

# SDGs: A paradigm shift?



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**T**HE Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of Global Goals with three major aspects: Economic, Social and Environmental. SDGs emphasise that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty and hunger, inclusive and equitable quality education, gender equality, inclusive and sustainable industrialisation are pre-requisites for sustainable development in the coming decades. Other global goals such as ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns, taking actions to combat climate change, ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for everyone at all ages are also important components of SDGs.

SDGs build on the legacy of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Though countries in Europe, North America and a few developing countries have been able to eradicate absolute levels of poverty and achieve certain levels of standard of living for their mass population, the reality is that, uneven developments and serious disparities between and within the countries remains. This is also reflected by the fact that in a large number of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, majority of the people are still far from securing any decent standard of living. The aspiration for MDGs and SDGs emanates from the understanding that such serious uneven developments and disparities both at the country and global levels are unsustainable, and these uneven developments and disparities lead to periodic and long lasting economic, social and environmental crisis. Therefore, specific actions are needed to combat such crisis.

Though, both MDGs and SDGs seek to address the aforementioned crisis, what is the paradigm shift under the SDGs? Three major changes characterise the paradigm shift under the SDGs. The first key change brought by the SDGs is that, while MDGs emphasised primarily on the aspects of social development, the SDGs, in contrast, represent a much wider agenda which, in addition to social development, also address the other two pillars of sustainable development: the economic

and the environmental. The second major change is the shift in the focus from an agenda which was applicable to a group of countries (under the MDGs) to one that is applicable to all countries irrespective of the differences in their levels of development. The third major change is that while MDGs were characterised by a 'North-South' model dependent on typical 'donor-recipient' relationships, SDGs

emphasise on domestic resource mobilisation as the key to achieving the goals. It is evident that global 'dissatisfaction' with the MDGs' processes, deliveries and progresses also led countries to go for such goals under the SDGs. The 'discontent' with the performance of MDGs is reflected by the fact that a large number of countries lagged behind in implementing the

MDGs by some considerable margins. According to the MDG Track Global Index (published by TAC Economics, www.mdgtrack.org), out of the 140 countries, only 6 countries could implement MDGs between 70 percent and 77 percent, only 18 countries could implement MDGs between 60 percent and 69 percent, 30 countries could implement MDGs between 50 percent and 59 percent and the rest 86 countries could imple-

years by majority of the countries is feasible and realistic.

One of the major challenges of the SDGs is that among the proposed indicators, related to the targets, many of them are non-quantifiable. This will be problematic while monitoring the progress in achieving SDGs. Also, there are indicators that do not specify any targets for the year 2030. Besides, there are unavailability of data as relevant data for some of the indicators are not available or readily available, and a number of indicators appear to be overlapped or repeated.

One of the most critical issues related to the implementation of the SDGs is the resources needed for implementing SDGs. As mentioned before, domestic resource mobilisation is the key to achieving SDGs, the question is how to mobilise required amount of resources domestically when a large number of countries suffer from weak institutions and infrastructure. It is also important to note that mere generation of resources would not ensure implementation of the SDGs if institutional and governance related aspects are not properly addressed.

The changing global scenario is a major challenge for the SDGs. The MDG period and whatever success it achieved was coined with growing globalisation and trade integration among the countries. However, recently emerging strong scepticism in such globalisation and trade integration process, as reflected by Britain's BREXIT and the presidential election in the United States, has casted shadows on the future of the 'global partnership' for SDGs. There are risks of trade wars between the dominant countries in the coming years, which will certainly undermine the prospects of such 'global partnership'.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the SDGs have the promise of bringing some very important changes in the lives of millions of people across the world. There is a need for a strong political commitment for negotiating with the challenges in the implementation of SDGs. Generating political capital for SDGs, both at the country and global levels, will remain the most critical task over the next one and half decades.

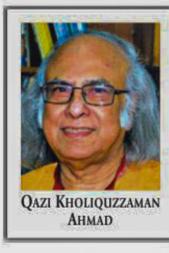


ment less than 50 percent of the MDGs. It is important to note here that, while the MDGs had eight goals with 18 targets, SDGs have 17 goals with 169 targets. Therefore, given the weak performances of the MDGs and the very wide coverage of SDGs, questions will remain whether achieving such wide and 'ambitious' goals and targets within next 15

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# Quality water for all A life and death issue in Bangladesh



QAZI KHOLIQUZAMAN AHMAD

**T**HERE is no exaggerating how crucial water is for human survival, particularly in countries like Bangladesh, which is crisscrossed by rivers. The level of water in a river here directly affects the lifestyles and livelihoods of the people living on its two sides, so much so that rivers



and water bodies of varied sizes are an inseparable part of Bengali culture and heritage.

Several hundred rivers and their tributaries flow through the country. However, some of the rivers — often called the lifelines of Bangladesh — are dying, inflicting prolonged suffering on the people. For example, the 309-kilometre Teesta flows through northern Bangladesh and drains an area of 12,540 square kilometres on its way from the Himalayas to Fulchhari of Gaibandha in Bangladesh where it meets the Jamuna.

The river, which can be up to 2.5 kilometres wide, is reduced to a width of about 70 metres during the winter and is even narrower or completely dry at some places during the very dry season (March and April). This leaves fishermen without work and farmers in acute need of water for irrigation.

While a dearth of water plagues the people of northern Bangladesh, particularly during winter, the middle and southern parts of the country reels from its overabundance, particularly during the monsoon. Also, salinity ingress in the surface and groundwater in the coastal region has reached such a state that not even grass can grow in some areas and people face an acute shortage of drinking water.

Someone said that a third world war may be fought over water. And it indeed is turning out to be a serious issue, not only in Bangladesh but also

uneven seasonal and spatial distribution of available water in Bangladesh poses serious problems. Adequate water access for drinking or for other purposes by certain groups of large numbers of people and in certain areas of the country is becoming increasingly serious.

Another set of problems related to the water sector arises as Bangladesh is at the bottom of three major rivers systems—the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, and the Meghna. A particular feature in this context is severe water scarcity in certain parts of Bangladesh in the dry season, Jan. 1 to May 31, particularly in March and April, due to low-flows through transboundary rivers as a result of excessive upstream abstraction. Also, floods in Bangladesh mostly originate upstream. Hence, regional cooperation in water management is an important issue.

Increasing salinity in water in coastal areas, arsenic contamination of water, and water pollution caused by human actions are becoming increasingly serious problems. Devastating floods and prolonged droughts also affect various areas of the country from time to time.

Clean, accessible water for all is the sixth among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations. The Sheikh Hasina-led Government of Bangladesh is working relentlessly to achieve the goals well before the 2030 deadline. The country already has necessary policies to save the rivers and other water-bodies and to ensure even distribution of quality water.

What the country now needs is stricter enforcement of the policies and relevant laws, and more effective efforts from both government and non-government actors in realising the goal of ensuring accessibility to quality water for all.

Ensuring accessibility to quality water for all is a must for sustainable development. And this has to be ensured before it is too late.

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*Increasing salinity in water in coastal areas, arsenic contamination of water, and water pollution caused by human actions are becoming increasingly serious problems.*

worldwide. In any case, quality water access on the one hand and devastation caused by flooding on the other are the hallmarks of water being the cause of large-scale suffering of people in many parts of the world. Water-related natural disasters have occurred in the past, but are increasing in recent times in terms of both frequency and extent of the devastations caused.

The reasons behind various water sector problems include a growing population, fast expanding economic activity, spreading water pollution, and the consequences of climate change.

In Bangladesh, as a matter of fact, the average annual per capita availability of water is robust — 7,568 cubic metres per capita, around five times higher than that in India. However, the highly

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**MAHATMA GANDHI**  
PREEMINENT LEADER OF THE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT IN BRITISH-RULED INDIA

*The law of sacrifice is uniform throughout the world. To be effective it demands the sacrifice of the bravest and the most spotless.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- "Sleep in heavenly...."
- Christmas tree topper
- Choir accompanier
- First Lady before Michelle
- Small songbirds
- "Childe Harold" poet
- Slacker address
- Employ
- Time for a party
- Sweeping story
- Publicity acts
- Fragrant wood
- Old market
- Really into
- Stratford's river
- Leave the country
- Jazz job
- Each
- Decorate
- Wonderland visitor
- Museum piece
- Race prize
- Sheriff's star
- Some messages

**DOWN**

- Punch sound
- Grow older
- Christmas treat
- Follow as result
- Edmonton's province
- Opposing vote
- Expert
- Winged archer
- Road division
- German article
- Bottle part
- Fencing sword
- Broad
- Christmas treat
- Flaring star
- Easy gait
- All there
- Love story
- Winter air quality
- Get excited
- Notion
- Gift of the Magi
- Equip
- Author Levin
- Vegas-set series
- Twisty fish

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**

F	I	S	T	S	S	A	L	A	D	
O	C	E	A	N	A	G	A	V	E	
S	I	C	K	O	P	O	R	E	S	
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M	I	D	T	E	R	A	M	P	I	C
A	M	I	M	A	D	E	D	O		
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E	L	L	I	S	K	E	R	A	S	E
S	E	E	P	S	R	E	S	T	S	

**BEETLE BAILEY** by Mort Walker

BEETLE BAILEY: THERE! I SQUAGHEP ALL YOUR PUMPKINS

CHEF: GOOD! I'LL GET BUSY AND BAKE THE PIES!

**BABY BLUES** by Kirkman & Scott

WOMAN: IS WUPEN STILL IN THE LIVING ROOM?

CHILD: I DIDN'T NOTICE.

WOMAN: IS THE GARBAGE DOOR OPEN OR CLOSED?

CHILD: I DIDN'T NOTICE.

WOMAN: IS THE HALL LIGHT ON?

CHILD: I DIDN'T NOTICE.

WOMAN: WANT! HAMMIE'S ICE CREAM HAS ONE MORE SPRINKLE ON IT THAN MINE!