

Chapter 13

Sustainable Development Goals in India: Ambitious, but Achievable



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Abstract The paper focuses on the discussion around the role of civil society in the sustainable development goals (SDGs), starting from its framing to implementation, and on different mechanisms of monitoring and accountability. The paper aims at evaluating the contribution of the civil society in SDG implementation, and make recommendations to achieve the goals. Agenda 2030, which is popularly known as SDGs, was adopted by the United Nations in September 2015 involving extensive process of consultation with various stakeholders, including the civil society and reckoning the learning from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The civil society played a key role in the drafting phase by advocating with the governments and the UN systems, and by undertaking mass actions. The paper briefly discusses about progressive provisions and shortcomings of the SDGs. India has shown adequate commitment at the top level for its execution, and structures to carry out the implementation have been put on place. However, things are hardly changing on the ground. While some of the policy initiatives are in line of the SDGs, many are not in sync with the leave no one behind (LNOB) slogan. Civil Society has been active in many ways in influencing the implementation process, monitoring and seeking accountability. The paper finally makes some key recommendations vis-à-vis the role of the civil society for better implementation of the SDGs.

Keywords Civil Society Role · Voluntary National Review Process · Leave No One Behind

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1 Introduction

The civil society sector plays a critical role in the society by collating and articulating the aspirations and voice of people, particularly of the underprivileged groups, and engaging with the government, lawmakers, judiciary and media. It is an important link between the state and the people wherein it strongly pitches for the inclusion of the people who would otherwise be excluded in the process of development even in best of the democracies and well-placed systems. It plays the role of a watchdog for the government institutions and works with people to raise their awareness about their rights and justice and works for their protection. In a country like India, which has a robust constitutional democracy with values of fundamental freedom, socialism, equality and secularism, civil society works towards democratic and constitutional accountability.

The Millennium Development Goals, MDGs in short, were adopted by the United Nations in 2000 that framed a set of developmental goals to be achieved in 15 years. It aimed at addressing hunger and extreme poverty, reducing child and maternal mortality, combating disease, promoting gender equality, achieving universal primary education, protecting the environment and strengthening global partnership. The civil society was very closely involved in the process of implementation of the MDGs in India and other countries. However, the civil society was not happy with the process of adoption of the MDGs. The MDG framework is criticized to be exclusive; it is also reductionist in character. A handful of people sitting in the UN office understandably framed the MDGs and they were adopted by the member nations.

The trajectory of development was redefined at the global level by adoption of the Agenda 2030 (popularly known as Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs) on 25 September, 2015 by the UN General Assembly with 193 members voting for it including India. Acknowledging the shortcomings of the ‘growth-centric’ development paradigm, the agenda changed the focus towards ‘sustainable, inclusive, equitable and just’ development.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) paved the way for the SDGs. Formulations of SDGs reckoned with the experiences from the implementation of MDGs and the changing developmental realities. During the formulation of the SDGs, representation from different sections of the society was ensured and phases of inter-governmental negotiation were done before finalizing the draft. Civil society was heavily involved in the process of consultations in the post-2015 agenda. In India, the civil society held several consultations with the people and did mobilizations to highlight the causes and necessities of an inclusive development paradigm.

A little over two years of consultation resulted in the framing 17 goals and 169 targets. SDGs, however, are not legally binding on the member states though they are expected to influence their laws and policies. As against MDGs where the targets are all in aggregated form, in the SDGs framework, there has been clear discussion and thrust of the inclusion of the various marginalized and excluded

groups in the development process. Leave no one behind (LNOB) is the slogan of Agenda 2030, which guides the whole framework. The question remains whether the governments are implementing it or it is another lip service made to the top UN body.

2 Prominent Features of the SDGs

The civil society is encouraged with the framework of Agenda 2030 as it aims at protecting the rights and dignity of the people on the margins. The SDGs cover a range of important issues: socio-economic and environmental, energy and governance-related issues. They aim to end poverty and hunger, achieve food security, achieving sustainable economic growth and productive employment, promote sustainable agriculture, combating inequality, providing quality education, access to universal healthcare, ensuring gender equality and justice, combating climate change and conserving oceans. They also aims to protecting wildlife and managing forests, increase share of renewable energy, striving for a peaceful society, aspiring for global partnership, enhanced infrastructure, addressing issues of migration, respecting ethnicity, promoting a just trade regime, ensuring development assistance and technological transfer from the developed countries to the developing and least developing countries (LDCs), etc. It, more importantly, charts out the ways of implementation and participatory monitoring and review of the goals and targets. The global leaders deserve kudos for creating a framework, which at least aims to save the 'Mother Earth'!

