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# **COVID-19 Impact Analysis on Sustainable Development Goals and the Way Forward**

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**Abstract**

*Just when the world was about to enter the fifth year of SDGs, we were made hostages to a virus finagling into our lives and putting everything on a standstill. Multifarious literature is available on the impact of Covid-19, which has exposed the world to rising inequities and dysfunctionalities of governance. This paper seeks to explore the scope of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the post-Covid world as a catalyst to minimize trade-offs and maximize synergies between the SDGs. Through a multidisciplinary approach, the author tries to map the impact of Covid-19 on SDGs and offers a review of initiatives taken so far by the Indian Government while navigating this challenging phase. The paper begins by reviewing the shape and contours of the unfolding crisis concerning the world economy, followed by an impact analysis, explicitly on the Indian economy. An attempt has been made to shed light on the importance of SDGs serving as a roadmap for post-Covid recovery and development in India. To pull the economy out from this amorphous state, there's a need for enhanced global partnerships and increased private investments in the domestic economy. The vigour to build back better requires reinvigorating the SDGs, which will provide direction for a sustainable post-Covid recovery.*

**Keywords:** *Covid-19, Sustainable Development Goals, Post- Covid Recovery, Indian Economy*

**1.0 Introduction**

Agenda 2030 with 17 SDGs, over 100 targets provides a development framework, which the 193 UN member nations have pledged to achieve at the end of the third decade of the 21st century. In contrast to their precursor Millennium Development goals, SDGs are exhaustive goals for developed and industrialized economies. The global goals are universally applicable to every nation. It's a sketchy framework to create a shared future for global citizens. The goals reflect the collective commitment to pursue an integrative approach to development. The pandemic has shown that no country is capable of solving issues independently. Whether the ambition is green recovery or making the terrestrial ecosystem habitable for each one alike, the world needs collaborative efforts. SDGs provide a broader framework within which each nation has been formulating its strategies towards a common mission of "Leaving No One Behind".

This universal framework provides for some diverging policy goals and others mutually supportive. To elaborate, economic development means more energy consumption and emission but climate action requires a deceleration in carbon emissions. For growth, economies will have to find innovative convergence zones wherein the SDGs are also taken care of. Likewise, reduction in poverty, zero hunger, good health are mutually related to inclusive economic growth. In every sector, the productivity of the labour force leads to growth and the income received by them increases their socio-economic well-being.

This inter-dependability of SDGs was epitomized by the Covid outbreak, which though began as a health crisis but has caused ripple effects on every development goal. The world economy is tattering and we have accepted that the pandemic is not just a health crisis. It has affected SDGs through economic, social, and political avenues. According to an International Monetary Fund (IMF) report, the world was already into recession and the pandemic inflicted losses of approx. USD 2 trillion (MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer, 2020).

The impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) has been highly variable in India and globally. The global shutdown added a smidgen of relief to the environment and has positively affected SDG-12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG-13 (climate action), SDG-14 (life below water), and SDG-15 (life on land). At the same time, the halt has eroded the progress and negatively affected SDG-1 (no poverty), SDG-2 (zero hunger), SDG-3 (good health and wellbeing), SDG-8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG-9 (Industry, innovation, and infrastructure), and SDG-10 (reduced inequalities).

## **2.0 Conceptually Mapping Covid-19 Impact**

To understand the impacts of the outbreak on SDGs and for a comprehensive analysis, it is crucial to know the progress made hitherto.

### **2.1 Highlights Of The Progress Report Towards SDGs**

- Implementation of the 2030 agenda progress has been uneven and acceleration is needed in many areas. The world is not on track to deliver the SDGs by 2030

- The pandemic is derailing the efforts to implement the SDG and threatening the achievements already made in many areas.
- The poorest and the most vulnerable people and countries have been affected disproportionately by the pandemic
- As per the Sustainable Development Report 2019 (UN. (2019), two out of five people worldwide lack good sanitation facilities and the report estimated another 700 million people to be displaced owing to intensive water scarcity.

Some of the SDGs have been majorly impacted and the progress made so far on a few of the goals has been derailed by the pandemic. As per the SDG report released before the pandemic, the world was making slow progress on these goals. The table below outlines the impact of Covid globally.

