



I N D I A
Main Messages

Voluntary National Review
on Implementation of

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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India has played an important role in shaping the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, it is no surprise that the country's national development goals are mirrored in the SDGs. As such, India has been effectively committed to achieving the SDGs even before they were fully crystallized.

The expression "*Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas*," which translates as "Collective Effort, Inclusive Growth" and has been popularized by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, forms the cornerstone of India's national development agenda. To fast track this agenda, the Government of India has just released a draft Three-Year Action Agenda covering years 2017-18 to 2019-20. In parallel, work is in advance stages on a 15-Year Vision, which will also include a 7-year Strategy. Reflecting the country's long-standing federal tradition, these documents are being prepared with active participation of the States (sub-national Governments).

Reflecting the country's commitment to the SDG agenda at the highest levels of Government, the Indian Parliament organized several forums including the South Asian Speakers' Summit in February 2017. These forums have focused on the elimination of poverty, gender equality, climate change and resource mobilization for SDGs. Additionally, the Speaker's Research Initiative has been launched for providing SDG-related insights to Members of Parliament.

For implementing the SDG agenda, the Government of India has launched several ambitious programmes, some of which are highlighted below. A noteworthy example of a crosscutting initiative is the *Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana* (PMJDY) which is the world's largest financial inclusion programme. By leveraging PMJDY, Aadhaar (biometric identity system) and mobile telephony, the Government has disbursed a cumulative amount of INR 1.62 trillion (USD 25 billion) to 329 million beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfers.¹ This has helped to significantly enhance the efficiency of Government programmes.

Further, special efforts have been made to invigorate the federal governance structure of the country through cooperative and competitive federalism. State Governments are playing a prominent role in advancing the national development agenda. The recommendations made by three sub-groups of Chief Ministers of States on various themes including the *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* (Clean India Movement) and skill development have contributed towards shaping relevant policy decisions at the national-level.

India's bold Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), communicated to the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, form a significant part of its SDG strategy. These include substantially reducing the

¹Converted at the exchange rate of INR 64 per USD; all subsequent conversions to USD have used this exchange rate.

emission intensity of GDP, tapping non-fossil fuel energy sources and creating additional carbon sink.

The responsibility for overseeing SDG implementation has been assigned to the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), which is the premier policy think tank of the Government and is chaired by the Prime Minister of India. NITI Aayog has mapped the goals and targets to various nodal ministries as well as flagship programmes. State Governments are also engaged in developing roadmaps for achieving the SDGs with several of them having already published their plans. Draft indicators for tracking the SDGs have been developed and placed in the public domain by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation for wider consultation.

The main messages for India's Voluntary National Review of SDG implementation encapsulate the progress made with respect to Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17. This is not to suggest that progress has not been made with respect to other goals. Interconnections across the 17 SDGs are so strong that the pursuit of the goals explicitly discussed below necessarily involves the promotion of other goals as well.

Goal 1: End Poverty in All its Forms Everywhere

- Rapid growth (SDG 8) is the key weapon in any country's arsenal for combating poverty. On the one hand, it creates well-paid jobs that empower households by giving them necessary purchasing power to access food, clothing, housing, education and health. On the other, it places ever-rising revenues in the hands of the Government to finance social spending. India has continued its programme of economic reforms to achieve sustained rapid growth. The reforms have included fiscal consolidation, inflation targeting, improved governance all around, accelerated infrastructure development (SDG 9), curbing of corruption (SDG 16), *Aadhaar* Act, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Act, Goods and Services Tax (GST), further liberalization of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), closure of sick Public Sector Units and much more. The result has been that, today, India is the fastest growing large economy in the world. It grew 7.9 per cent during fiscal year 2015-16 and 7.1 per cent during 2016-17. Growth has brought increased volume of revenues, which have permitted the Government to sustain a high-level of social spending that directly targets poverty, as described immediately below.
- An important strategy for achieving this goal is focused on generating meaningful employment by developing agricultural infrastructure, productive assets and entrepreneurship-based livelihood opportunities. *The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act* (MGNREGA), which is sometimes described as the world's largest cash transfer programme, has generated over 2 billion

person-days' of employment (SDG 8) during the last year. It has helped reduce extreme poverty as well as enhance the infrastructure and purchasing power in rural areas. The benefits have largely been reaped by women (SDG 5) and disadvantaged sections of society (SDG 10). Similarly, the *Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Livelihoods Mission* provides skilled employment to marginalized communities.

