

EVOLVING INDIAN STRATEGY ON SDGs AND SCOPE FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

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March 2021

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Abbreviations

AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
APFSD	Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
ASHAs	Accredited Social Health Activists
AYUSH	Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy
CESD	Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development
CII	Confederation of Indian Industry
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CSDGs	Centre for Sustainable Development Goals
CSI	Chief Statistician of India
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DKICs	District Knowledge and Innovation Centers
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FICCI	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry
GAIL	Gas Authority of India limited
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
HLG-PCCB	High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
HLSC	High Level Steering Committee
HPC	High Power Committee
IAEG-SDG	Inter Agency and Expert Group for SDG Indicator Framework
ICRIER	Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations
ISS	Indian Statistical Service
ITIs	Industrial Training Institutes
JBF	Jal Bhagirathi Foundation
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

MoEFCC	Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoSPI	Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
NAFED	National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation
NAG DNT	National Alliance Group for Denotified and Nomadic Tribe
NCAER	National Council of Applied Economic Research
NHM	National Health Mission
NIF	National Indicator Framework
NMSHE	National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem
NSO	National Statistical Office
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ORF	Observer Research Foundation
PHFI	Public Health Foundation of India
PLFS	Periodic Labour Force Survey
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PM-JAY	Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana
PM-KISAN	Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi
PMAY	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna
PMJJBY	Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana
RIS	Research and Information System for Developing Countries
RMNC	Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SANS	South Asia Network on the Sustainable Development Goals (SANS)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIF	State Level Indicator framework
SSS	Subordinate State Service
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
VNR	Voluntary National Report
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation

Glossary

POSHAN Abhiyaan	National Nutrition Mission
Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas	Development for all with trust of everyone
Rogi Kalyan Samitis	Patient Welfare Committees
Swachh Bharat Mission	Clean India Mission
Beti Bacho Beti Padhao	Save girl child, educate a girl child
Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana	Housing for All by 2022
Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana	Financial Inclusion Campaign
Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana	Rural Electrification
Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana	Clean Cooking Fuel – LPG
Sankalp se Siddhi	Attainment through Resolve
Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam	The world is one family
Sakshar Bharat	Literate India
Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan	Universalisation of Elementary Education
Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha	National Mission for Secondary Education
Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana	Girl Child Prosperity Account
Sagaramala Programme	Port Led Prosperity
Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana	National Livelihoods Mission
Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana	Government-backed Life insurance scheme in India
Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana	Government-backed Accident insurance scheme in India
Namami Gange	Integrated Ganga Conservation Mission
Ujjawala Scheme	A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation
Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana	Per Drop More Crop
Yojana Banao Abhiyan at Gram Sabha Level	Make Your Own Scheme at Village Council Level

Foreword

The Development Papers Series of the ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office (ESCAP-SSWA) promotes and disseminates policy-relevant research on the development challenges facing South and South-West Asia. It features policy research conducted at ESCAP-SSWA as well as by outside experts from within the subregion and beyond. The objective is to foster an informed debate on development policy challenges facing the subregion and sharing of development experiences and best practices.

This paper by Sachin Chaturvedi is prepared as a part of the research and policy initiative titled, *Interpreting SDGs for South Asia: In Search of a Regional Framework*, undertaken by the UNESCAP-SSWA Office in collaboration with the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka jointly directed by Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Distinguished Fellow at CPD, and the undersigned. With five years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, world leaders have now called for a “Decade of Action” to mobilize action at all levels and accelerate sustainable solutions to deliver the SDGs. This presents a timely opportunity to assess the current status of South Asian countries in terms of progress and existing gaps to identify and address the key challenges for accelerating the implementation of the SDGs. While the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic is threatening progress towards the SDGs, it also makes their achievement more critical than ever. The principles on which the SDGs were established are key to building back better in the post-COVID-19 recovery and meeting the goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change. Against this background, the overall objective is to explore mutual areas for regional cooperation in the subregion from the perspective of various South Asian countries to promote SDG delivery at national level and support SDG implementation within a regional framework.

This paper provides an overview of India’s efforts and ongoing initiatives to localize and implement the SDGs at the national and subnational levels in line with the national guiding philosophy of *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas*, which translates to ‘collective efforts, inclusive growth’. With steady economic growth and targeted initiatives, the country has made tremendous improvements in reducing monetary and multidimensional poverty, improving health and education outcomes, conserving biodiversity and building partnerships for sustainable development such as through the International Solar Alliance. However, faster progress is desired on nutrition, women’s labour force participation, providing decent work and ensuring environmental sustainability. Reigniting economic growth engines in the midst of the pandemic, reviving business sentiments, providing livelihoods while staying on track for SDGs achievement by 2030 form urgent priorities. In this context, the paper undertakes an important and timely

exercise to take stock of challenges in SDG implementation; reflect on the impact of the pandemic on SDGs achievement in the country and identify national SDG priorities for regional cooperation to accelerate the 2030 Agenda for India and other South Asian countries. It provides critical insights and perspectives on implementation efforts at the subnational level, highlighting the substantial progress India has made in effectively localising the SDGs.

We hope that insights and policy lessons drawn in this paper would make meaningful contributions to the ongoing deliberations on how greater integration and cooperation at the regional level could be an important complement to the national strategies in achieving sustainable development.

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Evolving Indian Strategy on SDGs and Scope for Regional Cooperation

Sachin Chaturvedi¹

Abstract

Along with all countries, India too collectively adopted the SDGs the UN Summit of September 2015. In India, the commitment towards SDGs is central to its own development as sustainability is ingrained in India's ethos and in line with it. Even prior to 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi coined the slogan: 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas' that is, 'along with all, for the development of all' which embodies the SDGs' ultimate goal of 'leaving no one behind'. As India readies to celebrate its 75th anniversary of Independence in 2022, the Government presented a vision of 'New India' for 2017-2022 that prioritized high-end manufacturing, infrastructure, effective healthcare policies, information technology with the goals of a 'New India' that is free of poverty, corruption, terrorism, communalism, casteism and ecological degradation, and unity of the entire country through good governance and technology. This paper attempts to highlight the country's SDG progress and examines the main challenges in implementing the SDGs at national and subnational levels. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions to timelines and milestones for achieving the SDGs and it is thus, imperative to accelerate our efforts for achieving the targets of the Agenda 2030. In this context, subregional and regional cooperation efforts can greatly complement national strategies for achieving the SDGs and broader regional level coherence.

JEL Code(s): Q01, O11, O20, F55, Q56

Key words: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Inclusive growth, Regional Cooperation, South Asia, India

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1. Introduction

The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core. This transformative Agenda officially launched on 1 January 2016 sets a roadmap for development for the next fifteen years. The Agenda built on the principle of “leave no one behind (LNOB)” seeks to eliminate poverty and hunger, reduce gender inequality and economic inequality, ensuring a healthy and prosperous world for future generations. It is to be implemented through guided national policies and meaningful multistakeholder and international partnerships. The SDGs with their cross-domain nature and cross-border dimension provide an inter-connectedness that the world needs at this point. These 17 goals, covering social, economic and sustainability dimensions of development and the underlying targets, define the scope of policies and actions and their possible integration.

In India, the development programmes being undertaken by the current government of the country are inspired by the fundamental principle of "*Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas*" (Development for all) with the philosophy that welfare of the people can be achieved only through participation of people and community.² This is aligned with the LNOB principle as envisaged by the SDGs. An inclusive agenda of national development has encouraged aspirations and confidence towards self-development among various stakeholder groups and agencies. Moreover, this also gets connected with the Indian tradition that respects nature and natural resources. The Constitution of India through its Preamble and various other provisions lays down the road map for socio-economic development of the country. All legislative measures and development initiatives and policies are geared towards the attainment of objective set by the Constitution.

The idea of sustainability is not alien to India and hence the commitment towards SDGs is central to the country's own development trajectory as sustainability is historically ingrained in India's ethos. The SDGs have helped in further reinforcing this concept of sustainability. India continues to target and maintain its economic growth, by introducing and implementing various policies and measures relating to sustainable development, climate change, resource efficiency and curbing air pollution. This is well synchronized with the vision of Agenda 2030, international commitments under the Paris Agreement and the vision of partnership under the SDGs. The Indian Parliament has also taken special interest in the SDGs and the actions initiated by it have helped create a wider awareness of the SDGs. The Speaker of the Parliament of India, along with the speakers of other South Asian Parliaments and the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), have launched a special

² In the second term of the current government formed by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in 2019, *Sabka Vishwas* (with trust of everyone) was added as another guiding principle.

South Asia initiative on SDGs for dialogue and cooperation on achieving the SDGs in South Asia culminating in the Colombo Declaration of 2018.³

India has adopted a holistic approach towards the SDGs by launching various national and subnational schemes, as discussed in the later sections. As India gears up to celebrate its 75th anniversary of Independence in 2022, the Prime Minister of India presented a vision of ‘New India’ captioned as “*Sankalp se Siddhi*” (“Attainment through Resolve”), with a comprehensive programme over 2017-2022 that has set goals across various sectors. Greater attention is being placed on developing high-end manufacturing, infrastructure, effective healthcare policies, increased reliance on information technology, ending poverty, social ills and ecological degradation and adopting good governance and technology.

In this context, this paper assesses India’s progress in achieving the SDGs in the first few years since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and identifies major challenges in the areas of policy alignment, institutional structure, financing, stakeholders’ participation and data availability. In the next section, the paper elaborates India’s implementation efforts, challenges and opportunities for achieving the SDGs in the context of the abovementioned areas. The paper also attempts to enumerate some of the efforts being made by subnational governments and Indian states in these areas. In the next section, it further explores the potential of regional cooperation in countries of South Asia in making collaborative efforts for attaining the SDGs. Furthermore, the paper discusses the challenges and opportunities for the SDGs as exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the final section, some key conclusions are presented.

2. SDGs Progress Overview in India

The recent national SDG progress report – the first formal progress report based on the national indicator framework- shows the progress made by the country on SDGs using the latest available data.⁴ The SDG India Index, which measures SDG progress at the subnational level, helps to periodically monitor progress towards meeting the SDGs among Indian states. Drawing on recent national assessments, India’s progress towards achieving select SDGs have been discussed below.

Sustained economic growth (6.2% from 1993-94 to 2003-04 and 8.3% from 2004-05 to 2011-12) has contributed to significant poverty reduction⁵. The incidence of multidimensional poverty has been halved with 271 million people from the most vulnerable sections being lifted out of poverty,

³ See Colombo Declaration on Promoting regional parliamentary cooperation for sustainable, equitable and green economic growth. Available at https://www.ipu.org/sites/default/files/colombo_declaration_draft-e.pdf

⁴ MOSPI (2020).

⁵ NITI Aayog (2017).

and reduction in extreme income poverty from 21.2% in 2011 to 13.4% in 2015.⁶ In a significant move towards addressing multi-dimensional poverty, NITI Aayog, as the nodal agency has constituted a Multidimensional Poverty Index Coordination Committee (MPICC) to map multidimensional poverty at the national level based on global methodology. With efforts geared towards universalizing access to basic services, close to 41% population in rural areas had access to safe and adequate piped water supply in 2019 (from 36.5% in 2017) and nearly 27 lakh Self Help Groups (SHGs) were provided bank credit linkage in 2018-19.

Significant progress has been made in the country in improving food and nutrition security (SDG 2). Stunting among children less than 5 years has declined from 48% to 38.4% between 2005-06 and 2015-16, while the percentage of underweight children has declined from 42.5% to 35.7%. To address the targets under zero hunger (SDG 2), beneficiaries covered under National Food Security Act 2013 have increased from 95% in 2015-16 to 97.6% in 2018-19. Undernourishment remains a huge challenge, as indicated by the high prevalence of stunting and wasting amongst children less than 5 years of age. India has made commendable progress in providing universal access to affordable healthcare through health insurance schemes like the Ayushman Bharat. Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has declined from 130 in 2014-16 to 122 in 2015-17, putting India on track to achieve the SDG 3 target of less than 70 by 2030. Under five mortality rate (per 1000 live births) has decreased from 43 in 2015 to 37 in 2017 along with reduction in infant and neonatal mortality rates. However, despite improvements in health outcomes, challenges remain in access and affordability of health care services and medical infrastructure. Though the number of physicians, nurses and midwives per 10,000 population increased from 35.8 in 2015 to 36.4 in 2016, the country still has one of the lowest per capita health personnel figures.⁷

With awareness generating national campaigns (*Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*) and increase in separate toilets for girls in elementary schools, India has progressed on achieving gender parity in education, with Gender Parity Index of 1.06 and 1.04 at primary and secondary level, respectively. Women's political participation has been rising steadily with women's representation in the lower house of the national parliament rising from 11.4% in 2014 to 14.4% in 2019, yet it still remains low. But gender disparities remain marked in economic participation of women. Number of women in managerial positions, in fact, declined, from 173 per every 1000 persons in 2015-16 to 167, in 2017-18. Female labour force participation for 15-59 age group has shown a declining trend, falling from 33% in 2011-12 to 25.3% in 2017-18. Inequalities continue to persist in women's access to and ownership of land and other assets.

Despite impressive output growth, the target of promoting job-creation and entrepreneurship (SDG 8) is far from being realised, with more than 90% of workers in informal employment, without access to social security benefits and labour standards. Skilling and improving employability of

⁶ NITI Aayog (2020).

⁷ NITI Aayog (2020).

youth population form important priorities with 27-28% of the population comprising of young people. With the third largest start-up ecosystem in the world, start-ups have created 60,000 direct and 1.3-1.8 lakh indirect jobs.⁸ Business and regulatory reforms have helped India improve its ranking in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business—progressing from 142 in 2014 to 63 in 2019. India needs to step up investments in infrastructure, to the tune of USD 1.4 trillion by 2025 to bolster short-term and potential growth in industry and to attain GDP target of USD 5 trillion by 2025. ICT and telecommunication infrastructure have increased substantially, with telephone connections rising by 19% between 2014-15 to 2018-19. Population with internet subscriptions increased to 48.5% in 2018-19 from 27% in 2015-16.⁹

With 31% of the total population residing in urban settlements in 2011, India's urban population is estimated to rise to around 606 million by 2030. This makes sustainable urban transformation (SDG 11) an important policy priority, including reducing ecological footprints of cities and material intensity, along with provision of urban amenities like housing, transportation, clean water and waste treatment. With 15 out of the 20 most polluted cities in the world being in India, air pollution is an emerging area of concern. Waste processing has seen significant increase from 18% in 2015-16 to 60% in 2019-20, with nearly 96% of wards having 100% door to door waste collection system. Indian cities generate around 62 million tonnes of municipal solid waste (MSW) per annum with plastic waste generation of 9.5 million tonnes per annum in 2017. India generates up to 7.2 million tonnes of hazardous waste per annum, which indicates the massive waste management challenges faced by the country.