Table 1: Comparison of Progress Made Globally on SDGs Before the Pandemic and Impact of Covid-19 on SDGs

<u>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)</u>	<u>PROGRESS MADE ON THEM BEFORE COVID-19</u>	<u>IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 ON SDGs</u>
(SDG-1) No Poverty	Poverty reduction slowed down and the poverty rate was projected to reach 6% in 2030 (Kharas, 2020)	40-60 Million more people have been pushed back into extreme poverty
(SDG-2) Zero hunger	Food insecurity is on the rise, 2 billion people have been affected by the same	Approx 370 million schoolchildren are missing free school meals
(SDG-3) Good health and wellbeing	Progress in many areas but acceleration was needed.	Devastated health systems globally and threatens the achieved health targets
(SDG-4) Quality Education	258 million children under 17 years of age were out of school	90% of the world's student population, 1.6 billion children were out of school in April 2020

(SDG-5) Gender equality	Women's representation in national parliaments reached 25% in 2020	Women have been spending more time on unpaid care and domestic violence against women has increased
(SDG-6) Water and sanitation	2.2 billion people lack safe drinking water and 4.2 billion people lack sanitation facilities.	One in four Healthcare facilities globally lack basic water services and one in five have no sanitation facilities.
(SDG-7) Affordable and Clean Energy	Though access to power rose from 83%-2010 to 90% by 2018, 2.8 billion people lacked access to clean cooking fuels	¼ health facilities in Sub Saharan Africa lack access to power
(SDG-8) Economic Growth	The global economies were entering into a recession	Half of the global workforce has been impacted
(SDG-9) Industry, Innovation Infrastructure	Global manufacturing growth had been declining	Manufacturing industries are hard-hit, global supply chains have been disrupted and small-scale enterprises are negatively impacted.
(SDG-10) Reduced inequalities	There had been an increase in inequalities	Poor, migrant labour, domestic helpers are the worst affected sections of the society
(SDG-11) Sustainable cities and communities	24%Urban population live in slums	1 billion slum dwellers have been affected
(SDG-12) Responsible Production+ Climate action(13)+ Life below(14) water and on Land (15)	Climate change is occurring at an increasing rate and deteriorating the environment	Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) have been projected to drop 6% in 2020 and air quality has improved. But the improvements are temporary.
(SDG-16) Institutions	Justice was delayed and protests were on the rise	There has been a rise in social unrest and violence
(SDG-17) Partnerships	The trade wars, scant financial assistance posed challenges to achieve SDGs	World Trade expected to plunge 13%-32% In 2020. The decline in FDI by 30%. Global remittances are projected to fall by 20% in 2020.

## Covid-19 IMPACT ANALYSIS

### **3.0 How Has The Pandemic Impacted Indian Economy and What's The Way Forward?**

Due to the onslaught of Covid-19, the Indian economy has likely faced a loss of 10-30% in the GDP. Even in the pre-Covid order, India's ranking was 117 in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index 2020 with an overall score of 61.92 out of 100. The UN expects India's economy to recover by 7.3% post-Covid-19 (LOUIS, 2021), but with the ongoing disruption, the country faces a more challenging task ahead to be able to mitigate the impacts of the crisis. Covid-19 has miserably affected the Indian economy and its different sectors. Quarantine, supply chain failures, loss of consumer demand have had serious implications for a wide range of sectors than initially anticipated. The social fabric has withered away. In the following section, the author tries to review the impact of Covid on the Indian economy through the lens of SDGs and suggests a way forward. The recommendations if implemented will help accelerate the sustainable Post-Covid recovery.

#### **SDG-1 No Poverty**

To eradicate poverty in all forms and unlock an enormous human potential is the first goal. It also seeks to extend social protection schemes to the poor and through policy intervention increase their resilience.

#### **Impact:**

Due to a halt in economic activities, manufacturing and the closing of borders the unorganized sector, vulnerable and the poorest of the poor (Oak, 2020) have been hit hard by the inactivity in the economy. Negative impacts on production networks, reduction in agricultural activities, tourism, trade, and industry had led to significant income reductions for both the producers and employees, which has accelerated poverty (research gate.net, 2020)

**Recommendations:**

Poverty mitigation is a long process with overarching goals and objectives and bringing on board all the stakeholders. Redressal measures in the form of monetary benefits and support packages will require additional financial resources and will be only for the short term. Poverty needs to be addressed from the roots and cannot be done in isolation. An integrative approach has to be followed as mentioned below

- Capacity building of poor and women especially in backward areas through education and training
- To end the poverty of all forms it is imperative to eliminate intra-household disparities, gender-specific and age-specific data should be collected and utilized for policymaking.

