International Journal of
LAW, ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Peer Reviewed, Referred & Indexed Journal
ISSN: 3070-0523 www.zesterapublications.com Original Research Paper

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS' (SDGS): INDIA'S PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES - A STUDY

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**ABSTRACT**

This study critically analyses India's progress in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals, investigates the challenges faced, and proposes potential ways to accelerate advancements towards sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted via the United Nations (UN) in 2015, provide a global blueprint for tackling key social, environmental, and economic challenges. As a country with a diverse and significant population, India's progress towards these goals presents unique opportunities and challenges. across various states and union territories (UTs) in India since 2015. The study considers secondary data derived from the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog's SDG Index. The SDG interaction analysis confirms that the maximum number of goals synergizes with other goals. This study enriches current literature by providing empirical insights into SDG progress and disparities across states and UTs for the first time in the Indian context. However, the study is constrained in its ability to describe the progress and disparities of SDGs across states and UTs. Future research endeavours may delve into the underlying factors contributing to uneven progress.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), India's progress, economic challenges, National Institution for Transforming India (NITI), Indian context.

## INTRODUCTION

Additionally, India needs to focus on managing water resources wisely, taking strong climate actions, and protecting the environment. The government, businesses, and communities need to work together and contribute to these goals to make progress. For several reasons, studying the SDGs in India is extremely important. This research helps understand and address different states' unique challenges, promoting national progress and equitable development. The contradictory spillover effect (synergy and trade-off) of one goal against another. India has a vast geographical and socioeconomic diversity, leading to significant differences in development indicators across states. By analysing each state's performance against the SDGs, researchers can pinpoint areas of disparity. Some states might excel in education and healthcare, while others lag. India's National Development Agenda aligns with the SDGs, and the country has made significant progress in various areas. However, the spillover effect among the target goals hinders equal growth and interactions differ significantly among countries and depend on the specific goals. The country's diverse states exhibit varying levels of socioeconomic development, underscoring the need for nuanced, state-level assessments to inform targeted policy interventions. India's development journey is marked by stark regional disparities, hindering the realization of the SDGs. These regional disparities underscore the need for nuanced assessments to inform targeted interventions. Therefore, sustainable development is the need of the hour for better and inclusive growth. In India, reaching the SDGs means tackling various issues in a way that fits the country's needs.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Shahryar Sorooshian (2024)** The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations represent a crucial worldwide initiative aimed at advancing development and

Received: 04-12-2025 | Accepted: 12-01-2026 | Published: 19-01-2026

fostering a more favorable future. By conducting a systematic review of scholarly works and employing diverse evaluation criteria, the research employed a multi-criteria decision-making approach to rank the SDGs. The results of the study indicate that SDG 3, which pertains to health and well-being, was rated the most research-friendly, whereas SDG 4, which emphasizes quality education, and SDG 16, which concerns peace, justice, and strong institutions, received the lowest ratings.

**Sangeeta Yadav (2023)** The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) form the edifice of sustainable future and an inclusive growth. Indian state of Odisha has made significant progress in human development in the recent years, however, in comparison to several other Indian states it still lags behind. This study aims to discern the future prospects and challenges for achieving the SDGs in the state of Odisha and the policy support that currently exists or is needed in this context. To achieve this objective, an econometric analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between public social sector spending and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in order to assess the investment requirements for achieving the SDGs.

**Fara Azmat (2023)** The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a universal framework for addressing pressing global economic, environmental, and social challenges. Many years have passed following the SDGs' inception, yet the engagement of business innovation scholarship with the SDGs remains sparse. Moreover, a comprehensive review examining the convergence of business, innovation, and sustainability through the lens of the SDGs is notably absent, constraining insights into present advancements and prospective trajectories. In this regard, this study adopts the SDGs as a lens to investigate the contribution of business innovation to sustainable development challenges and its impact on the SDG agenda.

**David A. Clark (2019)** Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an important challenge and strategic opportunity for stakeholders and beneficiaries involved with Agenda 2030 at all levels. To monitor progress across a diverse set of goals with multiple targets and indicators and to track overall progress, Jeffrey Sachs and associates have developed the SDG Index. Although their index is robust and permits comparisons across countries, it neglects the 'balanced' and 'integrated' nature of the SDGs, and exhibits well-known problems associated with the use of an arithmetic mean.

**Prabhakar Mohandas (2018)** The world economies have unified in their efforts to achieve the goals of sustainable development. This is in sheer contrast to the earlier approaches where governments pursued goals for the growth and development of their respective economies. The struggle for growth and excellence has created imbalance in the economic development among countries, depleted some of the natural resources and has thus altered the ecological balance. The impact of this is being experienced in the form of global warming and climate change. Since this threatens the very existence of human life on earth, a course of action that would ensure a safe environment for future generations has become the need of the hour.