The important achievement for the civil society is that it pushed for the adoption of a stand-alone goal on inequality (goal 10). For the first time, the debate on inequality has come to the global forum with clear actions pronounced. There is not only an exclusive goal on gender equality and justice (goal 5), but the issue of gender is discussed throughout the document and across the goals. The need for peaceful society and inclusive and accountable institutions have been articulated and made a separate goal (goal 16). It assumes significance for the most vulnerable groups who are subjected to discrimination and violence for various reasons.

3 Critical Assessment of the Agenda 2030

SDGs are not free from criticism. The first and biggest criticism is that while it has well encompassed the social, economic, cultural and environmental rights, it toned down the discussion on core political rights of the people. For example, it thinly mentions about the need for democracy and fundamental freedom. It does not discuss civil liberties, freedom of expression and press freedom. It does not strongly call for more and effective participation of the excluded groups in the decision-making processes which holds key to their development. It admits that

economic growth has been accompanied by rising inequality in the past few years, but it evades core discussion on the structural aspects of poverty and inequality like concentration of political power in fewer hands, illegal flight of capital from developing countries to developed countries so on. Inequality was stark when the richest 1% owned 48% of the total global wealth in 2014. The document does not chart out the ways for the downward flow of wealth, which is necessary to promote equality.

SDG 1 promises to ‘end poverty in all forms and everywhere’. But poverty is defined as ‘people living on less than \$1.25 a day’—which has been the global poverty line since 2005. But, since the cost of living has also gone up in many countries, ‘ending poverty’ with this definition is a pretentious promise.

The document promises to provide equal rights to economic resources, ownership and control over land and natural resources, which is quite welcome. But it is open to interpretation. Does it mean ownership of people within the overarching definition of ‘eminent domain’ or is it true ownership by the community? Large-scale transfer of sources of peoples’ livelihood to the big industries in the form of control over land, forest, and water is a continuous process. The way we have been seeing things happening till date after the adoption of the Agenda 2030, this promise is likely to remain only in the textbook. In the conflict between a development paradigm based on industrial development and community control over the natural resources, it is the former, which has the upper hand barring some rare examples.

Alongside the SDG, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development adopted by global leaders in July 2015 must be read. The overwhelming importance has been attached to private capital for financing the development visualized in the SDG framework. In a way, the Agenda has legitimized the state withdrawal from providing essential services like education, health, water sanitation, etc. This could actually prove to be dangerous, as privatization of health and education has made them unaffordable for the people living in poverty and socially excluded groups.

The civil society has been critical, as the financing approach has not reckoned with a rights and justice perspective.

4 Actual Implementation in India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has endorsed the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and reiterated India’s commitments towards its fulfilment in the UN and other international fora like the BRICs and G20. Endorsement has come from the speaker of the Lok Sabha, Ms. Sumitra Mahajan, who has held discussion on SDGs in the Parliament and promised to hold regular discussion by the lawmakers in the house.

NITI *Aayog*, which is the nodal body for envisioning and overseeing the implementation of SDGs, has done the mapping of the existing government policies

and linked them to the goals and targets. It has held discussions on various goals with different stakeholders. It has held discussions on north-east region.

The National Women's Legislators conference and second BRICS women Parliamentarian forum held discussions on the gender equity in context of SDGs. South Asian Speakers' summit on SDGs held discussion for strengthening the regional cooperation on SDGs.

At the provincial level, several states have made progress. Most of the states have the SDG cells now and are in process of mapping the policies and initiatives vis-à-vis the SDGs. Chhattisgarh has come up with a '*Naya Raipur Declaration*' as commitment towards SDGs. Task forces have been constituted, publicity materials prepared and trainings done in some states. In Andhra Pradesh, a dashboard has been created for the real-time online outcome monitoring on SDGs. Assam has a set up a center for SDGs and it has adopted an integrated framework for implementation of SDGs. Kerala has sector-specific plans for 2030 with emphasis on entrepreneurship. Haryana has prepared a vision 2030 framework with due consultations with various stakeholders so on and so forth. These are actions in right direction feels the civil society, but the process should be expedited.

