

# together

a national family magazine



**INDIA SCORES  
THE LOWEST IN  
ZERO HUNGER AND  
GENDER EQUALITY  
IN**

**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS**





**Together** is a national family magazine. It is a monthly, published by the Franciscans (OFM) in India. It was started in 1935 in Karachi, now in Pakistan. It got its present name in 1966.

The magazine **Together** is a conversation platform. Nothing changes until our families change. It is an effort at making worlds meet by bringing down fearful, pretentious and defensive walls. **Together** is a journey, an ever-expansive journey—from me to us, from us to

all of us, and from all of us to all. Let us talk, let us cross borders. The more we converse and traverse, we discover even more paths to talk about and travel together. **Together** is an effort to uncover our shared humanity.

Your critical and relevant write-ups, that promote goodness, inclusivity and shared humanity, are welcome. Your articles must be mailed to [editor@togethermagazine.in](mailto:editor@togethermagazine.in) before the 15th of every month.

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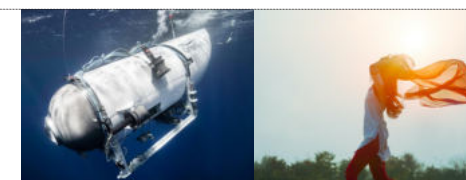
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# Who Is the Poorest in India?

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

A hungry girl child is the India's poorest person. She suffers from hunger, inequality, and abuse, for no mistake of hers. Starting from one's physical and mental disabilities to caste and illiteracy, there could be other relevant parameters of poverty, but a midway evaluation of the United Nations' Sustainable Developmental Goals in India, done by NITI Aayog, highlights that these two goals, zero hunger and gender equality, have performed the least for the last few years; and there are less indications of them getting better. This ought to be a cause for worry for a country that, according to the address of Narendra Modi at the US Congress in June 2023, boasts of being the fifth largest economy in the world; and claiming to be the third soon.

According to a UNICEF study, globally girls have higher survival rates at birth, are more likely to be developmentally on track, and do better in preschool, but India is the only large country where more girls die than boys; and more girls are likely to drop out of school. Statutory laws brought some relief to women of the elite, but not to the poor. Poverty and gender inequality is a critical combination to combat and win against. An estimated 87 million women and girls are living in extreme poverty in India in 2020; with the pandemic, it is less likely that the numbers look any better now. Combine this with India ranked at 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity according to the annual Gender Gap Report, 2023 of the World Economic Forum.

## Tilted Development to Sustainable Development

Humans as a civilisation can't grow and evolve; but in what direction and at what cost is the concern. There have been many courses and efforts. Western liberal model of development, holding autonomy, rights and self-interest of the

individual as the basis of all development, promoted rapid industrialization, technological advancement, modernization, and liberalisation of society, economy and polity. It leads to economic inequalities and concentration of wealth in the hands of the rich class of capitalists. It gives rise to a monopoly of the rich and exploitation of the poor.

Welfare model of development accepts and strongly advocates the role of state promoting the socio-economic welfare and common interests of the society. The assumption is that the welfare state protects all social, economic and political rights of all the people and in turn the people act in a socially responsible way. However, the welfare model did not succeed in securing the desired development: the bureaucracy proved to be inefficient and corrupt. Welfare goals were secured partially but with undesirable delays, and made the people utterly dependent upon the state.

Socialist/Marxist model of development takes on revolutionary means and a centralised system to attain progress and development. Though they placed full emphasis upon the social and economic rights and social justice they were found to be weak and unproductive; and began collapsing in 1980s and 90s.

Democratic-socialist model of development secures socialist goals by using democratic means. India and several other Third World countries adopted this model combined with welfare state structure. However, this model also proved to be inadequate due to bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, and faulty planning priorities.

India's Gandhian model of development, as opposed to the western materialistic model of development, gives primacy to moral and ethical view of socio-economic-political development.

It is decentralised model of each village acting as a self-regulating and self-sufficient unit of development with truth and non-violence as the basis of every decision and action. It recommends avoiding machines that deprive humans of employment; and escape industrialisation that generates consumerism and profiteering. All development must ensure environmental health and human happiness.

Sustainable development, according to the Brundtland Report (1987) is 'Development that meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The critical global environmental problems are primarily the result of the enormous poverty of some regions and the non-sustainable patterns of consumption and production in other regions. Sustainable development is mindful of areas extending from viable population levels, gender justice, socio-economic justice to environmental protection.

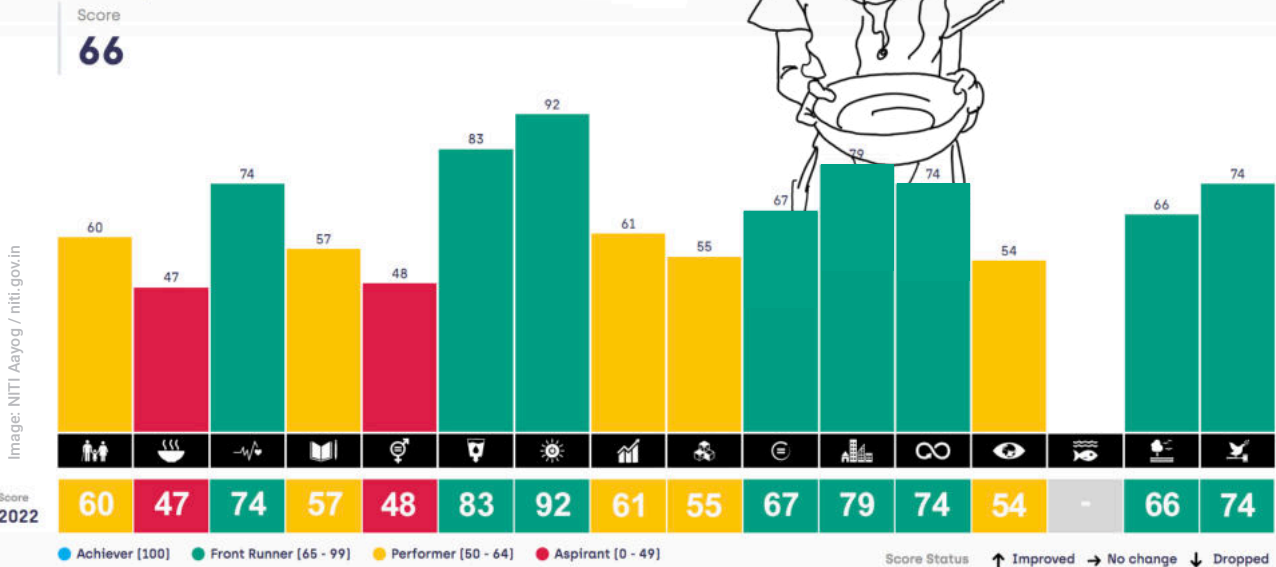
## What We Had, What We Needed, What Is Left, and What Is Wasted

The starting point of Sustainable development model is the instructive fact that natural resources

are finite. For example, the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation has predicted that by 2025, 1.8 billion people are going to be living in areas or regions of absolute water scarcity. It is a naïve assumption that the planet on which we live will always provide the resources that we need. The planet and its resources are not limitless and boundless by any stretch. Every year we consume twice the resources that our planet can replenish, which is referred to as ecological overshoot, meaning, human demand exceeds the regenerative capacity of a natural ecosystem.

In other words, humanity's ecological footprint exceeds what the planet can regenerate. The need of the hour is sustainable development. For any development to be enduringly sustainable it requires to be inclusive in thinking and action, harness diversity of thought and imagination, and show a hell lot of intent. ■

## INDIA, SDG WISE PERFORMANCE





# MANIPUR MAYHEM

The Meitei-Kuki conflict has crossed 50 days with no solution in sight

KAPIL ARAMBAM

## Demands

While the High Court's directive to the Manipur government (regarding the Meitei's demand for scheduled tribe status) in April 2023 was the immediate trigger for the ongoing violence between the Meitei and the Chin-Kuki-Mizo (Chikim) a.k.a. Kuki-Zo ethnic groups, anger against the Meitei-dominated state government has been simmering amongst the Chikim community for quite some time. The Manipur government over the past few months had taken few actions which have generated a sense of discrimination and insecurity among the Kuki community. Now the Chikim people is demanding a separate administration, which they argue, is the only solution.

## Disconnection

This is on two levels: (i) The natives, both the Meitei and Chikim groups, have always been articulating that successive governments in New Delhi have never acknowledged its existence and their apathy and neglect are prominently visible in the daily lives. The sense of alienation remains at record high. Even after more than 50 days of conflict, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not uttered a single word, as of June 25; and (ii) The Kukis also have a similar grievance against the Meitei-dominated state government which is based in the valley. These multiple disconnections have exploded and now, nobody seems to know a way out of this chaos and anarchy.

## Drugs

The most recent tension started when the N Biren government launched its war on drug campaign in 2017. The Kuki-dominated areas in Manipur border Myanmar, with a sizable Zo population and have been a heroin hub. The forcible destruction of illicit poppy cultivation and arrests of villagers, however, is perceived by the Kuki community as depriving them of their livelihood because the 'affected cultivators' never received the compensation promised by the state government.

## Demography

N Biren has been claiming that many illegal migrants from Myanmar have settled in the state, mostly in the reserved and protected forests. These drives against 'illegal encroachers' from Myanmar are interpreted by the Kukis as action against their own community because they identify the Chin refugees from Myanmar as members of their own tribe, i.e., the Chin-Kuki tribe. Meanwhile, the ethnic Meitei community feels that even though they constitute 53% of the population, they are confined to only 10% of the land in the valley. Even in the valley, they argue that they are getting squeezed because tribespeople are buying land and settling there, while being non-tribal, they cannot buy land in the hills. ■

For more details on these 4Ds, read the June edition of Together.

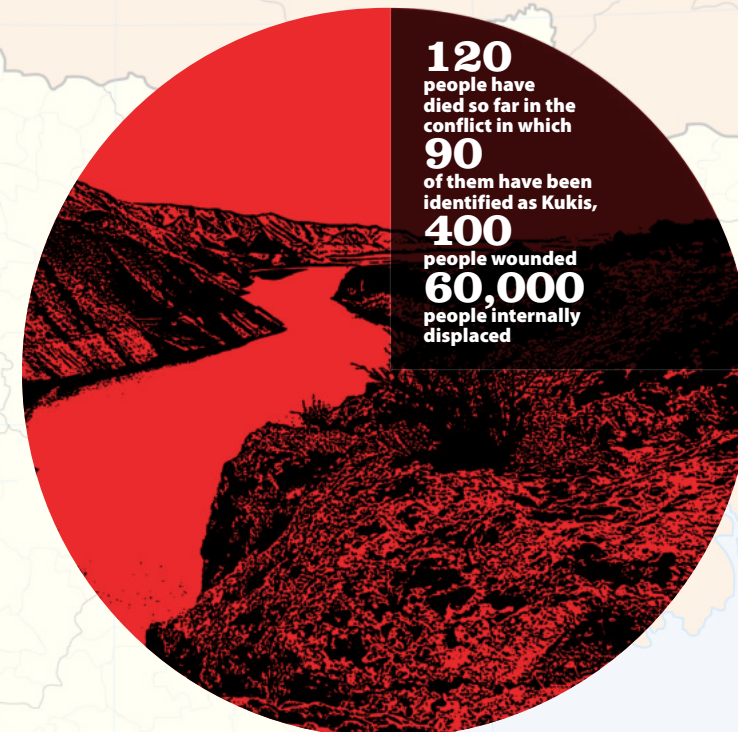
[The ongoing Manipur conflict] is an institutionalised riot system. It is very disappointing to know that the structural violence continues...they [the Kukis] are relentlessly targeted as troublemakers. There are ample evidence on the ground, which suggests the complicity of [CM Nongthombam] Biren and his government. [He has unleashed] the integrationist as well as majoritarian politics on the hill people by labeling, with certain pejorative terms, like encroachers, illegal immigrants, poppy planters, or even narcoterrorists.

**Prof Kham Khan Suan Hausing**  
Head of Department of Political Science,  
University of Hyderabad in an interview with  
Senior Consulting Editor (*The Print*) Jyoti Malhotra, 23 June



The Meiteis, who represent around **53%** of the population in Manipur, predominantly live in the Imphal valley while the Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic group, constituting **16%** is concentrated in the southern hills of the state.

**279** churches demolished  
**19** temples destroyed  
**4,000** security forces (army soldiers, paramilitaries, police) deployed; in addition to the nearly **70,000** who are already stationed for counter-insurgency operations



Number of relief camps set up in 13 out of 16 districts in the state  
**349**

The majority of Kuki-Zo people are Christians while Meiteis follow syncretism that consists of Hinduism and indigenous Sanamahism. However, there has been no allusion to religions so far. A fraction of the Meiteis also follow Christianity, for instance, but they are in relief camps scattered across the state.

Instead of doing this autonomy and so on, why don't you create a second chamber in the state Assembly with equal representation from all the districts, which is, incidentally, within the core hill areas? Create and handle development and forest affairs. You can have a second House... based on areas, not on ethnic groups.

**Angomcha Bimol Akoijam**  
Associate Professor, Centre for the Study of Social Systems,  
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi,  
in an interview with Karan Thapar (*The Wire*) on 9 June







In 2015, leaders from 193 countries of the world came together to face the future. And what they saw was daunting. Famines. Drought. Wars. Plagues. Poverty. Not just in some faraway place, but in their own cities and towns and villages. They knew things didn't have to be this way. They knew we had enough food to feed the world, but that it wasn't getting shared. They knew there were medicines for HIV and other diseases, but they cost a lot. They knew that earthquakes and floods were inevitable, but that the high death tolls were not. They also knew that billions of people worldwide shared their hope for a better future. So leaders from these countries created a plan called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This set of 17 goals imagines a future just 15 years off that would be rid of poverty and hunger, and safe from the worst effects of climate change. It's an ambitious plan. But there's ample evidence that we can succeed. In the past 15 years, the international community cut extreme poverty in half. Now we can finish the job. ■

## The Evolution of SDGs from 2015–2022

PRADEEP ANTHONY L OFM

As we are at the halfway of the stipulated 15-year time of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, one can see that the path to its fulfillment is not very smooth.

**2016** Ban Ki-moon being the UN secretary then, had started events to execute the set goals for the future. The report recorded the extreme poverty of the people, about 1.1 billion people are not having access to electricity and water, and even the richest nations are having the issues related to women discrimination.

**2017** In this year the new UN secretary was António Guterres. The report shows the rate of progress has been drastically slow, compared to the goals undertaken. It is found that about 793 million people still confront hunger daily. Children completing tenth standard schooling itself in third world countries is a dream. Two billion people are facing water scarcity. Nine out of ten are affected by the air pollution in cities, Global warming has increased the temperature to 1.1 degree Celsius. Women representation in politics is gaining very minimal progress.

**2018** António Guterres takes the strategy of trust and unity. In Sub-Saharan Africa the mortality rate has decreased, however, the problem of unemployment is increasing. 2.3 billion people are facing the problem of sanitation, about 890 people are prone to go for open defecation. There is a rise in undernourished people as the climate change hit very badly the people at the periphery.

**2019** António Guterres writes in the report, that there is progress in reducing extreme poverty and mortality. Access to electricity in many countries has improved, marine lives are

protected. Countries are working concertedly on fishing policies, rapid urbanisation, sustainable consumption and production. However, the sea level is rising, and acidification is accelerating. Millions of plants and species have disappeared. Women discrimination still exists all over the world.

**2020** Covid-19 stunned the world, writes António Guterres, the situation has become more devastated, progress of the goals was minimal. Health systems collapsed, Education was drastically hit, more than four lakhs lives were taken, due to pandemic. The progress made in reducing extreme poverty was once again pulled back. Once again, the people who were at periphery were the most affected.

**2021** António Guterres reports that the pandemic took a huge turn against, SDG's. The global extreme poverty rate boosted to 124 million, the highest in last 20 years. Even education sector declined in its progress to 20 years ago. Another herculean task was in digital transformation.

**2022** The report shows the new challenges faced in the present times has not only put the progress on the hold but also human survival into a question. There is, at least in some goals, a reversal of progress has been recorded, instead of progression.

Though, UN has faced challenges in achieving its goals, we can't pass the buck, as if we are not part of the team. Each one of us is responsible for one another's existence, sustainable development. We need to create such a conscience in us. One must hear the voice of wildlife, the voice of the indigenous, and the voice of the poor. ■

# Assessing India's Progress towards Sustainable Development Goals

STEVEN MARIO de NAZARETH

The global focus on creating policies for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for a better tomorrow is drawing near. A study by *The Lancet* in 2022 suggested that India may not be able to meet its target of 17 SDGs by 2030.

Some of the goals relate to good health, well-being, and zero hunger and poverty. The major indicators that are off target include the use of tobacco, child marriage, overweight children and the need for use of modern contraceptives. As compared to other states, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand have the most off-target states. Between 2016 and 2021, the situation has worsened for three major goals which include anaemia among women, pregnant and non-pregnant women.

Over the years, nations achieved over 59% of SDG promises but just after Covid this increased to 66%. India's overall performance in achieving the 17 SDGs has slipped, as evidenced by its ranking of 120 out of 193 countries in 2022. The Centre for Science and Environment's State of India's Environment Report highlights this decline, with India now trailing behind all South Asian countries except Pakistan. Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh have shown more progress in attaining sustainable development goals.

## Tackling Challenges in India

India has implemented several social sector schemes to address poverty, health, and education, such as *Ayushman Bharat*, *Jan Dhan Yojana*, *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana*, *Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan* and *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*. Let's discuss these schemes to understand how the government is working on these sustainable development challenges.

*Ayushman Bharat* is a national public health insurance scheme of the Indian government. It aims to provide free access to health insurance coverage for low income earners in the country. This would cover the bottom 50% of the country qualifies for this scheme.

Similarly, the *Jan Dhan Yojana* is a financial inclusion program open to Indian citizens. This scheme aims to expand affordable access to financial services such as bank accounts, remittances, credit, insurance and pensions.

The next scheme is the *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana* is created by the Indian government. Here, affordable housing will be provided to the urban poor and three crore houses have been built over eight years with 10 lakh home built in Gujarat alone.

With the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, or SSA scheme, it is aimed at the universalisation of elementary education over a period of time. Since the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to children between the ages of 6 to 14 a fundamental right.

Finally, the *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* campaign was launched by the Government of India in 2015. It mainly targets the clusters in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Bihar and Delhi. This campaign helped improve the child sex ratio and helped end sexism against girls in India.

Additionally, state governments and civil society organisations have played a significant role in driving inclusive development. For instance, the *Ladli Lakshmi Yojana* in Madhya Pradesh supports girls' education and bears the cost of raising a girl child till marriage. *Ladli Lakshmi 2.0* where the state pays the fee of girls who pursue medical education, or study at IITs

and IIMs. Girls passing class 12th and pursuing college education will receive ₹25,000. NGOs like Smile Foundation have focused on education and healthcare, enabling sustainable development at the grassroots level.

Despite these efforts to meet these SDGs, there is an urgent need to reassess the way it is progressing. Since 2015, there were 192 United Nations countries that adopted these goals. These goals were created to protect the planet, end poverty, tackling climate change and ensure that everyone enjoys peace and prosperity.

To achieve population-scale impact rapidly, India needs targeted, high-impact interventions supported by technology. The country has already built robust public data stacks, and leveraging these digital resources can help design scalable interventions. Collaboration between the government, industry, and NGOs is crucial in addressing the complexities of India's diverse landscape and population. Each stakeholder brings unique strengths, and their combined efforts can lead to profound change.

But there is considerable ground to be covered and reassessment could help. The World Bank estimates India has 100–150 million households living below USD 1.90 consumption per day per person. Also, the pandemic would have increased the number of ultra-poor households in the country.

## The Way Ahead

Achieving population-scale impact quickly requires targeted, high-impact interventions, and technology can play a crucial role in this endeavour. India has made significant progress in building robust public data stacks on education, health, citizen enumeration, mobile phone penetration, and bank account ownership. Leveraging these digital resources through innovation can facilitate the design of scalable interventions that deliver impact swiftly.

India's vast size, diversity, and complexity pose challenges for implementing interventions effectively. Organisations often struggle to implement carefully designed initiatives due to these factors. This is where collabora-

tion between the government, industry, and NGOs becomes crucial. Each stakeholder brings unique strengths that, when combined, can make a profound difference in achieving the desired outcomes.

The government, with its scale of operations, can provide the necessary infrastructure and resources for effective implementation. Corporate India, with its financial resources, organisational capabilities, and planning skills, can design and execute impactful interventions. Civil society organisations bring on-ground connectivity, experience in implementing public welfare initiatives, and the trust of the people. By bridging the trust deficit and working in close coordination, these key stakeholders can improve the effectiveness of public welfare initiatives, accelerating poverty alleviation and ensuring sustainable development.

However, it is important to acknowledge that achieving the SDGs is a complex and multi-faceted task. It requires sustained efforts from various stakeholders, including governments, civil society organisations, and other actors. While India has made progress in certain areas, challenges persist in environmental sustainability, healthcare, and reducing income inequality.

The fulfilment of India's SDGs depends on several factors. Political will, effective policy implementation, appropriate resource allocation, and collaboration between different sectors of society all play a vital role. Continued efforts and commitment are crucial in working towards achieving the SDGs and addressing the remaining challenges.

In conclusion, policymakers consider the demonstrable and fast-paced progress towards the United Nations' SDGs as the ultimate goal. India needs targeted interventions, technological innovation, and collaboration between the government, industry, and civil society organisations to achieve population-scale impact rapidly. While the journey towards achieving the SDGs is complex, sustained efforts and coordination among stakeholders will be instrumental in realizing India's sustainable development goals. ■



# Transformation to a No Poverty World

ARUN NATTALIL OFM

In the last few years, we all have seen a very huge change in the discussion of issues related with our environment in one hand and development on the other. Progress or development is the process which is continuing since ages but the nature of development takes different shape at different times. Development has been taking place with respect to different eras and places but it has been always with human race. It seems to be very tough to determine which nations are more developed and which are less? But, it is little easier to say which nations are rich in wealth and which are not. To decide the level of development, mainly we have to check the distribution of resources and how we are using these resources in sustainable manner. The world faces increasingly complex and interrelated challenges, which require sustained responses from the international community, the United Nations Development System (UNDS), and from UNDP. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals embody the universal commitment to deliver on these challenges in the years to come.

## Lacunae in NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India)

We know that India has signed and ratified the Paris Agreement, making it obligatory for it to reach its commitments. India is also a signatory among 193 nations to the 2030 Global agenda for Sustainable Development. The Government of India has entrusted NITI Aayog, with coordinating the SDG

Agenda in India and has asked the states to prepare action plans and has also embarked upon exercise to develop national indicators for the 17 Goals, besides undertaking consultations on specific goals. These challenges have made international agencies to realise that the planet needs sustenance and can be saved only with setting up of an agenda. With special reference to India, according to the Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report that has been prepared by the NITI Aayog for the UN. It is important to understand how India is trying to achieve these goals, as it is home to one-sixth (17%) of all humanity. India uses the approach of 'whole of society', which comprises of engagement of the Union Government with all 37 sub-national governments, local governments (over 700 districts), civil society organisations, communities and private sector for the implementation and evaluation of the SDGs. Since the world has entered the last decade before the end-date of 2030 regarding SDGs, it has been called the 'Decade for Action'. India is the first nation to formulate an 'SDG India Index', and has developed a robust 'SDG Localisation Model' (NITI Aayog, 2020).

## The Envision of No Poverty

Why do goals matter? No one has ever put the case for goal-based success better than John F. Kennedy did 50 years ago. In one of the greatest speeches of the modern US presidency, delivered in June 1963, Kennedy said: 'By defining our goal more clearly, by making it seem more manageable and less remote, we can help all people to see it, to draw hope from it and to move irresistibly towards it.' We know that it is the Anthropocene Age, that is, the human-driven age of the planet. The human activity is pushing the capacity of global ecosystem functions, which might result in disasters. Climate change and exposure to natural disasters threaten to derail efforts to eradicate poverty. A great bulk of the world's poorest and most vulnerable citizens live-in disaster-prone countries and their number keeps increasing.

Those groups are disproportionately affected by shocks and stresses. As temperatures rise, the likelihood and severity of climate-related disasters increase affecting lives and livelihoods, hampering the development efforts and reversing gains made in poverty reduction. Large family size and poverty often go hand-in-hand. People living in deprived areas are usually not empowered to choose the number of children they have and, in some cases, feel the need to have many so they can be provided for in their old age. When people are poor and have many children, they cannot invest enough in each child which often leads to kids not being able to attend school and girls getting married off as child brides. Women are also less able to gain financial independence when they have many children to look after at home. Ensuring that everyone is empowered to choose small families is key to eradicating poverty.

## Localising SDGs

The first goal of 'No Poverty' seems impossible and daunting. It is a very tough task to end poverty in all forms everywhere by 2030. India has been successful in designing effective strategies in an environment of diminished opportunities for livelihoods. It has focussed on steadily increasing its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rate at 8% between 2018–2023, but the pandemic Covid-19 has been a major setback. The Government has followed a multi-pronged strategy with targeted programmes at vulnerable sections of the society by: Developing infrastructure and support services, Creating productive assets; Developing skills, Supporting entrepreneurship, and promoting social protection measures aimed at reducing risks from natural and other disasters. We need to make efforts to identify effective policies that reduce poverty, improve health and create more inclusive, just and sustainable communities. Poverty is more than the lack of income and resources to ensure a sustainable livelihood. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services,



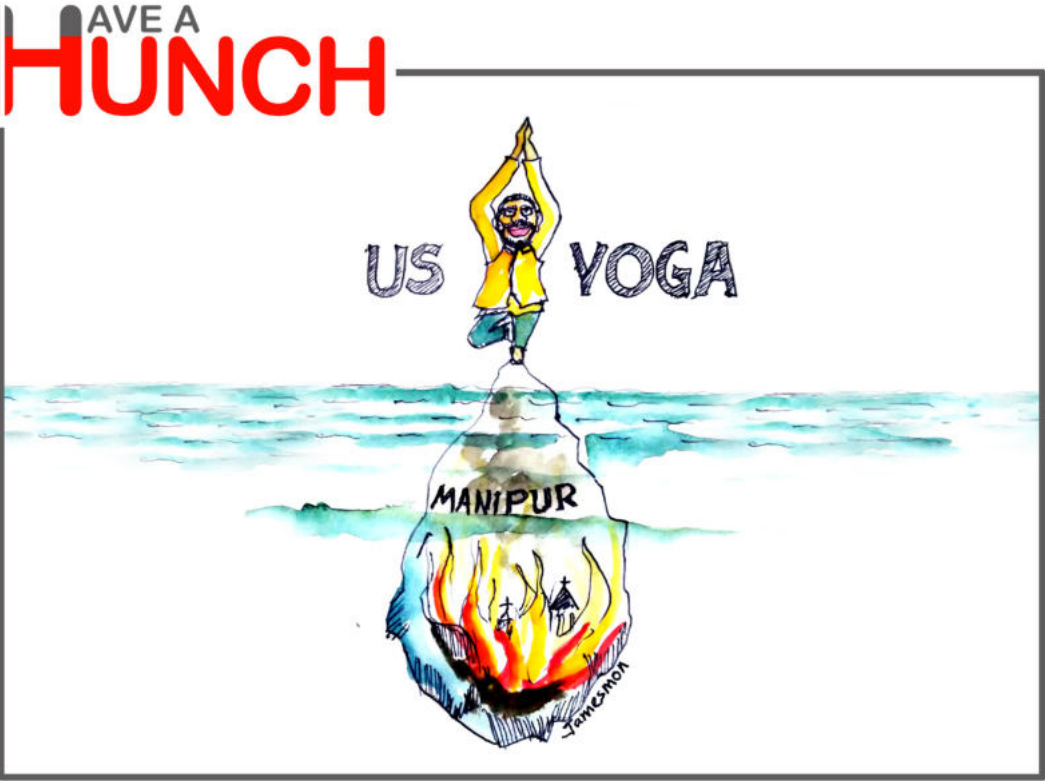
social discrimination and exclusion as well as the lack of participation in decision-making. Economic growth must be inclusive to provide sustainable jobs and promote equality. Social protection system needs to be implemented to help alleviate the suffering of disaster-prone areas and provide support in the face of great economic risks.

**Overcoming Poverty through Sustainable Means**

We know that sustainability is based on a simple principle i.e. everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. It's about taking what we need to live now, without endangering the potential for people in the future to meet their needs. We can say that it is a type of an ability or capacity of something which can maintain and sustain itself. If we say that an activity is sustainable, that activity should be

able to continue forever. Access to basic services included other parameters in the pursuit of elimination of poverty like well-being; access to nutrition, healthcare facilities, drinking water and sanitation; affordable housing; electricity; clean cooking; roads and utilities. The same time agriculture is instrumental in providing livelihood to around 59% of the Indian population and is instrumental in boosting growth, creating jobs and reducing poverty.

In conclusion, sustainable development is a critical component to creating a world free from poverty. It seeks to empower individuals, meet basic human needs, support entrepreneurship and innovation, and address the root causes of poverty. Ours is a world where ample resources exist, and it is possible to make significant strides towards the end of poverty. It is up to each of us to take action towards this goal and make it a reality. ■



**End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.**

In the past 20 years, hunger has dropped by almost half. Many countries that used to suffer from famine and hunger can now meet the nutritional needs of their most vulnerable people. It's an incredible accomplishment. Now we can go further and end hunger and malnutrition once and for all. That means doing things such as promoting sustainable agriculture and supporting small farmers. It's a tall order. But for the sake of the nearly one out of every nine people on earth who go to bed hungry every night, we've got to try. Imagine a world where everyone has access to sufficient and nutritious food all year round. Together, we can make that a reality by 2030.



# Zero Hunger by 2030

Dr MARIE KAVITHA JAYAKARAN

Few have too much, and many have little. Those who have the resources must help the international community and all those who lack resources. Responsibilities cannot be evaded or passed from one to another, but must be assumed to offer concrete and real solutions, said, Pope Francis (2019). The United Nations, officially began on 24 October 1945, now more than 75 years later, is still working to maintain international peace and security, give humanitarian assistance to those in need, protect human rights, and uphold international law. At the same time, the United Nations (UN) is doing newer things not envisioned for it in 1945 by its founders. With many achievements in its past, the United Nations is looking to the future with new goals. The United Nations has set Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, in order to achieve a better and more sustainable future for us all. Sustainable development and climate action are linked—and both are vital to the present and future well-being of humanity.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a bold commitment by the UN. The SDGs are unique in that they cover issues that affect us all. They reaffirm our international commitment to end poverty, permanently, everywhere. They are ambitious in making sure no one is left behind. More importantly, they involve us all to build a more sustainable, safer, more prosperous planet for all humanity. SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognise that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Through the pledge to 'Leave No One Behind', countries have committed to fast-track progress for those farthest behind first. That is why the SDGs are designed to bring the world to several life-changing 'zeros', including zero poverty, hunger, AIDS and discrimination against women and girls.



**A staggering 2.4 billion people, or above 30% of the world's population, were moderately or severely food-insecure, lacking regular access to adequate food in 2020. The figure increased by nearly 320 million people in just one year.**

### Zero Hunger

People who suffer from hunger—as measured by the prevalence of undernourishment—began to slowly increase again in 2015. Today, more than 820 million people regularly go to bed hungry, of whom about 135 million suffer from acute hunger largely due to man-made conflicts, climate change and economic downturns. In 2020, between 720 million and 811 million persons worldwide were suffering from hunger, roughly 161 million more than in 2019. A staggering 2.4 billion people, or above 30% of the world's population, were moderately or severely food-insecure, lacking regular access to adequate food in 2020. The figure increased by nearly 320 million people in just one year. Globally, 149.2 million children under five years of age, or 22.0%, were suffering from stunting (low height for their age) in 2020, a decrease from 24.4% in 2015. The number of people going hungry and suffering from food insecurity had been gradually rising between 2014; and the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic has pushed those rising rates even higher and has also exacerbated all forms of malnutrition, particularly in children. The war in Ukraine is further disrupting global food supply chains and creating the biggest global food crisis since the Second World War.

With more than a quarter of a billion people potentially at the brink of starvation, swift action needs to be taken to provide food and humanitarian relief to the most at-risk regions. At the same time, a profound change of the global food and agriculture system is needed if we are to nourish the more than 820 million people who are hungry and the additional two billion people the world will have by 2050. Increasing agricultural productivity and sustainable food production are crucial to help alleviate the perils of hunger.

### Targeting Zero Hunger

By 2030:

- end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.
- end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under five years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.
- double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.
- ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.
- maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.

Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries.

Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round.

Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, to help limit extreme food price volatility.

### India and Zero Hunger

India is home to a quarter of the global hunger burden. Women and children account for a major part of the country's population who don't have access to proper nutrition. India is home to half of the wasted children globally. The country is also home to the highest number of SAM (Severe Acute Malnutrition) children in the world with 9.3 million children below the age of five severely wasted. Phase-I results of the latest National Family Health Survey (2019–20) based on the data collected in the pre-pandemic era have revealed that almost a quarter of women of reproductive age are undernourished, with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of less than 18.5 kg/m (National Family Health Survey 5, 2019–20). Nearly 32% of children are chronically malnourished (stunted) and 18.1% are acutely malnourished (wasted).

India prides itself with one of the largest food safety nets in the world, anchored through the National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013. The NFSA is being implemented for addressing the availability, accessibility, and affordability dimensions of food security. The Scheme covers around 800 million people, about 67% of the country's population. In addition, the

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) aims at addressing nutrition security of under-6 children, lactating mothers, and pregnant women. The National Programme of Mid-Day Meal in Schools aims to provide nutritious meals to children in primary schools. Under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana, families with an income of less than ₹250 per capita per month are entitled to 35 kg rice at a subsidised rate. Improving the effectiveness of these programs will be central to improving the food and nutrition security situation in the country.

The UN in India 2021 Annual Report gives an overview on the penultimate year of the UN - Government of India Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) 2018-2022, which continued to support India's development priorities, even as we repurposed a significant part of our planned activities and budget towards the Covid-19 response. The part of the report in relation to SDG 2 stated 'We combatted malnutrition and food insecurity and continued to respond to the unprecedented disruption faced by children and adolescents impacted by school closures. And we didn't lose sight of the greatest existential threat of all, continuing to partner with the Government of India in responding to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and rising levels of pollution. Throughout the year, we remained focused on ensuring that the recovery was gender-sensitive and that gender equality was at the centre of all our initiatives.

We could support Zero Hunger by reducing Food waste, volunteer in hunger related activities, sponsor meals at shelters, start a food bank for the needy, deliver home food to the elderly.

Pope Francis pointed at the latest data from the 2022 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report, which revealed that in the last year, the number of hungry people in the world increased significantly due to the multiple crises facing humanity. In this light, he reiterated his appeal to 'gather in order to redistribute, not produce to waste', insisting that 'to throw food away means to throw people away.' ■

## 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



### Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

We all know how important it is to be in good health. Our health affects everything from how much we enjoy life to what work we can perform. That's why there's a goal to make sure everyone has health coverage and access to safe and effective medicines and vaccines. In the 25 Years before the SDGs, we made big strides—preventable child deaths dropped by more than half, and maternal mortality went down by almost as much. And yet some other numbers remain tragically high, like the fact that 6 million children die every year before their fifth birthday, or that AIDS is the leading cause of death for adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa. We have the means to turn that around and make good health more than just a wish.

# Sustainable Development and Spirituality

ANNA RIBEIRO

The UN Sustainable Development Goals require the human race to think beyond our immediate needs and consider the long-term impact of our decisions on future generations, to create a world that is just, equitable, and sustainable. The SDGs are centered on addressing spiritual needs while acknowledging the interconnection and underlying currents that connect society with the world and one another and accepting accountability for human actions. By prioritizing the SDGs, individuals and communities can work towards creating a more just, equitable, and sustainable world, which can fulfill our deeper spiritual needs.

The integration of spirituality and SDGs will involve promoting critical values, such as compassion, empathy, and stewardship, recognising the importance of mindfulness and meditation, and emphasizing the importance of community and collective action. Spiritual values have often been recognised to drive individual behaviors toward achieving the UN's sustainable development goals. For example, the value of compassion can inspire individuals to take action toward reducing poverty and hunger, while the value of stewardship can motivate individuals to protect the environment. By aligning spiritual values with the SDGs, individuals can find a deeper sense of purpose and fulfillment in their efforts toward sustainable development.

The integration of spirituality and SDGs will involve promoting critical values, such as compassion, empathy, and stewardship, recognising the importance of mindfulness and meditation, and emphasizing the importance of community and collective action.

The implementation of the SDGs faces several obstacles, especially in underserved or disadvantaged areas, despite their foundation in universal principles shared by all spiritual traditions. Often the challenge is that some religious communities may not be aware of the SDGs or may not see them as relevant to their spiritual needs. This can be due to a lack of education or awareness about the goals, or to cultural or linguistic barriers that make it difficult to understand their significance. In some cases, religious beliefs or practices may conflict with the goals or make it difficult to implement them.

While the SDGs are primarily focused on achieving sustainable development

SDGs do have spiritual impact on society.

**POVERTY** can have a significant impact on a person's spiritual well-being. By working towards eliminating poverty, nations can help to ensure that people have the resources they need to live a dignified life. Efforts to alleviate poverty can vastly help to improve spiritual well-being by reducing feelings of hopelessness and despair.

**GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING** are a fundamental aspect of spiritual well-being. Maintaining good health can improve one's mental and emotional well-being, which is also essential for spiritual well-being. This can have a positive impact on one's ability to find meaning and purpose in life, which is a fundamental aspect of spiritual well-being.

**QUALITY EDUCATION** is an essential aspect of spiritual growth and development. It can be used as a means to help us develop critical thinking skills, which are essential for exploring spiritual and philosophical questions. It also helps with the development of empathy and compassion—which are two key components of spiritual growth. By learning about different

cultures, religions, and belief systems, we can gain a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of all things and develop a greater sense of compassion and respect for others.

**GENDER INEQUALITY** has a negative impact on spiritual well-being. Delivering gender equality often helps promote a sense of interconnectedness and oneness, which is a key component of spiritual well-being. Gender equality can have a positive impact on spiritual well-being by promoting a sense of interconnectedness and oneness, supporting social justice and equality, and contributing to a more just and equitable society.

**CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION** is essential for good health and well-being, which can lead to a positive impact on spiritual needs. In many cultures, water is a symbol of purity and renewal, and access to clean water can contribute to a sense of spiritual well-being. In addition, having access to sanitation facilities can help to promote dignity and self-respect, which are important values in many spiritual traditions.

**CLIMATE ACTION** can have a significant impact on the natural world, which can in turn impact spiritual well-being. For many people, the natural world is a source of spiritual inspiration and connection. Climate change is threatening the natural world in many ways, which can thwart act spiritual well-being.

In conclusion, the SDGs can be seen as a means to spiritual fulfillment. While the primary focus of the SDGs is on achieving sustainable development and improving the lives of people around the world, they also have important implications for spiritual well-being; and help individuals to reach their full potential. Therefore, by using the SDGs as a means to spiritual ends, we can work towards creating a more sustainable and equitable world for all. ■

## Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

First, the bad news on education: poverty, armed conflict and other emergencies keep many, many kids around the world out of school. In fact, kids from the poorest households are four times more likely to be out of school than those of the richest households. Now some good news: since 2000, there has been enormous progress on the goal to provide primary education to all children worldwide: the total enrolment rate in developing regions has reached 91%. By measures in any school, that's a good grade. Now, let's get an even better grade for all kids, and achieve the goal of universal primary and secondary education, affordable vocational training, access to higher education and more.

### By 2030:

- ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
- ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

## 4 QUALITY EDUCATION



- ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.
- substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
- eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.
- ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
- build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.
- substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states. ■



## 5 GENDER EQUALITY



## Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

We can celebrate the great progress the world has made in becoming more prosperous and fair. But there's a shadow to the celebration. In just about every way, women and girls lag behind. There are still gross inequalities in work and wages, lots of unpaid 'women's work' such as childcare and domestic work, and discrimination in public decision-making. But there are grounds for hope. More girls are in school now compared to in 2000. Most regions have reached gender parity in primary education. The percentage of women getting paid for their work is on the rise. The sustainable development goals aim to build on these achievements to ensure that there is an end to discrimination against women and girls everywhere.

# Gender Equality Begins at Home

JOHN SEKAR OFM

The image of police forcibly removing protesting wrestlers who are demanding the arrest of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, a BJP MP facing allegations of sexual harassment and intimidation, reflects the current state of gender equality in India. This incident serves as a stark reminder that the vision of gender equality remains unachieved and distant in India. These wrestlers are not seeking any special treatment but rather demanding their due dignity, respect, and fairness in both their personal and professional lives. The fact that they have to resort to protests to attain these basic rights is disheartening. While this incident has sparked a public debate, it is crucial to question whether it has prompted a meaningful conversation about gender equality within our homes, educational institutions, and workplaces.

While it has become a cliché for leaders of nations and celebrities across various fields to speak about gender equality, they often fail to take concrete actions to promote it in their respective domains. The Women's Reservation Bill in India serves as an example of proposed legislation aimed at fostering gender equality in the political sphere. However, its passage has been pending for a significant period. The World Economic Forum released the Global Gender Gap Report 2023 on July 21, 2023, ranking India 127 out of 146 countries, showing an improvement of eight positions from 135 in 2022. While this improvement is encouraging, India still has a long way to go in achieving gender parity.

Gender pay disparity is another pressing issue affecting women in numerous industries globally. As of 2023, a report from the Interna-



tional Labour Organisation (ILO) reveals that the gender pay gap in India is reported to be 27%. This means that women earn approximately 73% of what men earn for performing the same work. Notably, certain sectors, like the technology industry, witness an even greater disparity, with women earning only 60% of men's earnings in that field. This disparity is unjust and hinders progress towards achieving gender equality.

Gender inequality goes against fundamental human rights. The pursuit of gender equality is an absolute imperative. Without it, sustainable development will remain an ideal yet to be realised in today's rapidly changing world. Gender equality is when all individuals, irrespective of gender, are provided with equal rights, responsibilities, pay, and opportunities.

The home is the place where the culture of gender equality can be nurtured, fostered, and taught for a sustainable future. Achieving gender equality at home necessitates challenging age-old religious traditions, deep-rooted societal norms, and advocating for equal treatment of everyone. While the uniqueness and diversity of each gender must be appreciated and upheld, there are no inherent notions of superiority or inferiority among genders.

The patriarchal society perpetuates gender inequality by prescribing gender stereotypes and promoting gender biases that dictate roles based on one's gender, such as 'Men work, women cook' or 'Men don't cry, women do!' 'Women are expected to be subordinate and submissive, while men are expected to be independent and aggressive'. It is the responsibility of parents to challenge and break such stereotypes and taboos and raise children who believe in the equality of all and treat everyone fairly. If this change starts at the microscopic level of individual homes, the ripple effect will spread from home to the world outside.



Education and awareness are of paramount importance in promoting gender equality at home. Parents must lead by example in how they treat, help, and respect each other, transcending gender stereotypes and embracing a lifestyle that embodies equal treatment and an inclusive approach. Parents must encourage open conversations about gender roles with their children, discrediting misconceptions and highlighting the importance of creating a free atmosphere where they can freely express themselves, pursue their careers, and realise their potential. The burden of societal expectations should not deprive children of forging their own paths in life. They should be empowered to challenge society's biases against gender equality.

Isn't it true that parents stipulate rules differently for girls and boys, providing boys with opportunities that are denied to girls? While parents may have good intentions, in doing so, they end up creating an unequal situation at home and reinforcing gender stereotypes.

Home is a place where children should have shared responsibilities. No household chore should be assigned based on gender, and it is important for every family member to contrib-

ute equally to the responsibilities of maintaining a harmonious home. By doing so, we can eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls within the household. Parents should encourage both boys and girls to pursue higher education, especially in societies where girl children are still treated as a liability for a family. Such societies should be actively educated about the priority of educating girl children for sustainable development. When a girl is educated, she becomes a catalyst for change in her family and household, shaping a new future for gender equality.

Children should be taught to abstain from using curse and swear words. The abusive expletives in almost all languages shame women. These words have unfortunately become so much a part of everyday conversations that their role in perpetuating sexism and gender discrimination often goes unnoticed. The abundance of web series on OTT platforms has further normalised the use of such offensive language. Social media has emerged as yet another platform where women are frequently targeted, with their privacy being violated and their dignity denied through demeaning posts.

Starting from the elders, the resolve to refrain from using this abusive language can create a positive atmosphere for gender equality.

Gender inequality is a contributing factor to both physical and verbal abuse against women. It is deeply troubling that domestic violence is often normalised within households. Furthermore, elders in the family sometimes go as far as justifying such violence and silencing the victims, preventing them from speaking out, and the victims endure their suffering in silence. The belief that power belongs exclusively to one gender and can be exerted over the other is the root cause of such abuse. Therefore, it is crucial to disassociate power from any specific gender. Let the power be shared among one another in the family.

Society is still largely patriarchal. Misogyny in movies does not seem to stop. Male chauvinism is still an accepted behavior. Gender disparity is present almost everywhere. So, gender equality still remains an ideal! However, with small steps taken at home to teach children about gender equality, setting for them an example to emulate, however far the ideal of gender equality is, it can still be reached. ■

#### Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Everyone on earth should have access to safe and affordable drinking water. That's the goal for 2030. While many people take clean drinking water and sanitation for granted, many others don't. Water scarcity affects more than 40% of people around the world, and that number is projected to go even higher as a result of climate change. If we continue the path we're on, by 2050 at least one in four people are likely to be affected by recurring water shortages. But we can take a new path—more international cooperation, protecting wetlands and rivers, sharing water-treatment technologies—that leads to accomplishing this goal.

## 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



## 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

Between 1990 and 2010, the number of people with access to electricity increased by 1.7 billion. That's progress to be proud of. And yet as the world's population continues to rise, still more people will need cheap energy to light their homes and streets, use phones and computers, and do their everyday business. How we get that energy is at issue; fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions are making drastic changes in the climate, leading to big problems on every continent. Instead, we can become more energy-efficient and invest in clean energy sources such as solar and wind. That way we'll meet electricity needs and protect the environment. How's that for a balancing act?

# Powering a Sustainable Future

RAJASEKHAR GOPU OFM

Energy plays a crucial role in addressing global challenges and opportunities, from poverty eradication to sustainable cities and climate change adaptation. As we approach the midpoint in our journey towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, it is vital to highlight SDG 7, which focuses on ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy. This article explores the progress made, the targets set, and the role of families in contributing to affordable and clean energy. Moreover, it highlights the contributions of the Franciscan community in India towards a sustainable energy future.

The first target is universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services worldwide. The second target aims to substantially increase the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix, reducing dependence on

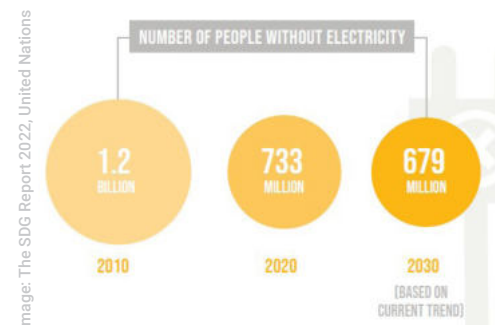
fossil fuels. The third target seeks to double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency. These targets reflect the importance of transitioning towards inclusive, clean, and efficient energy for the benefit of people and the planet.

Significant progress has been made in various aspects affordable and clean energy globally. Access to electricity has improved, reducing the number of people without electricity by nearly half. However, there is a need to accelerate efforts as 670 million people may still lack access to electricity by 2030. The transition to clean cooking solutions has seen advancements, but four billion people still rely on inefficient and polluting systems. The share of renewable energy in the overall energy consumption has increased (with 17.7% in 2019), yet greater efforts are required to meet the target of 33–38% by 2030. Energy efficiency improvements have fallen short of the required rate. Progress averaged

## IMPRESSIVE PROGRESS IN ELECTRIFICATION

### HAS SLOWED

DUE TO THE CHALLENGE OF REACHING THOSE HARDEST TO REACH



1.8% between 2010 and 2020, falling short of the required 2.6% per year. Further accelerating action is necessary to achieve a sustainable and inclusive energy future for all.

India has made remarkable strides in achieving SDG 7. The proportion of the population with access to electricity has significantly increased, reaching an impressive 99.6% in 2021. Moreover, there has been a notable shift towards clean fuels and technologies, benefiting 71.0% of the population, positively impacting the environment and public health. However, the share of renewable energy in the total final energy consumption has experienced a decline, decreasing from 46.9% in 2000 to 35.8% in 2020. India has demonstrated commendable progress in energy efficiency, with an average value of 4.3 compared to the global average of 4.6. Continued efforts in promoting renewable energy and improving energy efficiency will contribute to a sustainable and inclusive energy future for all in India.

The Franciscan community in India has actively embraced clean energy solutions, making notable contributions towards affordable energy. They have installed solar power

plants in their communities, formation houses, and institutes, reducing reliance on traditional electricity sources and promoting clean energy practices. Over the past three years, the friars in India have successfully installed approximately 150kW of solar on-grid/off-grid power plants, showcasing their dedication to transitioning towards clean energy. Solar heating systems have been adopted in many friaries. Additionally, the use of bio-gas for cooking in the Franciscan community in Palamaner (Andhra Pradesh) emphasizes their sustainable approach. Their efforts serve as an inspiration for other communities and families to adopt clean energy technologies and environmentally friendly practices.

The world is making progress towards sustainable energy targets, but we still have a long way to go. We need to accelerate improvements in energy efficiency, expand access to electricity, and promote clean cooking solutions. Disparities in energy access persist, particularly affecting vulnerable populations.

As families, we have the power to contribute towards SDG 7 and create a sustainable energy future. Simple actions can make a significant impact. Encouraging energy-saving habits, such as turning off lights when not in use, using energy-efficient appliances, and reducing waste, can lead to substantial energy conservation. Exploring renewable energy options like solar panels or supporting community initiatives for clean energy can help promote sustainable practices. Additionally, advocating for policy changes, such as promoting renewable energy investment and energy-efficient building standards, can drive collective progress.

Join hands as families, adopting clean energy and promoting sustainability. Together, let's construct a world with accessible, affordable, and sustainable energy for everyone, nurturing a healthier planet for future generations. Let's embark on this journey and forge a sustainable energy future for all. ■

## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



### By 2030:

- achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.
- promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.
- achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
- substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.
- take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and end child labour in all its forms.
- Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment. ■

### Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

An important part of economic growth is that people have jobs that pay enough to support themselves and their families. The good news is that the middle class is growing worldwide—almost tripling in size in developing countries in the last 25 years, to more than a third of the population. But today, job growth is not keeping pace with the growing labour force. Things don't have to be that way. We can promote policies that encourage entrepreneurship and job creation. We can eradicate forced labour, slavery and human trafficking. And in the end we can achieve the goal of decent work for all women and men by 2030.

### Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.

Technological progress helps us address big global challenges such as creating jobs and becoming more energy efficient. For example, the world is becoming ever more interconnected and prosperous thanks to the Internet. The more connected we are, the more we can all benefit from the wisdom and contributions of people everywhere on earth. And yet four billion people have no way of getting online, the vast majority of them in developing countries. The more we invest in innovation and infrastructure, the better off we'll all be. Bridging the digital divide, promoting sustainable industries, and investing in scientific research and innovation are all important ways to facilitate sustainable development.

## 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



## 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



### Reduce inequality within and among countries.

Between 1990 and 2010, the number of people with access to electricity increased by 1.7 billion. That's progress to be proud of. And yet as the world's population continues to rise, still more people will need cheap energy to light their homes and streets, use phones and computers, and do their everyday business. How we get that energy is at issue; fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions are making drastic changes in the climate, leading to big problems on every continent. Instead, we can become more energy-efficient and invest in clean energy sources such as solar and wind. That way we'll meet electricity needs and protect the environment. How's that for a balancing act?

# Reducing Inequality

ROSHAN LOBO OFM

Sustainable Development Goals aim at the wholistic growth and development of all nations in many key areas across social, economic and ecological domains. They provide a collective platform for all nations to work together in building an all-inclusive world. Reducing inequality within and among nations is UN's Goal 10. Inequality between nations in many spheres is a cause of concern, and UN through reduced inequality wants to ensure that no one is left behind in the race for integral development. A close look at the facts and figures connected with many areas of growth shows that there is rampant inequality between many nations.

Key figures related to inequality show a clear difference between the pre-Covid and post-Covid world. The pandemic pushed inequality

5,895 MIGRANTS



LOST THEIR LIVES IN 2021

THE DEADLIEST YEAR SINCE 2017 FOR MIGRANTS

1 IN 5 PEOPLE HAVE EXPERIENCED

DISCRIMINATION

ON AT LEAST ONE OF THE GROUNDS PROHIBITED UNDER INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

Image: The SDG Report 2022, United Nations





Website



Instagram



Twitter



Facebook



between nations by 1.2% between 2017 and 2020—the first such increase in a generation—as against the pre-pandemic projection of a 2.6% dip in the same period.

The effects of pandemic have also intensified social exclusion. Low economic growth among many countries has led to a sharp decrease in the generation of income which resulted in growth of income inequality between nations by 1%.

Another indicator of inequality is the discrimination faced by people on grounds prohibited under international human rights law. At the global level, one in every five persons have been discriminated on grounds of age, sex, disability, religion, gender, and sexual orientation.

There is a record number of people fleeing from violence in search of safer havens. At 8.4 million, countries in Northern Africa and Western Asia were the largest regional source of refugees. The war in Ukraine has made nearly 60 lakh people move to other countries and 80 lakh people to be displaced within the country. Also in 2021, 5,895 migrants died while fleeing their countries.

### Indian Dichotomy

Although India is the fastest growing major economies in the world, it also ranks among the most unequal countries. Crony capitalism, increased corruption and poor policymaking among other reasons has contributed to a steady increase in inequality over the last three decades.

Oxfam reported that the top 10% of the Indian population holds 77% of the total national wealth. 73% of the wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1%, while 67 crore Indians who comprise the poorest half of the population saw only a 1% increase in their wealth.

Growing inequality in health care is also a worrying factor because India is counted among

the countries with low spending on public health.

India's rising status as global economic power is noteworthy. In a historic moment, India assumed the G20 Presidency this year. The G20 comprises world's 20 major developed and developing economies working towards international economic cooperation. Though India is playing a pivotal role in the international forum, there are many issues to be addressed within the country to fight inequalities across different spheres—social, economic, political or religious.

For instance, the UN suggests reducing inequality by working towards the eradication of discrimination based on religion, gender and sexual orientation—all areas where India needs to make progress. The rising number of discriminatory policies towards the minorities by the government both at the central level and in certain states points to this inequality.

Although India's G20 Presidency theme is 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'; 'One Earth, One Family, One Future', there is a lot that needs to be achieved to make every Indian feel that they are not discriminated against and that they belong to one family. Providing equal opportunities for people from different strata of society is a way to do this.

In order to achieve the desired outcome, the UN has set a target for each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

In the area of reduced inequality, there are seven targets that must be met by 2030. The targets are meant to help accomplish equality in different spheres of life for people across the world. The targets focus mainly on achieving sustained income; promoting political, social and economic inclusion; avoiding discriminatory laws, policies and practices, through appropriate legislations and actions; adopting policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection

policies; proper monitoring of global financial markets; enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making; and facilitating orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people. In India, the NITI Aayog has been entrusted with the task of coordinating the SDGs, mapping schemes related to the SDGs and their targets, and identifying lead and supporting ministries for each target.

### Progress So Far

Though eight years have passed since the setting of these goals, India, just as the rest of the world, is falling well short of the progress needed to meet the SDGs by 2030. The impact of Covid has greatly affected progress.

For instance, before the pandemic, the incomes of the bottom 40% of the population grew faster than the national average in many countries. However, Covid has undone the progress made and has worsened global inequality.

Record number of refugees continue to flee violence, and in many countries, there are strict migration policies which result in discrimination towards them. Only a few countries have a say in many decision-making policies which affect the whole world.

Climate change for example affects the whole world, yet a few countries contribute in large amount to climate change by way of carbon emission and are reluctant to do something about it. Hence, attaining the target in order to overcome inequality requires concerted effort. The Government of India's emphasis on the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile programmes are aimed at a comprehensive strategy of inclusion, financial empowerment and social security. These priorities are in line with the Sustainable Development targets aimed at achieving greater equality and promoting the social, economic, and political inclusion of all by 2030. Regarding the enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making, after assuming the presidency of G20, India strongly advocated for the inclusion of African Union in G20. By becoming a part of the G20, the African Union has gained a platform to voice its concerns, advocate for its interests, and contribute to shaping global economic policies. India, as an emerging global economy is playing a vital role in reducing inequality within its own terrain and thereby set an example for others to follow. However, there is a lot that needs to be done further. ■



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### Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

If you're like most people, you live in a city. More than half the world's population now lives in cities, and that figure will go to about two-thirds of humanity by the year 2050. Cities are getting bigger. In 1990 there were ten 'mega-cities' with 10 million inhabitants or more. In 2014, there were 28 mega-cities, home to 453 million people. Incredible, huh? A lot of people love cities; they're centers of culture and business and life. The thing is, they're also often centers of extreme poverty. To make cities sustainable for all, we can create good, affordable public housing. We can upgrade slum settlements. We can invest in public transport, create green spaces, and get a broader range of people involved in urban planning decisions. That way, we can keep the things we love about cities, and change the things we don't.



### By 2030:

- ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.
- provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.
- enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanisation and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.
- strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.
- significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations.
- reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.
- provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.
- support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.
- substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement holistic disaster risk management at all levels.
- support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings. ■



### Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Some people use a lot of stuff, and some people use very little—in fact, a big share of the world population is consuming too little to meet even their basic needs. Instead, we can have a world where everybody gets what they need to survive and thrive. And we can consume in a way that preserves our natural resources so that our children can enjoy them, and their children and their children after that. The hard part is how to achieve that goal. We can manage our natural resources more efficiently and dispose of toxic waste better. Cut per capita food waste in half globally. Get businesses and consumers to reduce and recycle waste. And help countries that have typically not consumed a lot to move towards more responsible consumption patterns.

## SDGs and the Catholic Church

TOM THOMAS

**‘W**hen we speak of sustainability, we cannot overlook how important it is to include and to listen to all voices, especially those usually excluded from this type of discussion, such as the voices of the poor, migrants, indigenous people and the young.’ Pope Francis addressing a Conference on Religions and SDG, 2019 at the Vatican.

How do Sustainable Development Goals apply to me—a Catholic layperson living in one of India's most traffic-dense cities? I find the Catholic Church working at the forefront in most of these areas, but for some it needs real intent.

Countless saints like St Francis show us the importance of sharing what we have with the less fortunate. The account of Multiplication of the Loaves in the Gospels also reinforces this

message. We have enough for all if we share what we have. Poverty can be eliminated by sharing. So many initiatives like the St Anthony's Bread by the Franciscans which gives a daily hot meal to many poor every day or the BREADS movement by the Salesians to name a few, ensure their best to see that the hungry are taken care of. However, this is a drop in the ocean as far as India is concerned. Ranking a dismal 107 out of 201 countries on the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2022, which is almost a quarter of the world's undernourished (224 million out of 828 million globally). Clearly, a lot more work needs to be done and possibly the efforts of the Catholic Church towards eliminating hunger can get amplified if they work closely with the Government.



Good Health and Well-being, and Quality Education are also addressed by the Catholic Church in India through the various medical hospitals and clinics they run treating all, the Doctors and Nurses they train, so that 'He/she shall live because of me.' A health professional trained in our missionary/Church-run hospitals has to have a different outlook than the typical commercial attitude of 'my medical education cost me so much, I have to make it back.' Ditto for our Church run educational institutions all over India that provide quality education to all, regardless of caste, gender or creed.

Coming to Gender Equality, well, the detractors of the Catholic Church always are quick to

say that the Church is not progressive in this area. The recent initiatives of the Holy Father for more inclusion of women are steps forward in Gender Equality. We are in a country where women have, on paper, equal rights as men. But what is the actual practice? How many women give up on their education and career, as the family needs and expectations grow, because that is what society expects? This is definitely an area for improvement for us in India.

Clean water, Clean Energy, Decent Work, Industry, Reduced Inequalities are relevant in the larger context at the government or country level. Yes, as an employer I need to provide my team with clean water and sanitation facilities,

provide decent opportunities to them for work, and use clean energy sources of power as much as possible at home and work. It is a temptation for me to use my cost-effective (but polluting) diesel car for commuting and run a diesel power generator when power fails at work, but can I at least reduce the usage as much as possible? I need to also explore solar power for lighting as the way forward.

Sustainable cities and communities, and responsible consumption are followed when houses grow the produce they consume and are totally sustainable for the most part. Those who

have meals eat just enough, frugal consumption at its best, and the leftover food or waste are given to the animals. I can emulate this example in my house—making sure we produce just enough food for our meals and minimising wastage.

Climate Action is something that I can relate to. Why do I take the car to church for daily mass, or nearby shopping when I can easily walk/cycle there? These 17 SDG goals really seem holistic, taken as a whole, and embraced by all, we can make a difference, one step at a time. ■

TOO MUCH FOOD IS BEING LOST OR WASTED  
IN EVERY COUNTRY EVERY DAY



13.3% OF THE WORLD'S FOOD IS LOST AFTER HARVESTING AND BEFORE REACHING RETAIL MARKETS



17% OF TOTAL FOOD IS WASTED AT THE CONSUMER LEVEL

Image: The SDG Report 2022, United Nations

18 July  
Nelson Mandela Day

This day is a call to action for individuals, communities, and organisations to take time to reflect on Mandela's values and principles and to make a positive impact in their own communities. TOM JOHN

The image displays a collection of postage stamps from various countries, each featuring a portrait of Nelson Mandela. The stamps include: Kenya (3/-), Sierra Leone (2022, Nelson Mandela 1918-2013, Le 15000), Canada (Nelson Mandela 1918-2013), Tanzania (250/-), Australia (70c), Vietnam (4000d), Malawi (K200), and Maldives (Rf7). The stamps are arranged in two rows, with the top row showing smaller stamps and the bottom row showing larger ones.



### Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Every country in the world is seeing the drastic effects of climate change, some more than others. On average, the annual losses just from earthquakes, tsunamis, tropical cyclones and flooding count in the hundreds of billions of dollars. We can reduce the loss of life and property by helping more vulnerable regions—such as landlocked countries and island states—become more resilient. It is still possible, with the political will and technological measures, to limit the increase in global mean temperature to two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels—and thus avoid the worst effects of climate change. The sustainable development goals lay out a way for countries to work together to meet this urgent challenge.



# The Relevance of SDGs on Ecological Sustainability

A FRANCIS

The Sixth Assessment Report of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) issues a 'Code Red' warning for the planet, pointing to the rise of global temperature. It reports that even if we manage to limit the global warming by 1.5 degree Celsius, which is lower than the earlier projected level of 2 degrees Celsius or above by 2030, code red will continue to be the fate of the planet.

The term 'Code Red' means fire! Imagine for a moment, that our mother earth is turning into a horrifyingly desolate and uninhabitable space, blazing with fire, heat, and smoke, destroying everything animate and inanimate into ashes! It sounds a little bit apocryphal. But the inexorable truth is, as the planet continues to warm up, there are many parts of the world which are already on 'Code Red', rife with intense heatwaves, fuming volcanos, wild and dumpsite fires, etc. Just a couple of days ago, Canada and America were in the news for living through the worst wildfire smoke, blanketing the skylines with 'an orange apocalyptic cloud of darkness and despair.' Recently, Kochi, a southern city in the state of Kerala, fondly called 'the queen of Arabian Sea', was engulfed by fire and smoke for days, due to an outbreak of fire at a garbage dumpsite.

It is in this context of the impending planetary crisis, the relevance of the UN sustainable goals 2030, particularly the goals that focus on the ecological sustainability to be discussed and assessed. Scholars have been warning us about the human induced mass extinction that is underway which

will destroy one million species from the face of the earth. Could the SDGs have any power to prevent the loss of biodiversity of the planet, the over acidification of the sea, the rapid melting of glaciers and the rise of water level in the seas and oceans?

### Code Red Situation Is Manmade

Humanity's ecological footprint is growing irrefutably larger, at a rate unprecedented. In 2020, The *Living Planet Report* released by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) International in collaboration with the Zoological Society of London reported that the planet is already experiencing the destruction of 70% of biodiversity, cautioning that this is happening in a glacial speed, 'in the blink of an eye.'

It was such a disappointment that the UN Decade of Biodiversity (2010–2020) did not achieve its 20 proposed global targets, named 'Aichi Biodiversity Targets (*Global Biodiversity Outlook 5*, 2020). It is a terrible shame that the countries did not have the commitment to implement the targets they in word agreed to work on.

Although the lockdown period witnessed a slight decrease, the global warming trend is steadily on the rise, affecting more severely the

vulnerable regions, such as southern Asia, central and south America and sub-Saharan Africa. The devastation impacts the planet on all fronts – air, sea, and land. The glaciers are melting, sea levels are rising, oceans are acidifying, forests are burning, seagrass and coral reefs are dying and as mentioned, the biodiversity of the planet is plummeting drastically! The 2019 UN Climate Action Summit was definitive about the mounting climate emergency that is pushing the planet to a tipping point, and unleashing the potential for creating more 'climate refugees' in the future. What is more shameful is that the planet continues to be on the verge of destruction, while the world is supposed to be working on the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030, for the past 8 years!

### Three Major SDGs for Preventing the Code Red

The historic roadmap of sustainable development undertaken by the 2015 UN summit, has topics of 'climate action', 'life below water', and 'life on land' as its 13th, 14th and 15th Goals respectively, which I believe could serve as an adequate antidote for preventing the planetary code red situation. Whether countries are



### Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The oceans make human life possible: their temperature, their chemistry, their currents, and their life forms. For one thing, more than three billion people depend on marine and coastal diversity for their livelihoods. But today we are seeing nearly a third of the world's fish stocks overexploited. That's not a sustainable way of life. Even people who live nowhere near the ocean can't live without it. Oceans absorb about 30 percent of the carbon dioxide that humans produce; but we're producing more carbon dioxide than ever before and that makes the oceans more acidic—26% more, since the start of the industrial revolution. Our trash doesn't help either—13,000 pieces of plastic litter on every square kilometer of ocean. Sounds bad, right? Don't despair! The sustainable development goals indicate targets for managing and protecting life below water.

serious about the SDGs, or not, Goals 12 to 15 directly focus on the ecological sustainability and the responsible use of the species and resources of the planet. The basis for my cynicism on the seriousness of countries lies in the fact that these goals are seldom talked or translated into action in the day today living of people.

The very first action plan under the climate action, 'Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries' is a concrete one. This however, is a challenge on poor countries who can't afford to implement it due to lack of financial resources. But the bold action plan namely, the developed countries jointly mobilizing 100 billion dollars annually for supporting the climate action initiatives of the developing countries, is a much-needed gesture of international collaboration. This 'Green Climate Fund' certainly is also a needed ethical response, (though some capitalists question its logic), given the fact that G20 countries are responsible for 78% of the world's green houses gases.

Truth be said, climate action in practice is not inexpensive. Developing countries, and countries that struggle with poverty and hunger cannot on their own fully commit to it unless they are substantially supported with financial resources by the developed countries.

Goals 14 'life below water' and 15 'life on land', if put into practice effectively, could implement the conservation of various ecosystems and the biodiversity of water, mountain and land species. There are some quite needed action plans proposed, such as collaboration in combating desertification, the acidification of the water, the overexploitation of species, poaching and trafficking of wild life, etc., which serve to promote the conservation and protection of the planet. Though these goals are discussed from the development perspective, rather than from the urgency of saving the planet, which goes along the line of a meaningful critique, these definitely call for a renewed sense of ecological responsibility, from all countries and their citizens. ■

**Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.**

Humans and other animals rely on other forms of life on land for food, clean air, clean water, and as a means of combating climate change. Plant life makes up 80% of the human diet. Forests, which cover 30% of the earth's surface, help keep the air and water clean and the earth's climate in balance. That's not to mention they're home to millions of animal species. But the land and life on it are in trouble. Arable land is disappearing 30 to 35 times faster than it has historically. Deserts are spreading. Animal breeds are going extinct. We can turn these trends around. Fortunately, the sustainable development goals aim to conserve and restore the use of terrestrial ecosystems such as forests, wetlands, dry lands and mountains by 2030.

**15 LIFE ON LAND**



**16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**



**Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.**

How can a country develop—how can people eat and teach and learn and work and raise families—without peace? And how can a country have peace without justice, without human rights, without government based on the rule of law? Some parts of the world enjoy relative peace and justice, and may come to take it for granted. Other parts seem to be plagued by armed conflict, crime, torture and exploitation, all of which hinders their development. The goal of peace and justice is one for all countries to strive towards. The sustainable development goals aim to reduce all forms of violence and propose that governments and communities find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity. That means strengthening the rule of law, reducing the flow of illicit arms, and bringing developing countries more into the center of institutions of global governance.

## The United Nations and Its Goals

ALEX TUSCANO

After the United Nation completed its 50 years of existence it began to look internally at itself. Many raised questions about the present structure and power equation within the UN. There were cries for restructuring several bodies of the UN. The group in the Security Council came under heavy scrutiny. Nothing came out of it. In 1995 the UN organised World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen. The efforts were towards putting people at the centre of development. What came out of this summit was the formulation of Millennium Development Goals and finally the UN graduated to formulating United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

When we talk about the power of the United Nation we are facing a very tricky situation. We have several international events where we have seen inability of the UNO to bring relief.

- The conflict between Palestine and Israel: the UN has not succeeded to making Israel to recognise Palestine as a sovereign state. Israel continues to occupy Gaza Strip and to day there have been shelling into each other's territory causing deaths and hardship. Given the strong support of the United States of America the UN is paralysed.

- The war on Iraq by the United States of America and United Kingdom combined forces



did not have sanction from the United Nation. Nor did it control or regulate the war to prevent untold sufferings and miseries to the innocent civilians of Iraq.

- Afghanistan war: the UN did not prove itself effective in preventing the attack by the American forces. Today we see that they have left Afghanistan into the hands of the Taliban. What prevails in Afghanistan after American forces left the territory is any one to see.

- The present-day war between Russia and Ukraine is out of control of the United Nations.

- There are several institutional constraints that keeps UN powerless. After the second world war the constitution of the Security Council have given veto power to the five countries, United States of America, United Kingdom, France, China and Russia. Any one of these countries can veto any resolution of the council and prevent implementation of any solution. Today's international situation is different. Germany, Japan and Italy are not the advocate of fascism but still they are left out of the security

council. The countries like Brazil, South Africa and India are equally eligible to be included into the membership of Security Council.

- During the entire period of Trump's administration the United States kept itself out of World Health Organisation accusing it to be favouring China.

When it comes to the implementation of human rights violations in various parts of the world United Nations' Human Right Charter becomes a pious wish list. When the UN are called to report their achievement in different countries, the bureaucracy of each state enthusiastically present very rosy picture and if there is any NGO reports that might be critical of the official report they face fire from the governments.

#### India's Situation with Regard to 'the Sustainable Development Goals'

India became signatory to this declaration in September 2015, after NDA government competed one year in office. A year after the Narendra Modi announced the demonetisation

of ₹500 and ₹1000 notes on November 8, 2016. According to many renowned economists and even Manmohan Singh, a great economist and the former Prime Minister of India, Indian economy shrunk by 2%. The informal economy which is almost 50% of the Indian economy collapsed. In terms of employment 83% of the work force is employed in informal (unorganised) sector. The stated goals of tackling the menace of black money, control of terrorist activities etc. were never achieved. Three years after the demonetisation, in 2019, Corona Pandemic started. The suddenly announced lock down forced the workers back to their villages. The saga of this was already discussed in our magazine earlier.

In 2022 we began to breathe easy and out of pandemic thanks to the effective research and development of vaccines. Today the unemployment rate is forty years higher. While the poor suffered massive blow to their lives the few rich corporates like Adani and Ambani increased their wealth in many folds.

The sixteenth goal: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development,

provide access to justice for all and build effective accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. India has moved far away from this goal of the United Nations. There has been systematic targeting of the minority communities in India. There has been rise in the right wing political atrocities in the name of protection of cow, anti convention of laws, National Register of Citizens (NRC). These are anything but the signs of building peaceful and inclusive society for sustainable development.

If the story of social partnership in India is anything but division, conflict and the majoritarian rule, the story at the international level is of intrusion and aggression. China's incursion into Indian territory, its claim on Taiwan and its aggressive postures, its claims on the South China Sea has created tension between China and other sovereign nations. The war between Russia and Ukraine, the role of USA and Europe and the NATO countries in trying to make Russia to go on its knees is anything but the story of social partnership. ■

#### Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

The sustainable development goals are a pretty big to-do list, don't you think? In fact, it's so big; you may just want to throw your hands up in the air and say, 'Forget it! Can't be done! Why even try!' But we've got a lot going for us. The world is more interconnected today than ever before, thanks to the Internet, travel and global institutions. There's a growing consensus about the need to work together to stop climate change. And the sustainable development goals are no small matter either—193 countries agreed on these goals. Pretty incredible, isn't it? A total of 193 countries agreeing on anything is incredible? The final goal lays out a way for nations to work together to achieve all the other goals.

## 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS







## Learn to Enjoy Life

SUSAN D'SOUZA

*When we start our school days,  
We dread to leave our home—  
A comfort zone under our parents care  
We thought was all that is needed to make us grow.  
Learn to enjoy life child, as you won't have your  
parents life time.*

*The first day at school when we were barely four or less,  
Seeing mum leave us at the school gate,  
Tears filled we wailed aloud,  
'Mum, don't leave me here I want to come with you home'.  
Learn to enjoy life child as this is your place where you begin  
to set yourself forward one day at a time.*

*New faces of children and teachers and superiors,  
Made some scared while others won their heart  
like a magic wave.  
Slowly and steadily we even started feeling that school was  
the best place to laugh and play.  
Learn to enjoy life child as you get here lessons for a life time.*

*Be always thankful and grateful,  
For all the blessings bestowed on you from above,  
If it was not for God, you would have never been here.  
Learn to enjoy life child as everything will be given unto you if  
you make God centre of your life.*

*You have so many talents buried in you untouched,  
Wake up and do your best in whatever you can-  
Because opportunities comes knocking only ones in a lifetime.  
Learn to enjoy life today child, as you don't regret you never  
attempted it rest of your life.*

*Years have gone by so quickly you will say one day,  
From school days to college graduation, job hunt to marriage  
or choosing a vocation.  
Life kept you busy with daily routine, trials and tribulations.  
Learn to enjoy life child, as there is not much time to spare on  
this planet for you or me.*

*We are on a pilgrimage in this world,  
Assigned with chores to be done while we journey on,  
Everything will come to an end at God's appointed time,  
Silently we will be gone before the very eyes of our loved ones.  
Learn to enjoy life child and fill yourself with laughter and joy.*

*Today, as years have gone by,  
Have realised I procrastinated from all my duties,  
Now I feel I have not done what I should have ought to do,  
When one leg is now close to reaching my grave,  
Learn to enjoy life child before your last breath is taken away.*

■



## A Game Called Titan!

JAMESMON PC OFM

Remember 'Blue Whale'?! It was a controversial online game that gained attention a few years ago. Many youngsters fell as victims of this life threatening game. It involved a series of tasks over a 50-day period, which escalated to self-harm and eventually encouraged participants to commit suicide. This game was widely condemned for its dangerous nature and has been associated with several tragic incidents in our country and elsewhere. There are other games as well, like, Ingress or VR Horror Games that are at times life altering or can create anxiety or panic in those who consume them.



The recent implosion of Titan, the submersible, has captured our attention and set off a plethora of discussion and debate over the safety of such 'tourism'!

For those who were not aware of this incident, OceanGate is a company founded by Hamish Harding, a businessman, aviator, and explorer and resident of the

UAE, who provide submersibles that can delve into the deep sea. Imagine being presented with the opportunity to embark on an extraordinary 8-hour expedition to the depths of the Northern Atlantic ocean, to have a closer look at the iconic debris of the Titanic wreckage. This historical treasure chest rests at an astonishing depth of 3,800 meters beneath the surface of the Atlantic Ocean. But, wait...there is a catch! Imagine the submersible can't be opened by the travellers inside and you are bolted securely from outside. It can turn out to be a death trap, and that is exactly what has happened.

The US Coast Guard reported on 22nd June that Titanic sub crew died after 'catastrophic implosion' and came to that conclusion after examining debris found underwater on Thursday by a remote-controlled vehicle. On board the Titan were Hamish Harding, the founder of OceanGate and four others, including a father and son of one of Pakistan's most prominent families.

Recently I came across a YouTube video showing one of the OceanGate crew explaining the working methods of the Titan submersibles. It was quite a revelation that the gadgets used were like the Amazon provided virtual game consoles. As he explained, he said with an air of overconfidence and dismissive attitude that if one console failed, they had one or two extras.

Passengers described how the pilot resembled a computer gamer as they used the handheld pad to move the sub forward, back and up and down.

Mike Reiss, who works on the classic US TV animated show, made the trip last year on the sub Titan and said communication failures were common. *The New Republic*, an American

magazine, carried an article on June 20th that said: 'Missing Titanic Sub once faced massive lawsuit over depths it could safely travel to' and 'court documents revealed a former OceanGate employee had several safety complaints over the tourist submersible—and then he was fired' (*The New Republic*, 20th June, 2023).

#### People as Game

The safety and the efficiency of these submersibles are now called into question. You may wonder why such criminal negligence from the company with regard to safety measures. On one hand, there is big money involved, as people who can afford this travel into ocean depths are millionaires. And on the other, the whole ocean depth tourism is organised like a virtual game. Remember 'Blue Whale' and you get a chill running down your spine! What makes this Titan tourism different from that game? The lines differentiating them seem to blur...! Sometimes lives are treated like characters in a video game. In spite of lawsuits and constant warning about the insufficient security measures, the expedition continued. It seems that lives are taken for granted, like little boys can't differentiate between the use of a gun in a video game and in a school. We hear kids in the west using real guns to shoot down their companions. Are also the adults getting into the same attitude? ■

**It seems that lives are taken for granted, like little boys can't differentiate between the use of a gun in a video game and in a school.**



## LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR AT THE SERVICE OF THE ELDERLY POOR!



In 1839 in cold winter, Jeanne Jugan met and found God in the face of a poor elderly woman, blind and paralysed. She gave her bed to the poor woman, opened her home and her heart to her. Since then, many elderly people were welcomed by Jeanne Jugan and her daughters who are called "Little Sisters of the Poor" present all over the world in 32 countries. Jeanne said, "It is so good to be poor, to have nothing and to count on God for everything." She literally lived her saying and taught her daughters to trust in God's divine Providence.

**"Whatever you do to the least of my brothers you do unto me."  
Would you like to take care of Jesus in the elderly poor?**



**If you hear the call to follow Jesus in the footsteps of Saint Jeanne Jugan,  
COME AND SEE!**

**Little Sisters of the Poor**

26, Hosur Road, Richmond Town, Bangalore - 560 025

✉ bangalorelsp1900@gmail.com ☎ 080 - 22270273





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