AIR Spotlight - NITI Aayog Sustainable Development Goals India Index

AIR Spotlight is an insightful programme featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panelists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in IAS exam preparation. In this article, the topic of discussion is the NITI Aayog Sustainable Development Goals India Index.

Participants:

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2. Ruchika Chitravanshi, Journalist.

Context:

NITI Aayog has released the third edition of Sustainable Development Goals India Index 2021.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- The Sustainable Development Goals are a set of seventeen pointer targets that all the countries which are members of the UN agreed to work upon for the better future of the country.

- It is a group of 17 goals with 169 targets and 304 indicators, as proposed by the United Nations General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. Post negotiations, an agenda titled "Transforming Our World: the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development" was adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit.

- SDGs are the outcome of the Rio+20 conference (2012) held in Rio De Janeiro and is a non-binding document.

Read more on the Sustainable Development Goals in the link.

What is NITI Aayog Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index?

NITI Aayog has introduced the SDG India Index in 2018. It is a baseline report which comprehensively documents the progress made by India's States and Union Territories towards implementing the 2030 SDG targets.

- The Index tracks the progress of all the States and Union Territories (UTs) on a set of 62 National Indicators, measuring their progress on the outcomes of the interventions and schemes of the Government of India.

- It has been designed to provide an aggregate assessment of the performance of all Indian States and UTs and to help leaders and change-makers evaluate their performance on social, economic, and environmental parameters.

- From covering 13 goals, 39 targets, and 62 indicators in the first edition in 2018-19 to 17 goals, 54 targets, and 100 in indicators in the second; this third edition of the index covers 17 goals, 70 targets, and 115 indicators.

- The index, developed in collaboration with the United Nations in India, measures the progress at the national and subnational level in the country's journey towards meeting the global goals and targets.
- It has been successful as an advocacy tool to propagate the messages of sustainability resilience and partnerships as well.

Categories of states on the basis of scores:

1. Aspirants: The states which score 0 to 49 come in the category of aspirants.
2. Performer: The states scoring 50 to 64 belong to the performer category.
3. Front runner: The states with the score between 65 to 99 are the front runners.
4. Achiever: The states which score 100 belong to the category of achievers.

Performance of the states according to the SDG India Index 2021:

- The performance of the states are given below:
  - **Top Performers:** Kerala retained its rank as the top state with a score of 75. Both Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu took the second spot with a score of 74.
  - **Worst Performers:** Bihar (52), Jharkhand (56), and Assam (57) were the worst-performing states in this year's India index.
  - **Top Performer Union Territories:** Chandigarh maintained its top spot among the UTs with a score of 79, followed by Delhi (68) and Lakshadweep (68).
  - **New Front Runners added to the list:** Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Punjab, Haryana, Tripura, Delhi, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh graduated to the category of front-runners (scores between 65 and 99, including both). As per the report, Tamil Nadu and Delhi have done well on improving the per capita income of individuals, Gujarat and Delhi have given the best performance in the health sector, while Kerala and Chandigarh have done well in education.
  - **Top Gainers:** Mizoram, Haryana, and Uttarakhand have been top gainers with 12, 10, and 8 points respectively.

Where does India stand?

- The country's overall SDG score improved by 6 points – from 60 in 2019 to 66 in 2020-21.
- This positive stride towards achieving the targets is largely driven by exemplary country-wide performance in goal 6 (clean water and sanitation) and goal 7 (affordable and clean energy), where the composite goal scores are 83 and 92, respectively.

Areas of Weakness:

- **Goal 2 (Nutrition Zero Hunger):** It is largely driven by the level of stunting, wasting among children, anaemia among women, underweight children, pregnant women with anemia, etc.
- **Goal 5 (Gender equality):** This goal talks about women's participation in the economy and political arena, gender parity, security of women, women's control over family planning, labour force participation rate, operational landholding, managerial positions in the company, equal pay, etc.

- These two areas still belong to the aspirant categories or red zone under which scores lie between 1 to 49. Hence, these are the areas that have to be worked upon by not only the government but also with the efforts of the whole society and synergies across the departments.

- Although there has been an improvement in goals 2 and 5 in comparison to 2019 in terms of the scores rising from 42 to 48, none of the states belong to the green zone in goals 2 and 5.

- Some of the states doing well in goal 5 are Chattisgarh, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. The states at the bottom are Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, and Assam. Hence, these are the critical states which require a lot more attention.

Way Forward:

- The critical areas of each state should be diagnosed and then policy reforms should be made accordingly.

- The poor indicators that crucially belong to goal 2 and goal 5 require collective efforts, policy efforts, social, economic, and political efforts as well.

- States should learn from each other, they can implement the good policies of each other that can lead to improvement in their performances. This kind of cross-learning is very useful.

- Evidence-based policy-making should be implemented by the state governments.

- Goal 3 which deals with good health and wellbeing is the major area of concern these days. It has shown a lot of improvement with scores rising from 61 in 2019 to 74 in 2020. It is expected that this improvement will be continued because the entire machinery is working towards improving the system.

Conclusion:

Amid the COVID pandemic, India has managed to ensure an overall increase in SDG score. Through cooperative federalism and focused efforts, India will manage to achieve SDG 2030 goals.