India is among the top ten countries in the Climate Change Performance Index 2020 based on low per capita emissions levels and energy use and renewable energy targets. India's renewable energy generation capacity has increased by 75% since 2014 and emissions intensity of GDP has come down by 21% by end of 2019, in line with voluntary commitment of reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20-25%, over 2005 levels. With electricity demand expected to triple by 2030, coal sources still account for about 57% of electricity generated. Also, 85% of India's landmass is vulnerable to extreme weather events and climate-induced disasters, reflecting the urgent need for climate adaptation and disaster resilience. Forest cover as percentage of total area has increased marginally from 21.4% in 2015 to 21.7% in 2019, with marginal increases also seen in tree cover and protected areas. Ecosystem degradation is emerging as one of the biggest global environmental threats and as many as 57 of India's diverse fauna species are critically endangered.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ MOSPI (2020).

¹⁰ NITI Aayog (2020).

Birth registration in India has improved to 85% at the national level as of 2017. Percentage of population covered under unique identity system (Aadhar) increased from 77% in 2016 to 90% in 2019 with digital payment transactions rising to 38 billion in 2019-20 from 21 billion in 2017-18. The biggest challenges in meeting targets under SDG 16 relate to the lack of adequate comprehensive and disaggregated data, including crimes against women, children and other vulnerable groups. Inequalities in internet access, digital literacy and access to public services must be addressed to improve participatory governance, through technology driven initiatives.

3. Emerging Indian Experience in Implementation of the SDGs

As countries have committed to SDGs as a global development compact, India presented its first Voluntary National Report (VNR) in 2017 to the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF) for Sustainable Development, which highlighted that many existing programmes by the government are in coherence with the SDGs. According to the 2017 VNR, the India's priorities were to reduce multi-dimensional poverty and provide sustainable livelihoods, along with sustainable economic growth. The major paradigm shift was witnessed from entitlement to entrepreneurship based approach with focus on self-employment, in addition to cooperative federalism and responsible fiscal management with greater stability in the macro-economy and sustainable use of resources. Further, India's second VNR presented in 2020 marked a paradigm shift to the 'whole of the society' approach, with consultations and participation of all key stakeholders- state and local governments, civil society organisations, communities at the grassroots, academia and the business sector- in the preparation process and strong emphasis being placed on the localization of SDGs.

The following part assesses various aspects of SDG implementation process in India in terms of the extent of policy coherence, institutional structures, financing of the SDGs, role of partnerships and stakeholders participation and data availability for SDG monitoring.

3.1. Policy Alignment

3.1.1. Embedding sustainability in national priorities and development agenda

India's development agenda captures the spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, an ancient Indian phrase meaning "the world is one family". In recent times, the Indian Prime Minister's Vision of making Indian economy a global powerhouse and a USD 5 trillion economy by 2024-25 has given a clarion call for establishing a new development strategy. This Vision of "New India" covers all dimensions of development, including social, economic and environment and find a natural convergence with the SDGs philosophy. The national strategy document, 'Strategy for New India@75, lays down a broad-based strategy for making transformative transition to 'clean, inclusive, sustained and sustainable growth' across all strategic domains, comprising 41 sectors-

each mapped to the relevant SDGs.¹¹ The sectors have been grouped into four broad clusters, namely, drivers, infrastructure, inclusion and governance. India's national priorities and major schemes are well aligned with the 2030 Agenda of sustainability.

Although the Planning Commission was disbanded in 2015, the NITI Aayog, as the national nodal agency for overseeing development efforts in the country has been entrusted with the task of implementation of the SDGs in India. It began by carrying out a national level detailed mapping of the 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets with centrally sponsored/central sector schemes and concerned ministries/departments. In August 2018, NITI Aayog revised its earlier mapping of the 17 SDGs and associated targets with Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs) and other government initiatives by covering almost all programmes and schemes implemented by the Government of India, taking into account the interconnectedness across the goals and targets. The exercise mapped the functioning of the Ministries/ Departments concerned with the relevant the relevant goals and targets with focus on SDG-driven implementation.¹²

In a similar manner, almost all states¹³ have mapped out the departments/schemes and programmes in their states with the goals. As part of the localization of the SDGs, the national agenda and its convergence with the global commitment are quite evident through the steps taken by various state governments. Several states have set up specialised SDG Cells or have constituted Task Forces for collecting, validating and analysing data on progress of the SDGs. Through this mapping it would be easier to establish baseline information for various thematic areas and key indicators for monitoring purposes. All state governments embarked upon the process of preparation of their vision documents on SDGs, with almost all of them having prepared or adopted their SDG vision documents. Attempts are being made to integrate SDGs in the development planning processes at the local governments and community levels, through issuance of national and state-specific guidelines and capacity building and facilitation processes for SDG-aligned local development plans. However, challenges remain for the local planning processes and authorities to fully address the SDGs.¹⁴

3.1.2. Existing Schemes and Programmes

NITI Aayog has undertaken extensive efforts to map flagship initiatives that are aligned to SDGs. Many ongoing programmes like the *Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan)*, *National Health Mission (NHM)*, *National Rural Drinking Water Mission*, *Swachh Bharat Mission*, *PMJAY-Ayushman Bharat*, *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY)*, etc. are reflective of a forward-

¹¹ NITI Aayog (2018b).

¹² NITI Aayog, 2020.

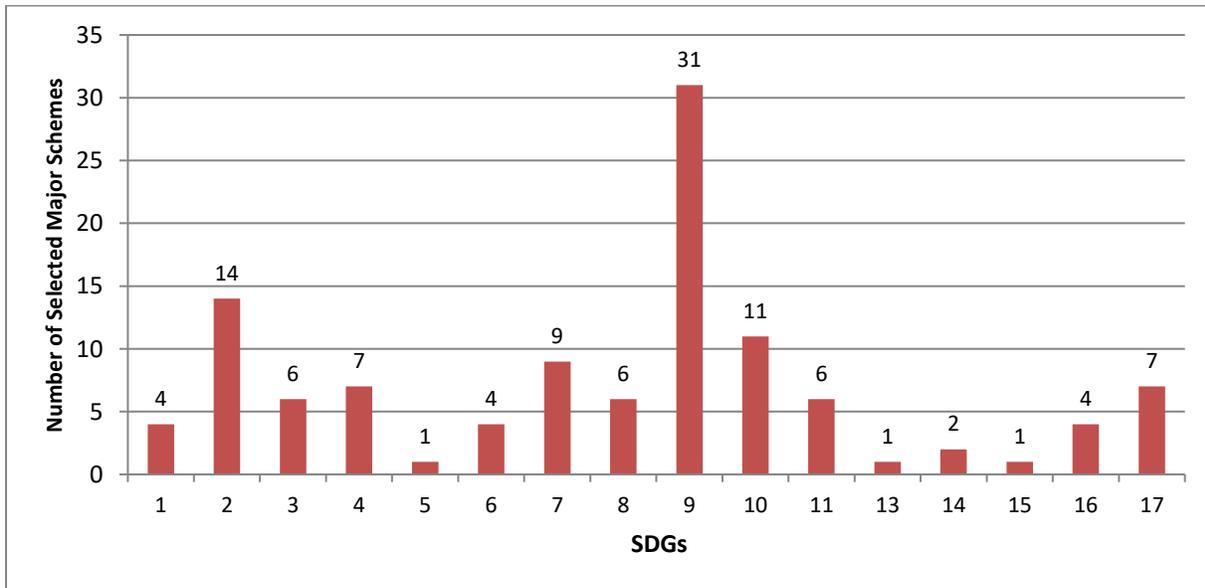
¹³ Adapted from NITI-UN SDG India Index Baseline Report, 2018

¹⁴ NITI Aayog, 2020.

looking framework aimed at better quality of life - clean and healthy environment, safe water and nutritious food.

The paper examines 114 major schemes and programmes, including umbrella schemes and missions, as per the Union Budget 2020-21. The budgetary allocation to various schemes provides a reflection of the national priorities (see Figure 1 and details in Annexure Table 1A). Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan), National Education Mission, National Health Mission, Umbrella ICDS and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), etc. are some of the key flagship programmes, which got high budgetary support in FY 2020-21. The patterns in the budgetary allocations reflects India’s commitment towards the SDGs through emphasis on schemes/programmes with direct and indirect SDG linkages. Special attention can be gauged for infrastructure, industry and innovation (SDG 9), sustainable agriculture and nutrition security (SDG 2), livelihood and reducing poverty (SDG 1), quality education (SDG 4) and ensuring health and well-being for all (SDG 3). The schemes covered are those which directly address an SDG – for instance, supporting SDG1 directly are substantial MGNREGA allocations (BE 2020-21 INR 61,500 crore.) – while budgetary allocations support several SDGs indirectly too. Moreover, to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 *PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana* has been launched which provides for doubling of free food grain entitlement to mitigate the disruptive effects on the pandemic on vulnerable households.

Figure 1: Number of Selected Major Schemes of India as per SDGs



Source: Union Budget 2020-21 Outlay on Major Schemes, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

MGNREGA is being implemented in the country as a social safety net programme for vulnerable groups by providing employment of 100 days per rural household willing to do unskilled manual work (SDG 8). It seeks to strengthen rural livelihoods and create durable assets in rural areas. However, the average days of employment provided per household during 2016-17 to 2019-20 ranged between 45 to 50 days only. This resulted from (i) the low average wage which ranged between INR 161 to INR 182; and (ii) the low fund utilisation capacity of many state governments. It is assessed that more women (54%) have been beneficiaries under this employment scheme.¹⁵

Programmes such as *Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)* for life insurance and *Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)* for accidental death insurance have also been launched. In addition, as farmers' incomes fluctuate significantly due to erratic weather conditions, rendering them vulnerable to poverty, *Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana*, was launched in February 2016, to provide farmers with comprehensive crop insurance coverage. To ensure access to sufficient and nutritious food for children and mothers (SDG 2 and SDG 3), the National Nutrition Mission or *POSHAN Abhiyaan* was launched in 2018 and clubbed under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). It is India's flagship multi-sectoral programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, adolescents, pregnant women, and lactating mothers, aiming to achieve malnutrition free India by 2022. It is too early to evaluate the outcomes of *POSHAN Abhiyaan*, although a Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey 2019 by UNICEF and MoHFW placed incidence of stunting, wasting and underweighted children at 34.7 , 17.0 and 33.4 per cent respectively, which is an improvement over levels assessed in the National Family Health Survey-4. The Mid-Day Meal scheme is one of the world's largest programmes of supplementary school nutrition which provides nutritious cooked meals to 116 million children at primary and upper primary level, with the objective of improving both nutrition and education related outcomes.

Significant achievements have also been recorded under the National Health Mission (SDG 3) such as (i) putting in place around 10 lakh Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) across the country for facilitating, mobilising and providing of community-level care; (ii) setting up of *Rogi Kalyan Samitis* (Patient Welfare Committees); Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committees; and (iii) mainstreaming of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy).¹⁶ Moving toward universal health coverage, the *Ayushman Bharat*, world's largest health protection scheme provides an annual cover of INR 500,000 (USD 6,666.7) to 100 million families from economically weaker groups.¹⁷

¹⁵ NITI Aayog (2020)

¹⁶ James, 2019.

¹⁷ NITI Aayog (2020).

To improve the quality of education to achieve sustainable development and improve the quality of life, all schemes related to literacy/education have been merged into the umbrella of the National Education Mission that comprises of four schemes, viz. *Sakshar Bharat*, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha* and teacher training programmes to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. To ensure equal access to affordable and quality education for girls, the government also launched '*Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana*' as a sub programme of '*Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*', a small deposit scheme for girl child, which would yield an attractive interest rate and provide income tax rebate.

Investment in sustainable industrialization, infrastructure and innovation is essential for economic growth and development. As Indian ports face infrastructural and operational challenges, the *Sagaramala Programme* was initiated in 2016, aiming to reduce domestic cargo transportation and logistics costs for international trade. Government of India is also developing integrated 'Industrial Corridors' in collaboration with states, to accelerate economic growth and planned urbanisation with focus on manufacturing. In order to promote sustainable industrialisation and improve manufacturing industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, *Make in India* was launched in 2014. It offers new approaches such as shifting from SEZs/NIMZs to industrial corridors; strengthening the ecosystem of entrepreneurship development rather than entitlement; introducing initiatives such as Start-up India, Ease of Doing Business, and promotion of sectoral competitiveness. As a result, India's success in a few sectors like pharmaceuticals, automobile/auto components industry, and more recently in mobile handset manufacturing have become evident.¹⁸

Several of these programmes are cross-cutting in nature addressing multiple SDGs. These include *Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana*, *Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana*, *Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana*, *POSHAN Abhiyan*, *Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana*, *Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana*, *Swachh Bharat Mission*, *Smart Cities Mission*, *Namami Gange*, *Stand-up India*, *Sagarmala Programme*, *Ujjawala Scheme*, *Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana*, *National Health Mission (NHM)*, *Swachh - Bharat Mission*; *National Rural Drinking Water Mission*, etc. For instance, the *Jan Dhan Yojana* promoted financial inclusion by expanding access to bank accounts, enhancing access to direct benefits under various social assistance schemes. It also helped reduce gender gaps as women's access to bank accounts increased and of the 380 million accounts opened under the scheme, 54% were owned by women.

3.1.3. Gap Analysis in Policy Planning and Programme

In terms of implementation challenges faced in policy alignment, the first one is the need to develop an effective bottom-up approach of strategies and actions and effective localization of the SDGs. There must be synergies among the development stakeholders at the lowest levels of

¹⁸ Saha and Shaw, 2019

government, i.e. districts, blocks, panchayats for service delivery in implementation and monitoring. In this direction, NITI Aayog has emphasized on fostering cooperative and competitive federalism and building a robust SDG localization model starting from the planning process itself. There is lack of clarity on the extent of alignment of the targets and indicators that these schemes and programmes address with that of the SDG targets. Without an alignment of target fulfilment timelines with those in the SDGs, there is no indication of the priority accorded to these schemes and therefore resources allocated for their fulfilment.

Another major challenge is to bridge the gap of financial needs for sustainable and inclusive development. There is no direct budget allocation for the SDGs, although India's own development aspirations are aligned with the concept of sustainability. Various major flagship programmes and schemes announced in the last five years since the adoption of the SDGs emphasize scaling up and accelerating the delivery of social services to the poorest of the poor. However, it is to ensure that the budget allocations align with SDG priorities at all levels of government. Many states are attempting to link their outcome budgets to state-specific SDG indicators. Assam was the first state to do so. At present, 16 states and union territories (UTs) are aligning budgets to SDGs.¹⁹

3.2. Institutional architecture

The interconnectedness of the SDGs requires an effective coordination and convergence mechanism at all levels, to achieve agreed goals and targets. Achieving them will require collective national efforts to deliver on the people's aspirations towards socio-economic progress. Therefore, it is important to have convergence of actions of all actors, that is, a 'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approach to reflect the political willingness and ownership for SDGs in India.

3.2.1. Whole-of-Government Approach and Institutional Coherence

Given India's vast and multi-tiered governance system, the federal system has provided for separate responsibilities for the union and state Government. With the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Amendments in 1992, the Constitution of India secured the participation of all people in the economic, social, cultural and political processes from grass root level upwards by introducing local self-governance in rural and urban areas. Along with the demarcation of responsibilities between the centre and the states, this institutionalization of decentralized local development planning has enabled all-round participatory development involving central, state actors and local governments. This provided the foundation for a conducive institutional structure for implementing the SDGs effectively with national and subnational governments being active partners and collaborators to drive the SDG agenda forward. The main need is to ensure that there

¹⁹ NITI Aayog, 2019

are sufficient resources, capacities and knowledge at all levels along with greater institutional interlinkages to effectively implement the Goals.

