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INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY



## Key Takeaways

International Conference

# Transforming India 2030: Strategies for Sustainable Development Goals

Organized by  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Pune, India 15-17 February 2017

In Collaboration with



UN Information Centre  
for India and Bhutan



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# Foreword

This publication provides insightful takeaways that emerged from the presentations and deliberations at the international conference titled 'Transforming India 2030: Strategies for Sustainable Development Goals' organized by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Symbiosis International University during 15-17th February 2017, in collaboration with United National Information Centre (UNIC), NITI Aayog, Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries (RIS) an autonomous think tank of the Ministry of External Affairs. The financial assistance received from Research and Development Fund of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) towards printing of proceeding of the conference is gratefully acknowledged.

We are sure that the key takeaways would contribute to the ongoing discourse on ways to improve living standards of the citizens and especially the deprived section of the population. The insights gathered will help various stakeholders including Government, academia, NGOs and citizens to design innovative strategies to attain the developmental goals set by the United Nations.

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ISBN: 978-81-928678-4-7

## **Symbiosis International University**

Symbiosis International University, conference proceedings, Pune, India, 15-17 February 2017

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Printed in Pune.

Design and Layout: Vikram Printers

Photo Credits: Mr. Vijay Khunekari, Studio 1

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# Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations introduced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a view to address the future development of mankind from all possible dimensions. The SDGs are expected to adopt an approach that integrates the social, economic, and environmental dimensions and concerns which form the very foundation of sustainable development.

They are composed of 17 goals and 169 targets, each intertwined with the other, thus recognising the need to not compartmentalize development. The goals engage with poverty, hunger, health, education, jobs and economic growth, infrastructure & innovation, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption, clean water, energy, climate change, sustainability of oceans and terrestrial life forms, peace and partnership for development cooperation.

The next 15 years are going to be decisive for India if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In a highly globalised world, it is not feasible to have redistribution follow growth, and development must work its way from the bottom up. There is a need for a constructive approach to fortify both development and democracy, engaging citizen bodies, research institutes and varying levels of governance. By the means of this conference, the FOHSS, SIU sought to address the issues and challenges that need to be addressed while formulating strategies with respect to the varied SDGs and the way forward.

## Inaugural Session

- Traditional models of development should be replaced by newer ones, imbibing the philosophy of life, connecting with people, evolving over time, reviewing the framework, incorporating technology and ensuring citizen participation. It should simultaneously create accountability for Governments and experiment with new development and financial institutions.
- For the global success of SDGs, India will be a decisive factor, given the scale and dimensions of the country. The solutions to developmental problems invented in India will be the solutions that will be used around the world to achieve SDGs.
- Global partnerships will play an important role in ensuring the success of the SDGs, and partnerships with businesses and private sector along with their technology should be exploited.
- Quality education alone is the oxygen of development. The education sector has been neglected by the Government and this needs to be reviewed.
- Education can play a transformational role both at the grass-root level and with the research undertaken leading to policy papers that can bring enrichment to society at large. **Universities and schools can play a major role in ensuring local area or local region sustainability of the city/ town or village in which they exist.**
- Some social groups face discrimination on multiple social identities. This needs to be considered while designing effective developmental policies.
- Inequalities can be addressed by framing the appropriate policies, which should be effectively implemented both by the Government and Private sector.
- It is essential to understand the type of growth and to strive for pro-poor and non-discriminatory growth.
- Policies are required to address the issues related to jobless growth in India.
- SDGs have brought to the fore, the old debate on “Limits to Growth”. The importance of ecological sustainability cannot be ignored, given the fact that humans have

already started pushing beyond the acceptable limits of the defined planetary boundaries which will add to the investment risk and thereby the creation of jobs will be constrained due to further uncertainty.

