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## Sustainable Development for Climate Action

Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was aimed at ensuring sustainable development. Its scope was limited to four targets: (a) integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes (reverse loss of environmental resources); (b) reduce biodiversity loss, which included indicators such as reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (total, per capita, and per \$1 GDP, PPP), reducing consumption of ozone-depleting substances and ensuring proportion of fish stocks remained within safe biological limits amongst others; (c) halving the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation; and (d) improving the living standards of slum-dwellers. The post-2015 agenda, taking cognisance of scientific developments which highlight the significant challenges posed by climate change, has a much wider scope, with almost all of its 17 Goals addressing environmental degradation. By making sustainability the central focus, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) acknowledge the intrinsic relationship between human development and climate change.

Goal 13 in particular focusses on the “urgent action” required to “combat climate change and its impacts”, thus incorporating both climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation. Its scope includes three targets: 13.1, strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters in all countries; 13.2 integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning; and 13.3, improve education, awareness raising and human institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning.

Crucially, Goal 13 acknowledges the role being played by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and thereby looks to minimise duplication of efforts, and ensure efficient and effective utilisation of limited resources. Having said that, by laying the responsibility of tackling climate change at the doorstep of the UNFCCC, the SDG agenda has restricted its ambitions to one framework, unlike say Goal 17, which provides new avenues for international development (such as south-south cooperation). The Paris Agreement, signed in December 2015, is meanwhile based entirely on the voluntary contributions of member states, making it imperative that national action comes together to fulfil global ambition. Therefore, in a sense, implementing the SDG agenda at home will be central towards action on climate change.

### India’s Preparedness on SDGs 13

*Target 13.1: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters in all countries; and*

*Target 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning*

India is also the world’s fourth largest energy consumer and the world’s third largest carbon emitter<sup>1</sup>. It is also one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change impacts.<sup>2</sup> Post the UNFCCC COP 19 at Warsaw, where all Parties were invited to initiate and/or intensify domestic efforts towards their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC), the Government of India took measures to work towards India’s INDC on mitigation, adaptation,

finance, technology, and capacity building. These contributions take into account not just India's domestic obligations of mass poverty alleviation, but also the challenges of food security and nutrition, universal access to education and health, gender equality and woman empowerment, water and sanitation, energy, employment, sustainable cities and human settlement, and the means to achieve sustainable development goals.<sup>3</sup> The main driver of India's INDC efforts is the National Action Plan on

Climate Change (NAPCC) (see Box 1). Established in 2008, the Plan sets forth the measures India will take to ensure advancement of the Indian cause on both the environment and the development front. India has also committed to ambitiously increasing its renewable energy capacity as well as financing adaptation action through domestic resources in its NDC.

The Government, in 2011, also took a significant step towards incorporating Green National Accounting. An expert committee's report in 2013 gave a five-step

### **Box 1: National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and Other Initiatives by the Government of India**

The NAPCC consists of eight National Missions, namely, Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission, National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency, National Mission on Sustainable Habitat, National Water Mission, National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture, National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem, National Mission for a Green India, and the National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change. Under these initiatives, the Government has been able to make significant strides – for instance, as of December 2014, 2,970 MW of grid-connected solar generation capacity had been installed.<sup>4</sup> Further, as of January 2015, 90 per cent of companies were on track to meet their Perform Achieve Trade<sup>5</sup> scheme targets due to investments in new energy saving technologies, resulting in about US\$ 5 billion saved in oil imports (based on average Brent crude prices over the 3 year period) and electricity savings of that equivalent to the output of 5 coal-fired power plants.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the energy intensity of the Indian economy has declined by 30 per cent between 2000 and 2011.<sup>7</sup>

Apart from these initiatives, the Indian government setup the National Clean Energy Fund (NCEF) in 2010 to finance and promote clean energy initiatives along with allocation of resources for clean energy research. Finance is raised for the fund by levying a cess of Rs. 200 (the initial cess was Rs. 50, which was raised in 2014 to Rs. 100<sup>8</sup>, and ultimately Rs. 200 in 2015).<sup>9</sup> As of December 2014, Viability Gap Funding (VGF) of Rs. 16,511.43 crore (US\$ 2.75 billion) had been recommended from the NCEF for 46 projects.<sup>10</sup> Along with funding innovative schemes such as the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM)'s installation of solar photovoltaic (SPV) lights and small capacity lights, the scope of the NCEF also includes projects under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), which are being implemented under the flagship programmes of “Grid Interactive and Distributive Renewable Power” and “Research Design, Development in Renewable Energy”.