**SDG-2 Zero Hunger**

The second development goal warrants a comprehensive approach to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

**Impact:**

“The pandemic induced closure has added to the hunger pangs of children in the urban and rural slums who depended upon mid-day meal schemes for their daily food requirements.”(Pillai, 2020) The spectre of hunger and starvation have been worsened by the pandemic and in truth, it requires great efforts and political will to deal with this all-encompassing issue in terms of a post-Covid policy framework.

Along with children, the most marginalized people and the migrants also bore the brunt of accessibility to food in the absence of Aadhar identity cards at their place of work.

**Recommendation:**

On one hand, millions in India go to bed hungry and on the other, the warehouses of Food Corporation Of India (FCI) have always been in news for Food loss. During the pandemic, the government found a way to deal with their overflowing granaries of cereals and pulses by rolling out the policy of One Nation One Ration Card along with the launching of Garib Kalyan Yojana and providing a fixed quantity of food grains to the poor.

The Indian food loss and wastage issue is a problem of mismanagement of resources and can be solved by integration of various intermediaries which would add to the value chain.

Zero hunger requires concerted efforts of all and this can be done by:

- Following Karnataka's Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Project (*How to Put India 'on Course' to Fight Malnutrition*, 2017) of deputing nutritional volunteers in every village to spread nutritional awareness and track progress through nutrition cards.
- Distributing supplementary nutrition among vulnerable sections
- Training volunteers on Diet Planning and deploying them in the households with malnourished children, to incite a behavioural change in their consumption pattern, within the existing budget.

### **SDG-3 Good Health And Well Being**

The global community has made progress on health, we've been able to eradicate diseases like smallpox. Through goal 3 the international community has committed to Reduce mortality rates, end preventable deaths under age 5, fight all forms of communicable diseases, collaborate on research and ensure universal access to vaccines.

#### **Impact:**

In research from Banerjee (2020), India has one doctor for 1445 Indians, which is suggestive of Indian health professionals operating in a restricted capacity. Owing to understaffing, incapacity to provide for sufficient beds and medical diagnostic facilities, India's understaffed and resource deficient health system was given a blow by the pandemic.

Also, the shift in the priorities of the health system, towards extending the emergency health services to communities, has adversely affected the treatment of other diseases, namely Tuberculosis(TB), Measles, and Polio vaccination campaigns. As per WHO (*Hard Fought Gains in Immunization Coverage at Risk without Critical Health Services, Warns WHO*, 2020) "When immunization services are disrupted, even for brief periods during emergencies, the risk of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks, such as measles and polio, increase."

Due to limited access to healthcare and the disruption of medical diagnostic services, there has been an 80% reduction in Tuberculosis(TB) notification rates, according to (Stop TB Partnership, 2020) The drop in notification rates implies that more cases remain undiagnosed and untreated for long, subsequently increasing India's burden of diseases.

Amidst an increase in TB cases and the suspension of the immunization program, the fear of a mutating virus(Covid-19), raises concern over the health of the Indian Health System.

### **Recommendations:**

Learning from the current pandemic, the government introduced Healthcare reforms and is increasing investments in Telehealthcare. E-Sanjeevani (Shivaay,2020), a web-based telecommunication service was launched to extend medical advice, in the absence of physical visits.

A continuous drive to scale up the investments in health and extending health insurance to over a billion health professionals goes a long way in enabling good health and well-being of all. Besides, the following recommendations can also be taken into consideration:

- Double the budgeted health expenditure to GDP from the current 3.5% to 6.5%.
- State of the art health infrastructural facilities
- Ramp up R&D in medical research and diagnostics
- Recruiting more doctors and Paramedical staff

### **SDG-4 Quality Education**

The goal seeks to ensure equal access to education, development care, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure teacher training.

### **Impact:**

The prolonged closure of the schools has disproportionately impacted the socially disadvantaged sections. According to an NSSO report (Social & Rural Research Institute, 2014), approx 32 million children were out of school before the pandemic, with the transition to e-learning during the pandemic, these have been left out of learning.

We might have been successful in avoiding community transmission in 320 million school learners but the wide rift in educational inequalities between the two groups has only exacerbated the disparities.

**Recommendations:**

Education (SDG-4) forms the foundational pillar for all the other SDGs. Education helps in upward socio-economic mobility and can act as a potential medium to spread awareness about other SDGs. Government schools are a lifeline for 60% of India's learners and they have been suffering from the menace of the digital divide. Training teachers and reskilling them for online delivery of lectures would help reduce the gap to some extent.