In various consultations some key issues have been identified and recommendations made. For example on goal 1, addressing the multi-dimensional poverty was stressed. There should be an integrated approach towards pockets of poverty existing in rural and urban areas with low HDI. Employment for women, violence free atmosphere, ownership of land and property and giving women representation in decision-making bodies are the key to gender equality and empowerment under goal 5. Addressing social inequalities and providing opportunities are measures ought to be taken to address inequality under goal 10 so on and so forth.

However, in the mapping exercise done by the central government linking policies to SDGs, there are several discrepancies as pointed out by some civil society actors. For example, under goal 6 (Access to water), the document claims that the inter-linking of rivers project fits into the integrated water management. However, environmentalist suggests that this project, if implemented, will cause severe ecological damage. Similarly for goal 16 (Peace and Justice), there are criticisms by CSOs of violation of human rights in the functioning of police and para-military forces during their operations. The existing schemes meant to address the inequalities under goal 10 are more of welfare in nature. Some employment generating schemes are also there. But inequality is a far more serious issue to be addressed by mere schemes.

Measures to popularize SDGs are rather adhoc. There has hardly been any serious attempt undertake mass awareness drive and capacity building measures among the key actors. Similarly the involvement of some key non-state actors like the local self-governments and the Parliamentarians has remained peripheral and superficial. The governments in fact should actively partner with the civil society for popularizing the same given the expertise of the CSOs on the same.

The indicators finalized at the levels of Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) and NITI Aayog were sent to the cabinet for approval. The cabinet recently approved the formation of a High-Level Steering Committee

for periodically review the national indicator framework meant for monitoring the SDGs. The committee will be chaired by the Chief Statistician of India and Secretary to Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). The members will consist of secretaries of data source Ministries and members of NITI Aayog. Secretaries of other related Ministries will be special invitees. Government sources suggest that the indicator framework has been finalized and will be placed in the public domain once this committee gives a go-ahead. Though delayed, the civil society welcomes the move as it is in right direction, which can make the achievements of SDGs measurable and fix accountability.

There is very little discussion of SDGs in the budgetary process, which is a big shortcoming. Some NGOs like the CBGA and NCDHR have made budget tracking to find out the resource allocation to the SDGs. Broad observations suggest that SDGs have not been aligned with the budgetary allocations—the most crucial aspect for their execution. Whereas the scheme like National Health Protection Scheme covering 10 million families is well in line of goal 3 of Agenda 2030 ‘ensuring healthy lives and promoting well being’, meagre allocation of 10,000 crore rupees as against the expected need of 100,000 crores per year raises doubts over its implementability. Budgetary allocations to and spending on other flagship social schemes like rural employment scheme (MGNREGA), food security scheme (NFSA) and on *Beti Bachao* have been criticized by experts.

SDGs are good in principle. Some stand-alone initiatives have been taken towards its fulfilment. They are, however, not systematically thought through and woven into the SDGs. The interconnectedness among the goals is not understood. The government has cherry-picked some goals like education, health, climate change etc. leaving behind very important goals like reducing inequality and building a peaceful society etc. The inference is that the spirit of SDGs is not comprehended. The transformative aspects are conspicuously absent in the government’s actions towards realization of sustainable development. It has been considered as any other framework to get international attention.

The situation in the country currently is marked by rising unemployment, price rise and unmanageable increase in cost of living, increasing trend in the concentration of wealth with the top 1%, strife among castes and communities, curtailment of citizens’ right to freedom of expression etc. The recent OXFAM India’s report suggests that the top 1% of population have bagged 73% of the wealth created in 2017. Despite laudable initiatives taken towards addressing climate change like adopting an ambitious ‘intended nationally determined contribution (INDC)’ on climate change, installation of solar parks, creation of Green Energy Corridors, running renewable capacity expansion programme, India has been ranked 177 of 180 nations in environment performance index in 2018 by a report done by Yale University and World Economic Forum. All these call for urgent actions towards realizing SDGs.

There were no serious effort to build the capacity of the task force members and other such actors on SDGs. The CSO and citizen generated data is hardly used.

