

# Addressing Child Rights Through SDG-2 and SDG-3: Analyzing Custodian Indicators for Sustainable Development in India

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## Abstract

India ranks 118 of 186 countries on the End of Childhood Index which evaluates countries on the well-being of children (Save the Children, 2021). So India needs to have a comprehensive strategy for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling children's rights also means achieving universal sustainable development and ensuring that children have a bright future. SDG-2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture) & SDG-3 (“Ensuring a healthy life and promoting well-being for all ages) are the most trans-versal and interrelated for transformational changes in the child's rights & development. This paper studies the child-related Custodian indicators of UNICEF for SDGs-2 and SDG-3 in India by highlighting the need for child rights, national planning processes, policies, and strategies.

**Keywords:** SDG-2, SDG-3, Custodian Indicators

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include 17 goals worldwide objectives to eliminate poverty, enhance the quality of environmental, and guarantee wealth and good health for all people. They are a component of Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda, which all parties have adopted, demonstrates humanity's commitment to the future it envisions for the earth and the political will needed to create alliances across all nations and interested parties to accomplish the SDGs. SDGs have been framed in a purposefully general manner, following the idea of country-led implementation.

## Children in SDG

The SDGs offer a more holistic vision of child development highlighting the health & well-being in children. Children are acknowledged as being dependent on adults, but they also have equal worth and value, and adults should prioritize the needs of children when making decisions that impact them. The SDGs adopt

a more comprehensive perspective and uphold everyone's human rights while encouraging the wise and sustainable use of energy and resources, granting access to essential services, creating green and respectable jobs, and safeguarding the environment. The survival of children and their optimal development are complex issues involving multiple roles and collaboration. Children's well-being is mostly the responsibility of parents and families, but the government and civil society organizations also have to assist families and offer resources including infrastructure, water, schools, clinics, protection services, child grants, and sanitation. The majority of these are covered by the 2030 Global Agenda, hence the SDGs support children's rights to survival and growth.

### **SDG- 2 End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition, and Promote Sustainable Agriculture**

Goal 2 manifests that by 2030 sustainable solutions have to be given to ensure food security which will end hunger. This can be possible only by identifying resilient agricultural techniques that promotes the productivity and generates income to small-scale farmers. Similarly, it is necessary to focus on sustainable agriculture and sustainable food production, which when met will aid in achieving the goal 2. Increasing investments through international cooperation is also necessary to boost developing countries' agricultural productivity.

#### **SDG -2 Related to Children**

A primary goal of Sustainable Development Goal 2 is to eradicate hunger and malnourishment by 2030, guaranteeing that everyone, particularly children's have sufficient and nutritious food. The goal highlights that by tripling the production in agriculture, all forms of malnutrition can be eliminated, (NITI Aayog, 2018)

#### **The Custodian or Co-custodian for SDG Global Indicators is UNICEF**

TARGET 2.2: By 2030 malnutrition in all its forms has to be eliminated, by 2025. To achieve this target, the a need to implement the targets that were internationally agreed. This includes reducing stunting and wasting in children under five years of age, and addressing the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and older persons.

2.2.1: Prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years of age.

2.2.2: Prevalence of malnutrition among children under 5 years of age, by type (wasting and overweight).

#### **SDG-3 Good Health and Well-Being**

SDG 3 is a "good health and well-being" goal-which goes beyond "ensuring a healthy life and promoting the well-being of all ages"-combines two concepts: 1) Health has to be considered as a fundamental human right, as it serves as a capital insurance that enables nations to settle on a sustainable plan; 2) Welfare is a state that is connected to several physical or psychological variables that can be taken into consideration individually or in conjunction. This goal on health and well-being is very much intertwined with all other goals, meaning the achievement of SDG 3 will have a huge influence on the fulfillment of other targets and vice-versa.

#### **Sub-Indicators of Goal - 3**

##### **Target 3.1-Maternal Mortality**

By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births

### **3.1.2 - Proportion of Births attended by Skilled Health Workers**

#### **Target 3.2- Under-Five – Mortality**

By 2030, preventable deaths have to focus on newborns and children under 5 years of age. All countries have to aim to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births

#### **3.2.1: Under-Five Mortality Rate**

#### **3.2.2: Neonatal Mortality Rate**

#### **Target 3.8.1 – Universal Health Coverage**

For achieving universal health coverage, certain factors like analyzing the risk of financial protection, ensuring access to essential healthcare services, and providing effective, safe, quality, and reasonably priced essential medications and vaccines for all.

