and mostly monitored. Due to the extensive regions lying out in the rural belts, it becomes a little difficult to collect complete data.

*Progress in Sustainability Development Goal – SDG 4*

Gross Enrolment Ratio {GER} in Higher Secondary Education {2021-22}:	58 percent
Gross Enrolment Ratio {GER} for Tertiary Education:	27 percent
Free and Compulsory Elementary Education up to Class 8.	

### **Challenges Faced**

India is facing unsurmountable challenges due to lack of infrastructure, quality of education and its relevance in the global workspace, the changing nature of the rote pedagogy, while higher education has slowly changed into outcome-based education, gender disparities where young women are always under disadvantages, and the digital divide that the poorer are unable to access digital communications. A large number of schemes have been floated by the Government both as Central Sector as well as Centrally Government Sponsored schemes, almost covering all needs under the SDG 4 implementation. Some of them are directly towards SDG 4 implementation:

- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan {Core} also known as Rashtriya Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for all)
- National Programme Nutritional Support to Primary Education {MDM} {Core}
- Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan {RMSA} {Core}
- Support for Educational Development including Teachers Training & Adult Education {Core}
- Scheme for providing education to Madrasas, Minorities and Disabled {Core of the Core}
- Rashtriya Uchhtar Shiksha Abhiyan {RUSA} {Core}

## II. Conclusions

By 2030, India should be able to offer free and equitable quality pre-primary, primary and secondary education, quality technical and vocational education including university studies, impart skills and entrepreneurship, eliminating gender disparities, and help all kinds of people with disabilities and handicaps.

To start with, "Education for All", the Indian Government programme aims at the universalisation of Elementary education "in a time bound manner", passed by the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to children between the ages of 6 and 14, expected to involve around 206 million children covered in the coming years.

Educate people for sustainable development, promotion of a culture of peace, and globally help still poorer nations; supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially for least developed countries and small island developing States. Provide quality education, eliminate all differences amongst the Indian diaspora, extend digitisation across length and breadth of the country, and provide food, shelter and education to the entire population.

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