*Source:* Authors' compilation.

implementation process for a System of Environmental Economic Accounting in India.<sup>11</sup> However, it is not only the Indian government that is reacting to the dangers of climate change; corporations too have realised the importance of sustainable development. In early 2015, 213 companies pledged to increase the country's renewable energy capacity to 266 GW over the next five years thereby significantly reducing India's dependence on fossil fuels. Financial institutions too have made a

commitment to finance green projects to the tune of 78 GW – the government expects this will mean an investment of US\$ 200 billion.<sup>12</sup>

*Target 13.3: Improve education, awareness raising and human institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning.*

On the awareness front, India's efforts date as far back as 1986 when under the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, the National Environment Awareness Campaign was launched. The campaign looks to bring together a wide group of stakeholders including non-governmental organisations, educational and training institutions, professional associations, scientific bodies, and community organisations. Each year, the campaign focusses on a particular theme, which is then implemented by the designated Regional Resource Agencies (RRAs) for specific states/regions of the country. For the year 2014-15, the theme was "Combating Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought". Previous themes include "Biodiversity Conservation", and "Forests for Sustainable Livelihood", amongst others.

India is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and extreme weather events. Following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which killed more than 10,000 people, central and state governments in India have begun investing in early-warning systems. Considering one-third of the Indian population lives in coastal areas – at risk from tsunamis, cyclones and storm surges – early warning systems are vital and have the ability to save millions of lives. At the national level, the Indian Ministry of Earth Sciences has established the National Tsunami Early Warning System at the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.<sup>13</sup> State governments such as the Tamil Nadu government are also investing in early warning systems along with other coastal states at risk such as Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, all of which are part of the Cyclone Risk Mitigation project.<sup>14</sup>

Adaptation is also a high priority action area for the Indian government given the high vulnerability of the significant percentage of the Indian population that lives in rural areas with limited infrastructure. The Government of India launched the Climate Change Adaptation in Rural Areas of India (CCA-RAI) in 2009 with the objective of integrating adaptation to climate change in sector policy decisions of central and state governments and rural development programmes.<sup>15</sup> The programme developed state-level vulnerability assessments, tested adaptation measures and contributed to human capacity development through training measures aimed at mainstreaming adaptation concerns into developmental planning at regional and sub-regional levels.<sup>16</sup>

## The International Framework

Despite all efforts by Indian policymakers, the capacity of the country to make significant strides with regards to climate change is largely dependent on international agreements. A major constraint that has emerged (for India and other developing countries) as a result of these agreements is that of access to finance. According to the UNFCCC, 'climate finance' refers to "local, national or transnational financing, which may be drawn from public, private and alternative sources" to tackle the effects of climate change.<sup>17</sup> At the 15th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC held at Copenhagen in 2009, developed countries committed to jointly mobilise US\$ 100 billion a year by 2020 from a "wide variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including alternative sources of finance". In the short-term, a commitment was made to raise US\$ 30 billion between 2010 and 2012 through 'fast-start' finance. The Paris Agreement once again notes the figure of US\$ 100 billion as the 'floor' to climate finance efforts and a transparency mechanism has been established at COP 21 which will work towards monitoring the progress towards that figure.

