

LiFE, Resilience, and Values for Wellbeing

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Abstract: Under India's G20 Presidency, the focus shifts to addressing global challenges like climate change, poverty, health, and hunger. Emphasizing the risks of continued resource exploitation, PM Narendra Modi introduces the Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) initiative. LiFE promotes sustainable consumption, production patterns, and a carbon-circular economy, while also advocating for values beyond anthropocentrism, encompassing intergenerational and trans-species justice. The concept prioritizes sustainable lifestyles, linking individual actions to potential significant global carbon emission reductions. Notably, India is advocating for a shift beyond GDP, emphasizing well-being and ethical value systems in international relations and finance, while recognizing the need for just transitions in the face of economic and geopolitical challenges.

Keywords: LiFE, G20, Ethics and Value, SDGs

India's G20 Presidency has rekindled the debate on how in the past two centuries, nation-states were able to achieve an unprecedented level of economic growth and increase the standard of living for most of humanity due to their vastly enhanced technological, economic, and administrative capabilities. Indian leadership has emphasised on the inequalities and vulnerabilities in various social, economic, and political dimensions that have been disproportionately distributed within and among countries around the world. Therefore, the main thrust of the Indian G20 Presidency is on the challenges of climate change, poverty, health, and hunger and the need to resolve them. As there is a real danger,

that if we don't make substantial progress towards decoupling the misaligned growth priorities with natural resource exploitations, some of the past gains in the quality of human life will be reversed.

It is in this backdrop that PM Narendra Modi has laid stress on a new transformative approach as Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE), which calls for transformations at various levels from individuals to institutions to significantly change their behaviour and functioning.¹ LiFE incorporates the issues of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns and carbon-circular economy (CCE) at its core and goes beyond the anthropocentric view to incorporate not just climate change mitigation strategies

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and intergenerational justice but also trans-species justice. The adoption of LiFE is deeply connected to value systems and ethical approaches in financial architecture and technology transfer mechanisms. The approach could subsequently address shortcomings of the presently dysfunctional financing and technology transfer mechanism towards achieving ethics and value-based development for all, where new measurement of wellbeing which goes beyond GDP plays a pivotal role.

LiFE places an individual at the centre of action against climate change by pursuing “Lifestyle of the planet, for the planet and by the planet.” According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), if one billion people out of the global population of eight billion adopt environment-friendly behaviours in their daily lives, global carbon emissions could drop by approximately 20 per cent.² The LiFE action plan includes nudging individuals to practice simple yet effective environment-friendly actions in their daily lives (demand), enabling industries and markets to respond swiftly to the changing demand (supply) and influencing government and industrial policy to support both sustainable consumption and production (policy).

Given the transformative potential of LiFE for global wellness, India has placed a sustainable lifestyle as a priority on the G20 agenda. G20 accounts for 80 per cent of global GDP as well as 80 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. In India’s view, the G20 is

therefore equipped to make LiFE a global movement.

LiFE, as a new development approach, will not only help the world in its fight against climate change but will also complement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UN through bringing in ethics and values in the functioning of IFIs, technology and International relations. PM Modi highlighted the significance of LiFE in his remarks at the G20 summit in Bali on 15 November 2022.³ “For the safe future of the planet, the sense of trusteeship is the solution. LiFE campaign can make a big contribution to this. Its purpose is to make sustainable lifestyles a mass movement”. In recognition of India’s efforts in changing the global debate on climate change, the G20 Bali Leaders’ Declaration has endorsed the concept of sustainable development and lifestyles, resource efficiency and circular economy.⁴

As a continuation of concretising the LiFE economy fundamentals, theoretically and empirically, a Think 20 (T20) task force under the Indian G20 presidency on Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) has been constituted under the process. Task Force 3 on LiFE, Resilience and Values for Wellbeing, primarily focuses on holistic aspects of Lifestyle for the environment (LiFE) and also how to bring in ethics and value system in our economic models of financing and technology. The ideas of sustainable consumption production and the lifestyle for Planet are not only behavioural issues but they are also part of the guidelines within which

international financial institutions and other agencies and entities may function. This is in line with India's G20 priorities on green development, climate finance & LiFE; accelerated, inclusive & resilient growth; accelerating progress on SDGs; technological transformation & digital public infrastructure; multilateral institutions for the 21st century; and women-led development.⁵

Ethics and Value System

Ethics and value system forms the foundational component in the formation of this New Development Paradigm. When we look at what is happening in the case of blocking of grains from Ukraine to other parts of the world, which led to the UN intervention, only then could we get the grains out from Ukraine. Similarly, the practice of providing financial assistance to countries which leaves them more indebted than they would have been otherwise is also a matter of concern. So how we can all remain ethically correct, how international relations, particularly the behaviour of international financial institutions, is not just led by financial concerns but also by ethical value systems, is something the LiFE economy looks into. Now, the question arises, as some of us ask, whose ethics we are talking about? Whose value system are we talking about? Apart from civilisational concerns, we also have some common value systems which are relevant for humanity, which are relevant for everyone, apart from specific inferences that we may draw in some regional or national contexts. But there are minimum value systems that

are related to respect for life, respect for human rights, and respect for the existence of each other, not only of human beings, but of other species as well. So our development theory, our financial institutions, their management, their guidance, and their principles, are equally important. Recently, the United Nations Secretary General report stated: "We cannot persist with a morally bankrupt financial system and expect developing countries to meet targets that developed countries met with far fewer constraints". Therefore, the adoption of LiFE is deeply connected to value systems and ethical approaches in financial architecture and technology transfer mechanisms.

