

## Sustainable Development Goals and India: Where Do We Stand?

Anitha C. V.<sup>1</sup> and Sarah Razack<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Government First Grade College, Harohalli.  
E-mail id:researchco22@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Government First Grade College, Athani.  
E-mail id:razacksarah@gmail.com

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**Abstract:** The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were the first global attempt to address major global concerns under a single framework. MDGs were approved in 2000 by United Nations member states, with a target to reach all 8 goals by 2015. However, in the background of raising concern to create a better world, the United Nation revamped the framework and introduced Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the 2012 Rio-de-Janeiro Conference on Sustainable Development, UN member states made the first attempt to develop the set of SDGs. Later, 193 UN member states endorsed The Agenda 2030 with 17 goals at the Sustainable Development Summit held at UN Headquarters in New York in September 2015 under the title "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The study is an attempt to trace India's progress towards achieving the goals. Efforts are made to compare the achievements across the goals and figure out the path of travel to reach the targets by 2030.

**Keywords:** Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals, Global Goals, Agenda 2030.

## INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are derived from The United Nations Millennium Declaration signed in September 2000. MDGs included 8 goals and 18 targets. The UN member states agreed to achieve these goals by 2015. The MDGs tackled the major global issues under one umbrella. It is regarded as the world's first effort towards providing remedy for issues of global concern. The MDGs motivated nations around the world to take action to solve the issues. However, the MDGs opened the door for a fresh set of difficulties in the meantime. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were created to meet these new issues and develop a new framework to coordinate development after 2015. SDGs sprang from MDGs in this way (Niti Aayog, 2018; Nirmala Buch, 2016; Valeria E and Caroline S, 2016).

Though SDGs evolved from MDGs they have a universal appeal and are of a global nature. SDGs are firmly rooted in the principles of equity, human rights, and human development which are not even reflected in MDGs. However, the MDGs' priceless lessons are beneficial to the SDGs. In order to continue and maintain the momentum created, these also carry forward the unfinished business of the MDGs. They also address the additional challenges of inclusivity, equity, and urbanisation while strengthening the global partnership by involving CSOs and the private sector. While strengthening environmental goals, they reflect the continuation and consolidation of the MDGs and make them more sustainable.

At the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro, UN member states made the initial effort to create the SDGs. Later, during the Sustainable Development meeting held at UN Headquarters in New York in September 2015, 193 UN member states approved The Agenda 2030 under the title "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (Niti Aayog, 2018; Nirmala Buch, 2016). Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development comprises 17 goals and 169 targets. As of January 1st, 2016, they are in force, and by December 31st, 2030, they are supposed to be completed. The task of monitoring and evaluating SDG progress is assigned to UN member states.

India, as a key player in developing the SDGs, is committed to meeting the targets by the deadline. As another seven years left for the commitment period, it is crucial to examine India's progress towards the SDGs. In this direction, the current research paper studies the country's performance in meeting the Goals. Further, it sheds light on the gaps between targets and achievements.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The present research paper tries to address the following objectives

- To throw light on Sustainable Development Goals.
- To study the performance of India in SDGs.
- To trace the gaps between target and achievement in SDGs.
- To identify the focus area to meet the SDGs on time.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research is both descriptive and analytical in nature. It makes use of secondary data. The data is derived from Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Sustainable Development Report - 2019 and 2022. The

study is divided into sections for easier comprehension. Section one provides details on goals, targets and indicators set to achieve under SDGs by 2030. Section two throws light on India's performance at global level in SDGs achievements. Section three provides insightful data on Goal wise performance of the country. Further, it sheds light on the gaps and focus areas. For better understanding tables and figures are used.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### (A) Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and Indicators

The SDGs are broadly classified into three categories: The first group is an expansion of the MDGs that includes the first seven SDGs; the second group is inclusiveness (jobs, infrastructure, industrialization, and distribution). The third group is on sustainability and urbanisation, which includes the final seven goals: sustainable cities and communities, life below water "consumption and production; climate action; resources and environment; peace and justice; and the means of implementation and global partnership for it."