- The need for data revolution is important as most of the employment data today comes with a huge time lag.
- The various amendments proposed in Indian Labour legislation in the current year are strongly at variance with Goal 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth. Inclusive growth cannot be achieved by neglecting a vast section of Indian labour force. It is highly doubtful whether the increasing informalization of labour that will inevitably follow in the wake of labour reforms, will increase total employment. What is certain is that it will erode the quality of work and reduced social welfare

## Track I: Poverty and Inequality

### Key Issues:

- SDGs should use global benchmarks derived from an aggregate of best practices, including global definition of social protection, poverty and inequality. These will set directives for the Governments of developing countries.
- Growth which is discriminatory in nature and does not provide equal access to resources is not pro-poor growth.
- While targets related to poverty have relatively been achieved, targets related to hunger and sanitation have not been achieved in several countries including India.
- The poor in India is not a homogeneous group in terms of gender, caste, religion, occupational status, leading to varied outcomes to a policy.
- Inequalities in India have increased, indicating a variation in impacts of growth on various disadvantaged socio-economic groups, based on castes, religion and gender. Group-specific income inequality is as critical as inter-personal inequalities. High inequality constraints growth, affects intergenerational mobility, and triggers conflict.
- Along with rising income inequality, inequalities in terms of education, water, energy, infrastructure, gender, employment are an emerging issue not only in developing countries, but also in developed countries.
- Urban inequality in India is rising faster. Consumption inequality is also on the rise and the growth pattern across states, confirms increasing regional inequality.
- The gap between salaries in the organised sector and self-employed/wages appeared at the end of 1990s and has been growing thereafter.
- While growth has accelerated, employment structure and quality of employment has not changed substantially, indicating a case of jobless growth.

## Key Takeaways:

- In consideration of inter linkages between growth, poverty and inequality, the focus has shifted to pro-poor growth. Although, growth in income, with or without state intervention, is the requisite for poverty reduction, State intervention is seen necessary to ensure that the rate of increase in the incomes of the poor is greater than the rate of increase in the incomes of non-poor.
- Growth should not only increase the incomes of the poor but also create facilities such as healthcare and education accessible to them.
- Group-specific poverty reduction policies are required which offer relatively higher benefits to the disadvantaged groups.
- In the efforts to reduce poverty, policies should aim at developing skills among labour to improve employability and therefore income.
- Public Distributive System (PDS), as a form of redistributive transfers, has played a significant role in poverty reduction in recent years. The leakages in PDS have come down since it moved from a targeted to a universal system.
- It is commendable that there is a separate goal on inequality under the SDGs. Equity as a value should be reinstated.
- Policies of private sector are also important to address the issue of inequality and it cannot be left only to the state.
- **Sustainable development cannot be achieved by offering economic solutions to political, social and structural problems.** Income and wealth inequalities, along with inequalities with respect to access to education and healthcare are structural inequalities, which demand unconventional treatment. Redistributive transfers are not sufficient to reduce these inequalities, which are structural and deeply rooted in history and have been reinforced by the process of growth. Devising strategies to attack these structural inequalities is the only solution. A political solution needs to be employed here rather than an economic one.

## Track II: Education and Gender

### Key Issues:

- Literacy is different than education, where the later is more desirable. Quality Education is the oxygen to development and this should not just be a national priority, but a global priority.
- Increasing enrolment ratio in education institutions should not be the ultimate goal but students' skills need to be enhanced and measured to ensure employability. The curriculum should include vocational skills and needs to be ever-evolving.
- Infrastructure, financing and medium of instruction in regional languages are identified as key challenges faced by the Government Municipal Schools.
- Female labour force participation rate is rising across countries, except in India. It is a result of gender bias, deeply rooted in socio-economic-cultural conditioners – poverty, patriarchy, and social hierarchy.
- Globally, gender equality should be pursued not only in the spheres of education and occupation but in all aspects of life.
- If education is a signifier of development, it should incorporate a gender perspective to it. For just as there may be growth not translating into development; there can be educational growth not resulting in female inclusiveness.
- Girls' inclusiveness in education is being measured in terms of gender ratios; which makes girls' progress at all levels of education as a 'catching up' exercise.
- India faces regional inequality in terms of inadequacy and access to higher education in some states.
- Girls' education depends upon the social reforms in the states and reforms supplemented with greater institutional presence to accommodate the entry of girls.