### **India and the SDG**

India, the nation with the largest population, will be crucial in determining if the SDGs are accomplished. India has swiftly endeavored to implement the 2030 Agenda in order to fulfil its obligation and join the global effort towards sustainable development. The government of India's motto, "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas," emphasizes its dedication to inclusive and sustainable progress. India's goal of inclusive and sustainable growth is highly aligned with the SDG framework's fundamental principle of "Leave No One Behind." In a nation the size and diversity of India, the national, state, and local governments have pushed a bold agenda for SDG localization. Many policies and initiatives have been put into place to address a variety of social, economic, and environmental challenges that are linked with the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Review of Literature**

Katoch (January 2024) India's SDG 2 review reveals obstacles to achieving food security. Growing populations, the effects of climate change on agriculture, and massive food waste are among the problems. Comprehensive, multifaceted policies addressing agriculture, poverty, and food security are needed to achieve SDG 2, with an emphasis on women's education, maternal and child nutrition, and economic inequality. Cross-sectoral collaborative actions are essential to achieving the SDGs. Policymakers ought to encourage interdisciplinary cooperation between the public, non-profit, and commercial sectors. A coherent approach to SDG 2 is ensured by partnerships between the agriculture, health, education, and environment sectors. Establishing forums for information sharing and resource exchange increases the effectiveness of India's efforts to alleviate hunger.

UNICEF (2019) The SDGs are extremely ambitious, and their realization will require revolutionary change. Furthermore, the data coverage is still only partially complete, which makes it difficult for us to determine whether this kind of change is occurring. SDG statistics show up differently depending on the location. In order to reach the global SDG targets by 2030, 75% of child SDG indicators in each nation either have inadequate data or demonstrate insufficient development.

México, et. al (2018) Since there is a severe lack of data, especially from tropical and southern nations, this strategy is essential to achieving SDG 3 since it necessitates a significant restructuring of the monitoring, surveillance, and tracing systems for data on public health, and welfare. The objectives of sustainable development encourage us to take a different stance in response to the fresh challenges that face national and international research policies at the moment.

GSDR (2015) Around the world, 7 million youngsters pass away before turning five every year. The majority of children—more than 200 million—do not grow to their full developmental potential in their early years.

This loss of human potential is caused by several potent risk factors, including maternal undernutrition, failure to breastfeed, lack of access to clean water and sanitation, and, in many low- and middle-income nations, a lack of stimulation and learning opportunities. These kids have a higher chance of early death, dropping out of school, getting pregnant young, being unemployed, and developing expensive diseases later in life. This poses a huge obstacle to the sustainable growth of the world.

Article 24 affirms a child’s entitlement to the best attainable quality of health. State parties are required to provide periodic reports on the application of the rights, including details of any legislative, judicial, administrative, or other actions they have taken. (UNICEF, 1990)

### Research Gap

The study draws attention to important problems that have an impact on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially those related to food security, health, and nutrition among children. Nonetheless, there are still large gaps in data coverage, especially in child-related studies, which makes it difficult to track progress and evaluate the efficacy of policies (México et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2019). Moreover, there is still a dearth of research on multidisciplinary cooperation and all-encompassing approaches, particularly when it comes to SDG 2 (Katoch, 2024). Early childhood development, maternal and child nutrition, and coordinated cross-sectoral efforts receive insufficient attention, which makes it more difficult to achieve the SDGs—especially SDGs 2 and 3.

### Methodology

This study is designed to evaluate the signs of progress in achieving SDGs 2 & 3 in India. The researchers have scrutinized published research articles in peer-reviewed journals, and UN reports, that were relevant to the current topic.

The chosen method of reviewing the literature for measuring the enhancement of SDG 2 & 3 is decidedly suitable for several reasons, like

- The literature’s provided empirical evidence which are reliable for the study result.
- Secondary data give a organized and complete framework including social, economic, and environmental factors. The multifaceted strategy guarantees a comprehensive advancements in accomplishing SDG 2 and SDG 3.
- The secondary sources provided a multifaceted and granular analysis of progress for the analysis.

### India Pathway for SDG

To promote greater progress toward the SDGs, the Indian government has been developing and executing important interventions, programs, and schemes. These initiatives include numerous State-level projects, Central Sector Schemes, and Centrally Sponsored Schemes. Ensuring broad national coverage, Central Sector Schemes, fully sponsored by the central government, concentrate on areas like healthcare, education, and social protection, among others. Programs are sponsored centrally and funded collaboratively. Centrally sponsored schemes, supported by both the federal and state governments, focus on essential industries such as agriculture, rural development, and infrastructure. They promote collaboration and specialized interventions at the state level.

The State Government’s programs also take into account the needs and goals of the community. The government tackles gender equality, better health outcomes, education attainment, poverty reduction, and environmental sustainability through these multi-layered programs. To ensure that

progress is inclusive and benefits all societal segments, initiatives to empower women and advance gender equality are essential to these efforts.

### **Initiatives of the Government of India for Goal – 2 Poshan Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) (2018)**

#### **Key Features**

Poshan Abhiyaan is India's nutritional flagship scheme that focus on adolescents, children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers nutritional outcomes . The Abhiyaan aims at anaemic, stunting, and undernutrition in young children, and mothers, and by 2022, the mission aims to reduce the percentage of stunted children in the 0-6 age group from 38.4% to 25%. Through the use of technology, behavioural change through convergence, and the establishment of precise targets to be met across several monitoring metrics, POSHAN Abhiyaan seeks to ensure quality services and interventions. Millets can be used in the preparation of meals and take-home rations (rather than raw rations). Moreover, States and UTs are only receiving fortified rice under Mission Poshan 2.0.

