

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and India's Performance: A Review of The Regional Responses

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ABSTRACT: India as one of the member states of the United Nations has implemented the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals in the last nine years from 2015. With 57 percent success achieved as reported to the Parliament, the government put up quite impressive achievement over more than a few goals. However, there are serious concerns over poverty, hunger, education, health, and human settlement issues in which cases the country has a very long way to go to live up to the goals. This paper, besides presenting the UNSDGs by their objectives and action strategies suggested has accounted for the sub-national responses and captured the success of each of the goals. It has categorized the selected goals into five broad groups, keeping the essential parameters to mirror the socio-economic considerations in view, across all the regions of the country. Based on the composite index averages, it must strive hard to establish an orderly society with inclusive features. The progress in economic growth is above the national scale but the growth drivers/ initiatives are yet to take deep roots in the lives of jobless and unemployed youth in rural areas. Educational and political empowerment of women are hoping to emancipate towards the new era. There is an absolute necessity to evolve an integrated human settlement policy and intervention to ensure decent housing with all the services. With half of the poor yet to cross the threshold, income-generating and entrepreneurial activities need up scaling to escape from poverty and hunger. Based on the analysis, this work offered several policy implications to fulfill all the SDGs in the country in the remaining timeline of six years.

KEYWORDS: UNSDGs, India's Performance, Sub-national Responses, Frontrunners and laggards, Implications

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES: The literary world should endorse a point that the year 2015 was a remarkable and memorable one, especially for the backward societies and developing economies, as all the global leaders have rededicated themselves to saving the planet and the people, by achieving higher prosperity with partnership. Accordingly, in September, the global leaders adopted a thoughtful and very ambitious resolution on the seventieth year of the anniversary/existence of the United Nations Organization (UNO). The resolution thus adopted was named after "UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs)", which has been pushed across all the member states to lay down the implementable roadmap, policies, and programs of the seventeen goals in fifteen years of timeline or by the year 2030. It must be noted that SDGs are the newer version of the Eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) advanced in 2000, as a mark of the commencement of the new millennium. They include (a) eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; (b) achieving universal primary education; (c) promoting gender equality and empowering women; (d) reducing child mortality; (e) improving maternal health; (f) combating HIV/AIDS/Malaria and other diseases; (g) to ensure environmental sustainability; and (h) to develop global partnership for development. Although fringe benefits have accrued to the developing societies, substantial could not be achieved for reasons like excessive emphasis on poverty and poor with the help of foreign financial aid (Sharma, HP & Ashish Chaturvedi 2020, UNDP 2015) and no time-binding (Carley & Christine 2017) to achieve results over the MDGs. Apart from that, governance factors like policy commitments, the importance of public programs, and accountable institutions in developing countries were ignored. The difference that makes in the SDGs is the significant thrust on the development of social infrastructure and socially inclusive growth. Thus, keeping the critical thrust of the resolution, the Goals are broadly categorized into six: (a) Poverty and Hunger focused goals (or 1&2); (b) Social Infrastructure Development and Social Standard Improvement goals (3 to 7); (c) Economic Growth and Inequality Reduction goals (8 to 10); (d) Inclusive Human Settlements and Sustainable Consumption goals (11&12); (e) Combat Climate Change, Conserve Marine Resources and Protect Ecosystems goals (13 to 15); and (f) Promote Inclusive Societies and Global Partnerships for Sustainable Development goals (16 & 17). The underlying principles of these goals are to further human dignity with enhanced access to human rights along the lines of the various international treaties and declarations. Undoubtedly, the declaration over the goals is a war raging unitedly against the socio-economic and environmental situations prevailing in the developing and least developed countries, especially to enhance the

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quality of life and standard of living. While doing so, the declaration has also unfolded international support and assistance, especially from the developed countries to share the economic burden of the low-income countries through various mechanisms (United Nations 2015).