- Further, two major programmes, the *Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana* and *Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana*, provide access to life and accident insurance for 130 million subscribers for nominal annual premiums. Additionally, initiatives like the *Atal Pension Yojana* and the National Social Assistance Programme provide pension to workers in the unorganized sector, widows and the differently abled.
- Another crucial strategy for eliminating poverty is ensuring access to basic services. In the area of education, there is a National Mission, which is focused on providing universal access to quality primary education. Moreover, the Right to Education Act has established an effective legal framework entitling all children (6-14 years) to free and compulsory education based on principles of equity and non-discrimination. Similarly, the National Health Mission and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) initiatives strive to provide access to primary health care and nutrition for the population.
- India is committed to ensuring housing for all by 2022. To enable the achievement of this objective, the Prime Minister's Housing Scheme provides direct financial assistance to poor households.
- For fulfilling the cooking fuel requirements of the population in an environmentally friendly manner, the *Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana*, launched in 2016, aims to provide Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) to poor families with initial financial support for accessing a connection. The programme has enabled the provision of more than 20 million LPG connections since its launch a year ago.
- Providing access to adequate and safe drinking water as well as sanitation is crucial. Under the National Rural Drinking Water Programme, more than 77% of the rural habitations have been fully covered with 40 litres of drinking water per capita on a daily basis. The objective of the Clean India Movement is to ensure an Open Defecation Free India by 2019. Over the last two years, more than 39 million household toilets have been constructed. Moreover, 193,000 villages and 531 cities have been successful in ending the practice of open defecation. The Movement also focuses on bringing about sustained behaviour change through the engagement of a range of stakeholders, including religious and political leaders.

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

- Programmes under the National Food Security Act cover more than 800 million people in the country. The Public Distribution System, for instance, is one of the largest food security initiatives in the world. In recognition of empirical evidence that women pay greater attention to household security, the Government has chosen to issue ration cards in the name of the senior most female member of the household. Other initiatives that contribute to this goal are the ICDS and the Mid-Day Meal Programme. The latter provides nutritious cooked meals to 100 million children in primary schools.
- Governance reforms are being undertaken for improving the effectiveness of food security programmes. These include digitization of ration cards, leveraging *Aadhaar* for authenticated delivery of benefits and an online grievance redressal mechanism.
- Further, the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture in collaboration with other stakeholders is implementing climate change adaptation strategies for sustaining agricultural productivity. Since 2014, the land under organic farming has increased to 200,000 ha. Additionally, over 62 million Soil Health Cards, with crop-wise nutrient management advisories, have been issued.
- Moreover, a comprehensive plan is being implemented for doubling farmers' income by 2022. This includes expediting tenancy reforms, promoting crop diversification and expanding micro-irrigation (1.3 million ha covered during the last two years).
- Another area in which considerable progress has been made is digitization of agricultural marketing. The electronic National Agricultural Marketing platform now covers 250 *Mandis* (agricultural markets) across the country. A revamped crop insurance programme, the *Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana*, has also been launched.

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages

- Beyond increasing access, several initiatives are also being taken for improving the quality of health services. These include the development of a composite index and an award for ensuring a hygienic environment in Government health facilities.
- The National Health Policy, 2017, specifies targets for universalizing primary health care, reducing infant and under-5 mortality, preventing premature deaths due to non-communicable diseases as well as increasing Government expenditure on health.
- To tackle the death of children due to vaccine-preventable diseases and the risk due to incomplete immunization, the Government is aiming to provide vaccination against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, tuberculosis, polio, measles and hepatitis to all unimmunized or partially immunized children by 2020.
- As a step towards achieving universal health coverage, the Government of India has announced a health insurance cover to the tune of INR 100,000 (USD 1,563) for families below the poverty line.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

- Several important initiatives have been taken during the last few years for promoting gender equality. A flagship initiative is Beti Bachao Beti Pado (Save the Girl Child Educate the Girl Child), under which State Governments are implementing a range of measures suited to their local contexts to elevate the status of the girl child.
- Additionally, a Maternity Benefit Programme has been launched for all pregnant and lactating mothers. Through conditional cash transfer, it protects women from wage loss during the first six months after childbirth.
- For raising the levels of female labour force participation, a number of initiatives are being implemented including Stand-up India and MGNREGA. The Women Empowerment Campaign is another effort focused on enabling digital literacy and gainful employment opportunities.
- Further, Women Empowerment Centres are being established for providing comprehensive services at the village-level.

