

INTEGRATING THE SDGs INTO ECONOMIC POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

India integrates the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into its economic policies and practices through national strategies, government schemes, and the SDG India Index. The present paper explained the SDGs, their key focus areas, and the need for integrating them into economic policies. Furthermore, it examined India's policies and practices for achieving the SDGs. The study found that the Government of India, along with State Governments, has made substantial efforts at both micro and macro levels to achieve the SDGs. It also found that India has demonstrated positive trends in progress toward these goals, although challenges remain.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, Economic Policy, India, NITI Aayog, Policy Integration.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, humanity exists in an interconnected world facing severe collective challenges such as climate change, poverty, and inequality. Sustainable development refers to development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainability was popularized by the Brundtland Commission Report (1987).

The United Nations established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a universal framework to address these challenges and improve living conditions across the globe. The main aim of the SDGs is to tackle these pressing issues to make the world more sustainable for future generations. The SDGs comprise 17 goals, focusing on eradicating poverty, protecting the environment, and promoting well-being. These goals form a blueprint for sustainable development worldwide.

The earlier Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), formulated in 2000, aimed to reduce poverty, mortality, and educational deprivation in developing nations. Although successful to some extent, the MDGs faced challenges in implementation. Consequently, in 2015, the SDGs were introduced with a broader and more inclusive approach, engaging both developed and developing countries. The SDGs were created with the conviction that every nation must participate in achieving them to ensure global sustainable development. The SDG goals and their key focus areas are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: SDG Goals and Key Focus Areas

SDGs - Goal No.	SDG Title	Key Focus
1	No Poverty	End poverty in all forms everywhere
2	Zero Hunger	End hunger, food security, sustainable agriculture
3	Good Health & Well-being	Healthy lives, well-being for all ages
4	Quality Education	Inclusive, equitable education, lifelong learning
5	Gender Equality	Empower women and girls, eliminate discrimination
6	Clean Water & Sanitation	Safe water and sanitation for all
7	Affordable & Clean Energy	Access to reliable, sustainable energy
8	Decent Work & Economic Growth	Jobs, inclusive growth, decent work
9	Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure, foster innovation
10	Reduced Inequalities	Reduce inequality within and among nations
11	Sustainable Cities & Communities	Inclusive, safe, resilient, sustainable cities
12	Responsible Consumption & Production	Sustainable consumption and production patterns
13	Climate Action	Combat climate change and its impacts
14	Life Below Water	Protect oceans, seas, marine resources
15	Life on Land	Protect forests, biodiversity, land ecosystems
16	Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions	Promote peace, justice, strong institutions
17	Partnerships for the Goals	Strengthen global partnerships for development

2. Objectives & Methodology of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To explain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), their key focus areas, and the rationale for integrating them into economic policies.
2. To examine India's policies and practices aimed at achieving the SDGs.
3. To identify key challenges and suggest policy implications for strengthening SDG implementation.

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature. It relies primarily on secondary data sourced from official reports, policy documents, government schemes, and academic literature. Key sources include SDG-related documents from NITI Aayog, United Nations publications, and peer-reviewed journal articles. To illustrate India's integrated approach, the study utilizes tables summarizing central government schemes and their alignment with specific SDGs.

3. INTEGRATING SDGS INTO ECONOMIC POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Integrating the SDGs into national economic policies requires policy coherence for sustainable development. Governments must adopt a “whole-of-government” approach to ensure that policies across different sectors—finance, trade, health, and the environment—are aligned to promote SDG progress. India’s NITI Aayog has developed the SDG India Index to track progress and encourage action toward national development targets. Governments can also create enabling environments for sustainable finance through regulatory frameworks, taxation, and incentives such as green bonds and sustainable investment policies.

The integration process should involve broad participation from civil society, academia, and the private sector. Effective communication of the benefits of policy coherence helps build public trust and mobilize action. The private sector serves as a critical driver for achieving the SDGs by generating employment, providing essential services, and contributing to tax revenues.