**Table 1: SDGs Goals, Targets and Indicators**

Goal	Goals Description	No. of Targets	No. of Indicators
SDG 1	No Poverty	07	02
SDG 2	Zero Hunger	08	08
SDG 3	Good Health and Well-being.	13	14
SDG 4	Quality Education	10	04
SDG 5	Gender Equality	09	04
SDG 6	Clean Water and Sanitation	08	05
SDG 7	Affordable and Clean Energy	05	04
SDG 8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	12	06
SDG 9	Industry, innovation and Infrastructure	08	06
SDG 10	Reduced inequalities	10	02
SDG 11	Sustainable cities and communities	10	04
SDG 12	Responsible consumption and production	11	07
SDG 13	Climate Action	05	03
SDG 14	Life below water	10	06
SDG 15	Life on Land	12	05
SDG 16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	12	10
SDG 17	Partnerships for the Goals	19	05

Source: Authors creation based on SDG dashboard <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles/india>

Thus, Sustainable Developments Goals comprises of a total 17 Goals and 169 targets. Table 1 provides description of 17 Sustainable Development

Goals, and the number of targets and indicators set for each goal. All 193 UN member countries bind to achieve all the 17 goals and 169 targets by December 31st, 2030.

### **(B) India's Performance in SDGs**

The SDG Index is used to know the country's performance in SDGs. The index is developed using the global indicators proposed by United Nations Statistical Commission. Each Goal is allotted with the same weightage (Allen et al., 2017). The index helps to evaluate each nation's overall performance in relation to the 17 SDGs. The score ranges from 0 to 100 represents a country's position relative to the target. The score 100 represents, best performance and also that all the SDGs have been achieved. While 0 indicates worst performance. Countries are ranked based on their overall scores.

In the 2022 index a total of 163 countries are ranked based on their overall scores. Finland topped the first rank with an overall score of 86.51. Consecutive three ranks grabbed by other Nordic countries Denmark, Sweden and Norway. India stood at 121st rank with an overall score of 60.32. Out of 19 East and South Asia groups of countries, India is ranked at 18th place with regional score 65.9 (table 2).

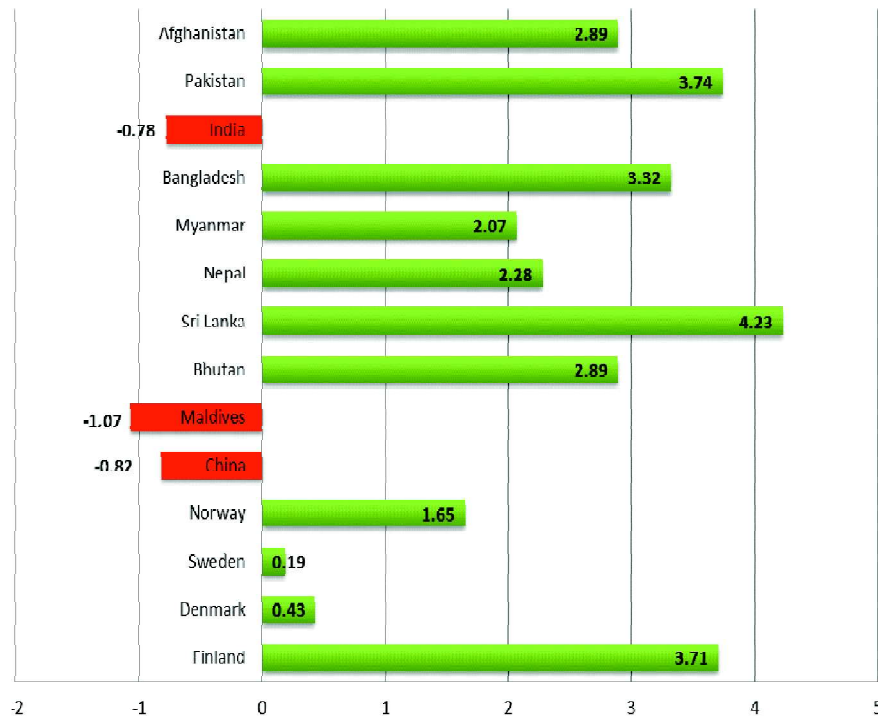
Compared to the 2019 index, the country's overall score declined by 0.78 in 2022 and rank slipped to 121 from 115th. Further, it is observed neighbouring countries such as China and Maldives also noticed a downfall in the overall score and rank (figure 1).

