

# National Strategies and Processes related to the SDGs in Asia



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# Outline

- Situation of MDGs
- Relevance SDGs in South Asia
- Key shifts
- Country level processes and strategies
  - Key issues and challenges
  - Good practices
- Way forward

# Looking Back: MDGs and Asia

- The Asia Pacific (incl South) played a key role in helping the world move towards achieving many of the MDGs, as some Asian countries have been the world's top performers.
- The region reached 13 out of the 21 MDG targets tracked. South Asia alone met 11 of the 21 MDG targets tracked
- Overall, the biggest success for the Asia-Pacific region has been in reducing extreme poverty – between 1990 and 2012, the share of the region's population living on less than US\$1.25 (2005 PPP) declined from 53% to 14%
- Similar progress is seen in terms of social development notably in primary school enrollment with gender parity (2ndary and tertiary education made progress but parity is yet to achieve)
- On the health front, there has been success in reducing the incidence and prevalence of tuberculosis. Considerable progress is made in reducing under-five mortality (58% reduction) and maternal mortality (61% reduction)

# Looking Back: MDGs and Asia Pacific and South Asia

- Significant progress has also occurred on other fronts especially in increasing access to safe drinking water, Yet progress on sanitation has been much slower, with the share of people without access to adequate sanitation falling by only 37%. Today, 42% of the population, amounting to around 1.7 billion people –still lack access to sanitation
- Progress has also been slow in some other areas notably to improve nutrition among children. Even today, more than 20% of children under five are moderately or severely underweight. Proportion of live births without skilled birth attendance fell by only 36% – compared to the target of universal coverage – with 27% of births still occurring without any qualified medical attention.
- In terms of gender equality, while there are considerable progress in women's access to education and health, the empowering goals of achieving gender equality in decision making remained weak clearly indicating that technical agenda easier to meet than the political agenda of sharing power.

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- South Asia's achievements vary across the goals and targets but also across and within countries because of the diversity.
  - SDGs carry forward the unfinished MDG agenda in the first 7 Goals and build on it with cross-cutting issues such as economic growth, job creation, industrialization, inequality, and peace and justice (SDG 8, 9, 10, and 16), and the ecological sustainability related goals (SDG 11-15), besides stronger means of implementation through global partnership (SDG-17).

# MDGs to SDGs in South Asia

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is especially relevant for South Asia countries, which despite their economic dynamism and remarkable MDG achievements,
  - account for 37% of the world's poor
  - nearly half of the world's malnourished children, and
  - suffer from a number of development and infrastructure gaps.
- With one fifth of the world's population and characterized by diverse communities (class, caste, gender, ethnicity), South Asia has a critical role in the global achievement of the SDGs.
- The progress during the MDG enables Asia to continue making gains, but there are a number of goals and targets that will not be met without major new effort.
- Failure of achieving some goals is attributed to number of governance issues including lack of contextualization and integration at national level on time.
- Now that the *global* SDG agenda is set, and as we have learnt from MDGs, the next key step is to adapt and apply these goals and targets at the *national* level immediately without wasting the important initial years
- This will involve developing new domestic targets or aligning existing ones, adapting them in national level plans, budgets, human resources, and setting up disaggregated monitoring and accountability systems right from the beginning

# Nature of SDGs

- SDGs is transformational
- All countries, not just developing countries are committed
- Transformatory shifts are challenging and won't happen over night
- Accelerated action at country level is critical, especially in initial years, to lay the foundation for long term changes

# National processes and preparedness consists of

## 1. Establishing policy coherence at different levels

- Global to national; National to local
- Inter sectoral (between different sectors as goals are interconnected;
- Intra sectoral (between vision, strategies and plans and budget to translate goals into action and results)

## 2. Contextualizing goals and targets

- Prepare national level benchmarks and processes and
- establishing integrated policy planning and financing frameworks at national and subnational levels

## 3. Preparedness in the government

- to coordinate as well as ensure stronger coherence at all levels of decision making, horizontal and vertical

# National processes and preparedness consists of

4. Mobilize and engage all sectors and society in implementation, monitoring
5. Enhancing evidence based decision making and transparency and accountability through new metrics
6. Establishing and implementing a robust monitoring and review processes
  - Indicators development and data collection
  - Disaggregated data
  - Monitoring/reporting system
  - Review processes and mechanisms (internal, external and peer review)