5 VNR Process in India—A Critical Review

There is one High-level Political Forum comprising the political representatives (heads of states or ministers) of the member-states of United Nations, which meets every July at the UN head quarters in New York to review progress on Agenda 2030. The Voluntary National Review (VNR) forms the basis of this review. VNR is voluntary and country driven, in 2017, India was among 43 nations, which presented its review in the HLPF. The goals of Agenda 2030 under review by the HLPF were ending extreme poverty (Goal 1), ending hunger (Goal 2), ensuring healthy lives (Goal 3), gender equality (Goal 5), inclusive sustainable industrialization (Goal 9), sustainable oceans (Goal 14) and means of implementation (Goal 17). But the VNR is supposed cover all the goals.

In India NITI Aayog led the process with support and involvement of other government agencies. It held consultations on the overall SDGs and on particular themes such as gender etc. where in civil society, private groups and other stakeholders at the national and State levels were invited to contribute. In the final report there were mentions of the work of the civil society. But the consultation with CSOs remained patchy. The official report did not take the CSO recommendations as part of it or as an annexure.

What Was in the VNR?

In the VNR the government claims that it has made substantial progress in achieving various goals under Agenda 2030. It portrays a picture of ‘all is well’. The report suggests that the sharp reduction of poverty from 45.3% in 1993–94 to 22% in 2011–12 is due to the economic growth that took place after economic liberalization. However, an alternative report on SDGs prepared by CSOs in India, led by the Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA), states that India’s growth story of last twenty or more years has increased inequalities, perpetuated poverty and shrunk the choices available for the historically marginalized communities.

The VNR report also states that the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has lifted millions out of poverty since its inception in 2005. It created more than two billion person-days of employment in 2016–17 alone. This is a welcome sign. However, budgetary allocation to the scheme has slowed down in recent years resulting in pending payments and doing other forms of damage to the implementation of the scheme. The report further states, to reduce hunger and malnutrition, the National Food Security Act aims to provide food grains to 66% of the population, covering about 800 million people. It further boasts that to ensure transparency, 77% of the ration cards have been linked to *Aadhaar*—the biometric based identification number. In fact in forum after forums government has claimed that the *Aadhaar* initiative has potential for successful delivery of welfare schemes and has minimized leakage. But field evidence suggests that mandatory linkage with *Aadhaar* is excluding the needy people in the interior tribal pockets. The reported occurrences of hunger-related deaths in

Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh like states in recent days owing to making the UID mandatory for getting rations are in sharp contrast to government's claim.

The VNR report states that the government, through its National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture, provision of soil health cards and crop insurance, claims to have helped small and marginal farmers, who form 80% of our farmer population. However, the theory is debunked by the fact that nearly 3,00,000 farmers committed suicide in last two decades. The NDA government has promised to double farmers' income, but the increase in MSP has generally been meagre till recently when it raised it to a significant level. Further, the Shanta Kumar committee's recommendation of replacing PDS by cash transfer which will eventually do away with the procurement system, if materializes, will bring incalculable misery to the small scale farmers.

India has made significant progress over the years on basic health indicators like Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), institutional deliveries and vaccination coverage, states the report. However, 62.4% of the total health expenditure is still out of pocket, putting a huge burden on the poor and the middle class, says the civil society report. In this regard, the aim of the National Health Policy, 2017 of providing affordable health care is welcome.

6 From the Lens of Leave No One Behind (LNOB)

The core of Agenda 2030 is leaving no one behind, which ought to be visible in the government's actions while implementing the goals. However, this is exactly where there is lack of commitment. The CSOs, while engaging in the process formation of the SDGs, advocated hard to include the 'Dalit' communities as the most marginalize groups. 'Dalit' is the generic term for the caste-based discrimination in India and in South Asia. It is understood that the government of India was not comfortable with the term, therefore the term did not find a mention in the document. As many as 260 million 'Dalits' spread across Asia, Africa and European countries are facing caste-based discrimination which did not get adequate attention in the SDG framework. In India, the number is about 200 million. There are laws and policies for fair treatment to these communities in India. But hardly this is reflected in practice. There are several recent instances where the Dalits students are discriminated; Dalit people are beaten in public so on. So much so, the union minister for social justice Thawarchand Gehlot has advised against the use of term 'Dalit'!

Many CSOs are of the view that governments after governments have neglected and usurped land and mineral below land from the Tribal communities in India. SDGs have not made any difference to their status. Every other day one hears of a tribal being killed or put behind the bar in name of being a Maoist cadre in tribal areas where the 'red rebels' are operating. There is no clue if they are really part of the banned group or they are just any ordinary tribals.

The status of women can well be understood in the post-SDG era in India from the Sabarimala temple standoff in Kerala. While the top court ordered to end the entry ban of the women in the temple, the implementation is opposed by many political and social groups in the name of protecting tradition. It may be noted that earlier women of menstruating age were not allowed to enter this temple.

7 The Role of Initiative of the Civil Society

The civil society in India has been proactively engaged in various ways in Agenda 2030. The engagement can be classified in four-folds.

i. Popularising and spreading awareness:

CSOs at the national and state levels have spread awareness through communications material like posters, leaflets, training, discussions through workshops and consultations.

ii. Identifying and analyzing policy gaps and advocacy:

The civil society has engaged at various levels in identifying the policy coherence with the SDGs and the gaps. It has engaged with the state in bridging the gap adopting various techniques of advocacy like meeting the key policymaker, inviting policymakers to consultations and sharing the findings and viewpoints. It also has undertaken people's actions to draw attention of the authorities, lawmakers and the media.

iii. Identify the critical accountability framework:

Accountability framework of the SDGs assumes significance due to its non-binding character. The existing VNR mechanism is not sufficient for effective monitoring of the SDGs. The civil society at the global level and at India level has been in constant discussion on various ways and mechanisms to ensure that the government lives up to its international commitments. The discussion is still on and the mechanism is still to be evolved.

iv. Actual process of monitoring:

The civil society has been constantly monitoring the implementation of the SDGs through various means. It did shadow report on SDGs in 2017 when India reported for the VNR. It has held consultations to give inputs to the indicator framework being prepared by the government. It is doing so by budget tracking—bringing forth the facts on resource allocation to implementation of various goals and targets. On occasions, it has discussed the state of development and human rights and linked the discourse to the SDGs.

8 Some Concrete Initiatives by the Civil Society

8.1 *Global Day of Action, September 25*

On 25th September, the day Agenda 2030 was adopted, is being observed as the global day of action by Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) and mass actions are organized across the world to commemorate the occasion. Initially, GCAP and UN SDG Action Campaign started the campaign in 2017 and this year Action for Sustainable Development (APSD) joined.

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA) is the national campaign in India, which has been engaged in the implementation of SDGs. Since its inception in 2004, it is engaged in the MGD process. In the SDG era, the network consisting of 4000 NGOs are variedly engaged in undertaking mass actions to brand SDGs and spread awareness. WNTA is the GCAP India chapter. WNTA and its partners have been active in the global day of action from 2017. It has undertaken several on-ground and online actions to create awareness, seek accountability and to create impact.

In 2018 WNTA engaged the youth to spread awareness on the SDGs and key communication material were prepared on inequality of the Dalits—the group facing discrimination based on work and dissent. Some more actions were undertaken as follows:

- Parvi and WNTA held consultation on SDGs Goal 8, 10 and 16 on 16th Sept.
- Two-days consultation in Tamil Nadu by SDG Watch TN (WNTA, TN Chapter).
- Photos, essay and tale/poetry competitions among students on LNOB and discrimination/inclusion.
- Social media campaign on SDGs on discrimination.
- Photo stunts in front of monuments and video in Delhi.

Apart from WNTA, Madhya Pradesh based organization Gopal Kiran Samaj Sevi Sanstha took out a candle march as part of their awareness campaign. They also held interactions with the children; self-help group women and jail inmates on SDGs. Association for Promotion of Sustainable Development (APSD) in Haryana organized discussion on SDGs in rural areas. Organizations also submitted memorandums on SDG to the district and state-level authorities for demanding implementation of SDGs.

GCAP and Action4SD highlighted some of these actions and videos in social media for the global audience.