While the short-term commitments have been fulfilled through the Development Assistance route adopted by developed countries, it is still largely unknown how the long-term commitments will be met. Apart from the bilateral agreements and Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) route, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), (based out of South Korea), is the only other credible institutional arrangement, which can be seen as a viable source for long-term climate finance. Established at COP 16, GCF is an operating entity of the Financial Mechanism of the Convention and will "support projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing country Parties". The other source of funding through the Financial Mechanism, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), has limited capacity and as of June 2014, had funded 787 projects amounting to just over US\$ 4.5 billion. While its capacity will be strengthened since its inception, the US\$ 4.43 billion pledged for the sixth replenishment period (20014 to 2018) is only a drop in the ocean.<sup>18</sup>

As per United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates, to build 'green infrastructure' and to invest in low-carbon projects that will restrain global average temperature from rising more than

**Table 2: Climate Finance - Estimated Annual Investment Needs v/s Actual (US\$ Billion)**

Finance Demand					Actual Supply (2012)
Year	2020	2030	2035	2050	
<b>Mitigation</b>					
IIASA (2012)				400-900	337
IEA (2014)			550		
McKinsey & Co. (2010)		1076		610	
WEF (2010)		700			
<b>Adaptation</b>					
Parry et.al. (2009)		4-100			22
UNFCCC (2007)		49-171			
World Bank (2010)		70-100			

*Source:* The Global Landscape of Climate Finance, CPI (2013).

two degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels, nearly US\$ 1 trillion of additional investment will be required annually upto the year 2030.<sup>19</sup> This is over and above the US\$ 5 trillion needed annually until 2020 to finance investments in sectors such as agriculture, telecommunications and power.<sup>20</sup> Concurrently, investments will also be needed in social sectors like health and education. The International Energy Agency (IEA) reckons that the prevailing global policies and market structures are incapable of guiding investments towards low-carbon and energy efficient avenues at the speed and scale required.<sup>21</sup> According to IEA estimates investments in energy supply and energy efficiency alone will require US\$ 53 trillion (US\$ 39 trillion for energy supply and US\$14 trillion for energy efficiency) upto 2035 to enable the world to adhere to a two-degrees-centigrade emissions path. However, as Table 2 illustrates, there is a stark gap between demand and supply (as of 2012, only US\$ 359 billion had been earmarked towards climate finance).

In the next fifteen years, the global economy will need an estimated US\$ 89 trillion in infrastructure investments<sup>22</sup> (India itself needs US\$ 1 trillion over the next five years to bridge its infrastructure deficit<sup>23</sup>). A further US\$ 4.1 trillion will be needed for incremental investment in low-carbon transitions to stay within the two-degree-Celsius temperature rise limit agreed internationally.<sup>24</sup> Thus while the challenges of development and climate change are highly convoluted, it is imperative that climate finance does not become a substitute for development finance, and must be seen as 'additional finance'. A conscious effort

must thus be made to not conflate climate finance with Overseas Development Assistance, even if there is an overlap in the development projects that eventually get supported.

In this context, what is required is innovative solutions, and statesmanship from global leaders. Post the Financing for Development conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, many in the developing world were left disillusioned as to whether a global agreement could be reached. Paris however delivered a global agreement on efforts to combat climate change.

Going forward, India's climate policy and development policies are going to be shaped by three interlinked documents: the Paris Agreement (COP 21), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda and the Indian NDC submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). All three affect India's national ambitions to grow infrastructure, ensure sustainable development and maintain economic growth. Financing is also an unanswered question that is an undercurrent to all three agendas, i.e. whether the global financial architecture can respond to the needs of this new development paradigm<sup>25</sup>.

For the mobilisation of long-term finance, the COP must converge the conversations that take place at Basel on global banking norms, with those that take place at the climate conventions. Basel III must be modified to include an exception for green investments and to improve the flow of funds towards climate-related projects in developing countries. In addition, developed countries must refrain from

enforcing blanket restrictions on coal projects.<sup>26</sup> Not only is it unfair to expect developing economies to industrialise through sources other than coal, when most developed economies today followed this path, it is a counterproductive proposition as it denies developing countries the opportunity to transition from inefficient coal based power to cleaner coal based generation technologies. The World Bank has also restricted loans for building coal-fired power plants since 2013; and in November 2015, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) agreed to limit most state financing to ‘ultra-supercritical plants,’ which burn less coal to produce the same amount of electricity<sup>27</sup>.