3.2.2. Ecosystem for SDG Governance

In India, the NITI Aayog has been mandated as the nodal body to oversee the implementation of the 2030 Agenda across the entire country at all levels. This calls for coordination across all central ministries, states and UTs, civil society organisations, think-tanks, the private sector and academia. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is the nodal agency for facilitating coordination with various line ministries and departments for SDG monitoring and evaluation. Constitutionally mandated local governments (both rural and urban) have the autonomy of decision-making in numerous areas related to the SDGs. The overall national strategy to manage the development programmes, necessitates horizontal and vertical institutional coordination, whereby central ministries have to coordinate with state government departments and other stakeholders. Civil society organizations (CSOs) in India have wide networks across the country with deep engagements with local communities, which facilitates the localization of the SDGs. The private sector has knowledge and resources to potentially contribute to the SDGs. Together, these institutional arrangements along with effective coordination with diverse stakeholders at multiple levels can help achieve the SDGs provided all institutions and partners coordinate effectively and play their assigned roles with ownership, enthusiasm and resolve.

3.2.3. Localizing the SDGs: Engagement with states and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

India has taken several initiatives for localization of the SDGs. At the subnational level, actions at state and district level including decentralised policy and planning are crucial for ensuring localization of SDGs. Central government has used the governance model of cooperative and competitive federalism for implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes and Programmes since it is the states implementing these programmes and schemes. State governments are collaborating with the NITI Aayog, MoSPI, various UN agencies, think tanks, academia, experts and civil society organisations along with the private sector to prioritise the SDGs in accordance with local challenges, capacities and local means of implementation. Some states are prioritising specific targets and indicators based on their own local needs and local context. States and UTs have set up appropriate institutional structures for implementation of SDGs in their own specific contexts by mapping nodal departments and establishing high level committees, usually chaired by the Chief Secretary of states. Thematic working groups are formed in coordination with line departments and districts given the multi-sectoral focus of Goals and SDG targets.

In rural India, the PRIs are responsible for advocating and implementing the SDGs through local development plans. Many SDGs and targets are within the ambit of the 29 subjects listed in the XI Schedule of the Indian Constitution that enshrines powers and authority to enable Gram Panchayats to function as institutions of self-government for local development. However, states

have not devolved all 29 functions which must be carried out quickly. Across the country, Gram Panchayats are preparing Gram Panchayat Development Plans to integrate the SDGs. Emphasis is being given to strengthen district planning and guidelines are being prepared for this purpose.²⁰ The elected representatives of Gram Panchayats have the mandate to implement policy and plans in consultation with the community at grass root level. In this context, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has prepared training manuals and handbooks from the perspective of local governments for elected members so that they are equipped with information on SDG-oriented local planning.

To empower rural poor people through internet technology, the Government has launched the Bharat Net Project to provide broadband connectivity to all the 250 thousand Gram Panchayats, having a speed of 100 Mbps that will provide internet accessibility to all. So far 123,854 Gram Panchayats have been connected by optical fiber under it against the target to connect all the Gram Panchayats. Such initiatives would help to ensure better access to e-governance facilities at the ground level and would enhance monitoring capacities.

Some initiatives have also been taken at the district level for localization of the SDGs. Jharkhand has initiated a *Yojana Banao Abhiyan* at Gram Sabha level. Telangana has established ‘District Knowledge and Innovation Centers’ (DKICs) in all the 31 districts. The task of DKIC is to provide inputs for policy decisions by district administrations and help in monitoring and achieving the SDG goals at district and sub-district level.

In the light of the areas discussed above, states’ strategies and approaches can be classified under five broad themes: (i) setting up institutional structure (institutional efforts); (ii) mapping of development schemes and programmes to nodal departments responsible as per the goals; (iii) budgetary initiatives; (iv) capacity development including through partnerships; and (v) monitoring and evaluation. More than 17 States and Union Territories have produced Vision/Action plans for Agenda 2030.²¹ Assam was the first amongst these and adopted the SDGs through a Government Order (GO) on 28 December 2015. It also formally launched “Assam 2030 Initiative” on 1 January 2016, right at the commencement of the SDGs era following up with a vision document, namely Assam 2030.

Almost all states have by now identified the nodal departments and/or nodal agencies (such as SDG Centres or cells etc.) to coordinate, collect data, spread awareness and build dynamic interrelationships²² for effective implementation of the SDGs. For example, Assam established a

²⁰ NITI Aayog, 2019

²¹ NITI Aayog-UN, 2018.

²² SDGs are interlinked and interconnected so the departments has to converge and collaborate across sectors and departments/agencies for working towards sustainable and balance development of the states.

‘Centre for Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs)’ and assigned the Transformation and Development Department as the nodal department.²³ Madhya Pradesh State Planning Commission (SPC) has established a dedicated SDG Cell and Policy Planning and SDG Monitoring cell within each department. Many states (like Assam, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh) have identified district level structures (e.g. district SDG cell, District Planning committee etc.) while several states have setup high-level mechanisms, involving Chief Minister or Chief Secretary, for policy development and monitoring.

In the spirit of cooperative federalism, NITI Aayog has constituted sub-groups, with Chief Ministers and Lieutenant Governors of states and UTs as members such as on rationalisation of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes; Swachh Bharat Abhiyan; and Skill Development programme. Further, the NITI Aayog has collaborated with the states on task forces related to elimination of poverty, use of technology for agricultural insurance, and agricultural development.

3.3. Financing for Development

3.3.1. SDG Financing Needs

Financing of the SDGs will require huge investments. To achieve this, India needs an inclusive and innovative financing approach in tandem with high economic growth and prioritization and scaling up investments in the social sectors and on environmental management. A study by UNESCAP (2020) argues that none of the SDGs would be met in the Asia and the Pacific region by 2030²⁴. Although the region has shown significant improvements since 2000, the scale and pace of efforts is insufficient to meet the Goals by 2030 unless accelerated actions are undertaken. Despite immense efforts to reduce poverty throughout the MDG period, around 34% of poor people still lived in South Asia in 2016. Major challenges for South Asia, particularly India, are multidimensional poverty, gender inequality and overall inequality in general, and need for urgent climate action. To meet these development gaps, large resources need to be committed towards these objectives.

A UN agency estimates that the financial gap for developing countries is USD 2.5-3 trillion per year.²⁵ UNESCAP (2019) estimated that Asia-Pacific developing countries need to invest an additional \$1.5 trillion per year, equivalent to 4% of annual average GDP for the period 2016-2030 for achieving the SDGs by 2030. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) provides a comprehensive framework for long-term investment for sustainability; however, there is no analytical framework drawn to bridge the gap in domestic resources for public spending.²⁶ In the

²³ Chatterjee (2018).

²⁴ UNESCAP (2020).

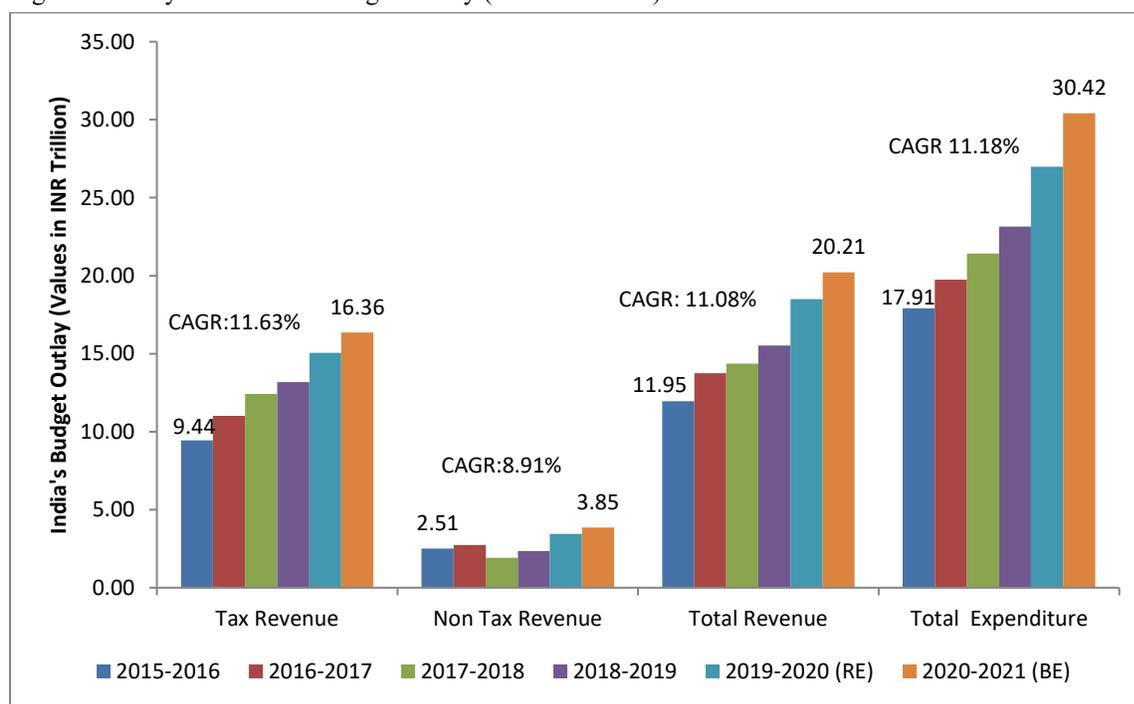
²⁵ UNCTAD World Investment Report, 2014.

²⁶ RIS, 2016.

developing countries, major challenges towards financing include limited fiscal space, lack of institutional capacity and weak financial architecture. Thus, the role of international support for developing countries is critical.

In the case of India, a first level estimate indicates an average annual gap in SDG finance at US\$ 565 billion²⁷. At present, around 70 per cent of the budgetary allocation goes to development expenditure as per Union Budget 2020-21. India's total tax revenues have increased from INR 9.438 trillion in 2015-16 to INR 16.359 trillion in 2020-21, i.e. showing a CAGR of 11.63 per cent over five years. Similarly, non-tax revenues grew at a CAGR of 8.91 per cent during 2015-16 to 2020-21 (BE). India's total budgetary expenditure has increased at a CAGR of 11.18 per cent during this period (Figure 2). However, India's effective revenue deficit was 1.3 per cent of GDP in 2019-20, while it was 1.5 per cent in 2017-18.

Figure 2: Analysis of India's Budget Outlay (in INR Trillion)



Source: Union Budget of Various Years, Government of India.

India's major development expenditures are spent on a whole range of development programmes and schemes, particularly, the central sector schemes and centrally Sponsored schemes. Centrally Sponsored Schemes are managed by both, central and State governments. Details of the expenditure distribution are provided in table 1.

²⁷ Development Alternatives, 2015.

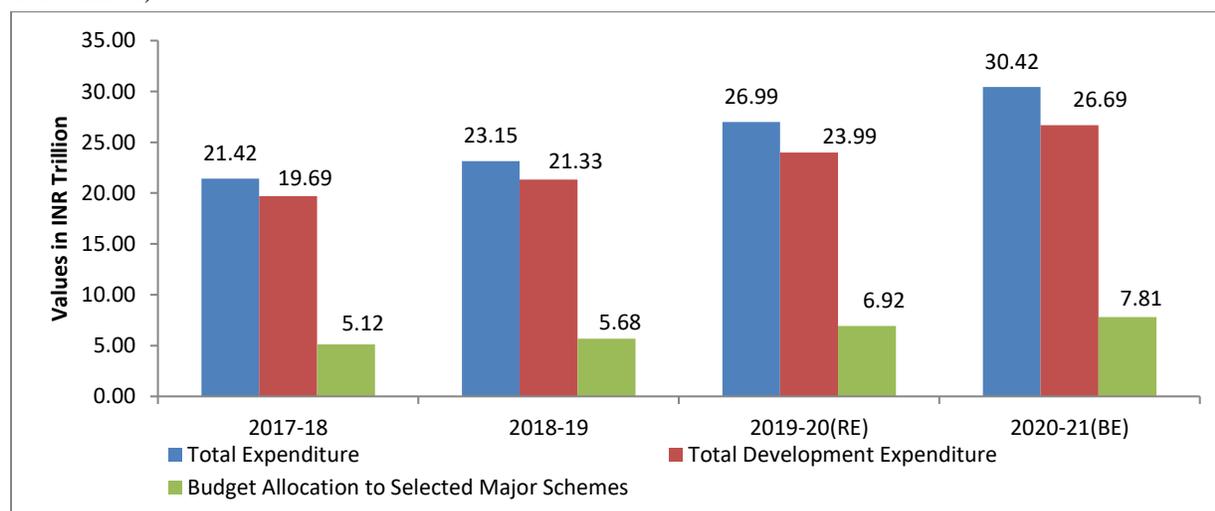
Table 1: Share of Total Budgetary Expenditure Distribution of India (in %)

Budgetary Expenditure	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20 (RE)	2020-21 (BE)
Central Sector Schemes/Projects	29.11	29.84	27.44	27.58	28.65	27.34
Centrally Sponsored Schemes	11.38	12.22	13.33	12.79	11.74	11.17
Estab. expenditure of the Centre	18.70	21.46	22.08	22.51	21.02	20.04
Finance Commission Grants	4.72	4.84	4.31	4.05	4.58	4.93
Other Central Sector Expenditure	33.11	28.88	29.08	29.26	27.48	29.18
Other Grants/Loans/Transfers	2.98	2.77	3.76	3.81	6.53	7.34

Source: Union Budget of Various Years, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

The Government of India is focusing on large-scale programmes with the objective of providing universal access to social security, target-based approach for effective social security nets and facilitating the process of creating livelihood assets. An analysis of India’s budgetary outlays on major flagship programmes carried out by the Government of India, shows 114 major development schemes in the budget outlay 2020-21. These schemes and programmes are centrally sponsored and major central sector schemes. These programmes and schemes are strongly aligned with the SDGs. Over the span of four years, expenditure on these selected schemes has increased from INR 5115.52 billion in 2017-18 to INR 7814.88 billion in 2020-21, i.e. showing a CAGR of 15.17 per cent (Figure 3). Detailed analysis of the flagship programmes is given in the Annexure Table 1A.

Figure 3: Budgetary Allocation of Selected Major Schemes of Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (in INR Trillion)



Source: Author’s calculation based on Union Budget of Various Years, Government of India.

Table 2 shows the budgetary outlays on the selected major schemes, which are directly linked to specific goals. Almost 75 per cent of the government expenditures of major schemes are directly on industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9), zero hunger (Goal 2), poverty (Goal 1) and health (Goal 3). During the period of 2017-2020, a huge amount of investment has been made in the area of nutrition and hunger, job creation and energy sector. Government has spent INR 746.36 billion in 2017-18 on Goal 2, which significantly increased to 1.8 trillion in 2020-21 (i.e. 8 per cent).

SDG Goal	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020 (RE)	2020-2021 (BE)
9	1841.18	2071.80	2332.84	2702.39
2	746.36	834.31	1467.19	1848.76
1	697.31	760.08	872.31	789.29
3	377.83	401.94	466.18	513.64
4	320.02	374.78	450.97	485.96
11	247.64	282.03	302.62	358.79
8	96.66	161.28	215.53	265.27
6	278.88	231.67	211.92	254.34
10	188.35	194.75	205.51	215.92
7	131.40	162.49	176.69	167.24
16	77.82	90.52	96.74	89.14
17	70.96	65.94	74.65	70.38
13	18.90	19.04	17.89	21.50
5	9.45	11.38	9.61	11.63
14	3.21	4.85	9.00	11.37
15	9.55	9.78	7.87	9.26
Total	5115.53	5676.64	6917.52	7814.88

Source: Author's calculation based on Union Budget 2020-21 Outlay on Major Schemes, Ministry of Finance, Government of India. Note: Graded colour scale red to green (lowest to highest); Values are sorted by highest allocation as per 2020-21(BE).

The challenge of SDG financing is huge. In their VNR presentations made by 46 countries in 2018, almost all highlighted alignment of policy with the SDGs; but most indicated lack of detailed plans for financing of development projects. A study by Chimhowu *et al.* 2019, found that 79 out of 107 countries had no specific costing or strategy about financing SDGs.

In India, alignment of flagship initiatives of the Government of India with the SDGs got special attention of the Finance Commission, which recommended provision of performance-based grants to development of aspirational districts²⁸ and blocks and for implementation of agricultural reforms. Also, the Commission recommended grants-in-aid of INR 7,375 crores for nutrition in 2020-21 and for some other priority sectors such as pre-primary education, judiciary, rural connectivity, railways, police training and housing.

Requirement for private investment is huge for infrastructure development. For instance, 3 out of 10 people lack safe drinking water and almost 1 billion people need electricity in the world. To

²⁸ NITI Aayog initiated a new programme for rapid improvements in the low-performing districts in the country in January 2018, called the aspirational districts. These 112 aspirational districts have been identified on the basis of indicators in areas of health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development, and basic infrastructure - including access to road, potable water, rural electrification and sanitation.

improve access and availability of basic necessity requires trillions of dollars and effective spending.²⁹ In addition the need for rapid transition to a low-carbon economy poses several challenges for India, such as limited institutional capacity, including data availability for monitoring and evaluation, limited range of financial instruments to mobilise domestic resources to raise private investments for development, etc. An infrastructure related World Bank country report for India found that infrastructure investment needs are vast: just urban infrastructure investment requirement amount to USD 40 billion per year over the next two decades.³⁰ To secure funds of this magnitude will be a major challenge. Private sector investments could alleviate the problem if sufficient incentives could be provided.

The NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Finance have partnered with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to undertake a study on SDG costing for select sectors, namely, education, health, electricity, roads and water and sanitation. It is estimated that significant progress in these SDG sectors would require an additional annual spending of 6.2 per cent of GDP by 2030. Initial estimates suggest that an aggregate USD 106 billion would be needed over 2020-2030 to meet universal coverage of safe drinking water and sanitation for all households. Among the potential strategies being explored for SDG financing, along with fiscal and financial measures such as improving national tax systems, reducing illicit financial flows, infrastructure finance and capital markets, promoting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); improving institutional and technical capacities remain crucial.³¹

3.3.2. Financing of the SDGs in the states

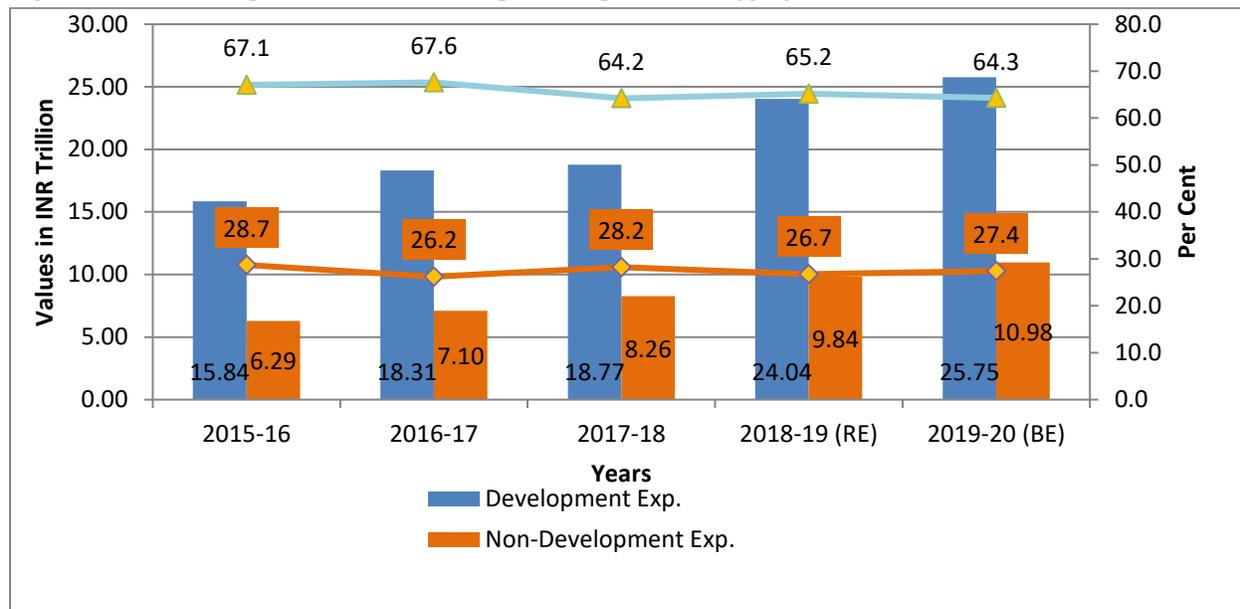
Financing for the SDGs is also a crucial challenge for the states. Within their fiscal resources, state governments are also investing in the welfare of their populations and aspiring to achieve rapid economic growth (Figure 4). The majority of the resources of the state governments goes to support social activities including education, sports, art and culture, and economic activities including agriculture, rural development, energy and health. The states now have a larger pool of resources after the 14th Finance Commission enhanced the share of the states from 32 per cent to 42 per cent in the divisible pool of taxes. With the rationalisation of the central schemes, states have greater autonomy in development spending.

²⁹ Rozenberg and Fay, 2019.

³⁰ World Bank 2018.

³¹ NITI Aayog (2020).

Figure 4: State Development and Non-Development Expenditure: Aggregate (in INR Trillion)

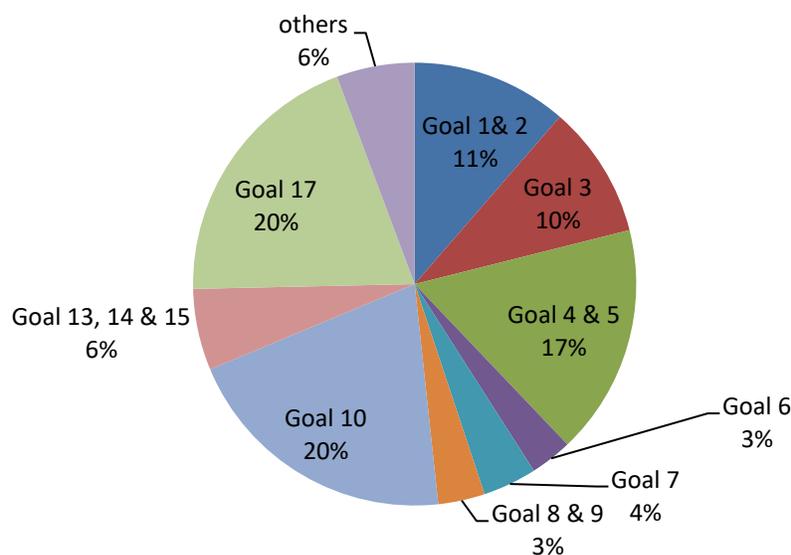


Source: RBI State Finance: A Study of Budgets.

Apart from attempting to augment their overall resources, states are making attempts to better allocate their resources towards the SDGs. Bihar has mapped the financial target in the Bihar SDG Vision Document. Jharkhand has focused its attention on key areas like agriculture, gender, and empowerment of marginalised sections. Assam became the first state in India to formally adopt the SDGs and has taken several measures towards their implementation including developing Outcome Budgets supporting the SDGs which can serve as a good practice for other states and countries/ regions like South Asia (Box 1).

Box 1: Assam’s Outcome Budgets Supporting the SDGs

Assam has taken special measures to ensure fiscal resources are allocated to SDGs tuning its budget document in 2016-17 to focus on the SDGs, becoming the first state in India to prepare an SDG-oriented outcome budget. Overall, an amount of INR 47,786 crore (almost 55 per cent of total allocation) was mapped against all goals of SDG in the budget outlays for 2017-18. Priority areas were reducing inequality (20.4 per cent), partnership for goals (19.6 per cent, and quality education (15.8 per cent). The Figure below presents the distribution of budgetary allocation to various goals along with their relative share in total allocation to SDGs.



Through this comprehensive exercise of budgetary expenditure mapping, understanding of SDGs among departments has improved significantly. Such an exercise is an important takeaway for other states, particularly, small states of the North-East Region. The process was led by the Centre for Sustainable Development Goals. The Government of Assam is in the process of developing a monitoring framework, which would allow all flagship projects supporting the SDGs in the state to be monitored on the basis of financial and physical targets enabling enhanced monitoring of projects supporting SDG implementation. Thus, course correction can be taken immediately, if needed during the process of achieving the SDGs in Assam.

Source: Economic Survey of Assam 2017-18.

3.3.3. External Financing

Gaps in domestic resources for the SDGs can be partly filled through external financing. Current declining trends for ODA in real terms have, however, been a matter of grave concern. As per the UN flagship report on Financing for Development 2019, OECD DAC countries have not met their commitment of 0.7 per cent of GNI. In 2017, ODA provided by DAC members amounting to USD 147.2 billion which was 0.1 per cent less than the previous year in real terms. Most of the funding reflected growth in aid for humanitarian assistances to a few countries addressing conflicts, war and drought. In case of India, external grant assistance has declined significantly at a CAGR of 22.7 per cent over the 6 years (Table 3). Even multilateral financing has shown a declining trend

over this period. India’s overall total grants-in-aid and contribution has declined at a CAGR of 13.07 per cent in 2015-16 to 2020-21.

Table 3: External Sources of Finance in India (in INR crore)

External Source of Finance	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020 (RE)	2020-2021 (BE)
Multilateral	66.95		281.75	102.57	65	55
Bilateral	312.57		21.18	59	36	35
International Bodies	1494.71	1299.59	1133.63	671.63	260	310
External Grant Assistance	1874.23	1299.59	1436.56	833.2	361	400
Total-Grants-in-aid and Contribution	1881.23	1299.59	3582.2	1063.19	974	812

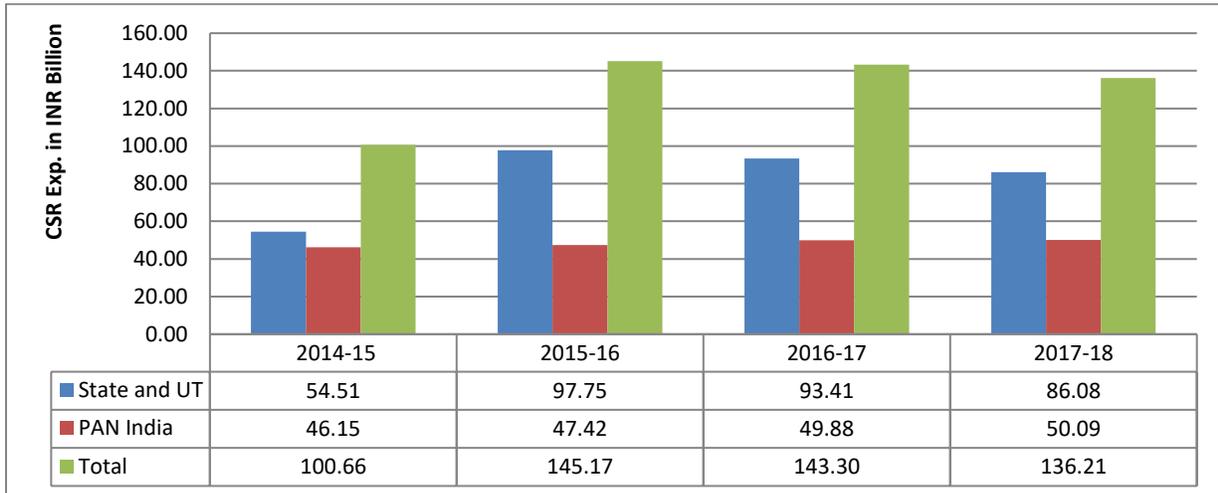
Source: Revenue Receipt of Union Budget from Various Years, Government of India.

3.3.3. Private financing

Para 67 of Agenda 2030 explicitly highlights the importance of businesses and their role in supporting sustainable development. Increasingly business communities are taking an active part in implementing actions in support of the SDGs. The Companies Act, 2013 lays down criterion for companies to contribute towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) out of their profits. The activities that can be covered under CSR are quite adaptable, as evident from assistance extended by companies in the fight against COVID-19, right from FY 2019-20.

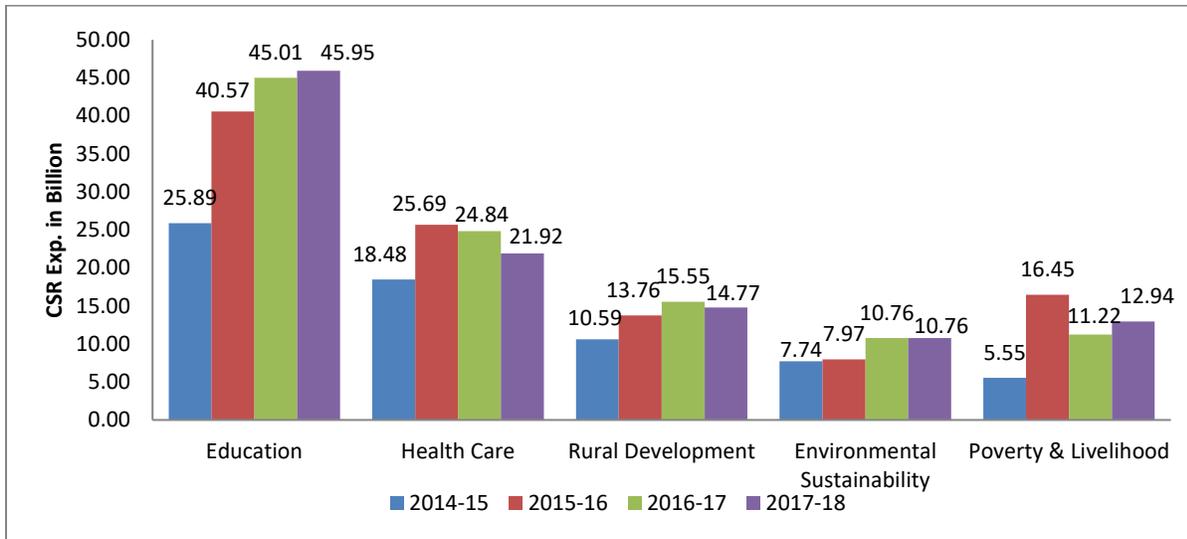
Pan-India CSR expenditures have increased at 2 per cent during four financial years 2014-15 to 2017-18 (Figure 5) from INR 100 billion crores in 2014-15 to INR 136 billion crore in 2017-18. Figure 6 shows the top five sectors of CSR funding, comprising more than 70 per cent of such spending in 2020-21. These sectors are education (34 per cent), health care (16 per cent), rural development (11 per cent), poverty & livelihood enhancement (9 per cent) and environmental sustainability (8 per cent). In fact, there is a provision to give preference to the local areas around the place of operations of a company.

Figure 5: Corporate Social Responsibility expenditures during 2014-18 (in INR Billion)



Source: Annual Report of Ministry of Corporate Affairs 2019-20. Note data of CSR is latest by 30 June 2019.

Figure 6: Top Five Sectors of the CSR Spending in India (in INR Billion)



Source: Annual Report of Ministry of Corporate Affairs 2019-20. Note data of CSR is latest by 30 June 2019

3.4. Partnerships and stakeholder participation

The MDG framework was criticized as being exclusive and disconnected with the larger society resulting in lack of ownership. In contrast, the SDGs have been participatory and focus on inclusiveness and forging strong partnerships with a separate goal (SDG 17) on means of implementation. The commitment made in the SDGs of ‘leaving no one behind’ and to reach the furthest behind first is not possible without affirming synergistic approach among all the stakeholders. Achieving the SDGs requires a synergistic relationship between governments at

various levels and various actors including academia, think-tanks, private sector, civil society organisations and stakeholder groups such as youth and women.

3.4.1. Role of Parliament

Unlike the MDGs, Parliamentarians have been involved at a much earlier stage in propelling the SDG agenda forward.³² In India effective leadership has been shown by the Parliament of India concerning the SDGs. Many conferences, workshops and consultations on them have been organised by the Parliament.³³ Special workshops³⁴ have also been organised on various SDGs for Members of Parliament, in which domain experts on the subjects made presentations on key issues and challenges. These workshops have been contributing to the quality of the discussions in Parliament on the SDGs. A National Women Legislators' Conference was also organised by Parliament in March 2016 on the contribution of empowered women towards nation-building. India hosted the second BRICS Women Parliamentarians Forum in August 2016 on 'Women Parliamentarians: Enablers for achieving SDGs'. Another regional initiative was the South Asian Speakers' Summit on SDGs organised in February 2017. The Summit adopted the Indore Declaration emphasising, among other things, the need for harmonising development with environmental protection and eliminating poverty and creating gender-sensitive elected bodies at grassroots level. The Fourth Speakers' Forum was held in Male in 2019.

3.4.2. Role of Think-tanks

Government of India draws on think-tanks for effective policy dialogues and capacity building in the area of economic issues, development agenda, social norms, social policies, etc. The role of think-tanks is important in decision making as they provide empirical evidence-based research inputs on issues pertaining to the SDGs such as inequality, poverty, shaping healthy living, etc. Think-tanks act as knowledge banks to the government and bridge the gap between sectors and stakeholders to enable efficient and effective policy making.

The NITI Aayog is the apex government think-tank playing the role of catalyst, facilitator and enabler for SDGs in India. In the first three years of the SDGs, NITI Aayog has partnered with Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and UN India for a series of National Consultations. These consultations involved the principal actors from states, including the governments, to ensure ownership of the SDGs in coherence with national and state level welfare programmes. The aim was to promote an action-oriented approach towards developmental targets in the SDGs with inputs feeding into the VNR 2017. For the 2020 VNR, the SDG Taskforce

³² Kaushik, 2019

³³ Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2017.

³⁴ For the benefit of the Members of Parliament, Speaker's Research Initiatives had done a workshop on SDGs with Ministry of External Affairs, NITI Aayog and Research and Information System for Developing Countries in Parliament Complex on 2nd August, 2016.

comprised senior officers/from key central ministries, state governments with think tanks playing an important role as knowledge and advocacy partners.

RIS has also been collaborating with key think tanks, development partners and international organisations in India on specific issues relating to the SDGs to strengthen knowledge partnerships. For instance, RIS was knowledge partner with World Food Programme India for drawing up a roadmap on SDG 2.³⁵ Some of the other premier think tanks supporting the SDG agenda include the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), which is one of the India's oldest and largest economic policy research institute; the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI); the Observer Research Foundation (ORF); and the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER). For example, an innovative model has been developed by the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), which involves providing training courses (including online) to primary care physicians and others in the health sector. This model has been adopted by various state governments and also municipalities such as the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. Many states are also taking active measures to involve think tanks for the SDGs implementation. Maharashtra, for example, has set up a body called Government Industry Think Tank to get inputs from industry and thereby to develop syllabi for skills development to suit industry demands.

3.4.3. Role of Civil Society Organisations

Civil society organisations are playing a crucial role at the national level in supplementing governments' efforts in localisation and implementation of the SDGs. Over a thousand CSOs were part of the 2020 VNR consultation process, providing critical insights from specific population groups.. Various CSOs (such as National Foundation for India) are supporting states such as Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka with planning, budgeting and institutional development. Specialised CSOs such as Sightsavers India engages with people with disability. Organisations such as National Alliance Group for Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (NAG DNT) and Praxis-Institute for Participatory Practices are involved in data collection and analysis to explore the scope of government and private sector in achieving specific SDGs for marginalised sections. In the fiscal domain, the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) has been highlighting the need for increased budgetary allocations for universal social protection. Water Aid India have been working for SDG 6(Clean Water and Sanitation), with focus on WASH and cleaning of Ganga river.

³⁵ Notable contributions include publishing a comprehensive volume titled "India and Sustainable Development Goals: The Way Forward" launched by Late Smt. Sushma Swaraj, then Minister of External Affairs on 7 October 2016; organizing high level panel discussions at the UN Headquarters in New York and the New York University in September 2015, alongside the UN General Assembly that formally adopted the SDGs; and conducting annual capacity building programmes on SDGs under ITEC for developing countries.

The CSOs are also active at the state level. Most states have been conducting capacity building programmes on the SDGs for officials at different levels of the governments such as state departments, agencies, SDG cells, district and sub-district level officials and personnel dealing with monitoring and evaluation of SDGs. They have collaborated with UN agencies and civil society organisations to carry out these programmes. For example, Madhya Pradesh organised capacity building at local government level through *Jan Abhiyan Parishad* (a government sponsored NGO) for its work force which in turn has undertaken sensitisation of 23,000 Panchayats in Madhya Pradesh. Similarly, the Centre for SDGs in Assam is routinely conducting training for different stakeholders at state, district and local levels and involving CSOs amongst others. Jharkhand has also conducted capacity building programmes for Panchayati raj representatives.

3.4.4. Role of Private Sector

SDG financing is a challenge and requires robust involvement of the private sector. Several industry associations have come forward (such as FICCI, CII and ASSOCHAM), in India to support the SDGs. In 2016, for example, FICCI organised the “India Sustainability Conclave”.³⁶ Four key areas for private sector collaboration were identified³⁷: (i) pooling of CSR funds to achieve significant scale up in sustainability initiatives; (ii) skill development; (iii) innovation and technology (example of India’s auto manufacturers coming together to develop components to ensure quality and to drive down costs); and (iv) advocacy. The Conclave also introduced the concept of “sustainable investment” which called upon investors to consider environmental, social and governance factors when making investment decisions. Similarly, in 2016-17, CII and ITC Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development (CESD) organised a sustainability summit on the theme of “Global Goals & Competiveness.” CII also initiated³⁸ an action group of business stakeholders interested in improving human rights records in their value chains. In August 2018, NITI Aayog initiated a partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for three years, to spur private sector involvement on the SDGs.³⁹ Initiated by the Government of India, the development of the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights is underway, which has considerable alignment with the SDGs.⁴⁰

³⁶ Press Release by FICCI, “Revamped National Voluntary Guidelines for Corporate Sustainability in Public Domain soon 2-day ‘India Sustainability Conclave’ gets under way” on 7th July 2016.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Adopted from CII-ITC Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development Website, available at <<http://sustainabledevelopment.in/project-details.php?id=228>>

³⁹ Press Information Bureau.(2018). NITI Aayog and CII Launch Partnership on SDGs 8 August 2018. Retrieved from <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=181656>

⁴⁰ NITI Aayog (2020).

Leading Indian companies have made effective interventions and have provided innovative solutions in order to further the SDG agenda. Initiatives have been taken to integrate and assimilate SDGs into the business action goals. For example, companies of the TATA group have mapped their business model and CSR activities with the 17 SDGs. An integrated water and sanitation programme has been initiated by HSBC in Barmer and Jodhpur districts of Rajasthan, in partnership with *Jal Bhagirathi Foundation (JBF)*, a CSO.⁴¹ Indian businesses have been an active partner in government led interventions in critical areas such as financial inclusion, and are undertaking initiatives related to resource efficiency, circular economy, climate change mitigation and renewable energy. Along with frameworks and initiatives to mainstream sustainability in business value chains, there is need to diversify the CSR ecosystem and focus on regions and groups being left behind and to encourage participation of smaller business entities.⁴²

3.4.5. Role of Youth

As per the India's Census 2011, 422 million (34.8 per cent) people are young and if India is potentially able to take advantage of its "demographic dividend", it can spur rapid economic growth. The National Youth Policy 2014 proposes to empower India's youth and harness their full potential by actively engaging them for the success of India's own developmental aspirations. India's youth must take ownership of the SDG agenda and investing in youth needs to be a national priority. With SDGs focused on the needs of the future generation, youth form an important priority among the 9 major groups within the UN in India system for engagement and participation. An example of youth-led organizations supporting the SDG implementation process, is the YP Foundation, that has initiated the Butterfly Project to empower marginalised young women from poor communities in Rajasthan and Delhi. It focuses on developing leadership among young women and girls, to address the issues of identity, human rights, sexual and reproductive rights and discrimination through digital media.⁴³

3.5. Monitoring SDGs and Data Gap

3.5.1. Data collection architecture

Monitoring of the SDGs relies primarily on official data. The official data collection system in India is highly decentralised and both the central government and the state governments are involved in this process. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is the national coordinating agency for both national and sub-national statistical systems, and mandated to maintain data protocols, standards and to define methodologies for data collection to ensure

⁴¹ Several public sector enterprises are also supporting the SDG movement. The State Bank of India (SBI) is trying to solve waste management problems in villages of Rajasthan by setting up community-run solid waste management systems. The Gas Authority of India limited (GAIL) has initiated the 'Hawa Badlo Campaign' in order to spread awareness on air pollution (FICCI, 2018).

⁴² NITI Aayog, 2020.

⁴³ UN, 2018.

comparability. The national statistical system, manned by professional statisticians from cadre services namely, Indian Statistical Service (ISS) and Subordinate State Service (SSS), has comparatively better capacity as compared to state statistical systems which varies over the states. The MoSPI is implementing a scheme, namely, Support for Statistical Strengthening which is providing financial assistance to state governments for augmenting their statistical capacity. MoSPI has constituted six sectoral committees with representatives from relevant data source Ministries, UN Agencies, research institutions for working on the methodologies of tier 2 and tier 3 SDG indicators in the Indian context and identifying data gaps in monitoring of SDGs,

3.5.2. Indicator Framework

National level. In India NITI Aayog is responsible for overall coordination of the SDGs, while the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is responsible for developing the SDG indicator set and the supporting data. Accordingly, MoSPI has prepared the National Indicator Framework (NIF) after widespread consultations with stakeholders at national and state levels. The NIF currently comprises 306 indicators for SDGs 1 to 16. For SDG 17 (strengthening means of implementation and global partnership), no indicator has yet been proposed. Moreover, indicators for 41 targets (including 19 targets for Goal 17) are yet to be developed. A High Level Steering Committee (HLSC)⁴⁴ under the Chairmanship of Chief Statistician of India (CSI) & Secretary has been instituted, to periodically review and refine the NIF.⁴⁵

States' level. The State Governments have been given flexibility to develop their own state level indicators taking into consideration local priorities, for which NIF will serve as a basis. A study conducted by the NITI Aayog⁴⁶ reveals that the state governments are in the process of evolving indicators for their respective States. Some state governments are also developing State-specific dashboards, while some other are aligning their existing dashboards to the indicator frameworks.

Comparison of NIF with UN Indicator Framework. The global indicator set evolved by UN Statistical Commission and endorsed by the UN General Assembly in July 2017 comprises of 232 unique indicators (excluding duplicate and triplicate ones). Based on the level of methodological development and the availability of data, all indicators have been classified into three tiers⁴⁷ to facilitate implementation. As of 11 December 2019 there were 116 indicators under Tier I, 92

⁴⁴ MoSPI, Government of India Gazette Notification dated 2nd January 2019.

⁴⁵ RIS also evolved National indicators comprising of a set of 50 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are output-outcome oriented (Kumar and Anand, 2019).

⁴⁶ NITI Aayog (2019)

⁴⁷ The UN global indicators have been grouped into three tiers namely, tier I, tier II and tier III. Tier I are those indicators which are conceptually clear and data is available, tier II are also conceptually clear but data availability is an issue and tier III are those for which methodology for compilation of indicator is yet to be evolved.

under Tier II and 20 under Tier III. In addition, 4 indicators have multiple tiers.⁴⁸ Out of 306 indicators in the NIF, 67 indicators (including 12 indicators with slight modification) have been adopted from the global set of 232 indicators as shown below in Table 4.

Table 4: Tier-wise Analysis of NIF Indicators

	No. of global indicators	NIF indicators from global list	Remarks
Tier I	116	38	15 indicators with modification
Tier II	92	23	3 indicators with modification
Tier III	20	4	2 indicators with modification
Multi-tier	4	2	
Total	232	67	20 indicators with modification

Source: Author's compilation based on UN global indicator framework as on 11th December 2019 and NIF dated 6 November 2019.

3.5.3. Data Gaps

In India, official data is currently available for only 169 (55 per cent) out of the 306 national indicators to assess progress towards achieving the SDGs. The sources of data for these are listed below:

- (1) As many as 102 indicators (60 per cent) originate or are sourced from administrative data. Such data is available at a greater frequency can be disaggregated and amenable to faster processing. India has a well-established system of flow of administrative data from the gross root level to state and then central level. The time lag between data compilation and dissemination is not high.
- (2) Survey data is the second largest source for NIF. Compilation of 42 indicators (25 per cent) is based on survey data. Survey data is generally available State-wise and geographically disaggregated (Rural/Urban) and available at regular intervals.
- (3) The third source of data is the Census. Only four indicators are sourced from census data. While population census is conducted once in ten years and has high potential for disaggregation, some other types of censuses such as agriculture census, livestock census etc. are conducted once in five years. Processing and dissemination of large data sets take much longer time. Further, a high cost is associated with conducting census.
- (4) Macroeconomic aggregates, national accounts statistics etc., provide data for 14 indicators. These are not amenable to disaggregation. Such data can be produced annually.