**Measures taken for implementing SDGs in India**

NITI Aayog, the Government of India's premier think tank, has been entrusted with the task of coordinating the SDGs. States have also been advised to undertake a similar mapping of their schemes, including centrally sponsored schemes. In addition, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is engaged in the process of developing national indicators for the SDGs. Many of the Government's flagship programmes such as Swachh Bharat, Make in India, Skill India, and Digital India are at the core of the SDGs. State and local governments play a pivotal role in many of these programmes.

**Challenges in attaining SDGs in India**

Four areas have been identified as areas of concern for India in Achieving SDGs. They are discussed Defining Indicators One of the major challenges for India is devising suitable indicators to effectively monitor the progress of SDGs. India's past records reveal that it has not been very successful in setting relevant indicators to measure outcomes. The definition for "safe" drinking water has been misconstrued with the availability of hand pumps and tube wells and the official data suggested that 86% of Indians had access to safe drinking water and therefore were "on track" for the MDG goal on drinking water.

**The 5 blockages hindering UN Sustainable Development Goal progress**

**1. Financial resources**

The UN estimates that more than $5 trillion per year will be needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets by 2030, which cannot all come from governments. While the impact investment market is growing rapidly, such investors have been remarkably passive. "The rapidly growing impact investor movement does not seem to want to engage with the SDGs nor beneficiary communities around the world," say Paul and Neil. "A recent study found that while 93% of impact investors said they aligned their objectives with the SDGs, only 48% aimed to achieve any of the 169 specific targets, and only 11% actually engaged with communities, customers, workers, and other stakeholders to understand the impact they were having or not having." Such investors often rely on high-level targets to gauge the impact of their investments, but these can vary dramatically in quality and can actually make things worse.

**Statistical data can be misleading**

An example drawn from previous work by Paul and Neil involved initiatives designed to get unemployed people back in the labour market, but the criteria for this project's success focused only on the proportion of clients who moved into and stayed in employment for a particular period of time. This had the effect of filtering out very needy people who might have been out of work for a long time, have disabilities or have criminal records, because the private firms involved focused on people they were confident they could place. "The rest were left for other organisations to pick up – social enterprises and non-profits. On paper, then, it looked like these private organisations were doing an amazing job of helping people get back into work, and the social enterprises and non-profits looked like they were doing a relatively poor job because they were placing fewer clients.

**2. Greenwashing by private firms**

Despite some high-profile engagement in Sustainable Development Goals by people like Paul Polman, former CEO of consumer goods giant Unilever, much corporate engagement with the SDGs has "so far been largely superficial – often used to support their reputations through greenwashing and social washing rather than meaningful attempts to make positive social change", says the research by Paul and Neil. The SDGs, said that research, are looked at "as a scheme with non-committal implications". "There were some exceptions among companies in Asia including South Korea, Japan and Thailand", says Paul, "and this may because those governments have played more active roles in both promoting the SDGs and putting in place regulation to enforce them. But the clear implication is that voluntary codes are unlikely to work. This also suggests that large establishment companies may be incapable of transforming themselves to align with the SDGs, and that we instead need to look at an emerging new generation of emerging entrepreneurs."

**3. The marginalisation of the state**

Most social innovation debate in both theory and practice has focused on the social and

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private sectors, so the role of government intervention has been marginalised – with the state often being seen as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Regarding climate, for example, early strategies emphasised the role of governments in creating regulatory systems to reduce reliance on the carbon economy, but more recently the focus has shifted toward innovation in the private sector.

"More broadly, the growth of social innovation in the Global North, and the US and UK in particular, is often assumed to be the result of the shrinking nation state – a shift from a set of assumptions about universal provision and forms of welfare to distributed, and uneven, provision and forms of welfare with a view to 'efficiency; and cutting through red tape", says the research by Paul and Neil. "And in the Global South the state is often assumed to be incompetent and/or corrupt, with investment often diverted to private firms.

**4. Pressure for social sector to scale**

The social innovation community has too often sought to replicate in subsequent initiatives organisations and practices rather than replicating the results of successful projects – and "our experience of third sector organisations suggests that this is not working". "The reason is that the same social problem often manifests itself very differently across time and place," says the research, citing as an example unique local issues that require homelessness to be tackled very differently in various UK cities. "This is an important lesson for the impact investment community, which is arguably too deferential to ideas about scaling from the business and startup world. Building huge social organisations delivering across many different places at scale is not necessarily the best – or most democratic and accountable – way to make social change", the research says.

