



# INDIA

## A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs

#HLPF2017



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### ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

India does not yet have a national implementation plan for the 2030 Agenda. An initial proposal for national indicators is currently in being drafted.

The government agency in charge of the implementation of the SDGs is the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) has been charged with streamlining the SDGs into national policies. The ministries in charge of the SDGs relevant to their policy areas are: the Ministry of Rural Development (SDG 1), the Ministry of Women and Child Development (SDG 5), the Ministry of Labour and Employment (SDG 8), the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (SDG 10), the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (SDG 13) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (SDG 16).

The trade unions have addressed the government with a charter of demands, which contains points relevant to the fulfilment of the SDGs; however, these have not yet been taken on board.

The government of India has so far only reported on the implementation of the SDGs to the parliament. Trade unions do not have access to the reporting information, nor are there reporting mechanisms to provide input available to them.

Not enough resources have been allocated to the implementation of the SDGs in India.



#### TRANSPARENCY

access to key documents on SDGs programming and/or implementation



#### CONSULTATION

existence of an official multi-stakeholder platform on the SDGs



#### SOCIAL DIALOGUE

dialogue among worker, employer and government representatives on SDG implementation



# IS THE (DECENT) WORK BEING DONE?

The Indian government has committed to working on all SDGs, with a specific focus on implementing **SDG 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all)**.

Trade unions stress that particular challenges exist with regards to achieving **target 1.1 (eradicating extreme poverty)**, as 22% of the Indian population is reported to be living in extreme poverty, of which 80% live in rural areas.

In addition, many workers in the informal economy, who constitute between 92% and 94% of the Indian labour force, continue to live in poverty. This poses challenges to reaching target **1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all)**, as social security coverage in the informal economy is weak. This further compounds issues associated to low government spending on essential services such as education, health and social protection, presenting further obstacles for **target 1.a (ensure significant mobilisation of resources to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions)**.

Women face specific obstacles in this context. Very low social protection coverage of female workers has grave implications for progress on **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies)**.

Regarding **SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth)**, performance on **target 8.3 (promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities)** is poor, given that most minimum wages in India do not cover living costs, in breach of ILO Convention 131. What's more, the share of temporary work is on the rise, further increasing the informality and precariousness of the labour market. Achieving **target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men)** also appears distant, as the gender pay gap stands at 40-54% according to trade union estimations.

Progress has been achieved on **target 8.7 (eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour)**, as the government approved the ratification of ILO conventions 138 and 182. However, the definition of forced labour varies across states. In addition, 11.8% of children (31 million) are reported to be working.

Unfortunately, no progress can be noted on **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)**, as India has not reinforced its efforts to adhere to internationally recognised labour standards, nor has it ratified ILO conventions 87 and 98. The number of trained labour inspectors has declined, as the government is promoting a self-assessment of compliance to industry. However, the key components of accountability are not ensured: both collective bargaining coverage and trade union density in the country are low.

Inequality within India remains high, with the top 1% of income earners owning 58% of the wealth and the top 10% of income earners owning 80% of the wealth. A particular challenge to achieving **target 10.4 (progressive achievement of greater equality)** is the lack of a national minimum wage covering the entire country.

There is a lack of an integrated national policy to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change, challenging the fulfilment of **SDG 13 (climate action)**. Trade union and civil society involvement in a dialogue on a Just Transition for workers and communities in greenhouse gas-intensive sectors has been limited, and no formal consultations have yet been launched.

Concerningly, challenges to achieving **target 16.3 (promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all)** are on the rise. The Maruti Suzuki case, which has seen workers being held in detention for years without conviction, is a prime illustration of this. While legal aid for workers and labour courts exist, the system is expensive, slow and does not address workers' needs appropriately.

## WHERE TO NEXT?

### TRADE UNION RECIPE TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The Indian government must prioritise the eradication of poverty, *inter alia* by improving wages, including through the introduction of a national minimum wage; and improving social protection measures, including by enhancing access to healthcare.

To ensure the effective implementation of these objectives, the Indian government should:

- Implement policies that ensure that economic growth is matched by a growth in the number of decent jobs.
- Involve trade unions and other stakeholders in the consultation, monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- Allocate sufficient financial and human resources to the implementation of the SDGs.



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