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The role of good governance in achieving sustainable development: A study of India

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Abstract

Governance is a decisive factor in every nation's progress. It is necessary to have good governance to develop a wealthy nation in which the well-being of the citizens takes precedence. The legitimacy of a government can be called into question based on the criteria established by each evolving era of human civilization to define good governance. Sustainable development emphasizes addressing present demands without jeopardizing future generations' ability to do so. In addition, there are 17 Sustainable Development Goals that the international community has agreed must be met by 2030. Goal 16 allows for establishing institutions and systems for good governance, emphasizing the significance of good governance in attaining sustainable development.

As India is also aiming towards achieving sustainable development for which it becomes necessary to understand the contrivance and the processes followed by the Indian Government in accomplishing such an aspiring goal, that will enlighten us to know that whether governance in India has been as per the new notions of good governance or not. This paper aims to investigate the impact of great governance on India's sustainable development. "Good Governance" is an essential element. This paper will focus on aspects that must be strengthened for improved governance to maximize potential and expand partnerships for achieving Sustainable Development Goals in India. In addition, it will attempt to make suggestions and recommendations that could encourage coordinated efforts toward achieving the SDGs.

Keywords: Good governance, sustainable development, India, constitution, rule of law

Introduction

Sustainable development (SD) is a leading philosophy that can be applied in the foreseeable future to protect people and the world. There are provided recommendations for maximizing available resources and maintaining their viability. SD is a technique of constructing things that prioritizes the requirements of the present over those of the future. Providing improved living conditions ensures that everyone has the opportunity to live a wealthy and satisfying life. These themes are presented in conjunction with the economic, social, & environmental aspects of society. All of these initiatives contribute to a safer and more sustainable global community.

Sustainable development (SD) is a priority in the development goals of many nations, but it is essential to emphasize that achieving SD requires satisfying certain requirements. Intending to complete the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, one hundred years after the United Nations adopted the Millennium Development Goals. Adopting the principle of Good governance in any nation is a key precondition^[1, 2].

While many elements play a significant role in development, good governance has always been acknowledged as a fundamental instrument for achieving sustainable development. It is also regarded as essential to being incorporated into development strategies. Good governance encourages accountability, transparency, efficiency, and the rule of law at all levels, enables the efficient management of human, natural, economic, and financial resources for equitable and sustainable development and ensures the participation of civil society in decision-making processes. Good governance & sustainable development are inextricably linked ideas. Good governance does not ensure sustainable development, but its absence severely restricts and, in the worst case, impedes growth.

In recent years, politicians, public workers, and academics across the globe, particularly in developing nations, have been focused on good governance and the realization of a corruption-free society to achieve the social and economic success required for SD [3]. Good governance is essential to any anti-corruption initiative.

According to the World Bank, national governments are regularly blamed for losing touch with individuals' lives. Thus, it is felt that devolving various forms of authority and functions to subnational levels of government for rapid adaptation to locally specific situations is an effective response to today's complicated problems (Bank, 2000 a). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) defines "Good Governance" as "how a country's power is exercised in the administration of its economic and social resources to promote that country's economic and social growth" [4]. Effective governance permits the participation of civil society in decision-making processes and the efficient application of human, ecological, economic, and financial resources for equitable and sustainable development. The notions of good governance and sustainable development are inextricably intertwined. Although effective governance is not legally required for sustainable development, its absence severely restricts the latter and, in the worst-case scenario, prevents it entirely. Given both the scientific community and policymakers have a vested interest in this topic, it is not surprising that it is both vast and complex, necessitating examination from numerous perspectives. Even though this article will not (and will not even attempt to) answer all of your queries, it will hopefully stimulate discussion by introducing some of the numerous governance applications to sustainable development initiatives.

Sustainable Development

The Sustainable development is progress that fulfils the needs of the present, without jeopardizing the capability of future generations to meet their own needs

The idea of sustainable development became a worldwide debate following the World Commission on Environment and Development's report "Our Common Future," published in 1987. This paper is called the Brundtland report because it contains the most well-known definition of sustainable development: 2 "development that meets current demands without jeopardizing future generations' ability to meet their own needs" [5].

The sustainable development principles include:

- Constant and long-term economic expansion
- Proportional and balanced social and economic development
- Active employment policies
- Reduction of regional discrepancies
- Personal income and expenditures growth
- The conservation of the environment for the benefit of future generations and the efficient use and distribution of natural resources.

The concept of sustainable development was first introduced in the Brundtland Commission Report of 1987. It focuses on addressing the demands of the present without compromising future generations' ability to do the same. The term "sustainability" was coined to assist in bridging the gap between economic development and environmental protection (Rogers, 2007).

The concept of sustainable development (SD) associated

with growth continues through many phases, beginning with the 1972 publication of Limits to Development by the Club of Rome [6]. It is now a global objective that every nation seeks to attain. Consequently, the United Nations has developed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted during the 2000 Millennium Summit and anticipated to be completed by the end of 2015. In 2015, the United Nations proposed a new set of goals known as the SDGs. 18 objectives were to be met within 15 years by 2030.

Good Governance

The concept of good governance is defined as the public, accountable, responsible, fair, and citizen-centered administration of a country's resources and affairs. Governance is realized when all citizens share the state's ultimate objective of advancing public benefit [7]. With strong governance, the people have a voice in policy decisions that affect their daily lives, leaders can be held accountable for their acts, and information is freely disseminated. A well-established system of governance would include norms and institutions, a legal foundation for development, and an accessible, efficient, and responsible public administration. Without favoritism, prejudice, and bribery, this society is equitable.

When assessing the quality of a government's leadership, one must first evaluate the safety of its citizens and, more especially, the safety of its people in settling issues by peaceful means, such as human security. It can also be considered regarding political and civic liberties, such as the right to run for office, the capacity to deal with disagreement and difference, and fundamental human rights. This, in turn, fosters an environment conducive to long-term growth.

According to the United Nations Development Programme, good governance is inclusive, transparent, and accountable to its population. It is effective and equitable, and it promotes the rule of law. It ensures that the opinions of the poor and vulnerable are considered in decisions regarding development resources and that political, social, and economic goals are based on wide consensus among the three stakeholders—the state, the private sector, and civil society. According to the United Nations Development Programme, the state's creation of a conducive political and legal framework, the private sector's creation of jobs and revenue, and civil society's promotion of political and social involvement are all vital for development (UNDP).

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) & the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), effective governance has eight defining features. Participation, the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus-oriented, equity and inclusion, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability are among these.

Interrelation between Sustainable Development and Good Governance

Omri *et al.* (2020) [8] investigated sustainability by proving the efficacy of good governance in rebalancing the economic, environmental, and social aspects of sustainable development. The findings indicate that political and institutional governance contribute positively to the three factors of sustainable development; there is a two-way relationship between human development and economic

growth, indicating that they are interconnected and may serve as complements to one another; increased economic growth leads to increased emissions, which leads to decreased economic growth; and increasing human development leads to a decrease in emissions. A Gaghman (2020) ^[4] examined the significance of effective governance in attaining sustainable development. To achieve sustainable development, it has been urged that a comprehensive framework for achieving good governance be included in future national development agendas based on research findings and lessons learned from other nations' experiences, development progress, and hurdles. Omar Ramzy *et al.* (2020) ^[9] explored two globalizing concepts: Sustainable Development and Good Governance. This article examines the relevant literature and history of these issues. This analysis utilizes Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development as a case study. One hundred (n = 100) administrative and academic staff employees at Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development were requested to complete a questionnaire on Sustainable Development and Good Governance. The results demonstrated a strong relationship between the several Good Governance concepts, the variables used to measure them, and the implementations of SD concepts.

Auriacombe *et al.* (2019) ^[10] examined the relationship between good governance and sustainable development by focusing on the role of governments in the global sustainability agenda. According to the study's findings, the World Bank's reforms are neither prioritized nor are the countries compelled to implement them given a deadline. Hence, recipient states simultaneously implement several governance reforms with the assistance of a diverse array of donors. Dhaoui *et al.* (2019) ^[3] presented an overview of sustainable development concerns and described the connection between good governance characteristics and chosen development indicators. In addition, the significance of responsible leadership is discussed here. Lowering poverty, eradicating poverty, protecting the environment, promoting well-being, etc., have all garnered increasing attention over the past several decades. Due to these revisions, the focus has shifted from the previous economic growth model to the new sustainable development model. Despite this change, the question of how to achieve sustainable development objectives remains. One of the most well-known tools when tackling the development agenda is excellent governance.

Good governance and sustainable development both are linked to each other in many ways to make sure the amelioration of the common citizens and to attain the success accordingly. Good governance and sustainable development mostly depend on each other. Sustainable development cannot be feasible without good governance like while good governance cannot be run properly without sustainable development. A good governance responds to the convoluted and interlinked issues faced by a nation such as poverty reduction, economic growth, social development, equity, health, environmental strands and so on which are key challenges of sustainable development. For confronting the challenge of sustainable development government has to be fair as it holds the key to building stable and secure societies and to drive inclusive growth within the finite boundaries of our planet over long term and it can overcome the challenges, reduce risk and take advantage of opportunities to ensure the sustainability of a country. So,

for attaining the goals of sustainable development the government has to be transparent, accountable, efficient, effective and responsive. Now it is very obvious that the relation of good governance and sustainable development is very immediate, and they are always dependable on each other.

Incorporated SDG aspects in Indian governance

India has been committed to achieving the SDGs since before they were entirely codified. The vision and philosophy of prominent Indians of the 20th century allude to the obligation of inclusive governance. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the guiding light of social justice in India, strongly believed that growing and enduring inequalities pose fundamental challenges to the economic and social well-being of nations and individuals. On the eve of Dr. Ambedkar's 125th birthday, The Permanent Mission to the United Nations organized for the first time a special event to celebrate his legacy. Reducing inequalities and discrimination in all forms, the cornerstone of Dr. Ambedkar's vision and work is also at the core of the new development agenda that the world has committed to attaining by 2030 in the form of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In accordance with Deen Dayal Upadhyay, the champion of *Antyodaya*, "the assessment of economic plans and economic growth cannot be done with those at the top of the economic ladder, but rather with those at the bottom." The spirit of the Sustainable Development Goal, "*Leave No One Behind*," is coherent with the concept of *Antyodaya*, "the ascent of the last person." This also bolsters the idea of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, which states that the entire world is one family. The concept derives from the Vedic scripture Maha Upanishad (Chapter 6, Verse 72): *ayam bandhurayam neiti ganana laghuchetasam udaracharitanam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, i.e., only small men make the distinction that one is a relative and the other is an outsider. The entire world is 'one' family for those who live selflessly. The Indian conception of life is embodied in a coherent viewpoint in which all elements harmonize and governed by a universal order echoed in all spheres of human experience. Nature and natural resources are considered as sacred and worshipped in India. Thus, environmental ethics and sustainability have always been central to Indian civilization and philosophy. Following this idea, India has also prominently pounded the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs emulate the country's national development agenda, and the government has been following the path of *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikaas, and Sabka Vishwaas*. India strives to achieve the SDGs with the help of dedicated flagship programs and relevant policy interventions, targeting on indigenous solutions to the divergent governance, development, and environmental hurdles that the nation faces today. The Indian government has launched the 'Strategy for New India at 75', aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, and aims to propel India to a US\$ 5 trillion economy by 2024. India, projected to be the world's most populous and youngest country by 2024, will make significant contributions to the SDGs.

India's paths towards sustainable development

United Nations General Assembly adopted the SDGs in 2015 as part of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The SDGs have 17 objectives, and 169 targets, with the

targets, further broken down into 248 indicators. The SDGs "clearly recognize the complexity, trade-offs, and systemic nature of sustainable development concerns" [11]. Thus, governments worldwide can better measure and direct their resources toward social development by aligning national policies with SDGs.

India must have a solid development framework in place if it is to achieve inclusive economic growth. Putting together effective social improvement initiatives in this country is complicated by its rich cultural diversity. Adapting the SDGs to local contexts is a significant obstacle to implementing the 2030 agenda [12].

The state of sustainable development in India as it stands right now has been analyzed. Governance indicators have been derived from WGI and BTI. They are used alongside national and global databases and statistics like the Human Development Index and the Sustainable Development Goals to assess the last decade's progress. A lack of substantial data in the national report regarding SDGs and Governance indices is one of the challenges.

The SDG India Index 2020–21 has implications across multiple sectors, including policy, civil society, business, and academia. The index is intended to serve as a tool for targeted policy discourse, planning, and implementation via development actions anchored to the SDG framework's globally-recognized metric. The index and dashboard will also aid in identifying critical gaps associated with tracking the SDGs and India's need to enhance its statistical systems at the State/UT level. NITI Aayog is adapting and developing the index on a district- by-district basis for the forthcoming North Eastern Region District SDG Index [13] as an additional milestone in the country's SDG localization journey. Between 2012 and 2022, countries with varying HDIs made varying degrees of progress toward increasing their HDIs, making comparisons of HDI growth useful (Table 1).

Table 1: Human Development Index of India

Year	HDI	Ranking
2022	0.633	132°
2021	0.633	132°
2020	0.642	130°
2019	0.645	129°
2018	0.645	129°
2017	0.644	128°
2016	0.639	127°
2015	0.629	130°
2014	0.619	133°
2013	0.607	133°
2012	0.598	135°

Source: Niti Aayog Report-2022



Fig 1: Human Development Index of India. Source: Niti Aayog Report-2022

NITI Aayog regularly conducts national reviews on the SDGs to assess the mechanisms put in place at the subnational level and allow states to learn from each other's experiences. It has taken the lead at the national level and released the SDG India Index Baseline Report and Dashboard in 2022. This report has provided new perspectives that have motivated many states to prioritize performance improvement. For example, it shows that even the most developed states are vulnerable to climate change-related events and need more local strategies to address them. The study ranked Kerala and Himachal Pradesh as the two best-performing states, as shown in fig 2.

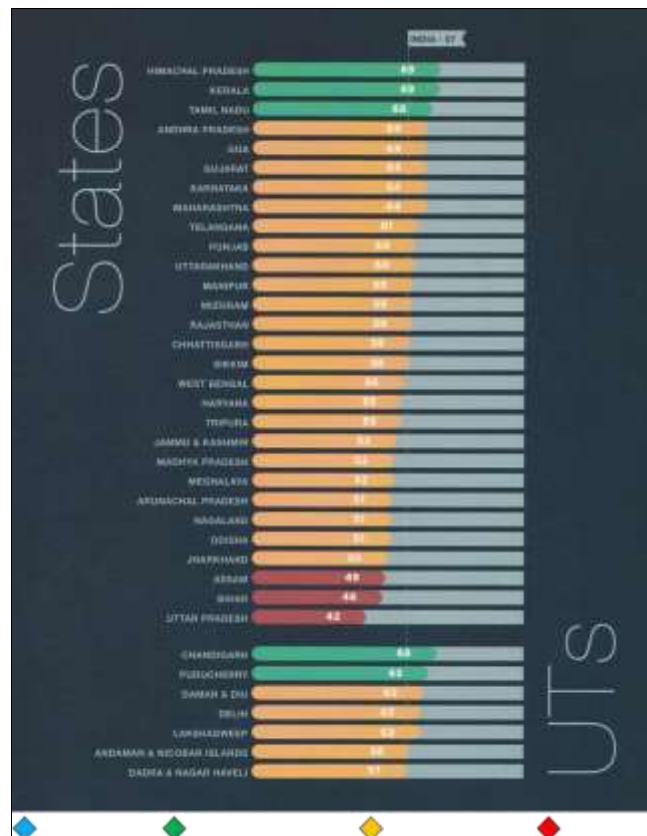


Fig 2: India's index SDG score of States and UTs (Source: NITI Aayog Baseline Report, 2022)

The focus of the Indian government is on creating and carrying out large-scale programs that address significant development gaps concerning key SDGs. For instance, *Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana* (PMJAY) is the world's largest government health protection program, providing approximately \$7100 in annual health protection to 500 million Indians. The government has also launched *Poshan Abhiyan*, a national nutrition mission for children and women, to destroy malnutrition by 2022. To reduce malnutrition in the country, the program acknowledges the interdependence of nutrition with other factors such as water, sanitation, hygiene, maternal education, and poverty and ensures that all services are included in a single budget.

Some SDGs are related to the '*Transforming Aspirational Districts*' program, which aims to reduce intra-regional disparities and improve service delivery in 112 districts. The world's largest financial inclusion program, the *Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana* (PMJDY), is another notable example of a cross-cutting initiative. By leveraging the JAM

trinity, i.e., PMJDY, *Aadhaar* (a biometric identity system), and cell phone numbers, the government has disbursed over \$110 billion in direct benefit transfers to over 250 million beneficiaries (DBT). This has significantly improved the effectiveness of government programs. These initiatives highlight India's progress in achieving the SDGs, with a continued emphasis on "leaving no one behind" in development planning.

Good governance is going to explore sustainable means to meet constituents' expectations. To meet the rising aspirations of its citizens, the government has an ambitious plan to transform India's economy into a \$5 trillion economy. The government is going to construct *Sagarmala* (ports) and *Bharatmala* (roads) as part of a 100-trillion-dollar effort to improve modern infrastructure (roads). The

emphasis is not only on wealth creation but also on wealth distribution to ensure equity and trickle-down benefits. The Prime Minister's announcement on the 73rd Independence Day (2019) that 3.5 trillion rupees will be spent on the laudable *Jal JeevanI* Mission to provide potable water is a step in the direction of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Agenda. The mission's coordinating body is the *Jal Shakti* Mantralaya, which was formed by combining the Ministries of Water Resources, River Development, Ganga Revitalization, and Drinking Water and Sanitation. In its VNR Report 2022, India's project focused on certain goals (1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14, and 17) identified as priority areas by the HLPF. The progress and accomplishments made by the Government of India for each goal in 2022 are shown in figure3.

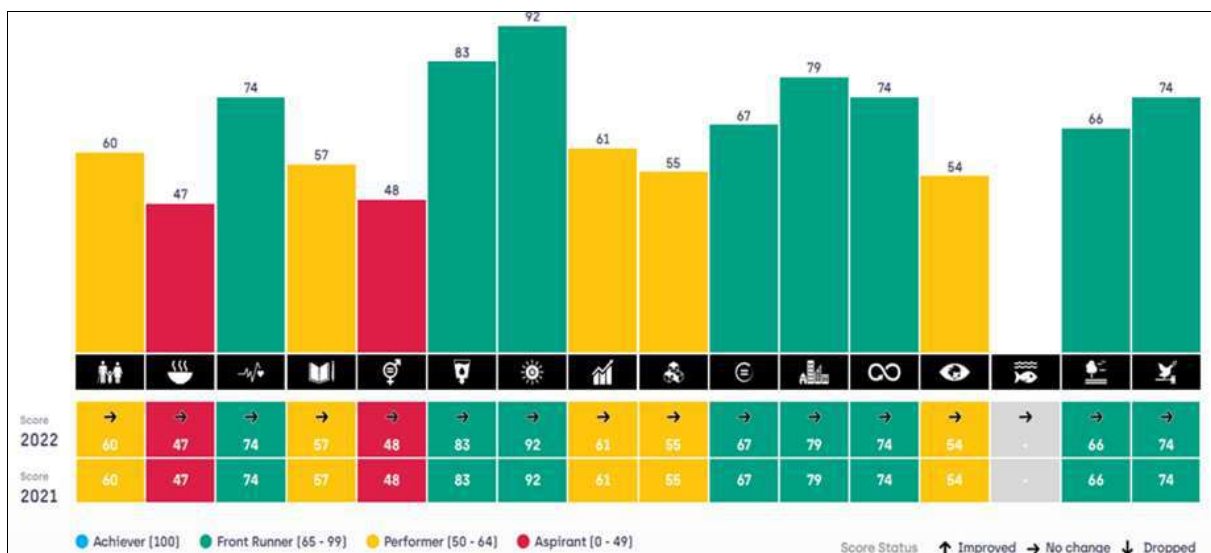


Fig 3: Goal-wise performance of SDG in India. Source: Niti Aayog Report-2022.

Consequently, India's overall SDG score increased by 6 points, from 60 in 2021 to 66 in 2021-22, for a total improvement of 12 points. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure all experienced a significant decline in the current index. In addition, the report highlights socio-economic status and leadership gaps in India. As home to approximately 17 percent of the world's population, India's SDG progress is crucial for the entire planet.

Conclusion & Suggestions

Currently, Sustainable Development is a major concern on a global scale. At both the global and local levels, well-defined objectives, principles, action plans, and roles and duties have been incorporated into sustainable development strategies. It seems concept Good Governance plays crucial role in achieving Sustainable Development. On the other hand Good Governance is itself one of the SDGs to be achieved by 2030. Government must adhere to governance principles especially Transparency, Legitimacy, Accountability, Responsiveness, Rule Of Law and Effectiveness to cohere with idea of Good Governance.

It depends on various attributes whether a government is sticking with the concept of Good Governance or not. If we talk about India particularly there are many provisions and mechanisms in constitution of India itself which drives towards achieving both Good Governance as well as Sustainable Development. But due to poor implementation and negligence their outcomes are not desirable. There is a

huge gap in policies on paper and their implementation on ground which creates practical hardships in attaining desired goals of both Good Governance and Sustainable Development. Good Governance guide should be implemented on all organization levels of public offices. Corruption, terrorism, insurgency, communalism and criminalization of politics have paralyzed the Indian governance system. India must address such issues strongly to attain the desired goals. It is very much necessary to develop a long term action plan with clear vision and indicators to monitor the progress time to time so that necessary modifications could be made accordingly. If we talk about Good Governance principles in India no doubt Indian governance system has been trying to bring transparency through RTI, JAM Trinity and other mechanisms but low literacy rate is a big hurdle in it. Active participation of citizens is an essential part of sustainable development and good governance as it is required for communities to engage in development processes and hence it will provide results which will be more sustainable as per the needs. Rule of law is must to adhere with concept of good governance. Countries which follow the rule of law strictly have higher investments and growth levels. So laws shall be made more enforceable and judiciary shall be in reach of common citizens which is a sheer imagination in India as of now. Accountability is a matter of concern as government officials who play a key role in implementation of policies on ground are not answerable to citizens anyway.

A mechanism shall be introduced to fix the accountability of government officials on grass root level. India is home to a fifth of the world's youth population. Young enthusiastic executive minds shall come forward to provide practical and better solution to most difficult issues which will help India in reaching desired sustainable development goals.

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