These numbers do not appear very impressive, nevertheless, MoSPI is making efforts to improve the data availability with high frequency and disaggregation. The Ministry has published a survey

⁴⁸ IAEG-SDGs, Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/>

on 'time use pattern' of people which marks a breakthrough in gender statistics. Further, the Ministry has already completed its Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) and results have since been disseminated and will prove handy in improving employment-unemployment statistics. Moreover, it has leveraged remote sensing data to conduct forestry related surveys and big data available on some digital platforms for compilation of monthly employment statistics to a limited extent. But the official statistical system is yet to harness full potential of digital data due particularly to limited capacity of harmonising such data with official data. The use of space technology to improve agriculture sector statistics is also on MOSPI's agenda. The Ministry is also utilising non-official data from trade associations, etc. to generate data on related national indicators.

3.5.4. SDG Index and Dashboard

To measure progress on the SDGs annually, NITI Aayog has prepared a dashboard which provides a comparison among states on their progress and encourages healthy competition among them in implementing the SDGs. The index score ranges from 0 to 100 and denotes the overall achievement of the State/ UT. States are categorised as 'Front runner', 'Performer' and 'Aspirant' according to the performance index assigned. So far NITI Aayog has brought out two annual publications in 2018 and 2019. These two reports indicate that there has been overall progress towards SDGs, but the magnitude of change varies. Among States Kerala retained its top rank, with a score of 70. Among the UTs Chandigarh too maintained its top position, with a score of 70. Himachal Pradesh was at the second position while Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana shared the third position. Uttar Pradesh gained 13 points and it was the highest gainer followed by Odisha and Sikkim.

However, due to several limitations including selection bias of indicators, data sets etc. the two sets of indices released in 2018 and 2019 respectively are not comparable and drawing conclusions solely based on the index scores may lead to misleading conclusions. For example, while SDG Index 2018 was based on 62 indicators over 14 goals (barring SDG 12, 13, 14, 17) SDG Index 2019 is constructed using 100 indicators covering 54 targets across 16 goals (barring SDG 17). An analysis of the 2019 indicators suggests that 78 indicators (including 39 indicators which have been modified or refined) correspond to NIF indicators; 4 indicators are part of UN list; and remaining 18 indicators are neither in the UN indicator list nor in NIF. These 18 indicators therefore neither reflect UN priority nor the NIF priority. In the spirit of cooperative federalism it would have been better to place the draft SDG Index in public domain and seek comments of the stakeholders, before going ahead with it.

MoSPI is also engaged in tracking SDG progress in parallel to NITI Aayog. While MoSPI's methodology takes into account the whole set of NIF indicators and is therefore superior to NITI's

methodology which is based on the Index score values arrived with selected indicators only. MOSPI too released a dashboard with the help of UN India and a Baseline Report, on 29 June 2019, namely, “Sustainable Development Goals National Indicator Framework Baseline Report 2015-16”. This was followed by the first progress report on the SDGs, based on the NIF indicators with latest available data marking current SDG progress in the country. However, MoSPI is yet to come up with setting of target values and periodic SDG related milestones to assess progress made so far and distance to be traversed.. Moreover, the two agencies namely, NITI and MoSPI should synergise their individual efforts for SDG monitoring for providing better assessments on SDG progress to policy makers at the Centre and state levels.

4. Regional Cooperation in achieving the SDGs: Indian Perspective

The preceding sections identified the SDGs implementation challenges in the country and the means to address them at the national level. India, being the largest country and economy within SAARC can help bolster the subregional cooperation process which has become moribund. While there are pending unresolved issues between some member states, with the new global threat caused by COVID-19, which has also devastated the subregion’s economies, the need for cooperation has become even more urgent. From India’s perspective the following areas have been highlighted for greater regional cooperation.

4.1. Poverty, hunger and food security (SDGs 1 and 2): Apart from cross-learning from the rich experiences in exemplary reductions in poverty and hunger by many states in India and similarly the several examples that exist in the subregion such as from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, there are several cooperative actions that India can gain from and contribute to.

These include importantly cooperation in a sub-regional food security system including through the SAARC food bank and through policy changes that bring about a unified market for essential staples and other food items to prevent temporary shortages and stabilize prices of food for the subregion’s population.

Table 5. Reserve adequacy of SAARC Food Bank on assumptions of production shortfall from 2010-2014 average production

Table xx. Reserve adequacy of SAARC Food Bank on assumptions of production shortfall from 2010-2014 average production										
Country	Average production last 5 years	Production Shortfall				Reserve	Reserves as % of Shortfall			
		8%	5%	3%	1%		8%	5%	3%	1%
		Metric Tonnes (000's)					Percentage of total reserves (486,000 MT)			
Afghanistan	53,00,000	4,22,441	2,65,000	1,59,000	53,000	2,840	115	183	305	916
Bangladesh	5,22,00,000	41,65,479	26,10,000	15,66,000	5,22,000	80,000	12	19	31	93
Bhutan	82,078	6,566	4,104	2,462	821	360	7395	11833	19721	59163
India	24,20,00,000	1,96,20,000	1,21,00,000	72,60,000	24,20,000	3,06,400	2	4	7	20
Nepal	63,60,000	5,09,870	3,18,000	1,90,800	63,600	8,000	95	153	255	764
Pakistan	3,10,00,000	24,78,768	15,50,000	9,30,000	3,10,000	80,000	20	31	52	157
Sri Lanka	40,00,000	3,20,695	2,00,000	1,20,000	40,000	8,000	151	243	405	1214

Source: Mustafuzur Rahman et al (2016)

India being the largest country geographically with a proportionately large agricultural production base compared to the other countries in the sub-region can play a crucial role in ensuring its food security. The SAARC food bank, for example, can contribute to some extent towards this goal provided it can be made more effective. Among other problems associated with the food bank is the issue of physical adequacy of the reserve. As can be seen from the above Table 5 the reserve is quite inadequate for the larger countries India, Bangladesh and Pakistan if shortfalls in production occur. But a doubling of the reserve will meet the needs to a great extent for all countries except India if moderate shortfalls of up to 3 per cent occur. With India's surplus reserves it should be able to contribute a larger share thereby substantially contributing to food security in most of the countries in the region. Doubling the reserve will also provide India with some cushion to draw upon during a shortage – for example, it will make available a 14 per cent cushion if its production shortfall is up to 3 per cent – and this will provide valuable time for India to negotiate contracting with international suppliers outside the sub-region to arrange imports if needed.

India can also play a bigger role in preventing shortfalls in the first place by initiating joint research programmes on improving crop yields. The yield levels in the subregion for wheat and rice are much below other Asian countries such as China and countries in the sub-region should initiate a time bound programme to catch up and here India could take a lead. Similarly, India can take a lead in developing drought resistant varieties of crops and also help in jointly developing better technology for effective flood proofing measures in the sub-region. In addition, it is now widely agreed that free trade in food grains and other food items within the subregion will play an important role in reducing temporary price volatilities which is also an important step towards food security, where India can play an important role.

4.2. Cooperation in health (SDG 3): Recently, with the COVID-19 crisis raging in the subregion, countries have come together for an effective response to it initiated by the Indian PM, culminating in the establishment of the SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund with contributions from all SAARC countries. Cooperation on COVID-19 has opened the door for possibilities of cooperation in other areas of health and the SDGs in general. Apart from prevention of communicable diseases such as COVID-19 where there is much to do and is currently consuming all health efforts by countries in the region, there are also other areas of immense potential from the long term point of view. These include (i) cooperation in medical education and training; (ii) cooperation in inter-country flows of health personnel (such as nurses) etc.; (iii) institutionalizing medical tourism which is already occurring at a significant level, with more countries joining the effort supported by knowledge and capacity creation by leading centers in India and elsewhere; (iv) cooperation in pharmaceutical and health products production including through FDI;

Expanding medical education is a critical priority for the sub-region given the large shortfalls of doctors and nurses from requirements. As Table 6 shows, among the larger South Asian countries, India fares better than the others but still the availability of doctors and nurses per 100,000 persons in India is less than half of the East Asia and Pacific sub-region; while with OECD, the comparison is far worse – India has about a quarter of doctors and less than a sixth of nurses per 100,000 persons. The current COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed this severe inadequacy in the health systems of the South Asian countries. The only way this problem can be rectified is through expansion of medical education.

Table 6. Status of availability of medical personnel in South Asian countries compared to other regions		
	Nurses, midwives per 1000 persons	Physicians per 1000 persons
Afghanistan	0.17	0.27
Bangladesh	0.26	0.46
Bhutan	1.28	0.31
India	1.37	0.74
Maldives	5.65	2.57
Nepal	2.31	0.67
Pakistan	0.52	0.9
Sri Lanka	1.92	0.84
OECD	9.29	2.81
East Asia & Pacific	2.85	1.48
<i>Source:</i> UNESCAP (2020) based on the World Development Indicators database		

Rather than each country attempting to address the entire gaps themselves, it may be more efficient if countries who are frontrunners in medical education, such as India, reserve seats for SAARC students from other countries. This may save resources for the countries sending students in costly infrastructure expansion and hiring of teaching personnel which may also be in short supply in such countries in the medium term. Agreements between countries could include payment of full costs of education for their students by sending countries; and continuation of graduated doctors and nurses as house staff and trainees and also as fully certified personnel later for specified periods which would help augment supplies of such personnel for countries imparting education.

India is already engaged in providing medical education for SAARC countries. About one-fifth of over 47,000 foreign students who were attending Indian higher educational institutions in 2018-19 were in medicine related studies including nursing. About half of the foreign students were from SAARC countries.⁴⁹ While expanding medical education to meet its own needs, India could consider scaling up quotas for SAARC countries in its institutions too. This

would be to India’s mutual benefit as it could defray some of the costs of expanding facilities, as well as augmenting supplies of medical personnel if this is made part of the agreements.

Travel restrictions should be eased for SAARC citizens wanting to travel to India for medical attendance. India, with its large number of specialized tertiary medical institutions in the private sector and highly trained and accomplished surgeons and physicians is already the country of

⁴⁹ All India Survey on Higher Education 2018-2019.

choice for specialized medical attention for citizens of many neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan. In 2018, for example, more than 40,000 citizens from SAARC countries came to various medical institutions for their health care.⁵⁰ It was estimated by FICCI in 2016 that India earned USD 3.0 billion in 2015 through “medical value tourists” and this could be tripled by 2020 (COVID-19 had not been anticipated then) but such expansion is clearly possible through active promotional measures in the medium term.⁵¹ Since several of the smaller countries may face diseconomies of scale for setting up specialized institutions for all medical disciplines it may be mutually beneficial for India to turn its comparative advantages in specialized medical fields and turn medical tourism into both an altruistic and an income earning venture.

Another area where India has established itself as a world leader is in manufacture of pharmaceuticals. It is a major supplier of drugs internationally – for example it supplied hydroxychloroquine to combat COVID-19 and is now producing the Oxford University developed COVID-19 vaccine through the Serum Institute of India along with indigenous vaccines which it has agreed to supply to neighboring countries also. Apart from support to SAARC countries through supply of drugs during COVID-19, Indian pharmaceuticals companies can enter into FDI ventures for setting up manufacturing facilities in general when COVID-19 subsides in other SAARC countries for mutual gain.

4.3. Cooperation on energy and other cross-border infrastructure (SDGs 7 and 9): India has much to gain from expanding energy cooperation with the Himalayan nations Nepal and Bhutan for import of electricity and with Bangladesh for supply of electricity from its Northeastern states. While there is already some success in this area there is immense potential for scaling up cooperation. For example, very little of hydroelectricity potential is being tapped by Nepal and Bhutan and India too can gain by stepping up its investments in the hydropower sector. The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) estimates that the hydroelectricity potential of India, Nepal, and Bhutan are 148 GW, 83 GW and 30 GW, respectively, out which only 51 GW, 0.8 GW, and 1.6 GW, generation capacity has been installed in these three countries.

There is considerable mutual benefit that can be obtained from such cooperation on hydroelectricity. These include (i) using the surplus hydropower resources in these countries for mutual economic gain and improving energy security; and (ii) use of hydropower in India and Bangladesh for better balance of the hydro-thermal system and management of peak load supply. Improving the clean energy mix is also a possible gain as hydropower uses a renewable energy source but this will require ensuring social and environmental mitigation measures being

⁵⁰ Ministry of Tourism (2019).

⁵¹ FICCI (2016).

scrupulously followed which must be ensured especially for large dams where socio-environmental impacts are immense.

4.4. *Trade (SDG 9):* Improving connectivity and undertaking tariff reduction and other trade facilitation measures for expanding trade with SAARC offers another major area with considerable potential for mutual gain for India given that intra-regional trade is much below its potential in the region and expanding of markets provides India and all other South Asian countries with large untapped benefits. There are a large number of studies that have attempted to quantify the likely gains for India from increased trade with the SAARC neighboring countries.

Recent trade data (Table 7) shows that India’s exports to SAARC countries doubled between 2010 and 2019 from USD 11.11 billion to USD 22.58 billion. But this is far below potential. A 2018 World Bank study felt, for example, that combined intra-regional trade potential of the SAARC sub-region was as high as USD 67 billion compared to the current USD 23 billion.⁵² With other facilitation measures the gains would be far higher as several studies indicate that the latter are likely to have a bigger impact.⁵³ Using a gravity model, UNESCAP estimates that SAARC trade could rise to USD 172 billion by 2020 (before the COVID-19 pandemic). This order of SAARC intraregional trade growth would likewise spur a large growth of exports for India too (to USD 81 billion), while India’s growth to Pakistan alone was potentially expandable to USD 45.0 billion.⁵⁴ The impact of freer trade would also alter the growth poles for India. Freeing up trade with Bangladesh, for example will give a large impetus to growth for the Eastern and North Eastern regions of India with the restoration of natural transport links and markets lost as a result of partition – a fact that has been responsible for much of the deceleration of growth of that large part of India.

SAARC Trading Partners	Exports of India (US\$ Million)	
	2010	2019
Afghanistan	0.39	0.89
Bangladesh	3.02	8.24
Bhutan	0.16	0.69
Maldives	0.10	0.23
Nepal	1.90	7.11
Pakistan*	2.24	1.19
Sri Lanka	3.30	4.23
Total	11.11	22.58

Source: International Trade Centre (ITC) Trade Map Database
 Note: * Exports to Pakistan has fluctuated, with positive growth in intermittent years

4.5. *Cooperation on climate, environment and natural resources (SDGs 13-15)*

India can contribute immensely to sustainable regional environmental management and climate change. In each of the following four areas, India’s role is critical but cooperative action so far has been inadequate, reflecting the need for stronger cooperation:

⁵²Kathuria (2018).

⁵³ ADB-AusAid (2009).