**Issues tackled by social enterprises are often bound up in local politics**

Says Neil, formerly the head of a social enterprise in an East of England area that faced many challenges including poverty, stretched public resources, and tension between long-term residents and those who had recently arrived: "Many of the issues addressed by the SDGs, such as inequality and healthcare, involve complex cultural and social problems that are often bound up with local politics and other regional or local issues." "There has often been pressure for social enterprises and other impact organisations to simply get bigger, with the assumption that bigger is better, but that can be strategically unwise because it can threaten an organisation's financial stability and actually dilute the group's impact in addressing local issues."

**5. Top-down interventions**

While some issues such as climate may call for centralised regulation and control, many other cases (especially in low-income countries) call for a different approach that is more locally accountable. "The justification for top-down initiatives is often to support vulnerable groups with a view to making them more productive and resilient, and this type of discourse 'lends itself too easily to hijackings by powerful actors driving their own interests'", say Paul and Neil, quoting from a previous study by other researchers published in 2021 in the journal Industry and Innovation.

"These interventions are done to' communities, rather than done with or by them, and often fail to take root or have unintended negative consequences in the longer-term because they are inconsistent with local cultural traditions and ways of organising," says the research by Paul and Neil.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This design is often done to make the research more efficient. Data interpretation, analysis, and hypothesis testing are essential tools for understanding the complex issues related to the SDGs and for measuring progress towards achieving them. Mixed methods surveys are

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surveys that combine both qualitative and quantitative methods. Achieving the SDGs requires concerted efforts by governments, civil society, the private sector, and individuals to mobilize resources, share knowledge, and work together towards common goals. It examined the types of data that are relevant to the SDGs, the methods for interpreting and analysing this data, and the role of hypothesis testing in assessing the effectiveness of interventions towards achieving the SDGs. It also highlighted examples of how libraries have used data analysis, interpretation, and hypothesis testing to support the SDGs and provide recommendations for how libraries can continue to play a role in advancing the SDGs through the use of these tools. These tools allow us to make sense of the data and information collected, identify trends and patterns, and test hypotheses to determine whether interventions are effective in achieving the desired outcomes.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In the response to the statement whether "National Library has ensured easy access and control to its users related to registration and use of information resources and books", 7.0% (14) respondents disagreed, 31.5% (63) respondents were undecided, 31.0% (62) agreed and 30.25% (61) were strongly agree.

**Table 1: SDGs and Libraries**

| | | Frequency | Percent (%) | Valid Percent (%) | Cumulative Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 14 | 7.0 | 7.0 | 7.0 |
| | Undecided | 63 | 31.5 | 31.5 | 38.7 |
| | Agree | 62 | 31.0 | 31.0 | 69.6 |
| | Strongly Agree | 61 | 30.25 | 30.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 200 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

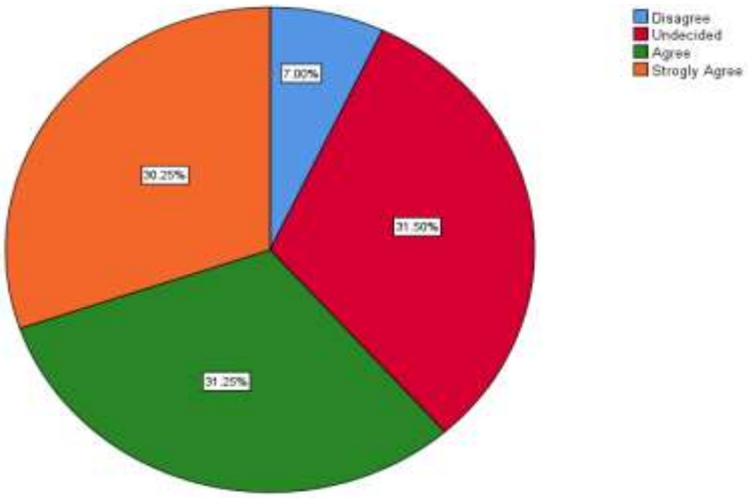


**Figure 1: SDGs and Libraries**

In response to the question about implementation of SDGs whether- "National library provides timely and relevant access related to economic conditions of country by its journals, websites and periodicals", 15% (30) respondents were strongly disagree, 20% (40) were disagree, 20%(40) were undecided, 22.3%(44.5) were agree and 22.8% (45.5) were strongly agree.

**Table 2: Library Resources and Information related to Economic conditions of a Country (SDG)**

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| | | Frequency | Percent (%) | Valid Percent (%) | Cumulative Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 30 | 15.0 | 15.0 | 15.0 |
| | Disagree | 40 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 35.0 |
| | Undecided | 40 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 55.0 |
| | Agree | 44.5 | 22.3 | 22.3 | 77.3 |
| | Strongly Agree | 45.5 | 22.8 | 22.8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 200 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

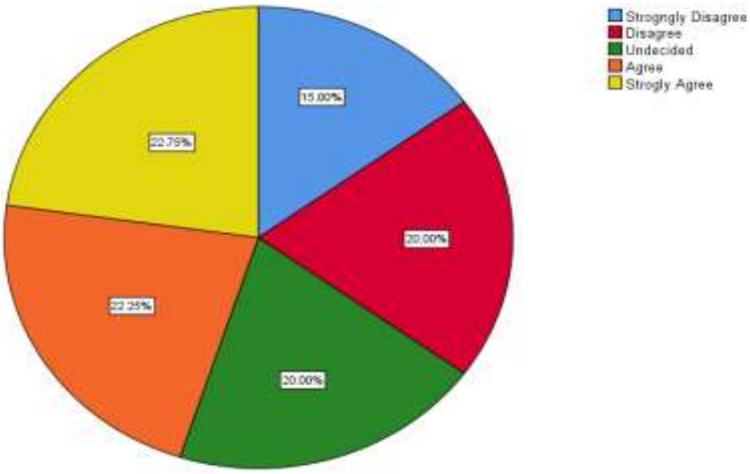


**Figure 2: Library Resources and Economic conditions of a Country (SDG)**

In the response to the question whether "National Library provides timely and relevant access related to health and wellbeing related information to its users via its books, websites, periodicals and journals", 24.5%(49) were disagree, 24.5%(49%) were undecided, 26.8% (53.5) were agree and 24.3% (48.5) were strongly agree.

**Table 3: Library Resources and Information related to Health and Wellbeing of a Country (SDG)**

| | | Frequency | Percent (%) | Valid Percent (%) | Cumulative Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 49 | 24.5 | 24.5 | 24.5 |
| | Undecided | 49 | 24.5 | 24.5 | 49.0 |
| | Agree | 53.5 | 26.8 | 26.8 | 75.8 |
| | Strongly Agree | 48.5 | 24.3 | 24.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 200 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

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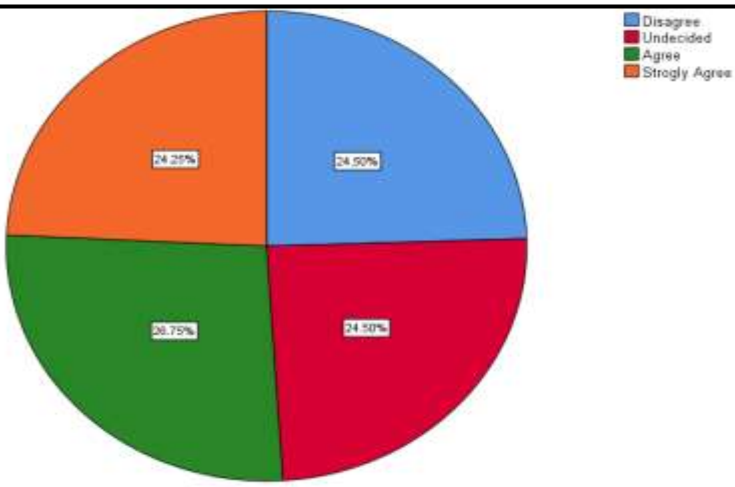


**Figure 3: Library Resources and Information related to Health and Wellbeing of a Country (SDG)**

## CONCLUSIONS

In, India's journey in the direction of accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is marked by both progress and challenges. While notable strides have been made in areas such as poverty reduction, health, education, and clean energy, significant gaps remain in achieving other goals such as gender equality, decent work, and sustainable cities. India encounters a variety of complex problems in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Progress is hindered by socioeconomic inequities, institutional and policy obstacles, environmental deterioration, population expansion, and data restrictions. The study unearths and gives an insight into the status of implementation of SDG related practices. Sustained efforts and collective action are essential to ensure sustainable development for all in India. Comprehensive policies, adequate investments, and inclusive approaches are critical in addressing the unique challenges faced by the country. Drawing upon the lessons learned from successful case studies across various sectors and regions, India can chart a path toward accelerated progress. Strengthening policy integration, promoting multistakeholder collaboration, leveraging technology and innovation, and mainstreaming climate action are vital strategies. Additionally, empowering marginalized groups, enhancing data collection and monitoring, and mobilizing financial resources are key considerations.

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