



21st session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Written statement by Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences

Agenda item 6: Application of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development at the subnational level.

Although the march towards realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been stalled by the ongoing Pandemic, the collective response to a shared global challenge is unprecedented and one can expect the alliance to continue throughout the recovery process. The efforts to deal with the crisis unleashed the local forces into action and disciplined humanity. Governance at the subnational levels, specifically participatory governance acquired centre stage and efficient taskforces comprising local stakeholders were created. Innovative solutions customized to local, regional and cultural needs were adopted underlining the efficacy of actions that are local and specific to the circumstances and not distant. As the effectiveness, accountability and inclusivity of the existing systems of public administration and governance were tested during the outbreak when humankind witnessed the double blow of extreme climate and COVID-19, impacting socio-economic development, migration, food security and climate action. The need to balance economic, social and environmental progress for recovery became evident, as envisioned by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It became clear that rethinking and realigning the strategy for accomplishing the SDGs while shaping the recovery was required to accelerate progress, enhance human and institutional capacity and resilience to deal with exigencies both locally and globally. There is hope that the lost ground can be covered quickly by capitalising on the momentum gained for collective action and aroused consciousness for human values and duties. There is enough reason to believe that the Global Goals can be achieved through cooperation and decentralization of governance. More specifically, the merit to promote governance at the subnational level that has the advantage of local buy-in has come to the forefront. In this context, an examination of the unique model and approach of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (hereafter referred to as the 'Institute') to

eradicate poverty and hunger through holistic education (human capital development), and in the endeavour its effort to contextualise and localise SDGs will provide direction.

The Institute has been applying the principles of effective governance for sustainable development at the subnational level since its very inception in 1990s. Its unique model to eradicate poverty and hunger through education has transformed the lives of 1,50,000 indigenous people in Odisha, India and contributed to nation building. The Pandemic did not deter it from advancing towards the realisation of SDGs. In fact, it further strengthened its campaign for contextualising and localising the SDGs and reinforced the “Art of Giving” as its Founder sums up the purpose behind everything the Institute does. Its success can be attributed to holistic thinking; ability to explore linkages between thematic issues and contextualise them; effort to engage with the local community and amplify the unheard voices of the indigenous communities at global forums; initiatives to harness the potential of youth and involve them in local development by providing them adequate learning and training opportunities to transform them into changemakers; campaigns to generate awareness and facilitate local action; and continuous pursuit to collect local data to promote research and development , and to assist policymakers in drafting sound policies for governance.

The Institute is a dynamic example of engaging with the local communities and accelerating progress through collective action. Over the years it has acquired credibility and developed sufficient capacity and capability in terms of expertise, resources and tools to work effectively on policy and governance with various stakeholders at the subnational, national and international levels. It has been advocating and mobilising local and global actions on SDGs. It has created a separate SDG Centre with a dedicated team for better governance, advocacy, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The Centre serves as a platform for convergence of both internal and external stakeholders for research, training, learning and development. It has been working on numerous projects, events and campaigns on SDGs and has started to emerge as the preferred partner for these pursuits. Few selected examples of advocacy and action are set out below.

1. In February 2018 the Institute organised the two national-level capacity building workshops on SDGs in partnership with the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog – public policy thinktank of the Government of India), United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC), Bonn, Germany and United Nations Volunteers (UNV). This was the first high level event for the Institute and NITI Aayog on SDGs in the country. Policy makers, administrators, planners, senior government officials representing 25 States of India, UN representatives and volunteers, and many others from within and outside the country converged at the Institute, to discuss the importance of capacity building for localising the SDGs. The key outcomes of the workshop included the decision to integrate SDGs into national, regional and local policies that reflect local priorities and opportunities; to localise SDGs by ‘communitising’ them; and to strengthen local governance and accountability by involving stakeholders at

regional and local level to widen inclusive spaces for engagement with clear communication channels with policy and decision makers, including for remote and marginalized populations, youth and women.

2. The Institute actively participated in the International Youth Campaign on Kindness for the SDGs, launched by UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) on October 2, 2018. Educational sessions were conducted at the Institute on the SDGs for more than 10,000 young learners; cleanliness and sanitation drives, and social media engagements were organized during the campaign.
3. On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the Institute partnered with UNV India, UN Women India, UNFPA India and Kalinga Fellowship and organized a week-long UN@75 Campaign from 18-24 October 2020. The themes covered during on-line and off-line campaigns included Education; Gender; Nutrition; and Climate Change. The campaign amplified indigenous and youth voices while addressing the SDGs. Overall, the campaign was a success as it witnessed massive global participation from many countries including staff members from partnering UN agencies, non-government organisations and other national and international dignitaries. They interacted with senior government officials, planners, district level administrators, representatives from training institutions, researchers and civil society organisations working on SDGs in India to grassroots level social workers, indigenous leaders, and youth.
4. The Institute has been working with Cambridge University to strengthen sustainable food supplies. The project is expected to strengthen alliances of experts from the United Kingdom and India in the domains of crop science, hydrology, social science and policy. This knowledge exchange partnership will determine the requirements for advancing the Green Revolution in India; explain necessary policy agenda; and develop a collaborative research programme focused on sustainable crop production and sustainable use of resources.
5. It has been working with University of East Anglia to address food and nutrition insecurity in India with gender equality through systemic and sustainable up-scaling of grassroots innovation. The project aims to build a gender sensitive virtual knowledge and innovation centre for collecting, dissipating and sharing information; use technology and traditional creative communication techniques to understand food and nutrition; develop an evidence-based curriculum and content on food and nutrition in order to replicate the knowledge for education and health initiatives; and conduct fact-based advocacy for political buy-in and financing for long term sustainability and institutional acceptance.
6. After the super cyclone Amphan hit coastal India, a study for “Strengthening Disaster Risk Management (DRM) capacity under COVID-19 pandemic in cyclone/flood-prone area” has been awarded to the Institute and Resilience Innovation Knowledge Academy (RIKA) by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The objective of the study

is to understand and strengthen the existing institutional and societal systems to be better prepared and adaptive to deal with natural and biological hazards. The study will help the policymakers, local administration, local communities and other Indian coastal states to enhance their capacities and resilience on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and DRM and also help them integrate biological hazards in their existing plans.

Thus, the Institute has been continuously contributing to strengthen effective governance for sustainable development at the subnational level. It has been promoting the integration of SDGs into national, regional and local policies that reflect local priorities and opportunities and generating awareness and building consensus for it through events, workshops and campaigns. It has been successful in creating spaces that encourage large public participation in policy dialogue and policy making, and has provided valuable data and proof of concept for policy uptake through research. Leading by example, it has demonstrated to local and regional governments how the rights of the most vulnerable populations can be protected and their basic needs of education, food, health and well-being can be addressed. It has also worked towards empowering and building the capacity and skills of local and regional governments. By starting multi-stakeholder conversations at multiple-platforms and including the disadvantaged it has enabled democracy to flourish. It believes in community-driven approach and continues to engage with the indigenous youth and local communities by empowering them to become changemakers.