# Institutional arrangements at national level

- SDGs demands a strong national coordinating agency because of the wide range of objectives and the need for cross-sector coordination.
- In South Asia, generally the planning agencies have taken over responsibility for coordinating the SDGs given their experience in sectoral coordination.
- In Nepal, NPC took this role during the development of national report, but not clear if this continues or a new institution will be set up.
- Adoption of outcome based approaches helps to tackle multidimensional challenges
- Strengthening decentralization is key to empower local administration and communities
- Adequate authority, capacity and resources need to be invested at local level
- Coordination vertically between national to local levels is needed that maintains accountability and encourages effective stakeholder participation.
- Institutional reforms are necessary to incentivize changes in regulations, institutional culture, markets and mindsets. For example, India has set up powerful National Green Tribunal that may help introduce difficult and unpopular changes necessary for sustainable development.
- Ensuring stakeholder participation in implementation and monitoring at all levels is key to effective SDG implementation and keeps policy design relevant and responsive.
- Participation need to ensure no one is left behind and service delivery is accountable.

# Addressing finance and capacity gaps

- Finance: to reflect on the vision, goals and plans
- Human resource: reorientation, mind sets, skills, mandates and authority
- Access to information, technologies
- Voice and agency of those who work for SDGs (break strict bureaucratic culture of vertical accountability)
- Clarity on roles and building synergy
  - Government
  - Civil society
  - Non-government service providers
  - Private sectors
  - Community and CBOs

# Role of leadership

- Good policies and institutional arrangement needs to be backed up by strong Leadership, Persistence and Determination

# Key issues: Interconnected and transformatory nature of SDGs

Example: Gender equality and SDG 2

- Women comprise more than 50% of agricultural labour force in South Asia and this is 70% in Nepal
- Yet their potential contribution to food security remains constrained by unequal access to land and other productive assets
  - Ending hunger means all women can consume enough food with adequate nutrients
  - Ending hunger also means that women produce food to their maximum potentials

This maximizing production potentials and consuming enough food with adequate nutrients both are not possible without addressing gender inequalities

Same applies to other forms of discriminating (spatial, regional, caste, ethnicity, language etc)

# Key issues specific to SDG goals in South Asia

SDGs are inter connected

- Example: food and poverty: are they Standalone or crosscutting? or the core and central.
- Same applies for Gender, Environment, Disaster, Governance

SDGs are Complex : sometimes goals too vague and big for us, do not know where to start

- Need to simplify them with basic simple indicators and target setting

Class-caste-ethnicity and gender specificity

- Requires to address discrimination if SDG goals to fulfill (South Asian countries are at different levels to address discrimination)

Eliminating hunger is related to food production, distribution and capability to access

- Sufficient production is not possible unless agriculture is considered as an occupation of dignity- an environment when farmers can say proudly that he/she and his/her daughters and sons are farmers. South Asia needs a lot to do on this

SDGs goals are transformative in nature. Business as usual cannot achieve these goals

Requires shift in culture

- Political culture; Bureaucracy and in the culture of how development partners and civil society operate

# Good practices

Nepal: multi stakeholder process to prepare national report, contextualizing agenda and setting targets

- NPC as lead, sectoral ministries to coordinate and civil society, private sector, academia, researchers, local government representatives participated (team inclusive from diversity perspectives)
- Took time but increased awareness, improved the content, increased ownership and sense of commitment to work on
- The multistakeholder process unfortunately ended with the completion of national report. This needs continue

# Good Practice

- Lao PDR: Integrating SDG in the local development context
  - Legitimacy and commitment through awareness, field assessment and setting targets
  - Framework for providing and utilizing financial resources
  - Capacity and human resource to expand services
  - Performance management based on targets
  - One-door SDG service centre (information, advice, services)
  - Building synergy and leverage at local levels

# Way forward

- Stock taking on what is happening
- Follow the deadlines, but also follow the multistakeholder process at every level, ensuring that no one is left behind
- Fora for local, subnational, national and regional level sharing, voice and agency (where role of civil society is critical)
- Awareness, policy coherence, system strengthening, and integration into plans, budget, human resource, service delivery is the entry point where civil society can act as partners as well as watch dogs

Thank you