The UN declaration came into implementation after the newly elected government assumed its office in India, just a little over one year ago - May 2014. By and large with a coincided journey together, the national government has completed over nine and half years in the office and was mandatorily responsible for implementing the action plans of the UNSDGs from September 2015. Also, it may not be wrong to say that the new government has had a new direction of roadmap of the SDGs, while in office besides its political agenda with which it came to the power for the implementation. The subject matter of the global agenda to achieve human dignity as well as the universal welfare of mankind has attracted several scholars to examine the various facets in the Indian context. This literature can be classified into two categories: (a) Public Responses by the National Institute for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog and the Lok Sabha Secretariat of the Parliament; and (b) Evaluation studies of the scholars of foreign and India-based, including a few regional and sector studies. The voluntary National Review report on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals by the high-level political forum of the United Nations has documented the policy responses and the programs for implementing the SDGs in India. One of the complimenting efforts that it has recorded is the success achieved so far with each of the goals. It has rightly admitted that "Collective Effort, Inclusive Development" is the cornerstone of India's National development agenda, which

has claimed to focus on achieving higher economic growth, infrastructure development, and industrialization to wage war against poverty, social inclusion, and empowerment of the poor (UN-VNRR 2017). Further, 13 of the 17 goals have been scientifically analyzed with the composite index score for all the States and Union Territories and recorded the performance scores between 42 and 69 and between 57 and 68 respectively. The composite score is 57, although in a few goals and at a good number of states/UTs, the performance is eye-catching in the country. It also attempted to identify and classify the Indian States into top-performing and worst-performing in the achievement of the SDGs and 13 States performed well in all the goals (Parliament Note 2023, Sharma HP & A Chaturvedi 2020). Similarly, while admitting the fact that India is well on track to meet SDG commitments, especially, it has achieved middling results in the case of poverty, education, inclusive growth public health, water and energy, reducing inequality, sustainable cities, etc. However, it has been identified that reducing hunger and malnutrition, achieving gender equality, creating resilient infrastructure, inclusive and innovative industrial sectors have remained the biggest challenges for India (CSDEI 2020). Assessment of the performance at state and regional levels and issue-specific challenges, the position of the country vis-à-vis developed and developing countries along with the trend of select indicators for ten years (2011-2020) are captured (Radhika B & K Roychowdhury 2020, Suman Chatterjee 2021)). A quantitative mid-line assessment of the SDGs in 707 districts of India is undertaken in the backdrop of the National Family Health Survey - 2016 & 2021 and National Health Policy 2017 (Subramanian SV & others 2023 & Shewli Shabnam & Others 2022). Lastly, the research on the regional context of Odisha's Multidimensional poverty was examined with the public social sector expenditure (Basanta K Pradhan & others 2023). It is pointed out that despite significant progress in human development in Odisha in recent years it still lags compared to several other Indian states.

Interestingly, the national government (2014 to 2024 under Mr. Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party) has given good governance and has achieved a little above half success in the country in implementing the SDGs. Especially, the success brought

about the needed changes and significant success in the country over most of the SDGs, although it has many more successes to achieve. The official public information clearly shows that India's response and its roadmap for fulfilling the UN Goals makes it obvious to examine the success. The official findings account an overall achievement of 57 per cent within the goals selected. This paper has four objectives: (a) to portray an overview of the SDGs with the defined target and action plan suggested to member states; (b) to delve into India's response and the success recorded over the selected SDGs; (c) to present the composite progress across all the regions; and (d) to offer policy implications for the corrective actions over UNSDGs during the remaining period of six years or 2030. This paper has not considered six goals for analysis for want of the public data but deliberated only 11 goals (1 to 11) as parameters to assess SDGs performance. While doing so, a composite index is constructed across the selected 11 parameters spread over to 36 regions (30 independent state and 6 union territories) to arrive at the national performance index. The analysis is based on the secondary published data and official information presented by the public authorities in the country.

IMPORTANCE OF SDGS: If not in the advanced and developed countries, the SDGs assume paramount standing in the context of all developing countries in general and India in particular. Despite India achieving its independence over seventy-five years ago, it has not been possible to overcome the development challenges yet, including the socio- economic order free from deep-rooted sufferings more so by the poorest of the poor. Especially, when India is dreaming of becoming developed by 2047 (the centenary year of independence), it cannot afford to abandon the socio-economic challenges any longer. This obviously calls for the development of economic capacities, good governance, and above all political determination because unattended fundamental challenges and developed economic standing cannot go together. Also, the literature points to the fact that poverty and hunger are

