

## **19<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)**

### **Written input by Indian Institute of Public Administration**

*Agenda Item 6: Effective governance for sustainable development: putting principles into practice and reviewing outcomes*

#### **Reviewing Outcomes of SDGs: Indian Scenario**

##### **Introduction**

The inextricable link between good governance and sustainable development was acknowledged in the Rio+20 Declaration *'The Future We Want'*. The SDGs in the form of 2030 Agenda gave a call for all countries to recognize the need for responsive, legitimate and democratic institutions at all levels. The 17 SDGs and 169 targets highlight the comprehensiveness of the agenda and virtually address all development challenges. The goals are closely interrelated and reflect the dynamic linkages among economic, social and environmental dimensions.

SDG agenda brings not only new issues but also represent a paradigm shift in development policy. The institutions have an important role to promote and track implementation of the agenda. SDGs can be met only through high standards of governance at all levels. Governance as both a standalone and cross-cutting goal is very important for effective outcomes.

##### **India and SDGs**

India has been a strong proponent of the SDGs and has been leading discussions on critical issues such as poverty, south-south cooperation and climate justice, at the global level. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation (MoSPI) is responsible for developing and maintaining the National Indicator Framework (NIF) which helps in monitoring the progress of SDGs. The statistical indicators of NIF monitor SDGs at the national and state level and aim to measure the outcomes of the policies to achieve the targets under different SDGs

India as a fastest growing major economy of the world is uniquely placed to deliver on its commitments to inclusive and sustainable development. The country has played a proactive role externally in shaping the SDGs and launched many programs to make progress towards these goals. Despite large population and vast geographical expanse, India is steadfast in achieving ambitious goals such as universal rural electrification, road and digital connectivity for all, massive expansions of clean and renewable energy, sanitation and housing for all and universal elementary school education.

##### **Role of NITI Aayog**

NITI Aayog, the premier think tank of the Government of India is mandated to oversee the progress of the nation in SDGs. It has been representing India at various SDG monitoring and review platform at the global level. India had presented its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2017, outlining the country's ambitious schemes and other initiatives for fast-tracking SDG achievement at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the highest international SDG review platform, convened under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council at the UN headquarters every July. India shared the experiences and learnings from SDG localization at the HLPF in 2019, which detailed the efforts by all States and UTs in adopting, implementing, and monitoring SDGs

There has been a significant paradigm shift from input-driven evaluation of schemes to outcome-based evaluation. In the new Output-Outcome Monitoring Framework developed by National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), the output and outcomes of the schemes of Union Ministries and Departments are linked with the financial outlays as a part of the Union Budget of 2019- 20. This will significantly enhance transparency, predictability and ease of understanding of the government's development agenda and linkages with the SDGs. The States/UTs have put in place institutional structures to take the SDG agenda forward. Most of the States/ UTs have designated their Planning Department as the nodal agency to coordinate SDG efforts. Some States/UTs have created dedicated cells/ units within or outside their Planning Department to be responsible for SDGs. A few States/UTs have designated officers in each government department responsible for coordinating SDG-related activities at the department-level. District-level structures have been put in place by some States/ UTs. Review mechanisms under senior leadership (Chief Minister or Chief Secretary) are operational to monitor progress.

## **SDG India Index**

The implementation of SDGs is incomplete without constant measuring progress of actual outcomes. It is in this direction that NITI Aayog has developed the SDG India Index, 2018. The Index served as an advocacy tool to trigger needed action by State Governments. The Index has reinforced the spirit of competitive good governance among the States and Union Territories, which are ranked on the basis of their achievements on the SDGs and their targets. The positive feedback on the SDG India Index, 2018 from all stakeholders and the media gave the impetus to continue the effort and bring out the SDG India Index, 2019. The SDG India Index 2019 and Dashboard, which is more refined and comprehensive than the first edition, not only gives an assessment of the progress made by States and UTs towards the attainment of SDGs but also attempts to measure the incremental progress since 2018. The new Index thus presents a more robust framework for measuring the progress on SDGs at the sub-national level. The SDG Index is a powerful tool which offers possibilities for the States/UTs to identify priority areas which demand action, facilitate peer learning, highlight data gaps, and promote healthy competition.

## **Outcome Based Evaluation**

The attainment of SDGs becomes central to the policy goals of not only the different Ministries in the Central Government but also of the State Governments. To drive the spirit of competition among States/UTs, NITI Aayog has sought to establish a structure of evidence-based policymaking by devising a robust mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of outcomes in key sectors of

governance. Focusing on effective management and better results backed by data analysis, NITI Aayog has developed several social indices and dashboards. The Composite Water Management Index, the Health Outcomes Index, the School Education Quality Index, India Innovation Index are some of the specific sectoral initiatives in this direction.

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### **Revisit the Spirit of SDG 16**

The principles of effective governance prepared by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration are grounded in effectiveness, accountability and inclusion. In the light of SDG 16(peace, justice and strong institutions) and as COVID-19 starkly shows, inclusion is crucial. There must be a focus especially on the needs of the most vulnerable and furthest behind, particularly women and children whose development determines the future of humankind. This calls for major changes in governance, in the spirit of multilateralism and solidarity, and in resource allocation towards sustainable development goals which appears to be quite challenging as the countries deal with domestic responses to COVID-19.

The reality of COVID-19 calls for a review of public finances and particularly allocations to health budgets, as well as the need to revisit education and training. SDG 16 and the role of the state and its institutions have become quite obvious with countries announcing stimulus packages to tackle the crisis.

### **Conclusion**

The Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi gave a clarion call for going 'vocal about local' in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The novel coronavirus outbreak has made India realise the importance of local manufacturing, local market and local supply chain. In his fifth address to the nation since the outbreak of the pandemic, the Prime Minister said that "a self-reliant India is the only solution to secure the nation against the deadly disease. The global situation shows that the way ahead for India is self-dependence. We have to turn crisis into opportunity,"

A pandemic like COVID19 is unprecedented and unimaginable. The operationalisation of eleven principles prepared by UN Committee of experts on Public Administration categorised under

effectiveness (competence, sound policy making, collaboration), accountability (integrity, transparency, independent oversight) and inclusiveness (leaving no one behind, non-discrimination, participation, subsidiarity, intergenerational equity) requires a firm resolve and commitment to move forward globally and nationally by the comity of nations.