8.2 Shadow Report by WNTA—Identifying Policy and Implementation Gaps

WNTA used the opportunity of the VNR process to do a thorough review of the goals of SDGs in 2017. It produced the Civil Society Report on SDGs: Agenda 2030 by involving the larger civil society in India. Different CSO groups were formed around ten goals of the Agenda 2030. They are: goal 1 (poverty), goal 2 (hunger), goal 3 (health), goal 4 (Education), goal 5 (gender), goal 6 (water), goal 10 (Inequality), goal 13 (climate change), goal 16 (peace). The report was prepared through and consultations with local communities, particularly, the marginalized communities and using the secondary sources. The report has used the lens of ‘Leave No One Behind’ and ‘A Life of Dignity for All’ as proposed by the SDG framework.

The aim of this report was to highlight the status of implementation of the SDGs and share with the stakeholders at national level and with the UN and other International agencies. It aims to create traction on SDGs and evolve a common civil society accountability framework from the prism of social exclusion. The Report also envisaged mapping the existing government interventions at various levels as well as to identify the gaps and challenges to achieve the SDGs.

The recommendations and suggestions emerging from the Civil Society Report on SDGs will be shared with the Government of India, parliamentarians, thematic experts, government think tanks, other government departments and will form the basis for advocacy. The report was released both in New Delhi and in New York.

Separately the civil society has engaged with the government in giving inputs to the VNR process and in framing the indicators.

8.3 100 Hotspots Study by WNTA

The 100 Hotspots study intended to highlight the status of the socially excluded communities in 100 backward areas of the country, which will encompass the regional and local diversities. It will link them to the functioning of the SDGs.

Household surveys will be done into primarily ascertain how the flagship programmes of the government are doing, e.g. MGNREGA (Rural employment scheme) (SDG 8), NFSA (food security) (SDG 2), Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India campaign—100% sanitation drive) (SDG 6), NHM (health mission) (SDG 3), RTE (Education) (SDG 4) and Beti Bachao and Beto Padhao (Teach the girl child) (SDG 4 and 5). The lens of inequality (goal 10) will be used to do the study.

It will include in the study the low-income states, the Scheduled Tribe communities, the scheduled caste communities, Nomadic and Denotified communities, Persons with disability across diverse disabilities, LGBTQI, persons engaged in stigmatizing occupations like manual scavengers, persons affected by particular illnesses like HIV-AIDS, women across different social groups, particularly women

from socially excluded groups, women with disabilities, single women, women in sex work, migrant women etc., migrant and urban slum populations, people living in conflict areas, youth, and the groups affected by climate changes—fisher community, forest community, agriculture community.

The study will provide a very vivid picture of how far SDGs have percolated to the local levels. All efforts will be made to use the study findings to engage with NITI Aayog and state-level planning bodies, which anchor the SDG process at national and state levels.

9 Ground Level Panel Discussion

PRAXIS, a civil society group has organized ground-level panels where people facing different kinds of vulnerabilities and marginalization discuss their situations and the existing policies which impact their lives. The aim of the exercise is to give a different perspective to the policy-making processes at various levels which are by professionals, academicians and politicians. It has now linked the process to the SDGs. For example, in June 2017, it held such a panel discussion with the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNT NAG) who have been suffering due to out-dated law that had branded their predecessors as criminals. These communities shared their experiences in relation to the SDGs and came up with suggestions for the government to consider.

10 Recommendations

The government has time and scope to bring thrust into achieving the goals. It ought to understand that realizing SDGs is not possible by the government alone. It has to take it to a campaign mode like the polio eradication campaign! Remember, how Polio campaign was a success. Partnership with the civil society and other stakeholders should be formalized in line of High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and South Asia Forum on Sustainable Development. At the national something like a ‘National Forum on Sustainable Development (NFSD)’ could be conceived for a multi-stakeholder engagement including the civil society. Discussion should be held at the local bodies; personalities ought to be involved in spreading the message of sustainability etc. The time for rhetoric on sustainable development is over; it is time for concrete, visible and accountable actions.

While this is well placed for encouraging the private sector involvement in the spirit of multi-stakeholder partnership the SDGs, what is the colour of the private investments need scrutiny given the records of rights violation and environmental damage caused many Private investors. Transparency in private investments is needed to ensure that they are nurturing sustainable development, not other way

round. The governments should report about these investments in the Parliament and in the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

While the governments ought to do a lot more to synchronize human rights in sustainable development given the ongoing violence and discrimination against the minorities, Dalits etc. the civil society has a strong role in pushing for it.

And finally, the governments should place a report card every year on the SDGs in the public domain and in Parliament and state legislatures.

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