Integrating the SDGs into economic policies involves aligning national development strategies, budgets, and business practices with the 17 goals. The SDGs (2015–2030) aim to balance economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. Economic policies influence resource allocation, investment, trade, production, and consumption—all central to achieving these goals.

India remains strongly committed to the SDGs by embedding them in its national development agenda and ensuring that growth remains both sustainable and inclusive. NITI Aayog, as the nodal agency, coordinates with states, ministries, and other stakeholders for effective implementation and monitoring.

WHY INTEGRATE SDGs INTO ECONOMIC POLICIES?

Integrating SDGs into economic policies ensures a balanced and sustainable future. The key benefits include:

1. Long-term Growth – Sustainable use of resources ensures future prosperity.
2. Poverty Reduction – Inclusive policies address inequality and unemployment.
3. Environmental Protection – Reduces ecological costs associated with rapid growth.
4. Global Competitiveness – Green and inclusive economies attract investment.
5. Social Stability – Fair distribution of benefits minimizes conflict and unrest.

4. INDIA’S POLICIES TO ACHIEVE SDGs

India, as one of the world’s fastest-growing economies, plays a pivotal role in achieving global sustainability targets. India aligns the SDGs with its national planning framework through NITI Aayog and the National Indicator Framework (NIF). These mechanisms track progress, encourage localization, and promote whole-of-society engagement. The Government of India has launched several flagship programs designed to advance SDG targets, including:

- Ayushman Bharat Yojana – Universal health coverage (SDG 3)
- Swachh Bharat Mission – Sanitation and clean water access (SDG 6)
- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana – Clean cooking fuel access (SDG 7)
- Namami Gange Mission – River ecosystem restoration (SDG 6)

- National Clean Air Programme – Air quality management (SDG 13)

These programs collectively address poverty, health, gender equality, energy, and environmental conservation. Table 2 clearly presents India's Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and related interventions designed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at both the national and state levels."

Table 2: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Nodal Ministry, CSS & Related Interventions in India.

Goal	Nodal Ministry	Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS)	Related Interventions
1.No Poverty	Rural Development	1.National Urban Livelihood Mission 2.National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme` (MGNREGA) 3.National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)	1.Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. 2. Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana 3. Atal Pension Yojana (APY)
2.Zero hunger	Agriculture & Farmers Welfare	1.National Food Security Mission 2.Mission for integrated Development of Horticulture 3.National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture 4.National Oilseed and Oil Palm Mission 5.National Mission on Agriculture Extension and Technology 6.Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) (ACA) 7.National Livestock Mission	1.Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) 2). National Nutrition Mission (NNM) 3) National Food Security Act (NFS), passed in 2013 4) Mid-Day Meal Scheme
3.Good Health & Well-being	Health & Family Welfare	1.National Health including NRHM 2.Human Resource in Health and Medical Education 3.National Mission on Ayush including Mission on Medical Plants 4.Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS)	1.Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (2006)
4.Quality Education	HRD	1.Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan 2.National Programme Nutritional Support to Primary Education	Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat.

		3.Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan 4.Rashtriya Uchhtar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)	
5.Gender Equality	WCD	1.National Mission for Empowerment of Women including Indira Gandhi Mattritav Sahyog Yojana 2.Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA)	1) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao 2) Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (Girl Child Prosperity Scheme) 3) Support to Training And Employment Programme For Women (STEP) 2014 4) Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) 5) SWADHAR 2011 (A scheme for women in difficult circumstances) 6) Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalay (KGBV)
6.Clean Water & Sanitation	Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation (MoWR, RD& GR)	1.National Rural Drinking water Programme 2.Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan 3.Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana 4.National River Conservation Programme (NRCP)	1. Namami Gange - Integrated Ganga Conservation Mission 2) Inter-linking of rivers
7.Affordable & Clean Energy	Power	1.Dean Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana 2.National Solar Mission – providing continuous power supply to rural India	1.India Energy Policy 2. Five new Ultra Mega Power Projects, each of 4000 MW to be installed
8. Decent Work & Economic Growth	Labour & Employment	1.National Service Scheme (NSS) 2.Skill Development Mission 3.Social Security for Unorganised Workers including Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana	1.Deendayal Upadhyaya Antodaya Yojana. 2.National Urban Development Mission
9.Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure	Commerce & Industry	1.Border Area Development Programme 2.National Handloom Development Programme 3.Catalytic Development Programme under	1.Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya Shravem Jayate Karyakram 2. Minimum Government Maximum Governance

