



**Impact of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on Economic
Development and Tribal People in India**

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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, provide a comprehensive framework for achieving inclusive and sustainable development. This paper examines the impact of SDGs on India's economic development and the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities. It analyzes how SDG-driven policies have contributed to poverty reduction, infrastructure development, employment generation, renewable energy expansion, and human capital formation. The study highlights India's progress in implementing various SDGs through government initiatives and policy interventions. At the same time, it identifies persistent challenges faced by tribal populations, including poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, land alienation, and livelihood insecurity. Special attention is given to targeted programs such as PM-JANMAN, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, and Van Dhan Vikas Kendras. The paper argues that sustainable development must balance economic growth with social equity and environmental protection. It concludes that the successful achievement of SDGs in India depends on ensuring the active participation and welfare of tribal communities. Inclusive and equitable development remains essential for realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Economic Development, Tribal Communities, Inclusive Growth, Sustainable Development Policy

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) consist of 17 goals and 169 targets covering a broad range of sustainable development issues. These goals aim to end poverty and hunger, achieve gender equality, ensure access to clean water and sanitation, promote sustainable economic growth, and take urgent action to combat climate change, among others.



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The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all member states in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These 17 interconnected goals provide a shared blueprint for eradicating poverty, protecting the environment, and ensuring prosperity for all. The goals include objectives such as No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Quality Education, Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, and Reduced Inequalities.

Unlike the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs are broader, more inclusive, and universally applicable to all countries. They emphasize a balanced approach that integrates economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

The adoption of the SDGs marked a significant shift in economic planning. Traditionally, national progress was measured primarily through Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, the 2030 Agenda promotes an economic framework where environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and human well-being serve as the pillars of sustainable development.

For a rapidly growing economy like India, the SDGs function as both a roadmap and a performance indicator. The true measure of sustainable development lies in balancing economic expansion with the welfare of marginalized communities, particularly Scheduled Tribes (STs), who constitute approximately 8.6% of India's population.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the role of SDGs in shaping global and national economic development strategies.
2. To evaluate India's efforts, achievements, and challenges in implementing SDGs.
3. To examine the impact of SDG-driven policies and investments on India's economic development.
4. To study the impact of Sustainable Development Goals on tribal communities across India.



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1. SDGs as Frameworks for Global and National Economic Strategies

Traditionally, economic development was largely measured through GDP growth. The SDG framework introduced a broader perspective emphasizing the "Triple Bottom Line" approach—People, Planet, and Profit.

Key Features

Internalizing Externalities

Economic planning increasingly incorporates environmental degradation, climate risks, public health burdens, and resource depletion into policy decisions.

Multidimensional Development

International financial institutions increasingly consider social protection measures and environmental sustainability while assessing investment attractiveness and creditworthiness.

National Alignment

India has integrated SDG indicators into policy planning and budgetary allocations, aligning them with the vision of *Viksit Bharat 2047*.

2. India's SDG Implementation: Efforts, Achievements, and Challenges

India's SDG implementation reflects both significant achievements and persistent challenges.

Major Achievements

According to the NITI Aayog SDG India Index, India's composite score improved from 57 in 2018 to 71 in 2023–24.

Energy Transition (SDG 7)

India achieved a score of 96 through extensive renewable energy expansion, particularly solar energy initiatives.

Poverty Reduction (SDG 1)

The score improved from 60 to 72 due to welfare programs such as:

- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)
- Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

Infrastructure Development (SDG 9)

Significant progress has been made in transportation, digital infrastructure, and industrial growth.

Systemic Challenges

Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10)

Regional disparities and urban-rural income gaps continue to hinder progress.

Gender Equality (SDG 5)

India's score remains relatively low due to:



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- Low female labor force participation
- Persistent wage disparities
- Unequal access to economic opportunities

3. Impact of SDG-Driven Policies on India's Macroeconomy

SDG-oriented policies have contributed significantly to economic growth and modernization.