life-threatening and grave to any society, as they impede individual growth and advancement. Needless to note poverty and hunger together isolate, alienate, no participation, baselessness, material deprivation, insecurity, vulnerability, worst reputation, and whatnot by individuals and families (Idriss Jazairy & Others 1992). Further, hunger is a situation in which individuals/families cannot feed the needed calories and meet vital wants by themselves causing a poverty trap. Akin, the noble winner argues that poverty status makes them less productive as the poor cannot afford to eat enough although intuition is powerful (Abhijit Banerjee & Esther Duflo 2011). These apart, hunger limits human instincts, forces one to engage in unlawful engagements, and kills oneself due to starvation. Secondly, the development of human settlements on an inclusive basis emphasized meeting basic needs like housing, drinking water, sanitation, and modern energy is equally important from the viewpoint of social advancement, as the social-environmental circumstances determine societal development (UNCHS 1996). With these issues, a cohesive framework is vibrant for public action in India, as it amounts to senseless with any degree of economic performance. This segment highlights Indian strategies against the SDGs targets.

The goals 1 and 2 in the Indian context of the conspicuous poverty and hunger scenarios assumed overriding importance, given roughly 30 percent of its population is in the poverty trap, based on the new methodology of household expenditure rather than calories alone. Professor Suresh Tendulkar's Committee adopted the household expenditure method based on the NSS 66th Round Survey data and presented the incidence of the poverty trap. Further, it argued that the incidence of poverty is even greater (or one-third) in rural areas than in the rest of the country (GoI 2009, Panagaria A & Megha Mukim 2014). The prescription suggested roadmaps to eradicate all dimensions of extreme poverty for all people, ending hunger and ensuring access to safe and nutritious food around the year. Besides, ending all forms of malnutrition by 2025, especially children under 5 years of age, adolescent girls, pregnant, lactating women, and older persons is yet another advocated recommendation. Effective pro-poor, and gender-sensitive policies at the national and regional levels with accelerated investment for poverty eradication, financial services, including microfinance, Creating access to basic services, ownership and control of land, and appropriate technology are proposed needs of the hour. These goals shall be met by proper public interventions like providing gainful employment opportunities, evolving nationally appropriate social protection systems, substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable with all the basic needs, and, equal rights to economic resources. The strategy of doubling agricultural productivity in small farming with inputs support, knowledge, financial services, market opportunities, and adaptation to climate change, drought, flooding, and other disasters should be evolved. Increasing investment in rural infrastructure, extension services, technology development, and preventing trade restrictions and distortions in agricultural markets have been the other interventions proposed.

The goals 3 to 5 deal with the very ambitious objectives to put an end to all preventable deaths of newborns, children under 5 years, neonatal mortality, premature mortality, deaths from road traffic accidents, hazardous chemicals, pollution, and contaminations. Ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls, violence in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual exploitation, and eliminating gender disparity have been extended purposes. The other purpose is to ensure free, equitable, and quality pre-primary, primary, and secondary education to all children with effective learning outcomes, affordable and quality technical, vocational tertiary, including university for all men and women, including inclusive and effective learning environment for all. The proposed strategy is to create access to safe, effective, quality, affordable essential medicines, and vaccines for all and to substantially expand health services, increase health financing, development, recruitment, training, and retention of the health workforce, strengthen capacity for early warning, risk reduction, and management of national health risks. Increase and achieve literacy and numeracy, vocational and technical skills for employment, and entrepreneurship. Increase enrolment in higher education, vocational training, and technical/scientific programs by increasing the supply of qualified teachers for teaching programs. Ensure full and effective participation and equal opportunities for decision-making in political, economic, and public life. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, ownership and control over land and other property, financial services, and inheritance by national laws. Adopt and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls at all levels.

Achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water being a lifeline for all is a renewed thrust of the goals 6 & 7 by relieving women and girls from drudgeries. Equally achieving sanitation and hygiene to end open defecation in some settlements. Similarly, ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services, increasing the share of renewable energy substantially, and doubling the improvement in energy efficiency are the added objectives of the goals. It must be understood that if developing societies are facing a high degree of deprivation of these facilities is only due to a lack of good housing for all. But an un-avowed precondition is good and standard housing for all to ensure these facilities, which in itself is in question in many contexts. Towards realizing these objectives, improving water quality by eliminating hazardous chemicals and materials, reducing the proportion of untreated wastewater, increasing water-use efficiency across all sectors, reducing the number of people suffering from water scarcity, and implementing integrated water resource management at all levels have been suggested to be the priority. Protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems like mountains, forests, Wetlands, Rivers, aquifers, and lakes by strengthening. The participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management is another priority. Expanding infrastructure and upgrading technology to supply modern and sustainable energy services for all effectively ensures social standards for all.

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Goals 8 to 10 mandated promoting all-round development and financing the same, achieving higher growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annually, reducing unemployment and increasing educational training technological up - gradation, innovation in labor-intensive sectors, promotion and support of productive activities, entrepreneurship, jobs creation, encouraging the growth of MSMEs with financial services, decent work for all, equal pay for equal work, elimination of child labor in all its forms, and promote sustainable tourism and local products. Develop quality and resilient infrastructure at the regional and trans borders with equitable access to all, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization to increase the share of employment and GDP, and promote social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, status, etc. is the added dimensions. Reduce inequalities of outcomes – discriminatory laws, policies and promote appropriate legislations policies and actions and adopt progressive policies in fiscal, wage, and social protection to achieve greater equality, protect labor rights, and secure working environment for all workers, including migrant and women workers should be the overall objective. Strengthening the capacity of domestic financial institutions to increase access to financial services of banking, insurance, and other sectors, increase access to small-scale industries, financial services, affordable credit, integrating them to value chain and markets, support domestic technology development, improve access to information and communications technology and affordable internet access shall be in place. Importantly, achieving and sustaining income growth of the bottom 40 percent of the population higher than the national average, facilitating orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people by implementing planned and well-managed migration policies are the facilitating strategies to attain economic growth, resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and to reduce inequality within the economy.

Given the increasing urbanization, informal settlements, growth of slums, degraded environment, and unmet basic needs, including secured housing, especially in the urban Indian context, making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, as depicted in the goal 11, is the need of the hour. Undoubtedly this goal seeks to bring about orderly urbanization and human settlements with access to all human basic needs. The goal mandates ensuring adequate, safe, and affordable housing with access to basic services for all and achieving inclusive urbanization and settlements by improving living conditions and standards. Upgrading slums, providing road connectivity with sustainable transport systems for all settlements, and road safety shall be the interventional priorities. Significantly, enhancing the development efforts of the other tier cities for sustainable and inclusive urbanization, integrated human settlement planning, and management shall be the other added priorities. Linking between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas by evolving national and regional development planning and increasing the number of cities and human settlements with integrated policies and plans at all levels shall be the order.

THE REGIONAL RESPONSES AND PROGRESS: In India's cooperative federalism governance system, achieving any development-oriented programme designed and implemented by the national government to bring about change largely depends upon regional governance. As sub-national governments, each of the 28 states and 8 union territories (including the national capital of Delhi) have equal powers and responsibility to facilitate development in their regions with financial devolutions and transfers from time to time by the national government. Since there are differences in the regional economies, social conditions, political dynamics, and capacities, variations in the overall performance are not only a reality but unavoidable. Before such differences are presented, developmental interventions were poorly designed against the ground realities, ill-financed, lacking follow-ups, monitoring, and absence of political will. But the reinvigorated demand-driven approach made the difference from 2015, coupled with political will & follow-up, good governance, monitoring, and international compulsions. It is evident from Table 1 that the overall average achievement against the 11 SDGs is a little more than half or 51 percent. Interestingly Chandigarh topped the rank scoring 63 percent, which is 12 percentage points higher than the national average, followed by Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh with scoring performance of 62 percent each. If eighteen other regions have performed above the national average, the remaining fifteen regions have lagged after scoring below the average. The lowest performance is recorded in Uttar Pradesh at the bottom scoring only 39 percent of attainment success in the SDGs, followed by Assam, Bihar, and Odisha. With this overall backdrop of the regional responses over the SDGs in view, goal-wise exposure is made even clearer.