**SDG- 5 Gender Equality**

The international community agreed to create an inclusive society, by pleading to end discrimination against women, adopt and strengthen policy to promote gender equality.

**Impact:**

The shrinking of economic opportunities and unequal access to technology has further amplified gender inequality in India. In research from I.F.(2020) 90% of the total working women in India have been employed in the informal sector- unpaid and unskilled. The pandemic will have long-lasting consequences for such women who are at risk of permanent elimination from the labour market. The disappearance of women from the workforce and simultaneous replacement by men in various publicly funded employment schemes reflect a grim picture of female status. Unemployment and confinement under lockdown have also made women victims of domestic violence.

**Recommendations:**

According to the research from OXFAM(2019) "The state of employment in India the reason for women being disproportionately burdened with unpaid and domestic work lies in the patriarchal stereotypes. Tasks like cooking and domestic work are highly gendered in India."

The scope of behavioural changes needs to be considered to overcome the social and cultural barriers to women's employment. Another reason for unemployment in women is the mismatch between the skill set required and the qualification of the job-seeking women. For a transition towards equal opportunities, policy intervention is demanded from the government in the forms of:

- focused program on skilling, especially for women and girls.
- Safe and affordable public transportation

### **SDG- 6 Clean Water And Sanitation**

Goal 6 aims for universal access to affordable clean water and sanitation. It also focuses on the sustainable management of water resources and waste management systems.

#### **Impact:**

Water is life, yet according to research by NITI AAYOG(2019), 82% of Rural households don't have access to piped running water. The challenges faced by such households are many and have been intensified by the Covid outbreak. To avoid infections, (UNICEF, 2020) recommends washing hands often but due to scarcity of water, frequent hand washing is a challenge that many such households confront. Sustaining so many family members under one roof with fewer resources like water and lack of hand hygiene makes communities vulnerable to communicable diseases.

#### **Recommendations:**

As per (Lahiri, 2017), 95% of Indian cities are using a centralized wastewater management system (Schellenberg, 2020) which processes wastewater at a central point. This central unit requires huge investments for the setup and in contrast recycles only 30% of urban wastewater(MATTO, SINGHAL & PRASAD, 2019). To alleviate water scarcity and ensure universal access to all households, India needs a paradigm shift from the current centralized mechanism to a Decentralised wastewater management system (IRJET), 2018).

It treats, reuses the wastewater in the vicinity of the source generation, which is an efficient and low-cost sustainable solution to India's hurtling water crisis.

"Taking note of the declining water table and limited water resources, Recycling is the only way out."

### **SDG- 7 Affordable And Clean Energy**

Goal 7 aims to ensure affordable and sustainable energy for all. Increasing the share of Renewable energy in the energy mix and improving the rate of energy efficiency are the other two targets under the goal.

#### **Impact:**

The above targets have set huge challenges for the Indian sector since according to UNDP(2019) One in seven people in India is still deprived of modern energy. India's major source of energy consumption comes from the burning of fossil fuels, making India the third-largest carbon emitter. In the context of energy efficiency, a critical issue that plagues India's power sector is the transmission losses incurred by the power suppliers while distributing electricity.

The radical slowdown in the economy and industries cutting back on their production has reversed the demand for energy consumption by 30% as reported by (TOI, 2020). Travel restrictions have led to a demand deficiency in the fuel requirements, negatively affecting the debt-stricken power sector.

#### **Recommendations:**

Fewer fumes and exceptional air quality as per Koundal and ETEnergyWorld(2020) experienced during the lockdown will shape the long term trajectory of Renewable energy in India's energy mix. There's a need to refuel the Indian economy post-Covid and some of the recommendations are as follows:

- Formulate a Green Policy Framework, to harness all non-conventional forms of energy viz. Solar, wind, hydro energy.

- Public investment in the form of “Green Stimulus Packages” (Budgetary support to non-conventional energy sources) should be considered as a viable option for generating interest in the producers of clean energy.
- The government can oblige by commitments of the Paris deal and International Solar Alliance by scaling up investments in affordable and clean energy.