⁵⁴UNESCAP SSWA (2018)

- (i) Helping to conserve the Himalayan ecosystem
- (ii) Using its expertise in renewable energy (wind, solar etc.) to encourage faster adoption of renewables and helping climate mitigation efforts in South Asia.
- (iii) Expanding cooperation in managing and conserving other fragile eco-systems especially those that spread across borders (such as the Sundarbans and the Thar desert).
- (iv) Cooperation in conservation of marine resources.
- (v) Cooperation in helping prevent natural disasters.

The Himalayan ecosystem straddles several South Asian countries: Nepal and Bhutan fall entirely within the ecosystem; while Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan also have areas within the ecosystem. Among countries, India has by far the largest absolute area within the ecosystem with nine of its states (Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, and Meghalaya) entirely within its fold and two states (Assam and West Bengal) partially. Therefore too, India has a very large role to play. The ecosystem has a vital role in the sustainability of all these South Asian countries that benefit from the three major river systems (Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra) that originate from the Himalayas. It also contains large areas of forests, grazing and agricultural land that provide sustenance to the human population living in the ecosystem area as well as to the rich flora and fauna within it. Broadly, there are two major sources of threats to the Himalayan ecosystem. While climate change has a large role to play (evident through its shrinking glaciers), human interaction is a major factor and impacts through deforestation, expanding grazing and unsustainable agricultural practices such as jhum cultivation, infrastructure development, urbanization and expanding tourism.

Climate change and its impact to the ecosystem needs to be tackled through close monitoring of its impact and making known the effects internationally so that climate action can be speeded up by all countries including South Asian countries as well as India (which unfortunately contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions). But India has made very strong commitments to the international community to lower its greenhouse gas emissions. It has agreed to increase the share of non-fossil fuels in its total installed power capacity to 40 percent as well as a 33-35 percent emissions reduction over 2005 by 2030. It has initiated massive expansions in solar and wind power over which it has developed considerable expertise. The International Solar Alliance (ISA) launched by India and France at the climate summit in 2015 with the goal of contributing to SDG 7 by mobilizing US\$1000 billion of resources to invest in solar energy by 2030 is a notable initiative in this regard. A recent ISA report finds that India is one of the largest markets for solar

energy.⁵⁵ It can take a lead in supporting similar efforts in South Asia. With the help of the Himalayan nations, it can also expand the share of hydropower capacity in its energy mix.

Cooperative efforts can also reduce the human imprint on the fragile Himalayan eco-system. Areas of cooperation include halting illegal felling and trade in timber, and in poaching of wild life; avoiding unnecessary infrastructure building and where absolutely necessary sharing technical and capacity support for green infrastructure building and in fully mitigating the adverse impacts of infrastructure construction; sharing knowledge and good practices in spreading sustainable agricultural practices and in development of sustainable urban areas; converting tourism practices towards environment friendly lines such as eco-tourism etc. India has included the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE) as one of its eight national missions on environmental protection. Among the objectives of NMSHE is to develop a regional cooperation framework with countries bordering the Himalayan region. However, so far little has been done. Similarly, there are fragile ecosystems outside the Himalayan region which involve India's neighbors. These include, for example forests (such as the Sundarbans requiring cooperation between India and Bangladesh), and the Thar ecosystem (requiring cooperation with Pakistan to halt desertification and conserve the fauna). Cooperation for protecting the ecosystems of the seas is also necessary to prevent pollution and depletion of marine resources.

Finally, India should take a lead is in prevention of natural disasters and mitigating their effects when they do take place. India suffers, among others, through annual flooding caused by rivers flowing into its territory from other countries. Likewise, India's own rivers cause flooding in other countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan. Greater cooperation can help reduce such hazards. Similarly, cyclones and earthquakes are frequent occurrences in the sub-region and regional cooperation in areas of inter alia (i) early warning systems; (ii) disaster relief and rehabilitation etc. can help immensely in reducing the loss of life and property in the sub-region.

South Asia has been particularly prone to natural disasters – and with global warming the frequency of such events is likely to increase (table 8). Between 1970 and 2015, more than 635,000 people lost their lives due to natural disasters and about 227 million people were affected in the SAARC countries. Bangladesh seems to have borne the largest impact with almost 70 percent of the total deaths and 64 percent of the total affected persons in SAARC from that country, followed by Pakistan and India. Given the frequency of occurrence of such natural disasters – and the likelihood that they will increase in the future – India could take a lead as it has done in the case of COVID-19 – to strengthen the sub-regional partnership for tackling such disasters. The SAARC Disaster Management Centre set up in India in 2006 should be strengthened with inculcation of fully trained personnel and adequate equipment to rush effectively to the aid of an affected SAARC

⁵⁵ ISA (2020).

member country in addition to acting as a center for building capacity and sharing knowledge and best practices to tackle such events in the medium to long term.

4.6. *Cooperation in curbing cross-border crime (SDG 16):* As discussed in the earlier part of this report the South Asian countries face significant illegal inter-country flows of narcotics, arms etc. and their financial institutions receive money laundered from these and other illegal activities.

Table 8. Natural calamities and their impacts 1970-2015 in SAARC countries			
Event	Year	No. of persons killed (000's)	No. of persons affected (000's)
Afghanistan			
Earthquake	1998	4.7	116.9
Earthquake	2002	2.5	56.0
Flood	1991	0.7	108.4
Drought	2000	-	2580.0
Bangladesh			
Cyclone	1970	300.0	20000.0
Flood	1974	1.8	38000.0
Flood	1988	2.2	73000.0
Cyclone	1991	138.0	15000.0
Bhutan			
Flood	2000	0.2	1.0
Flood	1994	0.0	0.6
Windstorm	1994	0.0	65.0
India			
Earthquake	1993	9.5	1000.0
Cyclone	1999	10.1	15000.0
Earthquake	2001	13.8	1800.0
Tsunami	2004	12.4	3500.0
Maldives			
Tsunami	2004	0.1	20.0
Nepal			
Earthquake	1988	0.7	301.0
Flood	1993	1.1	553.3
Landslide	2002	0.5	265.9
Earthquake	2015	8.8	8000.0
Pakistan			
Earthquake	2005	83.0	5000.0
Earthquake	1974	4.7	230.5
Flood	1992	1.3	12000.0
Flood	1998	1.0	9000.0
Flood	2010	2.0	20000.0
Sri Lanka			
Tsunami	2004	35.4	1000.0
Cyclone	1978	0.7	1000.0
Flood	1989	0.3	1200.0
Flood	2003	0.2	695.0
Total SAARC		635.7	226913.6
<i>Source: Kafle (2017)⁵⁶ based on SAARC SDMC data</i>			

Cooperation to end these criminal activities is essential and needs to be strengthened. India too has much to benefit as it is exposed much along with other South Asian countries to these nefarious activities and its population suffers immensely from them.

4.7. *Strengthening means of implementation and sub-regional partnerships for the SDGs (SDG 17).* Sub-regional partnerships to advance the SDGs will be critical. The basis for cooperation has already been set with the SAARC Development Goals adopted at the Thirteenth SAARC Summit based on the recommendations by the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation (ISACPA) in 2007. The report had envisaged 22 Goals with 75 indicators. This can form the basis for extending the exercise to an SDG based regional cooperation road map with specific Goals and time bound actions to achieve the SDGs. Particular areas of cooperative effort can include the following.

4.7.1. *Cooperation to augment domestic resource mobilization.*

There is little doubt that developing countries require support for implementation of their commitments on SDGs. Given the high population of the sub-region, South Asia requires much greater assistance than many other sub-regions. Apart from sharing knowledge on domestic experiences on measures to augment revenues (such as India's lessons from the GST), South Asian countries can advance global partnerships to augment resources for development in South Asia. India actively participated at the Third International Conference on

Financing for Development at Addis Ababa on issues of Domestic Resource Mobilisation and Global Tax Reform. India is already closely working with global institutions like Global Alliance

⁵⁶ Kafle (2017).

for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), and Global Environment Facility (GEF). Similar efforts at the sub-regional level to set up cooperative funds, facilities and institutions for tackling specific sub-regional issues need to be taken up as is being done for combating COVID-19.

4.7.2. Joint strategy for global negotiations on indicators. A common South Asia position needs to be developed to advocate at international forums (such as the first round negotiations in 2020 at the United Nations Statistical Commission) to ensure that global indicators adopted are relevant for the sub-region as global resource flows will be directed at the agreed global indicators and the sub-region's priorities must be reflected.

4.7.3. Cooperation to support statistical capacity development. A UNESCAP study has found that the overall average statistical capacity of South Asia region as 71 on a 0 to 100 scale, underlining the need to build regional capacities. India's statistical capacity, both at the national and sub-national levels being reasonably good, it can play an effective role help support regional capacity building in this vital area.

4.7.4. Cooperation on knowledge generation and research on the SDGs. A common exercise conducted by each country on the SDGs is the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). These are being done independently but could be further improved through participatory sharing of knowledge and experiences on the SDGs. The UNESCAP led South Asia Forum on Sustainable Development could play a bigger role in bringing sub-regional stakeholders, think tanks etc., together for sharing best practices on the SDGs and discussing how improvements can be brought about. In cognizance of the need identified for enhancing the role of think-tanks in promoting regional cooperation for fulfilling the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, the UNESCAP launched the South Asia Network of Think Tanks for SDGs (SANS) portal which can act as a knowledge platform for multi-stakeholder meetings for sharing of best practices and thereby accelerating SDGs implementation by South Asian countries.⁵⁷

5. Impact of COVID-19 on SDG implementation and India's response

As in other countries of South Asia, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating. SDGs 1 to 6 covering the social dimensions have been hit hard. However, India is well placed on food security in terms of total availability with record rabi (winter) crop expected and sufficient food grains stocked in public granaries. The main problem is, however, in getting the food to the poor who need it. Health outcomes have been particularly affected with the efforts to manage COVID-19 outbreak consuming all resources and personnel. The government's lockdown measures while causing hardship for the population especially the poor, did help in "flattening the curve" and giving more time to health authorities to prepare to meet the crisis. On the economic

⁵⁷ See UNESCAP SSWA (2021).

dimension, which comprises SDGs 7 to 9 and 11, livelihoods were the worst hit across all segments except a few where employees could manage to work from home. Industries - large and MSME alike - were closed except those in food processing or those which expanded to supply equipment for handling COVID-19.

India unveiled a set of monetary and fiscal measures totaling around INR 21 trillion to combat the COVID-19 impact. The details of all these measures may be seen in annex Table 2A.

Monetary measures comprised pumping in liquidity into the financial system to the tune of INR 3.74 trillion (later assessed at around INR 8.0 trillion), reducing rates for interest through open market operations (the repo or buying rate of bonds was reduced by 75 basis points to 4.40 per cent; while the reverse repo or selling rate by 90 basis points to 4.0 per cent); forbearance on loan repayments in various sectors including farm loans. The liquidity measures are estimated to have also cost about 2.0 percent to the exchequer.

Fiscal measures totaled around INR 13 trillion announced in five tranches. A summary of these tranches is provided below.

Tranche 1. The first and biggest comprising around INR 6.0 trillion was to lend as well as provide loan guarantees to small businesses, non-bank lenders, power distribution companies and salaried workers. By far the largest support in this tranche was for the MSME sector which was provided collateral free loans of around INR 3.0 trillion besides subordinate debt to stressed MSMEs and equity for the more viable ones.

Tranche 2. The second tranche comprised about INR 3.0 trillion and focused on providing relief to migrant workers, small farmers and the poor. The main focus for migrant workers was to provide free food support through the PDS system (including provision made for all-India portability of ration cards to reach 100 percent coverage by March 2021); and also included arranging affordable rents. Other areas of support in this tranche was for affordable housing for middle income households; livelihoods support for tribals; and support for small and marginal farmers (through additional capital emergency funds through NABARD for post-harvest Rabi and Kharif related activities).

Tranche 3. The third tranche of about INR 1.5 trillion focused mainly on rural development including rural infrastructure (cold chains, post-harvest facilities etc.) and encouragement to special sectors such as micro food schemes, inland and marine fisheries, dairy and livestock, vegetables, honey production, and medicinal plants.

Tranche 4 and 5. The remaining two tranches comprising less than INR 0.5 trillion included structural reforms in 8 critical sectors- coal, minerals, defence production, airspace management, social infrastructure projects, power distribution companies, space sector and atomic energy; and additional support for MGNREGS. The stimulus package also subsumed earlier measures amounting to nearly INR 2.0 trillion under the PM's Garib Kalyan Package which comprises various measures targeting the poor.

The total stimulus package comprises 10 percent of GDP. However, given the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, large, people-centred stimulus packages would be needed to mitigate the effects of the crisis and build back better. Recent UNESCAP SSWA (2020) estimates within the CGE framework suggest that a stimulus size of at least 14 percent of GDP would be necessary covering public health infrastructure needs, social protection and economic revival. In addition, some of the elements in the package may not fully meet expectations, for example for ensuring food security to migrants. Moreover, as evident from the composition of the package summarized above, while support for the MSME sector is appropriate, the support for rural development, the rural poor and agriculture seems to have received lower priority.

6. Conclusion and way forward

In the recent past, India has launched transformative approaches to address a plethora of developmental challenges including social, economic and environmental. The SDGs were never viewed as an externally imposed global agenda as India's welfare programmes already matched the spirit of the SDGs. One major outcome of these changes is an increasing willingness to introduce policy templates inspired by an integrated and ecosystem approach for addressing development gaps. India's objectives of poverty reduction, access to basic services such as affordable healthcare and quality education are of the highest priority along ensuring effective inclusion. Therefore these socio-economic upliftment schemes are corollaries of the integral efforts being made to attain the SDGs. In moving forward, the following areas are particularly important.

- (i) *Monitoring and reporting.* Effective monitoring will be key to success on the SDGs. Some states are establishing robust monitoring systems. Assam has established a three level monitoring system: (a) at the input level it has established a unique initiative of connecting budgetary allocations to SDGs; (ii) at the output level identified programmes and schemes for supporting the SDGs; and (c) since, the schemes' direct correlation with SDG outcome indicators is difficult to establish, Assam is also launched a direct outcome level monitoring of SDG outcome indicators. At the Centre, several initiatives are being taken but their weaknesses have to be rectified. The recently launched reports of NITI Aayog would need

thorough review of methodology as the number of indicators, that are globally agreed at the UN, have not been covered in the reports, and the new ones added do not reflect global commitments nor any recommendation from MoSPI. Going forward, the states and the Centre have to further improve their SDG monitoring systems.

- (ii) *Localisation.* It will be crucial for India to effectively extend localization and strengthen local institutions and empower them to implement the SDGs. This is one of the early lessons that have come in from states' experiences and essential for success on the SDGs.
- (iii) *Multi-Stakeholder initiatives.* One of the unique features of India's SDG effort is emanating from the multiple institutions and actors that are engaged in promoting SDGs. Going forward greater collaboration and strengthening of such partnerships will be essential for achieving the SDGs.
- (iv) *Cross-border learnings and sub-regional cooperation.* India's coordinated approach to address the SDGs, involving all levels of government and multiple stakeholders can provide opportunities for learning and partnerships among the countries of South Asia, given the common challenges being faced by them. Similarly the vast experiences from neighboring countries which have had much success on social (such as Bangladesh) and environmental (such as Bhutan) Goals can provide valuable lessons for India. Apart from cross-learning, subregional cooperation efforts will be crucial for evolving collective positions on global forums such as for environment (to facilitate support for green technology); on indicators such with the UN Statistical Commission, etc. Finally, as discussed in this paper, India stands to gain through much more effort at regional cooperation on several SDGs.

