Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals agenda was accepted by all members of the United Nations in 2012 at the Rio De Janeiro Council Meet with an aim to promote a healthy and developed future of the planet and its people. It was in 2015 when the Sustainable Development Goals were implemented after a successful fifteen-year plan of development called the Millennium Development Goals.

What are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals?

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 an important topic for candidates preparing for the UPSC 2021 exam.

The documentary screened at the Rio+20 conference – "Future We Want" presented the idea of a post-2015 development agenda. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an intergovernmental agreement formulated to act as post-2015 Development agenda, its predecessor being Millennium Development Goals.

It is a group of 17 goals with 169 targets and 304 indicators, as proposed by the United Nation General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. Post negotiations, agenda titled "Transforming Our World: the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development" was adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit. SDGs is the outcome of the Rio+20 conference (2012) held in Rio De Janerio and is a non-binding document.

The 17 goals under the Sustainable Development Goals are as mentioned below:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well being for all at all stages
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9. Built resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
10. Reduce inequalities within and among countries
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production pattern
13. Take urgent actions to combat climate change and its impact
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably managed forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

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

Sustainable Development Goals in India

India's record in implementing Sustainable Development Goals

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) is being implemented to provide jobs to unskilled labourers and improve their living standards.
- National Food Security Act is being enforced to provide subsidized food grains.
- The government of India aims to make India open defecation free under its flagship programme Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
- Renewable energy generation targets have been set at 175 GW by 2022 to exploit solar energy, wind energy and other such renewable sources of energy efficiency and reduce the dependence on fossil fuels. (Read about International Solar Alliance in the linked article.)
- Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) schemes have been launched for improving the infrastructure aspects.
- India has expressed its intent to combat climate change by ratifying the Paris Agreement.

Read about HRIDAY in the linked article.

Candidates preparing for the upcoming IAS exam must visit the linked article for more details regarding the exam.

Millennium Development Goals

The United Nations in September 2000 made all its members follow a Millennium Development goal that had a series of eight time-bound targets that were supposed to be attained within a time period of fifteen years. The eight targets under the Millennium Development Goal are as mentioned below:

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. to achieve universal primary education
3. to promote gender equality and empower women
4. To reduce child mortality
5. To improve maternal health
6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. To ensure environmental sustainability
8. To develop a global partnership for development

In 2015, a final report was handed over to the UN, stating the positive impact of the Millennium Development goal based on the eight factors and also on the maternal mortality rate. Once the 15-year target of MDG was attained, the responsibility for the development based on the 17 targets based Sustainable Development Goal.

Read Poverty and Hunger related topics from the links mentioned below:

How much progress has been made regarding SDG?

In 2019 five progress reports on the 17 SDGs appeared. Three came from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), one from the Bertelsmann Foundation and one from the European Union. According to a review of the five reports in a synopsis, the allocation of the Goals and themes by the Basel Institute of Commons and Economics, the allocation was the following:

Sustainable Millenium Goals achievement (ranked as per the number of goals completed in the corresponding fields)

SDG Topic	Rank	Average Rank
Health	1	3.2
Energy Climate Water	2	4.0
Education	3	4.6
Poverty	4	6.2
Food	5	7.6
Economic Growth	6	8.6
Technology	7	8.8
Inequality	8	9.2
Gender Equality	9	10.0
Hunger	10	10.6
Justice	11	10.8
Governance	12	11.6

Decent Work	13	12.2
Peace	14	12.4
Clean Energy	15	12.6
Life on Land	16	14.4
Life below Water	17	15.0
Social Inclusion	18	16.4

Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020

On July 7, 2020, the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020 was released. As per the report, the COVID-19 pandemic unleashed an unprecedented crisis which has lead to further disruption to SDG progress. Given below are the key points based on the SDG report:

- Improvements have been noticed in areas such as improving maternal and child health, expanding access to electricity and increasing women's representation in government
- An estimated 71 million people are expected to be pushed back into extreme poverty in 2020, the first rise in global poverty since 1998. The main cause of this is said to be loss of employment and people who were earlier secure also could find themselves at risk of poverty
- Approximately 1.6 million vulnerable workers across the world were either left unemployed or underemployed, with incomes estimated to have fallen by 60 per cent during the crisis
- Women and children, and people living in slums were the worst affected sections during the pandemic
- School closures have kept 90 per cent of students worldwide (1.57 billion) out of school and caused over 370 million children to miss out on school meals they depend on
- The cases of poverty, unemployment and risk of lives has increased the risk of child labour and trafficking

Apart from the above-mentioned points, the report suggests that climate change is still occurring much faster than anticipated. The year 2019 was the second warmest on record and the end of the warmest decade of 2010 to 2019.

Impact of SDG & MDG

The Millennium Development Goals were the stepping stone for the United Nations members to look for a developed and brighter future for their countries and the people living there. In 2000, the MDG was accepted and the final report presented in 2015 clearly mentions the decrease in infant mortality rate, reduction of poverty, provision of safe drinking water, sanitation and drastically improving the mental health of people.

Following its footsteps, the Sustainable development goals are set to make the world a better place to live by 2030. The plan was accepted in 2015 and up till 2020, the reports presented by the UNDP prove that various actions have been taken for the betterment of the Nation and improvement in the livelihood of people across the world has been seen.

The Sustainable Development Goals have resulted in the decline of the maternal mortality rate, reduced poverty, worked for the improved health of the people, spread awareness about the communicable and non-communicable diseases and also the vaccines required for children. Efforts are being taken for providing better medication to the world and mental illness is also being taken as a major concern.

Overall the Sustainable Development goals tend to make the world a better place to live by fulfilling its targets within the stipulated time of 15 years and remove poverty, improve health, provide employment, empower women, reduce inequalities and follow all the seventeen targets that have been set by the UN.