Reduction of poverty and hunger assumes paramount significance for the reasons noted already and the success in this regard is not eye-catching in the country, which is a cause of concern even after over seventy-five years of independence. Before the regional perspective is presented it is necessary to note that reportedly the Poverty Headcount Ratio (PHR), which was in the order of 24.85 percent in 2015-16 has declined steeply to 14.96 percent in 2019-21 (NITI Aayog 2023) - a net drop of 9.89 percent. Also, estimated that still 13.5 Crores population (or 135 million) is lagging in escaping extreme poverty and has caught with the poverty trap, which is almost another half of the poor people. Further, the poverty ratio of rural and urban India has respectively recorded a steep fall from 32.59 to 19.28 percent (a net reduction of 13.31) and 8.65 to 5.27 percent (a net reduction of 3.38) during the same period. This makes it obvious that the incidence of poverty is over two and a half-fold more in rural areas. It only means that the country is lagging in escaping extreme poverty by almost another half of the poor people. Furthermore, the intensity of poverty (average deprivation among the people living in Multidimensional Poverty) was reduced to 44.39 in 2019-21 from 47.14 in 2015-16 – a net drop of 2.75 percent. The success in arresting poverty and hunger depends upon the regional economies' performance as a principal driver of change – the higher the performance higher the change and vice versa, thus not all

the regions have achieved uniform success across the country but vary significantly in the poverty and hunger reductions. However, against a national achievement average of 51 percent poverty and hunger reduction, 25 Regions have performed well above the range of 51 to 71 percent. Goa has performed far better in this regard and emerged as a topper with 71 percent achievement, which is a 20-point scale above the average. Contrary to this national trend 11 regions have performed not only less than the national average but have the serious challenge of escaping poverty trap. The highest incidence of poverty is recorded in Dadra and Nagar Haveli among the UTs and Jharkhand among the states, as they have achieved only 30 and 36 percent success respectively in the poverty reduction process. In other words, roughly one-third of the poor people have yet to escape from the poverty trap. Yet another disturbing but revelation fact has been that the traditional poverty belt - BIMARU (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh) has continued to be the center of poverty, although the incidence of poverty (HCR) has dropped to 23.16 in 2019- 21 from 38.75 percent in 2015-16 in these regions. Despite this positive trend and a good chunk of the poor people (59.92 percent) have escaped from poverty in recent times, the BIMARU regions have still registered a large percentage of the population in the poverty trap. Precisely, against an average of 2.78 percent at the national level, BIMARU regions have reportedly recorded poverty at 9.51 percent, which is over three folds of the national incidence.

Since establishing an orderly society has been the crux of modernity, strong social advancement strategies toward achieving social mainstreaming are as critical as the economic performance of any country. Building an inclusive society with healthy lives and gender equality is a feature in itself and has far-reaching implications for the character of the nation. The overall achievement of the country is just above the half, despite good performance by many regions as is evident. In other words, India has a long way to go in building an inclusive society with equal opportunities for all and an orderly society. At the same time, the development gaps are almost half of the country as a whole, although the programmatic interventions have been in place for a couple of decades. From this perspective, the sub-national attainment level reveals three different dimensions: (a) National average of success; (b) Gap in attainment; and (c) Laggards of success. With 51 percent of the national success score, Kerala has achieved a remarkable mileage of two-thirds success (76 percent) in building its society with educational advancement and space created for women. Besides Kerala's benchmark performance, all the south-Indian states and a few Union Territories have also fared better much above the national attainment scale. Yet, a bunch of 9 other regions have attained success well above the national average (between 51 to 60 percent), but still leaving achievement gaps of more than one-third. Perhaps, upscaling the schematic interventions to build healthy and inclusive societies should be the priority for the remaining 18 regions, which have performed less and attained below the national average attainment, with Bihar at the bottom. However, Delhi as the national capital and center of authorities performing far less than the average is a serious cause of concern. Undoubtedly, these regions, including most of the northeastern states, need a big push in terms of public investment, monitoring, and follow-ups in building inclusive societies.

The second best performance that is even above the overall performance of SDGs score is the development of social infrastructure, in which the country achieved 57 percent success. As depicted, 22 regions have fulfilled the goals and succeeded well above the national average, with two union territories Chandigarh and Daman & Diu scoring the highest performance average at 98 percent and 92 percent, while Meghalaya and Assam at the bottom ends with 26 and 30 percent respectively. The other 12 Regions have performed less than the national average. Interestingly, six of the seven sister states in the Northeast except Mizoram, three of the BIMARU regions (Bihar, Rajasthan & West Bengal), four major states (Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Odisha & Uttar Pradesh), and a Union Territory (Pondicherry) have lagged in meeting the basic needs and services of the households. If this is the overall scenario, 74 percent of households in rural areas have been connected to a piped water supply by 2023. Over 113 million toilets have been constructed, including 111 million for households and over 2 million for institutions (Schools, Anganwadi, Ashrams, health centers, community centers, gram panchayats, and other public offices). In the case of energy, 34 solar parks in 21 states with central financial support and Ultra Mega Solar Power Plant (UMSPP) have been a reality in Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu. The total installation capacity has increased to 66,780 MW in 2023 from 6763 in 2016 with most regions participating in the process.

The trajectory of India's economic growth is impressive in terms of innovative initiatives introduced in the last decade with a major thrust on developing a skilled workforce, self-employment, and infrastructure development. It is significant to note that over 7.8 lakh MSMEs have been established in the country roughly with 6.5 lakh individuals employed. Interestingly, 80 percent of MSMEs are functioning in rural areas. The 15TH Finance Commission allocated Rs 13,555 crores up to 2025-26 to facilitate many more MSME ventures. Similarly, 1, 12, 718 Startups were established in the fields of prototypes, product trials, and other activities in 763 districts with the funding support of the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS). Construction of 83,677 Km of roads, including 34,800 Km of additional highways, 48,877 Km of new highways by the highway authority, and connecting 1.78 lakh habitations in rural areas under Gram Sadak Yojana (GSY) mirrors the performance of the economic growth. These apart, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh regions have witnessed coastal infrastructure development as well as 4-lane highways and increasing freights. Further, in response to achieving the specific goals (8 to 10), India recorded better success with 60 percent achievement, which is first among the selected SDGs and equally important to record that 50

percent of the regions have fallen in line with the national performance. Eighteen regions have performed well above the national average, topped by Pondicherry with 93 percent success. Invariably, the other 18 regions have bracketed themselves with lower performance, and a good number of the regions have marked with 50 percent below, which is led by Nagaland. However, the country's economic performance has been complemented by its resilient growth, as observed by the India Development Update (IDU) report with a recorded average GDP of 6.3 in the decade and offered forewarning with slower consumption and external challenges in the following year/s (World Bank 2023).

One of the most neglected aspects in the development history of the country is the neglectful attitude of the human settlements' aspects be they urban or rural, in terms of meeting even one of the basic needs - secure and decent housing and basic services like safe water for drinking, let alone anything. If this is the overall situation, the less said the better about others – good connectivity to a tidy environment and drainage. Above all, what is conspicuously missing has been the integrated approach that would have ensured good housing units with housing services like clean water, quality lighting, sanitation, clean energy, and good connectivity to drainage and roads. Unfortunately, most of the development approaches for housing, drinking water, electricity, sanitation, energy, and others are provided at different points in time and not integrated once. This is especially true in the case of rural areas till recently, which has significantly contributed to the underperformance in the human settlements front. The situation has not changed much even in this decade, as half-hearted participation in human settlement interventions is visibly evident either due to lack of political will or lack of development interest for reasons beyond comprehension. It is disappointingly awkward that the country's performance development score is just a little above a quarter or at 39 percent in the case of human settlements. This only means the development discourse, roadmap, and interventions must go a very long way with huge financial resource investment to bring about orderly human settlements. Regionally, barring small numbers, most of the regions have fallen short of human settlement progress in the country (Table 5). Accordingly, only a little more than a few regions have achieved success covering half of their population led by topper Goa at 71 percent. Similarly, a group of twelve other regions scored a little better than the national level and the other 18 Regions performed far behind the national average, which includes fifteen major states and three Union Territories. The situation is obviously due to poor participation in the development interventions around human settlements. Against a targeted 500 cities to be covered under AMRUT, only 192 cities have been implementing the mission with 5873 projects, whereas in the case of other regions, the participation is abysmally low. Similar is the case of the SCM in which a large scale of participation can be observed from only Uttar Pradesh with 13 cities, followed by Tamil Nadu (12 Cities), Maharashtra (8 cities), Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh (7 cities each) and Gujarat (6 cities). In the case of the others, participation is limited to a few or only one project in many of them. With only 98 cities selected for the mission, many regions have not only withdrawn their participation but also not participated at all. The respite however is that a little over 80 lakh housing units have been constructed in urban areas.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS: Highlighting the overall performance of India and capturing the sub-national responses to the UNSDGs, which have been implemented for almost a decade from 2015 have been the primary focus of this paper. Keeping the broad thrust of the UNSDGs 1 to 11 and absolute necessities for India's context, it is attempted to group the selected goals into five mainly to mirror the socio-economic advancements and to identify development gaps. Building a strong society with a social and human face without poverty and deprivation, and human settlements with connectivity and social welfare are indeed preconditions of social order and foundation of economic advancement. From these perspectives, India has showcased its performance and accounted for its overall success at 51 percent in the last nine years. Incidentally, the average success rate within the five groups also works out to 51 percent, although a few groups have achieved much better than the average. Thus sensitizing the national and sub-national development actions and interventions to live up to the goals in the remaining timeline of six years is the need of the hour. In this regard, the lowest performance recorded is in the fifth group – Goal 11, followed by the second group of goals 3 to 5, as accounted. This means that the country has recorded poor performance in the cases of human settlement issues as well as the social sector (healthy lives, education, and women empowerment) are concerned. Therefore, it calls for corrective interventions, additional impetus, and substantive actions at the national and sub-national levels during the remaining period up to 2030, especially to achieve the specific target goals to their full extent. At the same time, the other goals in groups 1, 3, and 4 should not be left to themselves, as they too need further support to achieve the remaining targets within the time frame. Similarly, the need of the hour is to give a big push, in terms of public investment and central financial assistance to all the laggard regions identified with the five groups. Such handholding is imminent not only to put up excellent performance across the goals but also to turn around their weak performance. In other words, all such regions scored around half the benchmark, need handholding by the central government to make them not to fall back on their performance. Most importantly, the demonstration of the political will exhibited so far in attaining most of the UNSDGs shall be sustained in the interest of the nation to alleviate income and development disparities. These observations offer the following specific policy implications on priority, which are based on performance analysis scores.

First, the black mark of the slums or informal settlements in major urban and metropolitan cities should be eradicated by improving them in all measures. Living standards in terms of human basic amenities/services and living environment in the slums

should be improved. Especially, the development of all-weather roads, household- drainage connectivity, arresting water logging, and complete collection of garbage assumes paramount significance in the slums. The present thrust of achieving slum-free cities shall be given major public impetus financially. The corporate houses should be encouraged to adopt slums for their overall in-situ improvement with the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds. Second, de-congestion and de-crowding of the metropolitan and major urban centers is the other potential and effective strategy that needs major consideration in the urban development administration through investment spread across the neighboring cities. The development of second and third-tier cities with investment, industrial and employment opportunities, and human settlement infrastructure needs yet another priority. It is imminent not only to avoid migration for better prospects but also to destress the major urban and metropolitan centers. Third, achieving higher economic growth, effective anti-poverty initiatives, and inequality reduction shall be pursued in combination and interchangeably, as each one is interdependent. The development of the skilled workforce of the jobless and unemployed persons of rural and backward areas needs further impetus to increase employability and to undertake income-generating activities including public opportunities. Offering fiscal incentives to MSME entrepreneurs would bring significant change in all walks of life and shall undertake to inform the first- time entrepreneurs at the Gram Panchayat levels. Increasing the number of days of employment to more than 100 days in a year under the NREG Act would facilitate arresting underemployment of the unskilled workforce, especially in the underperformed regions. Fourth, as a major solution to the nutritional needs of the poor, especially children under 5 years of age, old-aged persons, anemic, and pregnant women, enhance the household-based subsidized quantity of critical food under the Public Distribution System more so in rural areas. Fifth, eliminating all forms of homelessness, as part of the anti-poverty intervention, especially the life-threatening dilapidated units that constitute half of the housing poverty of the country shall be the priority within the housing development strategy. An integrated housing development approach should be adopted to provide housing, drinking water, sanitation, cooking energy, and lighting for all the marginalized and poor homeless families. The need is to merge all the costs of these services, especially of the rural social housing schemes. Promoting thrift and savings linked to adequate and affordable housing among the poor and homeless families would go a long way to keeping in pace with the housing demand of the new families to minimize housing adjustments. Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) need to be engaged in a housing-linked-savings mobilization programme, keeping the affordable housing programme and financial institutional linkages of all poor and deprived families in view. Lastly, building residential schools for children up to 12th standards at the Gram Panchayat or cluster level in rural and semi-urban areas with qualified teachers- cum-caretakers would last long to achieve educational excellence. Training on emerging and prospective employment opportunities would bring about substantial improvement in the enrolment, dropout, anemia, and other issues of the girl child. Further, undertaking the census operations as part of women's empowerment would eventually benefit the folk to draw a political action plan of reservation of seats in political platforms of different levels.

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Table 1 India's Performance Index over the UNSDGs

SL. No	Regions (State and Union)	Regional Response V/S UNSD Goals					Average Total	National Performance	
		RPH (1&2)	HLIEGE (3 to 5)	DSI (6 & 7)	IEGII (8 to 10)	MIHSO (11)		Above	Below
1	Andhra Pradesh	58.0	63.0	68.0	62.0	26.0	55.0	8	-
2	Arunachal Pradesh	55.0	38.0	54.0	46.0	44.0	47.0	-	15
3	Assam	53.0	40.0	30.0	57.0	32.0	42.0	-	19
4	Bihar	41.0	33.0	49.0	57.0	43.0	44.0	-	18
5	Chhattisgarh	49.0	48.0	67.0	53.0	54.0	54.0	9	-
6	Delhi	51.0	47.0	57.0	89.0	39.0	56.0	7	-
7	Goa	71.0	57.0	63.0	47.0	71.0	61.0	3	-
8	Gujarat	48.0	50.0	84.0	75.0	52.0	61.0	3	-
9	Haryana	51.0	51.0	65.0	59.0	30.0	51.0	11	-
10	Himachal Pradesh	59.0	62.0	79.0	71.0	41.0	62.0	2	-
11	Jammu & Kashmir	60.5	51.0	55.0	50.0	23.0	48.0	-	14
12	Jharkhand	36.0	43.0	36.0	57.0	52.0	44.0	-	18
13	Karnataka	53.0	63.0	70.0	66.0	36.0	57.0	6	-
14	Kerala	69.0	76.0	61.0	67.0	46.0	63.0	1	-
15	Madhya Pradesh	42.0	40.0	61.0	53.0	39.0	47.0	-	15
16	Maharashtra	47.0	59.0	75.0	68.0	34.0	56.0	7	-
17	Manipur	59.0	52.0	42.0	68.0	31.0	50.0	-	12
18	Meghalaya	55.0	42.0	26.0	68.0	39.0	46.0	-	16
19	Mizoram	70.0	50.0	73.0	55.0	32.0	56.0	7	-
20	Nagaland	64.0	40.0	52.0	40.0	32.0	45.0	-	17
21	Odisha	51.0	48.0	35.0	54.0	34.0	44.0	-	18
22	Punjab	63.0	59.0	61.0	56.0	36.0	55.0	8	-
23	Rajasthan	52.0	53.0	53.0	66.0	45.0	53.0	10	-
24	Sikkim	65.0	50.0	63.0	42.0	56.0	55.0	8	-
25	Tamil Nadu	68.0	63.0	78.0	68.0	33.0	62.0	2	-
26	Telangana	52.0	61.0	59.0	64.0	44.0	56.0	7	-
27	Tripura	64.0	49.0	35.0	60.0	38.0	49.0	-	13
28	Uttara Khand	59.0	48.0	67.0	54.0	41.0	53.0	10	-
29	Uttar Pradesh	45.0	35.0	39.0	41.0	37.0	39.0	-	20

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30	West Bengal	53.0	52.0	47.0	61.0	25.0	47.0	-	15
31	Andaman & Nicobar Island	47.0	62.0	64.0	43.0	64.0	56.0	7	-
32	Chandigarh	54.0	53.0	98.0	70.0	40.0	63.0	1	-
33	Dadar & Nagar Haveli	30.0	50.0	87.0	61.0	06.0	46.0	-	16
34	Daman & Diu	50.0	44.0	92.0	64.0	49.0	59.0	4	-
35	Lakshadweep	45.0	54.0	80.0	53.0	Null	46.0	-	16
36	Pondicherry	66.0	54.0	53.0	93.0	27.0	58.0	5	-
National Average Total		51.0	51.0	57.0	60.0	39.0	51.0	21	15

Source: Parliament of India (2023), Research and Information Division, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Research Note on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Achievement of India, New Delhi: Government of India.

Abbreviated Note

RPH - Reduction in Poverty & Hunger, **HLIEGE** - Healthy Lives, Inclusive Education & Gender Equality,

DSI - Development of Social Infrastructure, **IEGII** - Indian Economic Growth, Industrialization & Inequality, and **MIHSO** - Making India's Human Settlements Orderly.



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