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Annexure

Table 1A: Allocated Budget of Selected Major Schemes under Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored (in INR Crore)

Scheme Name	Directly linked to SDG	Indirectly linked to SDGs	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020 (RE)	2020-2021 (BE)
Total			511552.5	567664.1	691752	781488
Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan)	2	1	...	1241	54370	75000
Budgetary Support to Schemes of Ministry of Railways	9	8	43418	54913	69967	72216
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Program	1	2, 8	55166	61815	71002	61500
Road Works	9	8	36849	37811	45887	48759
National Highways Authority of India	9	8	23892	39287	36691	42500
National Education Mission	4	5	29455	30830	37672	39161
National Health Mission	3	2	32000	31502	34290	34115
Umbrella ICDS	2	4, 5	19234	21642	24955	28557
Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY)	9	8	31164	25443	25328	27500
Interest Subsidy for Short Term Credit to Farmers	2	1	13046	11496	17863	21175
Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna	9	8	16862	15414	14070	19500
Metro Projects	11	8,9	13810	14265	17612	17482
Crop Insurance Scheme	2	1	9419	11937	13641	15695
Urban Rejuvenation Mission: AMRUT and Smart Cities Mission	11	8, 9	9463	12085	9842	13750
Green Revolution	2	9, 13	11057	11758	9965	13320
Support to Infrastructure Pipeline	9	8	...	...	...	12500
Swachh Bharat Mission	6	2, 3	19427	15375	9638	12294
National Rural Drinking Water Mission	6	3, 2	7038	5484	10001	11500
Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojna	2	8, 1	6613	8143	7896	11127
National Programme of Mid Day Meal in Schools	2	4	9092	9514	9912	11000

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Scheme Name	Directly linked to SDG	Indirectly linked to SDGs	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020 (RE)	2020-2021 (BE)
National Livelihood Mission-Ajeevika	8	1	4926	6282	9774	10005
Space Technology	9	8, 17	5948	6383	8991	9762
National Social Assistance Progam	1	2	8694	8418	9200	9197
Compensation to Service Providers for creation and augmentation of telecom infrastructure	9	4	7000	4788	3000	8000
Employees Pension Scheme, 1995	1	2	5111.18	4900	6076	7457
Re-capitalisation of Insurance Companies	8	1	...	...	2500	6950
PMJAY-Ayushman Bharat	3	2	...	2602	3314	6429
Umbrella Scheme for Development of Scheduled Castes	10	1,8	5061	7574	5568	6242
Pardhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana	3	2	3159	3797	4733	6020
Jobs and Skill Development	8	4	2723	6126	5749	5372
Integrated Power Development Scheme	7	9	3900	3897	5663	5300
Optical Fibre Cable based network for Defence Services	9		3755	1927	4725	5000
Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojna	7	3	5050	3800	4066	4500
Umbrella Programme for Development of Scheduled Tribes	10	1	3573	3781	4194	4191
Police Infrastructure	16	9	4545	5085	4479	4135
Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLAD)	9	11	3504	3950	3960	3960
Modernisation of Police Forces	16		2546	3260	4155	3162
National AIDS and STD Control Programme	3	2	2010	1803	2956	2900
Education Empowerment	4	8	...	1986	2249	2530

Scheme Name	Directly linked to SDG	Indirectly linked to SDGs	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020 (RE)	2020-2021 (BE)
Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)	8	1	1073	2119	2464	2500
National Capital Region Transport Corporation	11	9	...	100	824	2487
Interest Equalisation Scheme	17	8	2000	2600	2868	2300
Umbrella Programme for Development of Other Vulnerable Groups	10	1	1574	1564	1846	2210
Air India Asset Holding Limited(SPV)	9		...	1300	2600	2205
Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)	4		250	2263	2100	2200
Solar Power	13	7	1890	1904	1789	2150
Price Stabilisation Fund	2	1	3500	1500	1820	2000
Market Intervention Scheme and Price Support Scheme (MIS-PSS)	2	1	701	1400	2010	2000
Border Infrastructure and Management	10	9	2022	2030	2128	1997
Interest Subsidy and contribution for Guarantee Funds for Education	4	8	1950	1575	1900	1900
Strengthening of Power Systems	7	13	1160	2802	1860	1843
Umbrella Programme for Development of Minorities	10	1	3948	886	1709	1820
Space Applications	9	17	1540	1811	1863	1810
White Revolution	2	1, 10	1574	2422	1799	1805
Refund of Central and Integrated GST to Industrial Units in North Eastern Region and Himalayan States	10		169	1500	2100	1716
Biotechnology Research and Development	9	8	1239	1329	1315	1580
Metropolitan Transportation Projects	11	9	794.26	1164	1580	1400

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Scheme Name	Directly linked to SDG	Indirectly linked to SDGs	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020 (RE)	2020-2021 (BE)
Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS)	4	10	...	...	16	1313
Subscription to the Share Capital of Export-Import Bank of India	17		500	500	950	1300
National Animal Disease Control Programme for Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Brucellosis	3	15	...	...	811	1300
Wind Power	7	13	750	950	1026	1299
R and D Basic Science and Engineering	9	8	836	1021	1170	1250
Integrated Development of Tourist Circuits around specific themes (Swadesh Darshan)	8	12	944	1101	566	1200
National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT)	9	8	797	1097	950	1200
Science and Technology Institutional and Human Capacity Building	9	17	990	989	1076	1163
Mission for Protection and Empowerment for Women	5	16	945	1138	961	1163
LPG Connection to Poor Households (Saubhagya)	7	3, 5	...	3200	3724	1118
Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana	2	1	...	592	889	1081
Fund of Funds	9	8	...	...	431	1055
Innovation, Technology Development and Deployment	9	8	614	773	812	1051
Subscription to Share Capital of National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD)	17		3880	2000	1500	1000
Promotion of Electronics and IT HW Manufacturing (MSIPS,	9	8	460.37	727	690	980

Scheme Name	Directly linked to SDG	Indirectly linked to SDGs	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020 (RE)	2020-2021 (BE)
EDF and Manufacturing Clusters)						
Environment, Forestry and Wildlife	15	13	955	978	787	926
Khelo India	4		346.99	342	578	890
Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)	17		...	649	465	858
Schemes for Safety of Women	16	5	61.87	50	50	855
National River Conservation Plan	6		723.22	1620	1200	840
Infrastructure Development and Capacity Building	9	8		309	471	802
National Ganga Plan and Ghat Works	6	3	700	688	353	800
Central Silk Board	9	8	543	601	765	800
Distribution of Pulses to State / Union Territories for Welfare Schemes	2	1	...	550.08	370	800
North East Road Sector Development Scheme	10	9	192.00	371	662	800
Border Area Development Programme	10	8, 9	1100	771	825	784
Exim Bank	17		571.68	629	1153	779
Bridge Works	9		453.90	532	753	777
Freedom Fighters (pension and other benefits)	1		760	875	953	775
R and D in IT/Electronics/CCBT	9		100.93	179	435	763
Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme(ATUFS)	9		1905	616	494	762
Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary	16	9	629	657	990	762
INSAT Satellite Systems	9		565	1593	1009	751
Phulpur Dhamra Haldia Pipeline Project	9		400	1207	1552	728
Research and Development	9	8		472	589	718
Crop Science	2	9	400	652	635	716
Capacity Development (CD)	17		144	216	529	706

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Scheme Name	Directly linked to SDG	Indirectly linked to SDGs	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020 (RE)	2020-2021 (BE)
Exploration of Coal and Lignite	7		159	448	755	700
Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan(KUSUM)	7	2	...	...	...	700
Scheme for Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid and) Electric Vehicle in India -(FAME - India).	9	8	165.00	145	500	693
Payment to Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL) for Crude Oil Reserve	7		1121.28	608	1	690
North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS)	10	9	...	94	558	674
Credit Linked Capital Subsidy and Technology Upgradation Scheme	9		295	1007	806	654
Schemes of North East Council	10		335	378	385	606
Skill Development and Livelihoods	4	1	...	482	582	602
Family Welfare Schemes	3	1	614	490	514	600
Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Rurban Mission	11	9	553	433	300	600
Promotion of Agricultural Mechanisation for in-situ Management of Crop Residue	2		...	584	594	600
Power System Development Fund	7		1000	544	574	574
Blue Revolution	14	2	321	485	455	570
Ocean services, Modelling, Application, Resources and Technology (O-SMART)	14		...	...	445	567
Central Pool of Resources for North East and Sikkim	10	9	861	526	576	552

Scheme Name	Directly linked to SDG	Indirectly linked to SDGs	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020 (RE)	2020-2021 (BE)
National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)	9	8	343	1196	2003	503
Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana	8	10		500	500	500
Sagarmala	9		479	360	381	297
Centenaries and Anniversaries, Celebrations and Schemes	11		143.82	156	104	160
Stimulus Package for Export Credit- NIRVIK Yojna	17		...	...	...	95

Source: Author's Calculation based on Union Budget 2020-21 Outlay on Major Schemes and various years, Ministry of Finance, Government of India

Note: '...' indicates either values are not available or it's a new programme.

Table 2A. India's stimulus measures undertaken to combat COVID-19

Measures	Budgetary Outlay
Fiscal	
1. Health investment for emergency medical response including for testing facilities, PPEs, isolation beds, ICU beds and ventilators (March 24).	1. \$2 billion (0.1% of GDP).
2. Fiscal support measures comprising in-kind (food, cooking gas) and cash transfers to lower-income households; insurance coverage for healthcare workers; and wage support and employment provision for low-wage workers (March 26).	2. \$23 billion (0.8% of GDP). By April 17, over \$4.8 billion transferred using DBT, including \$1.3 billion in the bank accounts of about 200 million women beneficiaries.
3. Increase in borrowing target for FY2020/21 (April 2020-March 2021) to \$160 billion, by about 55% more than budgeted.	3. 5.5% of GDP
4. Comprehensive fiscal relief package announced in multiple tranches, including (May 12-17):	
a) Business support package, including various financial sector measures and credit support for MSMEs ⁵⁸ and non-bank financial	4. \$270 billion (10% of GDP), including previously announced fiscal measures and

⁵⁸ Support measures for businesses and SMEs comprise of collateral-free lending programme with full guarantee; subordinate debt for stressed MSMEs with partial guarantee; partial credit guarantee scheme for public sector banks

<p>companies (NBFCs) and liquidity injection for electricity distribution companies.</p> <p>b) Expanding support for poor households, especially migrants and farmers, mainly in the form of concessional credit to farmers and a credit facility for street vendors and an expansion of food provision for non-ration card holders (mainly migrants).</p> <p>c) Targeted support for the agricultural sector mainly in the form of support for rural infrastructure development.</p> <p>5. Measures to ease the tax compliance burden across a range of sectors announced, including postponing some tax-filing and other compliance deadlines, and a reduction in the penalty interest rate for overdue GST filings for small businesses.</p>	<p>RBI's liquidity injection of around 4% of GDP).</p> <p>a) Around 2.7% of GDP, of which credit support to businesses amounting to 1.9% of GDP and 0.4% of GDP for distressed electricity distribution companies</p> <p>b) About 1.5% of GDP</p> <p>c) About 0.7% of GDP for agriculture infrastructure development.</p>
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on borrowings of NBFIs, housing finance companies, and micro finance institutions; provisions for equity infusion in MSMEs; and SPV to purchase short-term debt of the eligible NBFIs and housing finance companies.

<u>Social Protection</u>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Under the comprehensive fiscal stimulus package, social assistance in the form of cash transfers provided to beneficiaries under various schemes. 2. In-kind transfers and food vouchers provided to low-income and vulnerable households. 3. Social insurance provisions and wage support provided under public works programme. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cash transfers worth INR 1000 (\$13) to all beneficiaries under the National Social Assistance Program (NSAP) for elderly, widows and people with disabilities receiving social pensions (35 million beneficiaries); PM-KISAN topped up by Rs2000 (\$26.50) for 87 million farmers for 3 months; cash transfers of Rs 500 (\$ 6.50)for 3 months from April to June to 200 million women with Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) account. 2. Scaling up Public Distribution System (PDS) allocations for all Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) priority households for three months (1kg pulses per household, 5kg wheat or rice per individual); free cylinders for three months to poor UJWALA beneficiaries (83 Million households). 3. Withdrawal up to 75% non-refundable advance from EPFO account or 3 months' salary, whichever is lower allowed for workers. This is expected to benefit 48 million workers covered by the EPFO. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partial withdrawals allowed from National Pension Scheme towards treatment for COVID-19 related illness for subscriber, spouse and children covering around 10 million people. - Employee Provident Fund contributions for employees and employers to be paid by Government if India for the next 3 months, targeted at firms with up to 100 workers and where 90 per cent of workers earn less than INR 15,000 per month. This is expected to cover 1.8 million employees and 400,000 firms. - Increase in MGNREGA wage rates from INR 180 INR to INR 202.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Monetary and financial</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Liquidity measures announced by RBI such as \$4 billion swap for foreign exchange market, expansion in limit for FPI investment in corporate bonds, and removal of restrictions on non-resident investment in Central government securities (March 16). Repo and reverse repo rates reduced by 75 and 90 bps respectively and more liquidity injection (March 27). 2. Reverse repo reduced again by 25 bps and additional liquidity measures, including special refinance facilities for rural banks, housing financing companies and SMEs (April 17-20). 3. Liquidity facility for mutual funds announced on April 27 (regulatory benefits extended to all banks on April 30). 4. Repo and reverse repo rates reduced by 40 bps, and further regulatory easing including: extension of the loan moratorium and support for working capital financing; relaxation of norms for state government financing, and credit support to exporters and importers (May 22). 5. Restructuring of existing loans to MSMEs allowed for banks and resolution plan for stressed corporate and personal loans (August 6). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Liquidity measures worth 1.8% of GDP 2. 0.2% of GDP
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Trade</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Export ban on 26 pharmaceutical ingredients and medicines made from them, including paracetamol. Limited exports to some countries are allowed (April 4). 2. Export ban lifted on certain exports of formulations made from paracetamol (April 17). 3. Partial lifting of ban on export of non-medical, non-surgical masks (May 16). 4. Due to delay in shipments because of COVID-19, one-time relaxation provided through extension of validity of automatic registration number generated under SIMS for imports of iron and steel. 5. Decrease of import tariffs (from 10% to 5%) on medical or surgical instruments and 	

<p>apparatus and exempted from the health access.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">6. Temporary exemption from import tariffs of certain medical supply products. •7. Import ban lifted temporarily to ease supply of ventilators.	
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Source: Based on UNESCAP Policy Responses to COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific, and World Bank (2020) Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures.

Note: as on 28 August 2020

