

INDIA AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

As India's census is going on and projected population may be around 1.5 billion people, recent report gave us the good news that India has jumped into top 100 for Sustainable development. India scored 99th spot scoring 67 out of 100. NITI Aayog's domestic SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) India has also seen improvement. However, when dug deep into the performance of Indian as a whole and Indian states comparing with each other, it gives us different picture as few developed states especially south states have outperformed in achieving SDGs. This paper gives us certain insights on how few states are still lagging behind in achieving SDGs and facing certain challenges to achieve SDGs. This paper allows us to understand reason behind India's achievement in SDGs, at the same time challenges lying ahead specially related to gender equality, income inequality, hunger and issues related to climate change specially with reference to Indian states. The objective of this paper is to understand India's trend in achieving Sustainable Development goals, at the same time to understand overall performance between states which shows huge gap between Developed states like Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, when compared with less developed states like Jharkand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh etc., SDG are a set of 17 goals and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030 is a long road ahead.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development Goals which are 17 in total with 169 targets to be achieved by 2030 by all countries have long road to reach its target. When the whole world is going through tough phase due to ongoing war between USA and Iran, India is bound to have certain effects. India, according to World Economic Outlook (WEO) published by International Monetary Fund (IMF), India is no longer 4th largest economy in the world. It has dropped to 6th position. When we look at India's progress even though GDP indicates upward trend, its achievement specially with reference to achieving Sustainable development goal's is far from reaching its goal.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the paper are as follows:

1. To Understand the importance and goals set in Sustainable development.
2. To know the progress of India in achieving Sustainable development goals.
3. To compare South states with North states in achieving SDG.

HISTORY

Before the SDGs which we have today, Sustainable development progress has long history gracing back to year 1968. In the year 1968 club of Rome, Italy was founded, through this the report was published titled "Limits to Growth" in the year 1972. From this we got the information that we can't utilize environment non-stop but to utilize sensibly.

In the year 1987, Brundtland report was published with title “Our common future”, where for the first time Sustainable development was used. In 1992, Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It was in this summit UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) was established. It was signed by 154 states at UN (United Nation). By 2022 it was signed by 198 countries. Today its decision-making body (COP - Conference of the Parties). Conference of parties meet annually to assess the progress in dealing with climate change. Apart from this CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity) was signed and agenda 21 also was Sustainable development plan.

In the year 2000, Millennium Summit in New York was held which resulted in UN Millennium declaration set's targets to achieve by 2015 which we know as Millennium goals. In 2002 World Summit on Sustainable development in Johannesburg. In the year 2012, resulted in outcome document of “**the future we want**” where all countries agreed for Sustainable development plans, target.

MEANING AND DEFINITION

United nations Sustainable Development Goals are a set of global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to achieve economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection by the year 2030.

“SDGs are global development goals designed to create a better and sustainable future for people and the planet.”

According to **Brundtland commission (1987)**, one of the most famous definitions of sustainable development was given in the World Commission on Environment and Development Report: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

According to **United Nations**, “The Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and prosperity for all people by 2030”.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals.

INDIA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

As pointed out earlier India has entered into top 100 in SDR (Sustainable development report) for the first time since the report inception in 2016 by SDSN (Sustainable Development Solutions Network). SDSN functions as an independent UN backed body widely followed by the countries all over the World and economist, policy makers follow with great interest. In the year 2016 India ranked 110 out of 157 countries. In the year 2025 India is ranked at 99 which itself is a huge achievement.

Now let us understand how India achieved 99th spot, which India was able to achieve and which are the goals India still has long way to achieve.

1. India and SDG-1: No Poverty

When compare to World Poverty, India has performed satisfactorily as a country. Whereas World Poverty, who earn less than 3.00 \$ per day, which we consider as extreme poverty are more than 90 million people. Whereas in India poverty has comparatively reduced, though we can challenge certain data's

Table No.1: India and Poverty

Source	Year	Poverty rate
NSSO	2012	22%
World bank	2023	12%

Economic survey highlight that extreme poverty has come down to 53%. Tendulkar committee also indicate sharp decline in poverty. Between 2011-12 to 2023-24 poverty rate decreased from 21.9% in 2011-12 to 4.7 in 2022-23 and 2.3% in 2023-24. These estimates indicate low poverty incidence across states specially in urban area.

South states like Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Andra Pradesh, Telengana show's dratic reduction in poverty compare to north states like Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa, Chattisgarh etc.,

India and SDG-2: Zero hunger

This area also show's marginal improvement. But according to National Family health survey obesity among young youths specially in urban areas is increasing with specific to age group of 15 to 45.

Table no. 2: Hunger rate in India

Indicator	NFHS-4 (2015-2016)	NFHS-5 (2019-21)
Stunting	38.4%	35.5%
Wasting	21.0%	19.3%

a) NFHS-National family health survey

b) Stunting means, people who are too short for their age".

c) Wasting means, people who are thin in their height".

India and SDG-7: Affordable and Clean Energy

This goal is one of the most achieved goals by far by India where there is almost above 90% household electrification. But one should remember that power supply varies from region to region depending upon the seasons state availability.

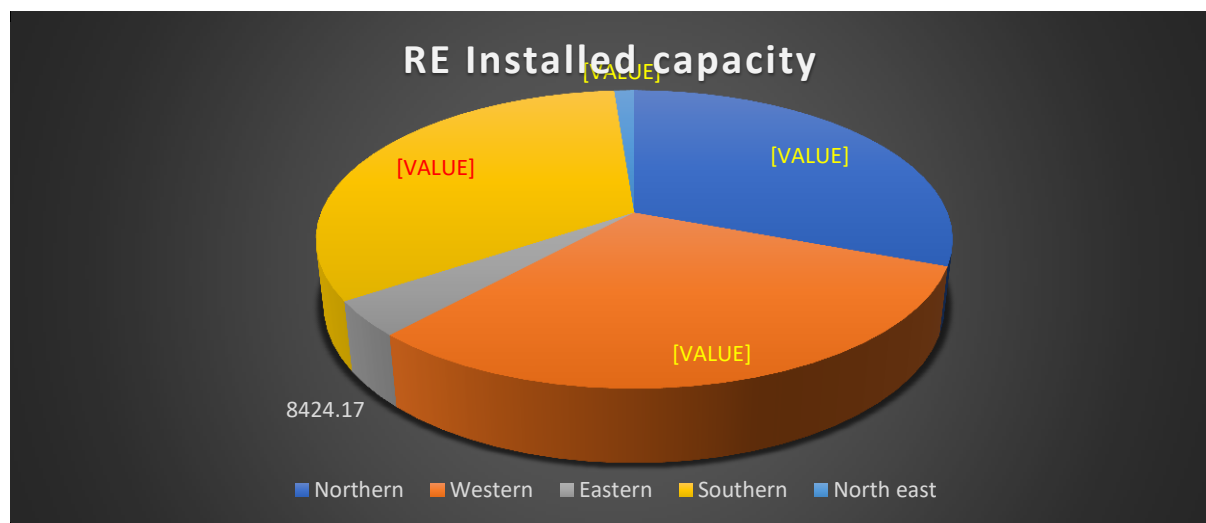
Renewable energy is considered as major success as India ranks 4th in global in renewable cap, mostly in solar and wind energy. However, target by 2030 is 500 GW (Gigawatt) non-fossil fuel capacity 50% energy from renewables 5 million tons of green hydrogen annually by 2030. When taken their target India added only 44.5 GW renewable energy by 2025. India stands 3rd in Solar power installed capacity and 4th wind power capacity.

Table no. 3: Sector wise Installed capacity in India

Sector	Installed Capacity (GW)
Solar Power (a)	132.85
Wind Power (b)	53.99
Bio Energy (c)	11.61
Small Hydro (d)	5.16
Hybrid/Round the Clock (RTC)	--

As on 31.03.2025 region wise installed capacity shows small improvement in southern states.

Figure 1: Region wise RE Installed capacity in India.



Source: Ministry of New Renewable Energy (MNRE) National Power Portal (NPP), Ministry of Power (MOP)

Table No. 4 : Region wise/State wise RE Cumulative Installed Capacity from 2017-18 to 2024-25

(in MW)

STATES / UTs	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
NORTHERN REGION								
Haryana	510.49	519.11	547.19	762.51	1242.13	1362.09	1832.92	2449.94
Himachal Pradesh	10514.30	10707.75	10768.91	10916.61	11303.49	11330.42	11356.16	12196.18
Jammu & Kashmir	3650.22	3664.10	3581.11	3588.11	3551.61	3556.12	3595.37	3624.42
Ladakh	0.00	0.00	89.00	89.00	136.44	137.79	139.79	142.59
Punjab	2626.98	2522.38	2566.86	2743.80	2864.12	2961.93	3163.92	3270.42
Rajasthan	7289.36	8223.73	10134.97	10812.35	17451.62	22809.05	27103.89	34136.34
Uttar Pradesh	3447.25	3739.46	3900.97	4563.07	4985.12	5282.65	5697.17	6223.91
Uttarakhand	4379.83	4426.88	4437.96	4589.24	4787.15	4909.14	4971.94	5010.77
Chandigarh	26.01	35.52	41.36	45.97	55.17	58.69	65.52	78.85
Delhi	123.03	180.35	218.62	246.43	270.12	302.26	340.51	397.4
Total	32567.47	34019.28	36286.95	38357.09	46646.97	52710.14	58267.19	67530.82
NORTH-EASTERN REGION								
Arunachal Pradesh	517.00	655.69	955.98	1256.27	1257.34	1259.75	1259.90	1270.46
Assam	378.39	414.58	433.86	437.67	504.05	534.04	542.29	582.65
Manipur	115.28	118.66	120.43	121.84	122.70	122.73	123.49	124.24
Meghalaya	418.85	372.18	372.18	372.18	372.48	372.48	395.07	395.11
Mizoram	100.16	101.20	102.52	103.45	104.37	133.49	135.78	135.86
Nagaland	108.51	108.51	108.51	108.58	108.71	110.71	110.84	110.84
Tripura	24.53	24.53	28.91	29.57	30.9	33.61	34.47	37.25
Total	1662.72	1795.35	2122.39	2429.56	2500.55	2566.81	2601.84	2656.41
WESTERN REGION								
Chhattisgarh	785.42	850.77	864.89	886.52	989.08	1419.82	1683.39	1828.46
Goa	1.08	4.09	5.29	7.95	20.34	26.88	45.47	58.43
Gujarat	9339.45	10697.72	12683.77	15204.25	18577.90	21425.85	27461.72	33393.03
Madhya Pradesh	6445.13	6864.87	7285.75	7526.97	7703.88	8140.08	9333.37	10827.7
Maharashtra	11519.21	12421.69	12822.27	13382.85	13704.08	15804.50	17530.12	22401.46
Dadar & Nagar Haveli/Daman & Diu	16.07	19.93	25.32	46.01	46.18	46.47	46.47	51.87
Total	28106.36	30859.07	33687.29	37054.55	41041.46	46863.6	56100.54	68560.95
EASTERN REGION								
Bihar	346.18	352.23	365.09	376.63	387.35	389.60	450.15	539.26
Jharkhand	320.14	267.87	273.80	288.21	307.14	324.19	395.55	434.06
Odisha	2364.94	2681.68	2686.38	2715.63	2771.64	2782.57	2825.03	2958.84
Sikkim	2222.98	2222.99	2223.05	2223.05	2338.79	2341.80	2344.15	2344.67
West Bengal	1747.46	1849.29	1888.03	1923.44	1928.15	1962.77	1982.13	2112.18
Andaman & Nicobar	12.05	17.22	17.68	34.71	34.74	35.16	35.16	35.16
Total	7013.75	7391.28	7454.03	7561.67	7767.81	7836.09	8032.17	8424.17
SOUTHERN REGION								
Andhra Pradesh	8060.58	9560.02	10091.40	10696.10	10821.6	10970.20	11029.30	12114.48
Karnataka	16241.60	17524.40	18918.10	19149.30	19593.8	20408.40	21441.90	23917.64
Kerala	2282.06	2290.71	2304.35	2428.92	2527.2	2957.10	3229.46	3853.38
Tamil Nadu	13451.7	14909.40	16588.8	17476.70	18277.5	20098.60	22161.60	25241.36
Telangana	6507.48	6405.96	6442.85	6796.59	7364.79	7510.97	7604.40	7688.34
Lakshadweep	3.14	3.14	3.27	3.27	3.27	3.27	4.97	4.97
Pondicherry	0.34	3.32	5.69	9.51	13.69	35.53	49.91	54.51
Total	46546.9	50696.95	54354.46	56560.39	58601.85	61984.07	65521.54	72874.68
Others	47.66	49.31	49.31	49.31	49.31	49.31	49.31	49.31
Grand Total	115944.90	124811.20	133954.50	142012.60	156607.90	172010.00	190572.70	220096.35

Source: MNRE & NPP, MoP

The above table explains the Region wise/State wise RE (Renewable energy) Cumulative Installed Capacity from 2017-18 to 2024-25, India witnessed a remarkable transformation in its electricity installed capacity, nearly doubling from 116 GW to over 220GW. This growth was predominantly concentrated in the Western, Northern, and Southern regions, driven by strong contributions from states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. The Southern Region leads India's renewable energy capacity with over 33%, followed by the Western and Northern Regions, while the Eastern and North-Eastern regions lag behind. Solar energy dominates India's renewable mix, complemented by wind, large hydro, bio power, and small hydro power. States like Rajasthan and Karnataka demonstrate high shares of installed capacity exceeding 60%, while some northeastern states achieve 100% renewable capacity, mainly through hydro power.

As on 31st March 2025, Southern Region leads India's renewable energy installed capacity, contributing the highest share at 33.13%, reflecting strong growth in states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. Western Region follows closely with 31.15%, driven by major contributions from Gujarat and Maharashtra. Northern Region holds a 30.68% share, with Rajasthan playing a dominant role in the region's rise. On the other hand, Eastern Region accounts for only 3.83%. North Eastern Region contributes the least at just 1.21%, indicating minimal capacity expansion and limited renewable infrastructure in the area. The chart highlights the regional imbalance in renewable energy growth, with southern and western states leading the transition¹.

INDIA AND SDG-9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

India is one among fastest growing economy in terms of innovation. If we take mobile there is rapid mobile phone penetration. In terms of mobile accessibility, it is more than 95% of India is covered. A financial payment innovation has led the digital arena into fastest growing area via UPI (Unified Payments Interface) based digital platforms.

INDIA AND SDG-16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTION

In terms of performance of their goal India is the weakest performance, where certain states still due communal fighting has no peace. For example, Manipuri India is still lagging in governance quality, Rule of law, press freedom, institution independence, freedom of speech etc., These aspects have shown stagnation or decline in many aspects. Judicial justice also lagging has long pending cases are not being finalized and still rich has upper hand than common citizen.

Future India

India achieving 99th spot must be considering has step forward and not the final goal. Still if we consider many small economies like Sri Lanka, Nepal have achieved more in SDG than Indian economy though being 6th largest economy, India has to look into many aspects to improve its position to name a few...

- a) India has to bridge gap in nutrition, institutional strength
- b) Should try to reduce Income inequality, especially urban-rural disparities are crucial.
- c) India must try to accelerate targeted policy action and data transparency is a must.

Thus, true improvement lies inclusive equitable and sustainable development than just focusing on ranks.

CONCLUSION

To conclude we can easily say that being in under 100th rank may on paper feel a huge achievement. But Sustainable Development Goals with 169th targets with little more than 300 indicators World as well as India has long way to go to achieve all the 17 goals by 2030. India in particular has to focus main on economic inequalities, quality education, clean water and sanitation. Though taken many steps still a lot of work has to gender equality. In short 17 goals to be achieved by 2030 still a huge task for entire world and India in particular.

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