		Sericulture 4. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana	3. Make in India 4. Start Up India 5. Ease of doing business initiative 6. FDI Policy
10. Reduced Inequalities	Social Justice & Empowerment	1. Multi Sectoral Development Programme for Minorities 2. Backward Regions Grant Fund (District Component) 3. Scheme for Development of Scheduled Castes 4. Scheme for Development of Other Backward Classes and Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribes. 5. Scheme for development of Economically Backward Classes (EBCs)	1. Grants from Central Pool of Resources for North Eastern Region and Sikkim 2. PAHAL- Direct Benefits Transfer for LPG (DBTL) consumers scheme 3. Give it Up Campaign (for LPG subsidy) 4. Mudra Yojana
11. Sustainable Cities & Communities	Urban Development	1. Rajiv Awas Yojana 2. Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) 3. Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY) 4. National Programme for Persons with Disabilities 5. Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) (ACA)	1. Smart Cities Mission 2. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Housing for All-2022) 3. Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 4. Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY)
12. Responsible Consumption & Production	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)	1. National Policy on bio-fuels 2. National Clean India Fund (NCEF) 3. National Clean Energy Fund	1. Soil Health Card Scheme
13. Climate Action	MoEF&CC	1. National Action Plan on Climate Change, 2. National Mission for a Green India, 3. National Solar Mission, 4. National Mission for Sustainable Habitat, 5. National Water Mission,	1. National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture 2. National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change. 3. National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem,
14. Life Below Water	Earth Sciences	1. Conservation of Natural Resources and Ecosystems	1. National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic

			Eco System 2.Sagarmala Project (Blue Revolution)
15. Life on Land	MoEF&CC	2.National Afforestation Programme (National Mission for a Green India) 3.Integrated Development of Wild Life Habitats 4.Project Tiger	1.Project Elephant 2. National Environmental Policy 2006 3. National Agroforestry Policy (2014)
16. Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions	Home Affairs	1.Panchayat Yuva Krida aur Khel Abhiyan 2.Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary including Gram Nyayalayas 3.Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)	1.Digital India 2. Pragati Platform (Public Grievance Redressal System) 3.RTI (Right to Information Act)
17. Partnerships for the Goals	1.Finance 2. Science & Technology 3.Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) 4.Commerce & Industry 5.MoEF&CC	1.Support for Statistical Strengthening	1.South-South Cooperation 2.India Africa Summit 3.SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) 4.BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) 5.NDB (New Development Bank – BRICS 6. SAARC Satellite (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)

Source: NITI Aayog, India

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has explained the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), their key focus areas, and the necessity of their integration into economic policies. It has also examined India's specific policies and practices aimed at achieving these goals. The analysis found that the Government of India, in collaboration with State Governments, has undertaken substantial efforts at both micro and macro levels. As a result, India has demonstrated positive trends in its progress toward the SDGs, although significant challenges persist.

India played an instrumental role in shaping the SDGs, and its national development objectives are closely aligned with the global agenda. Integrating these goals into economic policy requires embedding sustainability into fiscal, industrial, and trade practices—a transition from a growth-first model to one that prioritizes inclusivity, resilience, and environmental balance.

India's approach reflects a transformative shift toward sustainable and inclusive growth. Through targeted programs, institutional coordination, and digital governance, the country has made measurable progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Nonetheless, sustained effort is necessary to address persistent issues such as regional disparities, financing gaps, and environmental pressures. The ultimate success of SDG integration depends on collective action from government, the private sector, and civil society to ensure no one is left behind.

Moving forward, India must continue to mainstream the SDGs into its planning, leverage private sector participation, and ensure robust monitoring. Post-pandemic recovery efforts and advanced digital governance frameworks offer further opportunities to accelerate implementation and build a more sustainable and equitable future.

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