Employment Generation

Through SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), programs such as MGNREGA have strengthened rural employment and income security.

Digital Infrastructure

Under SDG 9, India has expanded digital connectivity significantly:

- Over 954 million internet subscribers
- Enhanced Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) systems
- Growth of more than 34,000 recognized startups

Circular Economy Development

Under SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production):

- Waste processing efficiency increased from 17.97% to over 80%
- Growth of recycling industries
- Reduced municipal waste management costs

4. Impact of SDGs on Tribal People Across India

Although national SDG indicators show progress, tribal communities continue to face unique developmental challenges.

Livelihood Challenges

More than 45% of tribal households continue to live below the poverty line.

Major concerns include:

- Land alienation
- Displacement due to mining projects
- Limited ownership of productive assets

In states such as Jharkhand, only 12.5% of tribal women own agricultural land.

Educational Challenges

Literacy Gap

Tribal literacy rates remain around 59%, significantly below the national average.

Key barriers include:

- Language differences
- Limited educational infrastructure
- High dropout rates



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Health Challenges

Tribal communities face:

- Higher infant mortality rates
- Malnutrition
- Inadequate healthcare facilities
- Poor accessibility to medical services

Government Initiatives for Tribal Development

PM-JANMAN Mission

Provides targeted support for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) through:

- Infrastructure development
- Healthcare services
- Clean energy access

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)

These schools provide quality residential education for tribal students and help reduce dropout rates.

Van Dhan Vikas Kendras

These centers:

- Promote value addition of Minor Forest Produce (MFP)
- Enhance tribal incomes
- Encourage sustainable livelihood opportunities

Present Status of India in SDG Implementation

According to the NITI Aayog SDG India Index 2023–24:

Goal	Achievement
SDG 1 – No Poverty	99.7% employment demand met under MGNREGA
SDG 2 – Zero Hunger	99.01% coverage under NFSA
SDG 3 – Good Health	Maternal Mortality Ratio reduced to 97
SDG 4 – Quality Education	Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate at 96.5%
SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation	99.29% rural households with improved drinking water
SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy	100% household electrification
SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth	5.88% annual GDP per capita growth



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Goal	Achievement
SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	99.70% road connectivity
SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities	45.61% Panchayati Raj seats held by women
SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities	97% wards with door-to-door waste collection
SDG 13 – Climate Action	Renewable energy share increased to 43.28%

Budget Allocations Supporting SDGs

The Union Budget 2024–25 allocated substantial resources to SDG-related sectors:

- ₹1.5 lakh crore for Education (SDG 4)
- ₹2.1 lakh crore for Health and Nutrition (SDGs 2 & 3)
- ₹10,000 crore for Renewable Energy (SDG 7)
- ₹80,000 crore for Urban Development (SDG 11)

How SDGs Promote Economic Development in India

Increased Productivity and Employment

Programs such as Skill India and MUDRA support entrepreneurship and job creation.

Infrastructure Development

Investments in sustainable infrastructure improve logistics and reduce costs.

Human Capital Development

Improved health and education enhance workforce productivity.

Rural Transformation

Housing, sanitation, and clean water programs improve living standards and reduce migration.

Enhanced Investment Opportunities

SDG alignment attracts sustainable investments and foreign direct investment (FDI).

Conclusion

The Sustainable Development Goals provide a comprehensive framework for achieving balanced, inclusive, and sustainable development. India has made significant progress in implementing SDGs through policy reforms, infrastructure development, poverty alleviation programs, and renewable energy initiatives.

However, substantial challenges remain, particularly in addressing inequalities faced by tribal communities. Sustainable development cannot be measured solely through



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economic growth; it must also ensure equitable access to opportunities, resources, education, healthcare, and livelihoods.

As India advances toward its vision of *Viksit Bharat 2047*, integrating SDGs into all levels of governance—from Panchayats to Parliament—will be crucial. The ultimate success of the SDGs will depend on ensuring that tribal communities become active participants and beneficiaries of India's development journey.

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