#### **Need to Improve**

- The Global Nutrition Report (GNR, 2021) states that India has not improved its rates of childhood wasting or anemia.
- More than 17% of Indian children under the age of five suffer from childhood wasting.
- In 2019-21, 35.5% of children under five were stunted, and 32.1% were underweight. (National Family Health Survey -5)

### **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) -2017**

PMMVY is a maternity benefit program that addresses the issue of undernourishment in women by offering Direct Benefit transmission (DBT), or the direct transmission of monetary incentives, to expectant mothers who are nursing their babies. By giving pregnant women and nursing mothers sensible and sufficient support for their first living child, PMMVY significantly contributes in alleviating undernourishment.

#### **Need to Improve**

In India, 10% of the districts have more than 25% of births occurring at home, which means institutional deliveries are still lacking. The PMMVY system ought to be the focus of efforts aimed at improving and comprehending these shortcomings. In the same way, low PMMVY coverage for neonatal tetanus prevention and Mother and Child Protection card coverage are serious concerns in several areas.

### **Anaemia Mukh Bharat-2018**

By implementing six interventions through a strong institutional mechanism, the Anaemia Mukh Bharat strategy focuses on combating anemia in six target groups: children (6-59 months), children (5-9 years), adolescents (10-19 years), pregnant and lactating women, and women of reproductive age (15-49 years).

#### **Need to Improve**

Supplementation with Iron and Folic Acid (IFA) should be intensified, especially if IFA tablets are used for 180 days or more. To encourage adherence to IFA tablet intake, this will call for advancements in the distribution of IFA supplements among states and districts as well as more successful behaviour change communication. (Harvard University, 2022)

## **Initiatives of the Government of India for Goal – 3**

### **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)-2016**

The initiative aims to offer all pregnant women guaranteed, high-quality prenatal care on the ninth of every month, free of charge. The scheme ensures that every pregnant woman receives at least one check-up during the second or third trimester of her pregnancy. As part of the campaign, beneficiaries are required to receive a minimum set of antenatal care services at the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Clinics on the ninth day of each month. Before departing the facility, all expectant mothers will get counseling, either one-on-one or in groups, including safe sex practices, nutrition, rest, birth preparation, danger sign identification, institutional delivery, and postpartum family planning (PPFP).

#### **Need to Improve**

The results indicate a pressing need to improve the ANC services in public facilities, train physicians, interact with pregnant women to promote a positive pregnancy experience and address complications, and develop clinical and technical capacity and supervision for healthcare providers to adhere to standard guidelines for providing high-quality ANC services (Dandona, et. al, 2022)

### **LaQshya (Labour Room Quality Improvement Initiative) -2017**

The maternal and new-born mortality and morbidity have to be reduced, that is due to complications occurring during and immediately after delivery, improving quality of care during delivery and immediate postpartum care, stabilizing complications and ensuring timely referrals, and enabling an efficient two-way follow-up system to improve beneficiary satisfaction when visiting the health facilities, LaQshya was introduced. Additionally, it aims to provide all pregnant women attending public health facilities with Respectful Maternity Care (RMC). It is intended to assist all pregnant mothers and newborns who give birth in public health institutions.

#### **Need to Improve**

After 18 months, this initiative would be continued through sustained mentoring. This can have a framework with all the details of the children from birth with a code number that can be accessed for medical reference.

### **Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan**

Every mother and child going to a public health facility will receive certain, dignified, respectful, and high-quality healthcare free of cost. There will be zero tolerance for service denials. The goal is to create a positive birthing experience for pregnant women, all mothers up to six months post-delivery, and sick infants.

#### **Need to Improve**

The objective can include counselling sessions for parents and post-delivery stress management which will be vital for child growth.

#### **Problems Identified**

1. The percentage of indicators that specifically target children dropped from 50% to 37% even though the overall number of child-centered indicators grew from the MDGs to the SDGs. (Sambu, W., 2019)
2. The absence of consistent administrative and survey data to track the SDGs, especially for children, continues to be a major concern; statistics organizations are ill-equipped to gather data regularly and, on the scale, required by the SDGs. (Bhardwaj., et.al 2017)

## Conclusion

The report emphasizes how important it is to address child development within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDGs 2 and 3, which center on nutrition, food security, and health. While there are many government initiatives in India aimed at addressing maternal support, healthcare, and malnutrition in children, the progress is impeded by the lack of available data, particularly when it comes to child-centered indicators. This inconsistency in data makes it difficult to monitor and evaluate progress. To accomplish the SDGs, the research also highlights the necessity of interdisciplinary cooperation across industries like agriculture, healthcare, and education. More all-encompassing methods of addressing nutrition, well-being, and maternity and child health are also demanded. To make sure that no data is overlooked, it will be crucial to fix these gaps, maintain consistent efforts, and strengthen data gathering addressing these gaps will be essential for ensuring that globally no child is left behind in the quest to achieve sustainable development by 2030.

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