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

- All forms of transportation -- roads, railways, civil aviation and waterways -- are being rapidly expanded. Road connectivity and electricity are being brought to all villages.
- The objective of the Digital India initiative is to build a digitally empowered society by focusing on broadband highways, mobile connectivity and Internet as well as e-Governance. For example, the Bharat Broadband Network Ltd has provided high-speed connectivity to 18,434 local village councils, thus far. Till December 2016, there were 432 million internet users in the country.
- Another priority area is manufacturing. The new Manufacturing Policy raises the output target from 16% of GDP to 25% by 2025. India is developing into a high-tech and global manufacturing hub because of the emphasis on 'Make in India' and a substantial increase in FDI inflows.
- The Government has also introduced a number of policy measures for boosting employment-intensive manufacturing segments. For instance, the recently introduced *Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana* provides easy credit ranging from INR 50,000 to 1 million (USD 780 to 15,600) to small-scale business entrepreneurs. A major package announced for the textiles industry aims to create hundreds of thousands of jobs in this sector.
- For promoting entrepreneurship and enhancing economic growth, the Government has launched the Start-up India programme. Innovation and entrepreneurship is also being encouraged through initiatives like the Atal Innovation Mission. Additionally, NITI Aayog has launched the India Innovation Index for ranking innovations in the country.

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources

- Several strategies have been put in place for realizing the Blue Revolution in the country. These include strengthening marine research, developing an eco-friendly marine industrial and technology base as well as implementing the National Fisheries Action Plan.
- Significant progress has been made with respect to preservation and management of the marine ecosystem. For instance, the Coastal Ocean

Monitoring and Prediction System tracks the levels of marine pollution along the coastline. Additionally, the Online Oil Spill Advisory System enhances the effectiveness of the national response to marine oil spills. India is also implementing the revised National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan.

- Further, the *Sagarmala* programme is focused on improving port connectivity, port-linked industrialization and coastal community development. Under this initiative, support is also provided for the development of deep sea fishing vessels and fish processing centres.

**Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership
for sustainable development**

- A revitalized global partnership is crucial for the achievement of the SDGs. India is committed to taking measurable actions for implementing the SDG agenda. We also reaffirm the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. This is important because while efforts at raising resources domestically will help India move closer to the attainment of the SDGs, they are unlikely to result in sufficient revenues. Therefore, we reiterate that the developed countries have an essential obligation to provide financial assistance to the developing countries, especially for global public goods such as climate change mitigation and control of pandemics, so that they can fully achieve the SDGs. International cooperation is also essential for curbing illicit financial flows, defining aid unambiguously and establishing robust systems for monitoring commitments made by donor countries.
- For increasing the domestic mobilization of resources, a path-breaking tax reform agenda is being finalized. This includes direct tax reforms as well as the GST, a uniform and simplified form of indirect taxation. An innovative tax like the *Swachh Bharat Cess* (Clean India Cess) has also been levied for mobilizing resources for the Clean India Campaign.
- Additionally, implementation of the budget responsibility legislation is ensuring predictable and sustainable budgeting as well as long-term debt sustainability.
- Financing of sustainable sources of energy is being promoted to provide energy for all by 2022 through a massive 150 GW increase in energy from renewables. Enhanced international cooperation is also being fostered through the leadership of the International Solar Alliance.
- Further, consistent policies have opened up the economy to FDI. This has resulted in \$156 billion FDI flow during the last three fiscal years. The flow of \$56 billion in

the latest fiscal year has been larger than that in any other year.

- The 14th Finance Commission award is being implemented to substantially enhance fiscal devolution to States (from 32% to 42% of the central pool of tax proceeds) and Local Governments. This is enabling a significant spurt in development interventions designed and implemented independently by sub-national Governments.
- Enhancing development cooperation with neighbouring and other countries of the global South brings India's innovation and expertise to the service of these countries. For instance, launching of the South Asia Satellite will lead to sharing of valuable data with neighbouring countries including Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Afghanistan.