### **SDG- 8 Decent Work And Economic Growth**

The development goal promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

#### **Impact:**

As per reports in (FORBES, 2021), The influx of migrant labourers back to their villages and the incapacity of the agricultural sector to absorb them has led to the swelling up of the unemployment rate in India to 9.1% in December 2020. The pandemic is wreaking havoc and the employment of millions is at stake, mostly in the services sector. The shrinking incomes, demand deficit, and fewer exports are some of the crises that loom in the Industrial sector. The maximum impact is on 80% at the bottom who constitute as agricultural labourers and urban informal sector workers. According to an International Labour Organization ILO (2020) report, more than 40 crore informal workers may get pushed into deeper poverty by the Covid outbreak.

#### **Recommendations:**

A resurgence of the Indian economy demands fast economic growth. If India has to grow into a USD5 trillion economy some structural issues need to be addressed. It’s important to codify labour laws, legislate on the identification and basic rights of migrant workers at their place of work. To aid in the demand recovery increase investments in infrastructure are recommended, such as expenditure of 1% of GDP on infrastructure boosts real growth by 2% and creates 1.3 million jobs.

## **SDG- 9 Industry, Innovation And Infrastructure**

Goal 9 seeks to facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure, enhance scientific and technical research, in landlocked and developing countries.

### **Impact:**

Resilient infrastructure, manufacturing, and innovation are the economic drivers of the Indian economy. The entire spectrum of Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure which relies on Human capital is facing massive disruptions. With relatively low levels of automation in the construction sector, there's a high degree of dependency on skilled and unskilled labour, deployed around project sites in concentrated circles. According to Wikipedia(2020), The Indian construction sector employs a workforce of over 49 million people, almost 12% of India's working population.

### **Recommendations:**

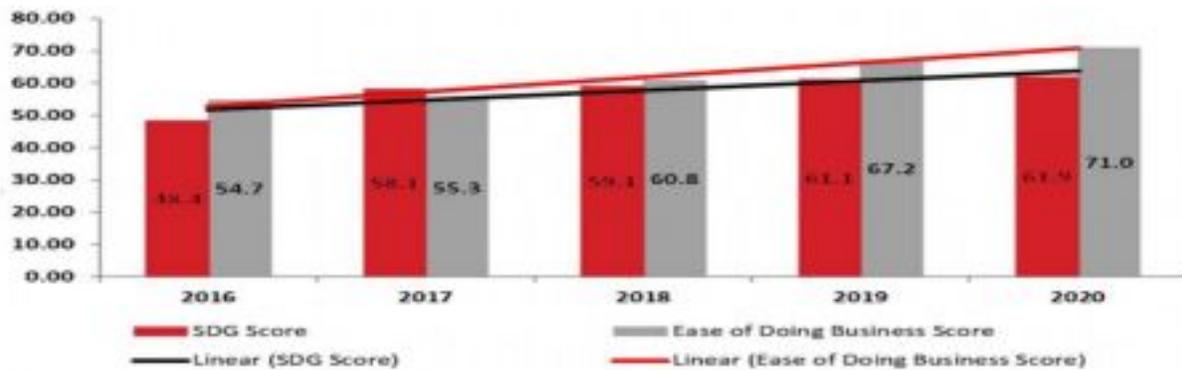
For a sustainable and resilient recovery, India must invest heavily in sustainable infrastructure. India must harness this opportunity and escalate investments in non-conventional sources of energy viz renewable energy. Data from the past shows that post-2008 global meltdown, South Korea diverted 70% of its resources towards Green Energy (Climate Home, 2013), helping it to rebound better and quicker compared to other countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation (OECD).

The infrastructure sector is one of the largest employment generators and has a multiplier effect. To materialize India's goal of becoming a USD5 Trillion economy, the completion of critical infrastructure under the National Infrastructure Pipeline is important. This can be done by prioritizing the portfolio of projects that are

- capable of generating immediate and sustained employment
- Projects of National interests like Hospitals, Educational institutes
- Adds value to other industries

For the Industrial sector, a direct relationship has been observed between SDGs and Industrial development. From 2016 -2020, there has been a steady increase in India's performance in the SDG index, which has led to a constant increase in the Ease of Doing Business Index also. Industries thrive only when there are improvements in Economic, Social, and Political Stability. The graph below is illustrative of this linear relationship.

Fig. 1: A linear relationship between SDG and ease of doing business indices



NOTE- Bhowmick, S. (2020, October 19).

### SDG- 10 Reduced Inequalities

“Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies, and action in this regard”

#### Impact:

In the recent decade, the programs launched by India to minimize inequalities were set back in a matter of months. THE PANDEMIC OF INEQUALITY highlighted growing inequalities in health, financial inclusion, access to food, and justice. According to OXFAM (2019) report gauging inequalities, India was ranked at 147th rank on a list of 157 countries. The Food and Agriculture Organization's assessment remarked that India's Gini Coefficient (WIKIPEDIA, 2021) is the most important indicator of Income Inequality, might rise by 2%.

