

India's Sustainable Development Paradigm: A Systematic Review of Institutional Frameworks, Strategic Transitions, and Research Trends

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ABSTRACT

India is working towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. India also has its vision for Viksit Bharat 2047. This paper looks at what India has done far. It uses information from the Sustainable Development Report 2025 the NITI Aayog Annual Report 2024-25 and other recent studies. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are very important for India. India wants to balance its growth with taking care of the environment. The findings show that India has made progress. For now, India is in the 100 of the global SDG Index with a score of 67 in 2025. India has done well in reducing poverty making healthcare more accessible through Ayushman Bharat and increasing its use of energy. However, India still faces problems in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in areas like Zero Hunger and Gender Equality. There is a change in how companies report on their impact. Now companies have to report on Environmental, Social and Governance issues through the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting framework. India also has a plan to reduce its carbon emissions and achieve Net-Zero by 2070 based on the principle of Climate Justice and with help from countries. This paper concludes that while the government is doing a job of monitoring progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals more needs to be done at the level like in cities and towns to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Keywords: SDGS, Sustainable Development Report, Viksit Bharat 2047, sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

India stands at a point in its development. India is home to one-sixth of humanity and is one of the world's fastest-growing major economies. The idea of development is to meet the needs of the present without compromising the future. India is committed to the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. India's commitment to this agenda is rooted in a "dual challenge": the necessity of maintaining high economic growth to alleviate poverty while simultaneously securing its ecological foundations. According to the Sustainable Development Report 2025 India

has achieved a significant milestone by entering the top 100 of the global SDG Index for the first time ranking 99th with a composite score of 67. This progress is driven by institutional ownership led by NITI Aayog. India's unique approach defined by the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities advocates for climate justice while pursuing domestic targets, such as reaching Net-Zero by 2070.

METHODOLOGY:

A Systematic Review Framework

This review uses the Scientific Procedures and Rationales for Systematic Literature Reviews (SPAR-4-SLR) protocol SPAR-4-SLR protocol drawing on data and qualitative syntheses of official government documents. Analysis shows that research is heavily clustered around SDG 8 and SDG 12 while SDG 14 and SDG 15 remain significantly under-researched.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the frameworks that define India's path toward sustainable development and its long-term low-carbon future.

Institutional Governance and Competitive Federalism

The institutionalisation of SDGs in India is led by NITI Aayog, which has moved from down planning to a model of Competitive and Cooperative Federalism. The SDG India Index tracks progress across all States and UTs with the composite national score improving from 57 in 2018 to 99 in 2024-25.

Viksit Bharat 2047 is a long-term vision that seeks to transform India into a developed nation by the centenary of its independence integrating growth with sustainable infrastructure and human capital development.

Low-Carbon Transitions

India's Long-Term Low-Carbon Development Strategy identifies seven key transitions required to decouple emissions from growth.

These transitions include:

1. Low-Carbon Development of Electricity Systems,
2. Integrated, Efficient and Inclusive Low-Carbon Transport System
3. Adaptation in Urban Design and Sustainable Urbanisation,
4. Economy- Decoupling and Low-Emission Industrial Systems,
5. CO2 Removal and Related Engineering Solutions,
6. Enhancement of Forest and Vegetative Cover and Economic and
7. Financial Aspects of Low-Carbon Development.

Resilient Urbanisation and SDG 11

With areas projected to contribute 75% of the national GDP by 2040 the sustainable management of cities is a primary frontier. NITI Aayog's pilot projects in cities like Mumbai and Surat represent a shift toward "integrated visioning" rather than traditional spatial planning.

Sustainable urbanisation is hindered by the implementation of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. The Plastic Waste Management Rules introduce definitions for biodegradable plastics and target the reduction of microplastics.

Natural Resource Stewardship: The Water and Forest Story

India's sustainability is inextricably linked to its water and forest resources managed through large-scale missions.

The Jal Jeevan Mission aims to provide 100% household tap connections significantly reducing the health and economic burden of water-borne diseases.

The National Aquifer Mapping programme has mapped 2 million sq. Km. To ensure groundwater extraction. Under its NDC India committed to creating a carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent by 2030 through expanded forest and tree cover.

The Corporate Governance Shift: ESG and Accountability

The Indian corporate sector has witnessed a transformation from CSR to mandatory ESG compliance. The Securities and Exchange Board of India now mandates that the top 1000 listed entities provide disclosures on environmental and social impact.

Judicial interpretations have expanded directors' duties to include the long-term interests of all stakeholders and the environment than mere profit maximisation.

Discussion

- Bibliometric evidence suggests that while India excels in research related to SDG 8 and SDG 13 significant thematic gaps persist.
- There is a need for research on SDG 5 and SDG 2 where regional disparities in states like Bihar and Jharkhand remain acute.
- A significant challenge is the "granular data void" at the ward and district levels, which hampers evidence-based policymaking for sustainability.
- There is a pressing need for more public-private synergy within India to foster localized innovation. India is making progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- India has done well in reducing poverty and increasing its use of energy. However, India still faces problems in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in areas, like Zero Hunger and Gender Equality. India needs to do more at the level to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

CONCLUSION

India is working hard to be sustainable. The government has plans like **LT-LEDS** and Mission Life to make this happen. There is still a lot of work to be done to make sure these plans actually work on the ground. To reach the goals of **Viksit Bharat 2047** and the 2030 Agenda India needs to find a way to get a lot of money to invest in sustainability help local governments get better at doing their jobs and use Digital Public Infrastructure to get accurate information.

Indias sustainability journey is about finding a balance between growing the economy quickly and keeping the air, water and land clean and safe for people. This is what people call the Green Dilemma. India needs to figure out how to make its economy strong without hurting the environment. Indias success, in sustainability depends on how India can solve the Green Dilemma and make sure that Indias land, water and people are protected.

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