SCP and Just Transitions

Given the current geopolitical issues and economic setbacks of the pandemic, the challenges of transitioning whilst ensuring justice for affected communities have become more profound, particularly for the developing and least developed nations as they face fiscal stress and technological constraints in the process. Similarly, the recent UNSG Report highlighted the impacts of the pandemic on SDG 12, Sustainable Consumption and Production, particularly with respect to the change in consumption patterns and disruptions in global supply chains. However, the divergence between the Global North and Global South vis-à-vis their material footprint and their domestic material consumption brought forward questions around climate burden and responsibilities.

Lifestyle for environment, while connecting resilience and values that are important for wellbeing, is also trying to emphasise that we need to take care of intergenerational gaps and also inter-species disequilibrium that we are ending up with. While conceptualising the idea of Just Transition, the issues around distributional justice, procedural justice, and restorative justice were made an integral part of transitioning towards a carbon-neutral economy. The idea of Sustainable Consumption and Production patterns is deeply embedded in LiFE approach. Hence the modalities of carbon circular economies, eco-friendly supply chains and local food systems for reducing the ecological footprint have been made an intrinsic part of economic transitions. LiFE also emphasises the idea of trusteeship, which is thinking more about the concept of the social sector, which in the US, they call the “Fourth Sector”, in which we are trying to emphasise the role that social enterprises can play. India has recently established the Social Stock Exchange to facilitate that and it would be important for us to go forward with that.

Going beyond GDP

We are all increasingly realising, not now but for the last several years, but more so after COVID-19, the need to go beyond GDP as a measure of growth. That is why the idea of bringing in climate change, health, food security, governance, all different dimensions included, and that’s where the current LiFE approach that we have in G20 comes in. The UN and UN-led institutions have also been

playing an important role in this regard. Target 17.19 (by 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement the gross domestic product and support statistical capacity building in developing countries) of SDG Goal 17 is important, as it envisages playing some role in terms of identifying the priorities.

Similarly, UN Secretary General has mentioned in terms of suggesting that the time for wellbeing-based measurement has come, and that it is absolutely important for all of us to be reminded that the current system for accounting, which came in 1947 from Richard Stone, needs to be revisited. It was revised first in 1958 and then in 1993. The current review, which was done in 2008, is to be over in 2025. So, we need new measures, both IMF and World Bank have already identified more nuanced structures and that is important for us to ponder upon.

Presently, various wellbeing measurement frameworks and indexes have been floated by various multilateral agencies, such as the Human Development Index by UNDP; Better Life Initiative: Measuring Well-Being and Progress by OECD; the Socio-Economic Transformation: Recoupling Dashboard by Global Solutions Initiatives, among others. The indexes and frameworks so far face the challenges of data availability and subjective preferences of indicators which might not be common across countries. Therefore, significant enhancements in national statistical capacities are required to collect, collate and disseminate the data for such multidimensional wellbeing measurement, along with prioritise

indicators and dimensions of social, ecological, and economic wellbeing.

Conclusion

In order to ensure that individual responsibility should not boil down to the poorest of the poor, the growth necessities of the developing and least developed nations also require appropriate and just reflections in the LiFE framework. The framework formulation for global governance for LiFE economy also contemplates the inequalities around the world. Therefore, even while we adhere to the idea that each person has a responsibility to the planet, the aspirational characteristics of the large majority of humanity have been given room to flourish.

For long, the G20 process has focused mainly on economic development. A profound change in this governance approach may not be easy. It involves a mindset change. It may require long-term sustained efforts at foundational thinking of the group and will have to explore and overcome serious challenges. First, states, multilateral institutions and corporations must accept that moral values are the basic prerequisite of an enduringly peaceful, stable and equitable world. Secondly, the principles of climate justice, burden and responsibilities require a rethinking, given the significant disparities and climate induced vulnerabilities among the developed and developing nations. Lastly, the global governance institutions should henceforth see existing challenges as universal and indivisible. We live in an

interdependent world which is connected at an unprecedented level at any point in the history of humankind and we cannot have local or national solutions to the “Grand Challenges” we face. Therefore, the challenges of climate change, poverty, health, and hunger require solutions at the global level.

Endnotes

- ¹ PIB (2022).
- ² UNEP (2022).
- ³ PIB (2022a). Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's remarks at the Closing Session of G-20 Summit in Bali Posted On: 16 NOV 2022 12:58PM by PIB Delhi
- ⁴ G20 BALI LEADERS' DECLARATION Bali, Indonesia, 15-16 November 2022.
- ⁵ PIB (2023).

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