## Key Takeaways:

- Gender equality and quality education play an important role in achieving SDGs goal.
- If society at large can foster equality of opportunities and duties in their family circle, then change in society is inevitable.
- When the targets of development programs related to cash transfers, food, health, education are women, their children and families also benefit, therefore benefits of the programs are multiplied.
- Women's participation in the workforce is desirable as paid work earns them dignity in the present societal setup and empowers them.
- The work of Teach for India (TFI) is an attempt to close the achievement and learning gap of students coming from varied income groups, with the long-term vision being that poverty should not determine destiny.
- TFI advocates teacher's training as an essential exercise wherein teachers are trained to look at community as a whole. Insights shared by the private corporate sector are incorporated in the training and teachers are seen as change makers.
- Education requires a multi-stakeholder approach, where different stakeholders (parents, principals, teachers & students) joins hand to solve problems of the community.
- Inclusion of parents in the education sector would add value as they can provide vocational training used in their respective occupation to students.

## Track III: Sustainable Cities

### Key Issues:

- There has been a mismatch in India in terms of the growth of cities and the growth of capacity-building to manage the cities. Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) desperately lack capacity of professional urban managers.
- When the person making decisions is not affected in any way by the decision, the city suffers. This can be seen when decisions regarding Public Private Partnership (PPP) model of waste disposal are taken at a state capital for other cities in the state.
- Procedural fairness need not imply procedural justice. The eviction in Yamuna Pushta is the epitome of this.
- Studying urban initiatives across the globe, one finds that directly or indirectly 62% of the initiatives address wellbeing and quality of life, 70% of them address the needs of present and future generations and 55% of them address ecosystem limits as central components of delivery of sustainability. Unfortunately, very few of these indirectly address procedural justice.
- A large section of urban society is invisible and are not considered while taking decisions. These are the people in the unorganized informal sector (maids, dhobis, ragpickers etc) who make the connections and processes work so that the entire city runs.
- The ignored group has an extremely complex system of hierarchies within the city, thus rendering the process of making a collective claim - impossible.
- While many people face multiple vulnerabilities in our cities, growth by itself is not a sufficient goal.
- Sustainable financing strategies may not ensure holistic sustainability but if absent it will derail the movement towards sustainability.
- There is a shrinking financial space of municipalities as cities are increasingly financed through national level resources rather than locally raised resources.

- Growth of cities is resulting in cost exportation. Cities are being financed through taxes generated elsewhere.
- ULBs are not augmenting their own resources as they are not empowered and are being spoon fed. Of the 1,40,000 crores that have been commissioned for 60 cities under the Smart City plan, the cities will be funding 5% and 95% will come from the centre.
- Absence of a financial accountability framework (like an FRBM) at the ULB level is leading to wasteful expenditures.
- The direct beneficiaries of the proposed Smart Cities will only be 8% of the population of these cities and 3.5% of the physical area of each city. Also, the 100 smart cities constitute only 20% of the total urban population. Even if the scheme is successful, it will be an exclusive success.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- The world has realised the importance of cities; global platforms now discuss how cities should shape up. The SDG - 11 and the Urban Agenda agreed at the Habitat III conference in Quito are testimony to this.
- SDG 11 can be decomposed into three broad issues; (i) Services like housing, basic amenities, transport; (ii) Planning a city with respect to its region and (iii) preserving the cultural heritage of cities, which is particularly important in Indian cities.
- Just Sustainability, an idea propounded for cities is a means to bring together Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice and it is often articulated around four principles; (i) Wellbeing & quality of life; (ii) meeting the needs of present and future generations; (iii) Procedural Justice; (iv) Environmental limits
- Sustainability is linked to actions in the neighbourhood like improvements of infrastructure, delivering of green spaces much more strongly than with delivery of very advanced technologies or 'ecocities'.

- Inequality in cities cannot be thought of only in terms of economic value. One has to think about it in terms of dignity, injury, humiliation etc. and try to bring them into the theory of understanding inequality.
- The crux of urban issues is the process of negotiation, who is at the table and who is not.
- Cities like states must compete with each other to unleash dynamism. Competitive federalism in India must beget competitive sub-federalism.
- Cities should be entrusted with responsibilities, empowered with resources and accountability.

## Track IV: Jobs and Economic Growth

### Key Issues:

- Growth is a prerequisite for job creation but is not necessarily sufficient, and job creation is important for social cohesion. However, jobs and social cohesion are a requisite for growth. So, there is a circular relationship between these issues.
- SDGs being global goals ignore a lot of sociological and contextual complexity associated with unemployment that international organisations are not equipped to deal with.
- There is no trade-off between growth and macroeconomic stability. Every time we step on the growth accelerator, it comes at the cost of macroeconomic stability and the growth is not sustainable. Furthermore, jobs cannot be provided by trading-off growth. If growth is to be sustainable, government expenditure can not be undertaken just to create jobs.
- While manufacturing sector is capital-intensive, labour-intensive sectors in India have not created jobs. Country's traditionally labour-intensive sectors have been more capital intensive than they have been in other labour intensive countries like China or Korea.
- Labour participation rates are about 50 percent in a labour force of about 480 million and within that labour force, participation rate for females has been falling. There is also a rural-urban disparity in terms of in terms of labour force participation rates.

### Key Takeaways:

- Macroeconomic Stability is essential for sustained growth and job creation.
- When growth has been driven by investment in India it has been sustainable but growth driven by consumption quickly spills over into external and internal imbalances and is not sustainable. Growth therefore has to be driven by capacity creation, that does not come at the expense of macroeconomic stability.

- Openness to the global economy is important. Economies that grew at a fast pace had imported ideas, know-how, technology; they used global markets when the domestic markets were small and opened up foreign investment as a tool for technology transfer.
- Market allocation using prices is essential, where resources are allocated according to price signals. Thus allowing resources to react market signals including labour mobility as well.
- Future orientation translated as high levels of investments and high levels of savings is a crucial ingredient for jobs and growth.
- Innovation and improved productivity is the key to break-out from the cycle of accumulation of factors led economic growth.
- Exports is a crucial sector to stimulate growth in India.
- Our education systems were historically better simply because we were not at scale. Failure to impart quality education at scale is a barrier to jobs and needs change.
- A dynamic and pragmatic role of the government is important. Government has to be oriented towards the long term furnishing of important public goods, and should be willing digress and change course.

## Track V: Partnership for the Goals

### Key Issues:

- Given the weight of India in the world population and poverty, it is not possible for the world to achieve SDGs without India.
- Significant amount of resources (10-20 percent) of GDP and different types of new technology is required for the implementation of SDGs.
- The present global partnership architecture is not suitable for achieving SDGs.

### Key Takeaways:

- Appropriate technology is required for implementation of SDGs.
- International cooperation is required to have greater access to clean technology.
- A global platform has been formed as Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) – a global platform, to provide easy access to technology. However, the modalities need to be fine-tuned.
- Private financing and public-private partnership are required for the mobilization of resources required for the implementation of SDGs.
- For the successful outcomes with respect to SDGs, the importance of the domestic financial systems, particularly the national development banks needs to be taken into consideration and at the same time corporate social responsibility needs to be leveraged.
- India needs to collect more revenue by using income and profit tax to move forward.
- Direct taxation is the best way for resource mobilization and India should attempt to enhance property taxes. However, Goods and Services tax (GST) is not the most efficient solution.

# Valedictory Session

## Key issues:

- The interpretations on what economic development means, as under the SDG framework is very comprehensive.
- The SDGs are more nuanced and its targets are much more complicated than the MDGs, posing challenges of measurement of the progress with many more indicators.
- India may face challenges with respect to the same measurement parameter being applied pan India, keeping in mind the heterogeneity character of the country.
- India will also face some challenges with respect to the resource requirement for implementing the SDG agenda.

## Key Takeaways:

- There is a need to focus on the challenges which exist within the SDG framework and how to measure, report and make progress on them.
- The UN framework of desirable attributes for the indicator should be examined on the basis of 3 principle parameters:
  - ▶ The indicator must respond to the goal and target.
  - ▶ The indicators should as far as possible cover all targets.
  - ▶ The number of indicators should be kept parsimonious, as far as possible to try to keep the measurement effort cost effective.
- For the purpose of measuring, there is a need to conceptualise the targets in a manner which is easy to understand and are representatives of the communities as a whole.

- Under the SDG framework environmental sustainability is more comprehensively described compared to MDGs.
- India's development policies assertions right from the 1950s have already made space for the SDGs. Also, India's articulation of the needs of development have not been restricted only to economic growth but have involved social objectives as well.
- NITI Ayog had undertaken an exercise of clear mapping of development schemes and flagship programs which address specific SDGs and targets.
- The measurement protocol in India will evolve leading to further improvement and deepening in understanding the development challenges.



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