**Table 2: Countries SDG Index Score and Ranking**

<i>Country Name</i>	<i>Rank as on 2019 report</i>	<i>Rank as on 2022 report</i>
Finland	3	1
Denmark	1	2
Sweden	2	3
Norway	8	4
China	39	56
Maldives	47	67
Bhutan	84	70
Sri Lanka	93	76
Nepal	103	98
Myanmar	110	103
Bangladesh	116	104
India	115	121
Pakistan	130	125
Afghanistan	153	147

*Source:* Sustainable Development Report 2019 and 2022.

*Note:* In 2019 Sustainable Development Report 162 countries are considered and in 2022 Report 163 countries are considered.



**Figure 1: Change in SDG Index score between 2019 and 2022 for Selected Countries**

Source: Authors' Analysis

### (C) Goal Wise Performance of India

To understand the progress in each goal four categories are introduced such as SDG achievement (colour code: Green), Challenge remain (colour code: Yellow), Significant Challenge remain (colour code: Orange), and Major Challenge remain (colour code: Red). Figure: 2 depicts that the progress varies across the goals. It is noticed that out of 17 goals, so far India is on track only in two goals i.e., Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production, and Goal 13: Climate Action to meet committed goals by 2030. Eleven SDGs, which make up 65 percent of all goals, continue to face major challenges (Bajpai, N., & Biberman, J. 2020).

The time series trends for these 11 goals showed that SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities progress is decreasing, which indicates that the nation is moving in the wrong direction. SDGs 2, 5, 14, 15, 16, and 17 are showing stagnation, and their progress is less than half of what would be expected if the goals were to be reached by 2030.

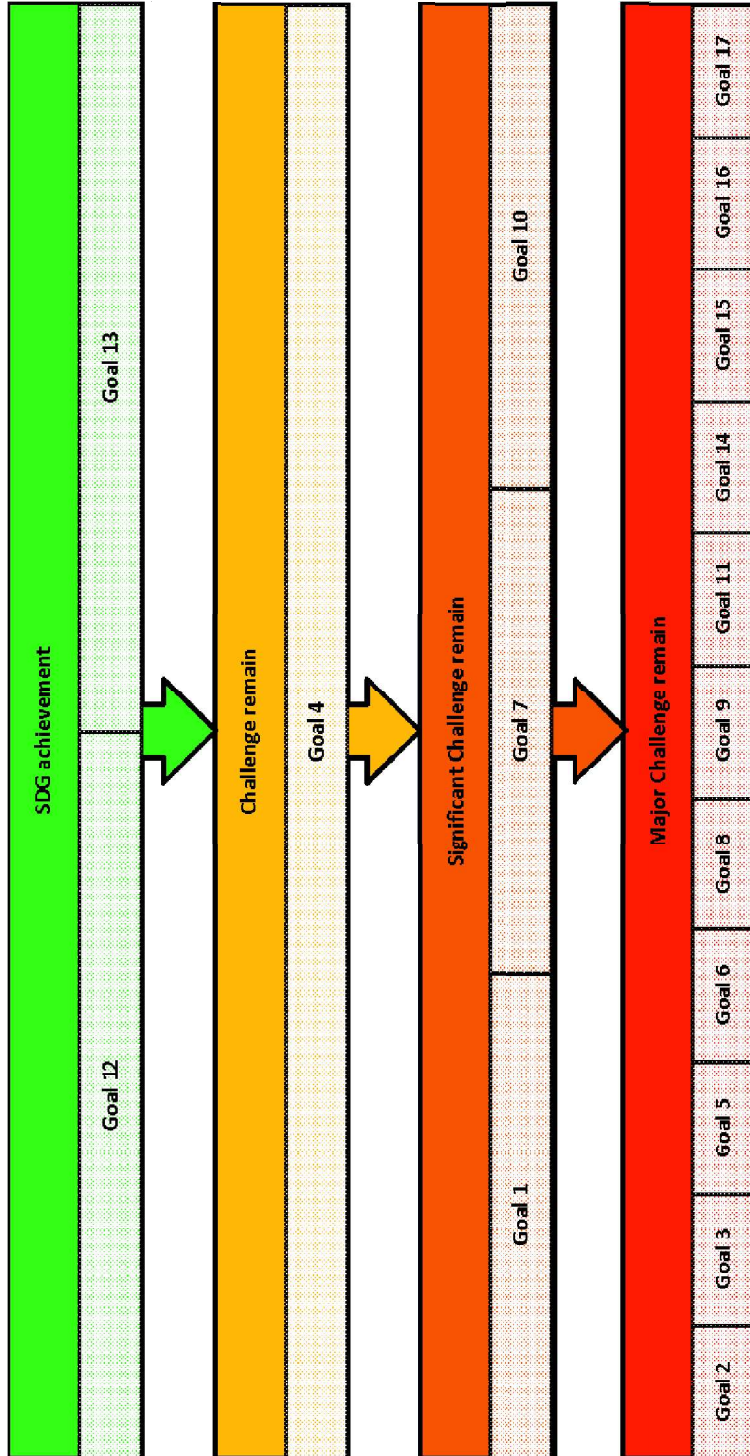
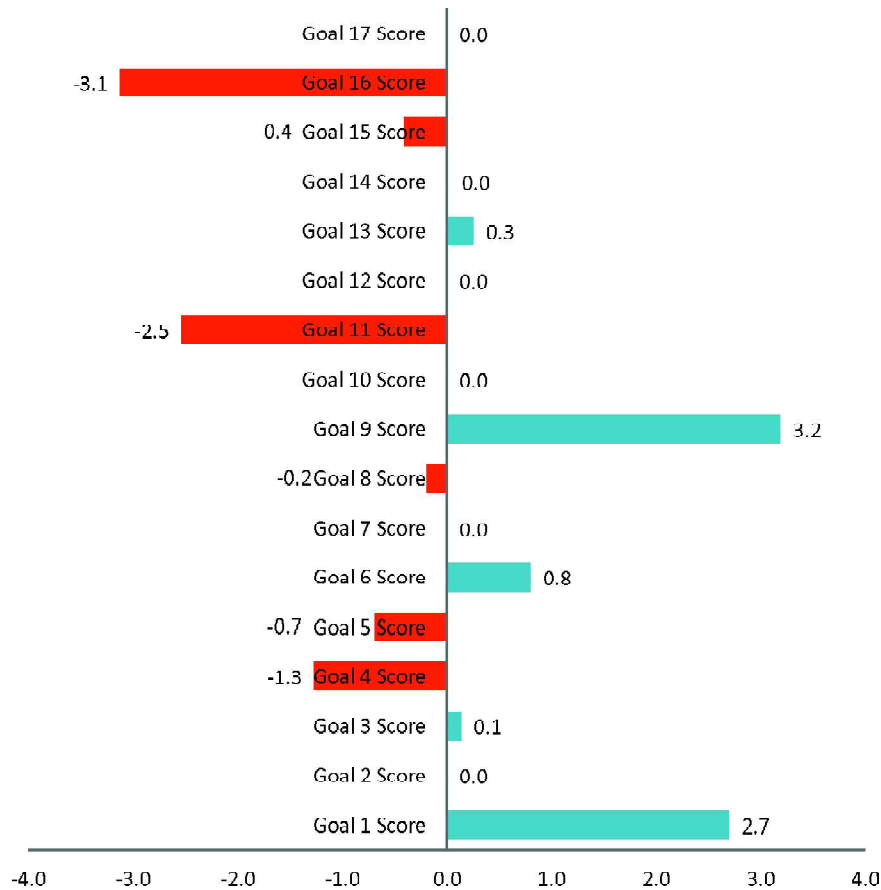


Figure 2: Goal wise performance of India as of Sustainable Development Report-2022

Source: Authors' Analysis

Goal wise changes in index scores between 2019 and 2022 (figure 3) indicates Six Goals such as: Quality Education, Gender Equality, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Sustainable cities and communities, Life on Land and, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions noticed negative growth in four years. On contrary, five goals i.e., Industry, innovation and Infrastructure, No Poverty, Clean Water and Sanitation, Climate Action and Good Health and Well-being are recorded positive growth towards the goals. Meanwhile no changes noticed in the index score of goal 17, goal14, goal 12, goal 10, Goal 7 and Goal 2 between 2019 and 2022 (Sustainable Development Network Solutions, 2019 & 2022).



**Figure 3: Goal wise Change in Index score between 2019 and 2022**

Source: Authors' Analysis

The goal-wise nation's target achievement is presented in figure 4. It is used to identify the goals that require more attention in order to meet the



committed targets by 2030. The goal wise index scores clearly show that nation's achievement in three goals, namely Goal 5, Goal 10, and Goal 9, is accounted less than 50%. Furthermore, Goals 11 and 15 are just crossed half way. All the above five goals demand more attention from policy makers. Steps required in the development of integrated policies, sectoral action plan, inclusive strategies and budgetary provisions. Because India is classified as a low SDG commitment country, strict monitoring of these goals at the national level is strongly recommended (David M, 2018; Sustainable Development Network Solutions, 2022)

Irrespective of negative growth between 2019 and 2022, Goal 4: Quality Education showed a good index score of 82.9.

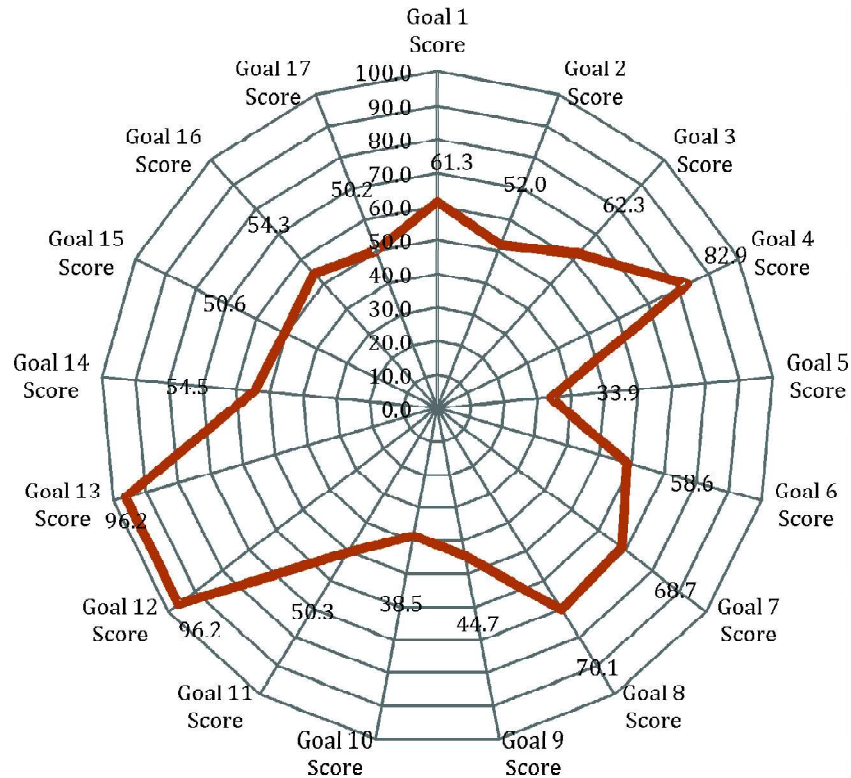


Figure 4: Goal wise Nations' Achievement as per SDSN report 2022

Source: Authors' Analysis

## CONCLUSION

The study briefly explains how global concern has shifted from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 to Sustainable Development Goals



(SDGs) in 2012. India's stand in this journey is analysed in detail. India's progression in achieving the SDGs is studied with the aid of Sustainable Development Goals Index. India's rank in the SDG index has not been so convincing as compared to 2019 (115<sup>th</sup> rank) it has slipped down six positions (121<sup>st</sup> rank) in 2022. Regional scores showed India stood at 18<sup>th</sup> position out of 19, under East and South Asia region category. The goal-wise performance is also not appealing barring two goals i.e., Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, Goal 13: Climate action to meet committed goals by 2030. However, the performance in the remaining SDGs is poor and below the expectations. The goal wise index scores indicate the nation's achievement in three goals, namely Goal 5, Goal 10, and Goal 9, is below 50% and major gaps exist between targets and achievements. Furthermore, Goals 11 and 15 are just crossed half way and yet another half way to travel. The time series data for SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities noticed a decreasing trend, which indicates that the nation is moving in the wrong direction. Research found the five goals namely: Goal 5, 10, 9, 11 & 15 demand more attention from policy makers and stakeholders to meet the set targets on time. Interventions are needed in the development of integrated policies, sectoral action plan, inclusive strategies and budgetary provisions. India is categorised as a low SDG commitment country, to get over this, strict monitoring of the goals at the national level is strongly recommended. The nation faces a herculean task in attaining this.

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