**Recommendations:**

According to Misra (2021) Oxfam's report titled "The Inequality Virus" reports that when millions of informal workers were being pushed deep into poverty, migrants being stranded into streets, India's richest billionaires increased their wealth by 35%. There is a need to reduce inequalities. But the question that follows is how?

- By expanding the scope of employment programs under MNREGA for rural and urban areas
- Making the Public Distribution System (PDS) universal for the most vulnerable so that "no one is left behind"
- Implementing Universal Basic Income (UBI)- giving a small sum of money to every individual

No matter how appealing the above, the Income redistribution model might be for the short term but on rational analysis, it would be financially draining for the exchequer and inflationary for the taxpayer for the medium to long term.

The viable and sustainable solution is "Inclusive Fast Economic Growth" which would generate employment, increase income for the people and reduce inequalities in the long run.

**SDG-11 Sustainable Cities And Communities**

The goal seeks to enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization, ensure universal access to basic services and safeguard heritages.

**Impact:**

According to UNDP INDIA(2019), Sustainable cities mean creating business and career opportunities, safe and affordable housing, building resilient societies and economies. It involves investment in public transport, creating green public spaces, improving urban planning and management in inclusive ways. The pandemic has been exerting pressure on the cities because of which the cities have been exposed to unprecedented challenges of delivering healthcare, education, and safety.

**Recommendations:**

The pandemic has exposed and amplified the vulnerabilities in urban planning and management. Stakeholder participation and community involvement are at the heart of sustainable cities. Seeking lessons from other nations, the Indian government has an opportunity to pursue data-driven planning as a measure of good governance. Cities in Latin America and Africa are using digital technologies for cash transfer payments to the poor BRODERICK(2020). The cities are hitting a great reset by creating healthier and resilient cities, using Big Data (Ochoa and ENGELMANN & WORLD BANK BLOGS 2020) to assess the demands in the economy. Organizations use big data to extract data and process the data as per their requirements, to make consumer-centric decisions.

There have been instances where the cities have streamlined priorities and resolved issues through community participation. As per Sharma(2020) drawing evidence from the pandemic, it is now accepted that local governments are more efficient and responsive to the needs of their people. From a political standpoint, this is the right time to pursue a decentralized and customized planning system for Local Governments.

According to a UN report, 90% of the Covid cases were found in Urban areas making cities the epicentre of the epidemic.

*Fig.2- Percentage of urban households exposed to risk factors*



NOTE- FROM NFHS SURVEY(2014-2015)

According to the NFHS Survey(2014-2015), the urban cities were clogged and 42% of the urban households had no room for social distancing, aggravating the risks of infection. Covid 19 has impacted over 19.4% of such households in the absence of good sanitation.

### **SDG- 12 Responsible Consumption And Production**

Sustainable consumption and production promote efficient use of energy and resources.

#### **Impact:**

The outbreak has changed the landscape of sustainable consumption. The country saw remarkably less oil consumption due to the shutdown. Another potential component of Sustainable consumption is the zero waste generation capacity of an economy. In India, the generation of waste and pollutants pose a big challenge since only 19.9%of the waste generated is processed, as per (UN INDIA, 2019). The pandemic is only going to make things worse by all that medical waste that is finding its place in landfills and water bodies.

#### **Indian Initiatives**

The Indian government has introduced various policies and flagship programs for the efficient management of natural resources.

- Use of Fly Ash in the construction sector
- National policy on Biofuels
- National Clean Energy Fund
- Draft policy on Resource Efficiency

#### **Recommendations:**

When India is aiming to be The Manufacturing Hub for the World, transmutation from the traditional Take- Make-Waste linear Model to a Circular Economy is recommended along with the following suggestions

- The goal of “NO PLASTIC” can only be achieved when the government speeds up Research and Development to find alternatives to packaging materials.

- There's a need for financial instruments that can extend credit to Green Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) involved in Waste Management
- The Draft Policy On Resource Efficiency addresses concerns of only with demolition waste, there's a need for a comprehensive policy for sustainable use of resources in the construction sector.

For the producers, the government should make it mandatory for them to track their waste generation and subsequently design green strategies to minimize their ecological footprint. In the absence of a sustainable consumption policy in India, consumers often consume products that are not sustainable. Integration of policies is needed at both the source of production and at the consumption end for efficient resource utilization.

### **SDG -13 Climate Action**

Strengthen mitigation and adaptive capacities to climate-related hazards and natural disasters.

#### **Impact:**

If we were to quote India's pre-Covid stats then India is the fourth largest energy consumer and third-largest carbon emitter. The global lockdown and restricted movement have positively affected the environment. As reported by PTI(2020), Carbon emissions in India were predicted to fall by 8% for the first time in four decades. As per KAPIL(2020), in North India, the Aerosol levels swooped to a 20 year low during the lockdown.

Aerosols are tiny particles produced from the burning of fossil fuels and from industrial activities, which remain suspended into the environment for long and contribute significantly to altering the climate. Indian economy witnessed a reduction in the power demand by coal-based power plants by 26% during the lockdown which led to a further reduction in emissions.

#### **Recommendations:**

India's climate policy is shaped by three documents on the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and SDGs. India's commitment to these affects its goals on Infrastructure Development and Economic Growth.

In this context, India must find innovative solutions. Given the high vulnerability of the Indian population that lives in coastal and rural areas with a rudimentary infrastructure, climate adaptation programs should be prioritized rather than climate mitigation alone.

### **SDG -14 Life Below Water**

The goal commits to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

#### **Impact:**

In the near term, Covid-19 consequently led to less pressure on marine biodiversity due to reduced environmental pollution and overfishing. Over time the water bodies became the bed for India's huge chunk of Biomedical Waste as reported by Ravichandran(2020). Though the marine ecosystem had positive impacts, the livelihoods of coastal communities took a downturn. As reported by Kumar(2020), the disruption in fish processing and exports inflicted huge losses to India's fishery sector.

#### **Recommendations:**

The health and sustainability of the marine ecosystem is not a standalone goal, its scope is much larger and depends upon the management and sustainability of all other sectors that affect the oceans. Thus, to stem the flow of plastic waste into water bodies there's a need for devising stringent rules and a concrete framework for regulating Biomedical waste.

Various institutions are working and managing marine resources but owing to the sparse nature of data, analysis hinders the policymaking process. There's a need for a single database that contains all the information on marine resources.

### **SDG-15 Life On Land**

Ensure conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of Terrestrial Ecosystem, Combat desertification, increase afforestation and promote equitable access to genetic resources.

**Impact:**

Similar to the above three goals, Life on land saw some green recovery in forest cover and paltry reversal in habitat loss but the cut down in forest-related supply chains ravaged the lives of forest dwellers (ILO, 2020a) and indigenous communities that depend upon the collection and selling of Minor Forest Produce(MFP) as reported by SUSHMITA(2020). Roy(2020) of Indian Express through a report- “Indian wildlife amidst Covid-19 crisis” discerns that due to a decrease in surveillance, there has been an increase in unlawful activities like poaching and illegal logging.

**Recommendations:**

Loss of biodiversity tends to increase pathogen transmission, which can lead to health problems and food insecurity. Deforestation or illegal logging affects forests which are the largest carbon sequesters. Life on Land is interlinked and integrated with goals on zero hunger, health and well being and climate action. Any reversal in life on land will have serious consequences for these goals too. Protection of the terrestrial ecosystem requires active participation from people.

**SDG -16 Peace Justice And Strong Institutions**

The goal is more judiciary centric promotes justice-based governance. To some extent, it is the catalyst in boosting and sustaining Human development. It reiterates that judicial accessibility is a prerequisite for peaceful and inclusive societies.

**Impact:**

As reported by Dixit(2020) the pandemic wheel brought the justice system to a grinding halt, with no easy bails and delayed justice. With courts closed for long and lack of digital literacy has wider ramifications affecting a broader range of human rights and the right to access justice in a timely and efficient manner.

**Recommendations:**

The goal is more of an enabler and Indian initiatives like Digital India, Pragati platform(IT-based) redressal mechanism, e-governance needs to be rolled out expediently.

The E- courts are in their nice phase and filing documents electronically is a tedious and time-consuming process, which needs to be worked upon. There's a need for an inclusive governance system that gives civic space for debates and discussion to follow and invests heavily in responsive institutions of public concern like the National Human Rights Commission.

### **SDG- 17 Strong Partnerships**

It asserts strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnerships for Sustainable development. Through financial assistance, the developed nations are expected to help developing nations in developing their economies sustainably.

#### **Impact:**

The initiatives taken to contain the virus and deal with the repercussions have led to the draining of financial resources for all the nations globally. At the onset, when western economies are retreating from various multilateral institutions, cutting back, and tapering financial assistance, Covid has intensified the problem of resource mobilization, placing India in a jeopardized state.

#### **Recommendations:**

There's a need to foster good relations with neighbouring countries that would help India in resource mobilization for the domestic economy. We must capitalize on the historical relations we have had with our Asian neighbours. The South-East Asian economies offer us a huge market for our finished products and exports being an important comp

### **4.0 Indian Initiatives To Align With 2030 Agenda**

To ameliorate the conditions of the sectors in the Indian Economy and achieve self-sufficiency, the Indian government launched the program ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT. The program is a visionary document that seeks to translate the short term policy measures taken during the pandemic into a long-lasting policy framework that would help transform the Indian economy and make SDGs achievable.

To avoid people getting into a poverty trap, an INR 50 Billion credit facility was announced for the street vendors and an INR 300 Billion emergency credit window for farmers.

In the pursuit of inclusive development and furthering the goal of food security, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution introduced the platform of ONE NATION AND ONE RATION CARD (ONORC). The geographically independent card would ensure that cardholders receive a certain amount of foodgrains, ensuring that no one is left behind.

### 5.0 Roadmap To Recovery

The development goals are interlinked with one or the other forms of capital as outlined in the following table. The resurrection of the Indian economy is possible only when we develop and harness the potential of each of these capitals by intervening through various policy goals.

Fig 3 *SDGs and Economic Linkages*



NOTE-BHOWMICK. (2020)

### 5.1 Human Capital Development

For a resilient and inclusive economic recovery, it's important to bring back the focus on developing Human Capital as the foundational pillar of SDG 1(No poverty), SDG2 (Zero Hunger), SDG3 (Good health and well being), and SDG4(Quality Education).

Interestingly, the development of human capital formation is interwoven and exhibits complementary relationships with poverty, hunger, education, and sanitation. This liaison can be summarized as follows: a.) If a child consumes a balanced diet, the possibilities are that he'll be healthy and he'll be able to excel in his studies; b.) The more educational opportunities the child receives and greater are the chances of his skill development and employment opportunities.

## **5.2 Physical Capital And Sustainable Development Goal**

There is a nexus between the SDG and the physical capital investment. SDGs provide various opportunities for businesses like investments in Renewable energy and waste management setups. Similarly, it is observed that Indian states that score better on the SDG index tend to perform better on the Ease of Doing Business index too and have higher flows of Foreign Direct Investment, which leads to an Economic growth of the nation.

## **5.3 Natural Capital And SDGs**

Globally it has been observed that growth has been eroding the natural capital of the earth. Disbalance and pollution have led to increased mortality rates and the emergence of pathogens that are affecting the quality of life. The recent pandemic is a case in point and as a corrective course, the Indian Government should promote the development of Ecological Civilization on a broader scale (Wikipedia, 2020b). Ecological Civilization reinforces the idea of a symbiosis between the Economic Development and Environment Protection as reported in *The Diplomat* (2018).

## **5.4 Social Capital And SDGs**

The economies can achieve growth targets but if the growth is not percolating and aiding in the upliftment of the marginalized, the economy is not developing. As an old saying goes "*If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.*" When economies strive to achieve an equal and just society they set themselves on the path of growth and development, which is an important indicator of better communities and a shared future.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

As per the reports from Smart Water and Waste World(2020), even before the pandemic, India was not on track on most of the goals except four SDGs (No poverty, clean water & sanitation, economic growth, climate action) The slow pace towards the targets was worsened by the pandemic. To achieve the targets within a decade the Indian economy needs to reboot itself and only then Indian can expect to be on the trajectory of growth by 2025 and achieve the goals by 2030. The pandemic has altered the dynamics of the Indian Governance system, it has brought to the fore the importance and efficiency of a parallel decision-making body. In a report by Sharma (2020) Bhilwara's clampdown is a case in point where local authorities took immediate steps to avoid infections and soon became a model for containment for other states.

The lesson that follows from the above example is the preeminence of localization of SDGs. Whether it is for ensuring basic services to stranded migrants or the identity issues plaguing the nation, local interference and a bottom-up approach rather than a centralized top-down approach will be more efficient. For India's dwindling economy, to deliver the goals by 2030, a renewed focus on green, tech-smart, and sustainable development are important for a systemic recovery.

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