Lastly, as the Table 2 highlights, a disproportionate sum of climate finance is directed towards climate mitigation, when compared with climate adaptation. One reason for this trend is that investors are aware of returns on investment when it comes to mitigation activities, however when it comes to adaptation, such awareness is lacking. There is also a lack of awareness amongst financial institutions as to what business opportunities exist and how these may be leveraged by investors. In this context, the UNFCCC must play a critical role and ensure the knowledge gap is narrowed. The multinational development banks too can contribute by taking the lead and partnering with organisations adept at identifying and implementing adaptation development projects. Once this is done and a market is created for adaptation projects, the private sector will crowd-in, as it has in traditional sectors.<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

It is important to recognise the differences between the aspirations of the SDGs and the unfolding natural phenomenon that is climate change. In the case of sustainable development, the core goal is poverty eradication whilst balancing environmental imperatives. In the case of climate change, mitigation and adaptation actions lie at the heart of the issue. Nevertheless, these two agendas are clearly linked. Access to energy is critical to global development. The World Energy Outlook Report 2002 for example highlights that lack of access to electricity hinders poverty reduction programmes<sup>29</sup> while the positive correlation between energy access and rising income

levels have been highlighted in other studies<sup>30</sup>. On the other hand, burning fossil fuels and cheaper sources of energy compromise mitigation action in the fight against climate change.

In India, an estimated 300 million people lack access to electricity. Successfully addressing the challenge of India’s energy poverty lies at the heart of achieving the SDGs aspirations for poverty reduction and removal of social and economic inequality. Yet, India’s total emissions are the third highest in the world and the country is under pressure to contribute significantly to global action on climate change.

To successfully advance the economic and social pillars of the SDG agenda in the country, while remaining cognisant of its environmental imperatives, India must adopt a nuanced approach towards climate action. It must protect its right to provide lifeline energy to its poor, as it transitions from a low-income agrarian society, to a middle-income industrialised country. At the same time, India’s targets for expanding its renewable energy capacity as committed in its NDC and its taxes on consumption of petrol, diesel and burning of coal all indicate that it is firmly committed to combating climate change and reducing the energy intensity of its economy. Lifestyle energy consumption is therefore up for grabs as are further measures such as introduction of a tax on corporate emissions as possible policy instruments to strengthen India’s climate action.

It is in India’s interest to be propositional as it seeks to protect its ‘lifeline’ objectives and encourage the developed countries to be more ambitious in their green agendas that will offer more carbon space to the rest. While the challenges of poverty and energy access go hand in hand, vulnerability to climate change is also felt more severely by the poor. Enhancing adaptation action in the country and progressively transitioning to a green economy will both increase India’s ability to meet the SDGs while also display international leadership on climate change.

## Endnotes

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Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts: Targets and Indicators	
13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries	13.1.1 Number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies <sup>a</sup> 13.1.2 Number of deaths, missing persons and persons affected by disaster per 100,000 people <sup>a</sup>
13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning	13.2.1 Number of countries that have communicated the establishment or operationalization of an integrated policy/strategy/plan which increases their ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change, and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development in a manner that does not threaten food production (including a national adaptation plan, nationally determined contribution, national communication, biennial update report or other)
13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning	13.3.1 Number of countries that have integrated mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning into primary, secondary and tertiary curricula 13.3.2 Number of countries that have communicated the strengthening of institutional, systemic and individual capacity-building to implement adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer, and development actions
13.a Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible	13.a.1 Mobilized amount of United States dollars per year starting in 2020 accountable towards the \$100 billion commitment
13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities	13.b.1 Number of least developed countries and small island developing States that are receiving specialized support, and amount of support, including finance, technology and capacity-building, for mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate change-related planning and management, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities