

LEVERAGING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOS) & CORPORATE SECTOR TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) IN INDIA

Author's Name: Vinod Singh Kushwaha

Affiliation: Ph.D Scholar (Public Administration), Research Unit Of Ignou Campus, New Delhi, India

E-Mail: 1vinod7.Du@Gmail.Com

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Abstract

The seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations (January 1997 – December 2006) and Nobel Peace Prize co-recipient (2001), Kofi Atta Annam quoted: “Business, labor and civil society organizations have skills and resources that are vital in helping to build a more robust global community” (July 2000). It outlines what the important roles are going to be played by corporate/private sector, citizens and civil society organizations in shaping and realizing the 21st century development agenda at state as well as global level. This article highlights the concept of sustainable development goals (SDGs 2030) and sought to access the contribution of civil society organizations (CSOs) and corporate/private sector (through CSR) in terms of expertise, knowledge, economy, amplifying voices of the weaker sections & marginalized groups at the grassroots and engaging at all levels of the implementation process to achieve the goals of 2030 Agenda.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Corporate Sector, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

INTRODUCTION

In January 2016, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the main international mechanism for guiding development in all United Nations member states until 2030. The 17 SDGs along with 169 targets are understandably built and expanded on the results of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that ended in 2015. The need for collective approaches to public policymaking and implementation has become the central concern with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development along with a widespread recognition of shift in how policy is developed and implemented (Nilsson & Persson, 2017; UN ECOSOC, 2016).

The 2030 development agenda is a very inclusive call for all- the people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships. Almost all member states believed and recognized that to achieve the sustainable development agenda 2030, collective action should be encouraged through diverse participation of various stakeholders including civil society organizations and corporate sector.

SUATAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & 2030 AGENDA

First time at the global level the United Nations' Brundtland report of 1987 entitled 'Our Common Future' defines sustainable development as: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

The principles of sustainable development include, “Promotion of good governance, stable and long term economic growth, reduction of regional differences and proportionate and balanced socio-economic development, active employment policies, growth of personal income and consumption, promotion of justice (social, economic and political), environment protection for

next generations and efficient usages and allocation of scarce natural resources” (The United Nations 1987).

Sustainable development is a visionary approach towards the future. It cannot be brought about by merely policies, but requires the spreading awareness about sustainability among citizens, civil society organizations, corporate, government(s) and research institutions etc. to convert the natural assets for inter-generational equity.

In 2015, the United Nations provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future, and all the member states (developed as well as developing) adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) along with 169 targets as a part of the resolution: ‘Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’. The United Nations highlights these goals as:

1. No poverty in any form,
2. Zero hunger and food security,
3. Good health and well being of all,
4. Quality education and life-long learning opportunities for all,
5. Gender equality and women empowerment,
6. Clean water and sanitation for all,
7. Affordable, reliable, sustainable and clean energy for all,
8. Decent work and sustainable economic growth,
9. Sustainable industrialization, innovation and resilient infrastructure,
10. Reduced inequality at all,
11. Sustainable cities and communities,
12. Responsible consumption and production,
13. Climate action,
14. Sustainable life below water,
15. Sustainable life on land,
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions at all levels and,
17. Global Partnerships for the goals.

These goals are very comprehensive and people centered, integrated, undividable and keep the balance among the three pillars of sustainable development; society, economy and environment. To achieve these goals, require the partnerships among public (government) and private sectors, civil society organizations, citizens and research institutions to make sure we leave a better planet for future generations.

Today, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) provides substantive support and capacity-building for the SDGs and their related thematic issues.

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs) IN SDGs

Civil society organizations play a role to spur government action through persistent advocacy and act as watchdogs holding governments accountable to their commitments. They can advise governments on concrete implementation measures to take, building on their experience on the ground, often working with marginalized communities (Andonova, 2014). The 2030 Agenda calls for a “revitalized global partnership for sustainable development” that is based on “a global solidarity with the poorest and with people in vulnerable situations.” The 17th SDGs prompts

governments and all other stakeholders to rejuvenate global partnerships through development cooperation, mobilizing finances, technology, capacity building, open trade and policy coherence (United Nations, 2015). For example; Significant investments support under the Sanitation Partnership Trust Fund (SPTF) between Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Clean India Mission was aimed to eradicate open defecation throughout India by 2 October, 2019.

CSOs have progressively become key players in development issues such as providing sufficient food for people living without food, creating hospitals and schools for good health and quality education, enforcing political accountability and quality and inclusiveness of the governance, and making peace, strengthening justice and making institutions stronger at all levels.

The advocacy and engagement of civil society organizations on various issues and tasks/goals influence and helps to the objectives and ambitions of the effective implementation of sustainable development goals.

ROLE OF CORPORATE SECTOR IN SDGs

The 17th SDGs provokes for multi-stakeholder partnerships among the United Nations, public and private sectors, civil societies and other actors to mobilize and share knowledge, financial resources, expertise and technology in support to achieve the SDGs 2030 agenda in all countries at all levels.

The United Nations' eighth Secretary General, **Ban Ki-moon (January 2007 – December 2016)**, during the forum '*Businesses and the 2030 Agenda: Choosing the Right Path*' held in September 2016 referred to the creation of new strategic alliances to secure a sustainable future and said, "*We've learned that the SDGs pave the way for business practices and markets of the future. Businesses also have a crucial role in this task. The United Nations, governments, and the private sector are working together more closely with very significant results.*"

Since, business has become major part of the Indian economy and therefore affect very great number of people and on government policies and programmes that's why the corporate sector is critical in achieving SDGs as India move forward, so there is need of more transparent and aggressive policies for public and private sector to work together and to push forward more focus on low performing states like Bihar, Jharkhand, UP etc.

Highlighting the responsibility of business houses toward society, *Ratan Tata* said, "Businesses need to go beyond the interests of their companies to the communities they serve." It outlines the role of corporations in sustainability.

To promote sustainable and responsible business philosophy at a broad level and encourage corporation to come up with creative ideas and robust management system to address social and environmental concerns of the local, state and national level, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs of the Government of India made the mandatory provision under Companies Act-2013 that every company (either national or international running in India); either public limited or private limited, which either has a net profit of INR 50 million or a net worth of INR 5 billion or a turnover of INR 10 billion, have to spend at least 2% of its average net profit for the immediately preceding three financial years on the activities of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as allowable under Schedule VII of Section 135 under Companies Act 2013. The law came into force on April 1, 2014 and with it India became the first country in the world to mandate CSR constitutionally. The

almost CSR activities are linked with 2030 sustainable development agenda and Government of India makes necessary updates from time to time in Schedule VII in accordance with needs. Up to Financial Year 2020-21, the activities under Schedule VII are as:

1. Ending destitution, hunger and unhealthiness, adlibbing medical services and sterilizing, making accessibility of safe drinking water.
2. Working on quality schooling which incorporates specialized curriculum and business upgrading livelihood abilities among ladies, kids, older and the in an unexpected way abled and business upgrade programmes.
3. Advancing sex correspondence, enabling ladies, setting up homes and lodgings for ladies and vagrants, setting up advanced age homes and care habitats for senior residents and presenting the actions for diminishing disparities looked by socially and monetarily in reverse gatherings of the general public.
4. Guaranteeing ecological manageability, natural equilibrium, creature government assistance, assurance of verdure and fauna, agro-ranger service, protection of regular assets and keeping a nature of soil, air and water including a commitment for restoration of the waterway Ganga.
5. Protecting public legacy, craftsmanship and culture including rebuilding of structures and locales of recorded significance and masterpieces; setting up open libraries; improvement and advancement of conventional expressions and painstaking work.
6. Measures for the benefits to veterans of military, war widows and their wards.
7. Preparing to energize country sports, public games, paralympic and Olympic games.
8. Commitment to the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund (PMNRF) or some other reserve set up by the Govt. of India for financial improvement giving alleviation what’s more, government assistance of the Scheduled Cates (SC), the Scheduled Tribes (ST), in reverse classes, ladies and minorities.
9. Commitment of assets to investigate and advancement (Research and development) projects in the field of science and innovation hatcheries financed by all things considered Focal Govt. or then again State Govt. or then again PSUs. Commitments to public financed colleges, IITs, IIMs, DST, CSIR, DRDO, ICAR, ICMR, AYUSH, DAE, DBT and so forth focused on advancing SDGs.
10. Rustic advancement projects.
11. Ghetto region advancement where ‘ghetto region’ will mean any region announced as such by the Government of India or any State Government or on the other hand some other skillful authority under any law for the time being in power.
12. Catastrophe the executives including help, recovery and remaking exercises

Up to 2020, more than 21 thousand companies have been linked with CSR policy and spent over INR 1 trillion on CSR projects since the law came into effect. A look on the expenditure by corporations;

Financial- Year	CSR Expenditure (in Rs. Crore)	Financial- Year	CSR Expenditure (in Rs. Crore)
2014-15	10066	2017-18	17079
2015-16	14517	2018-19	20099
2016-17	14344	2019-20	24063

(National CSR Portal: <https://www.csr.gov.in/index20.php>)

The CSR initiatives have pushing India towards achievement of SDGs and public-private partnership (PPP) in transforming India.

CONCLUSION

Since, India has been achieving lots of success through multi-stakeholder partnership initiatives, yet the huge unemployment, low literacy of 77.7% (average world literacy rate is 86.48%), poor medical facilities, poor hunger index (101st in 2021) and human development index (131st in 2020) etc. are the challenges in the path of achieving Agenda 2030 and therefore India needs aggressive partnership initiatives and its implementation with assessment, evaluation and reporting.

In order to effectively work for the cause of the SDGs and solve global challenges, the corporate houses in India should assess their own and their value chain's impact, both positive and negative, on the SDGs, and modify operational strategies accordingly. They should select the SDGs carefully and put them into wider context of their business. Their initiatives must be go well with specific situations and contexts. Negative impact should be minimized and positive impact must be enhanced.

To achieve 2030 Agenda, the requirements of multi-stakeholder partnerships need to be fulfilled, such as strengthening local leadership and ownership by citizens or civil societies and a bottom-up approach based on a broad consultative process that identifies ideas and solutions, and provide a framework for monitoring results.

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