



Pratidhwani the Echo

A Peer-Reviewed International Journal of Humanities & Social Science

ISSN: 2278-5264 (Online) 2321-9319 (Print)

Impact Factor: 6.28 (Index Copernicus International)

Volume-X, Issue-III, April 2022, Page No.135-148

Published by Dept. of Bengali, Karimganj College, Karimganj, Assam, India

Website: <http://www.thecho.in>

India and Sustainable Development goals: The Challenges and Prospects amidst Pandemic

Dr. Satabdi Das

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science, South Calcutta Girls' College, West Bengal

Abstract

The global corona virus pandemic has posed unimaginable and unprecedented threats to human existence today which has resulted in a complete halt in our daily lives and livelihoods, has isolated economies with closure of the borders and large influx of internal and international migrations. In such a situation the sustainable development which requires building a coherent balance and creating responsibility for economic activities and development, has taken a back seat in many countries. With no exception, the fast growing economy of India is under severe threat during these catastrophes of the global pandemic, Covid 19. Against this backdrop the study concentrates on the issues like - the effects of long term lock-down upon different goals of sustainable development in India; the policy of India towards attaining SDGs when Covid 19 poses enormous negative impacts on livelihoods and on sustainable development prospects; How the pandemic has exposed the fundamental socio-political drawbacks of developing countries like India and exhibited that poverty, weak health systems, lack of education and as well as lopsided governmental policies have exacerbated the crisis? The second wave of the pandemic and the infrastructural failure affecting the sustenance of existence at all levels.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, Sustainable Development Goals, India, Sustainability

Introduction: The global corona virus pandemic has posed unimaginable and unprecedented threats to human existence today. This pandemic has long term and profound impacts on the economy of each and every country. It has resulted in a complete halt in our daily lives and livelihoods as in order to restrict its spread, lockdown has become essential and inevitable. The lockdown has provided us with a rare opportunity to assess the impacts of our attitude towards the nature. During lockdown period as witnessed in 2020, the pollution levels were exceptionally low and the clear natural landscapes have reminded us the need to rethink for the adoption of behavioural changes towards a lesser resource intensive life style. But one must admit that though lockdown has improved drastically the air and water quality, and has reduced our material consumptions, water usage and waste generation, the economic shut down due to this has many negative consequences too.

In countries like India, it has isolated economies with closure of the borders and large influx of internal and international migrations. Covid-19 and the resultant economic shut down have led to massive financial slow down and loss of jobs, with maximum impact on vulnerable groups. Specially in our country the exodus of migrant labours and the hardship they faced while returning back to their native places have raised several questions regarding our lopsided policy implementation, less preparedness in the face of unprecedented crisis and lack of resources to accommodate the interest of all. The pandemic and its resultant immediate and far reaching effects have actually questioned the viability of attaining sustainable development goals and setting the aim to 'leave no one behind' amidst such pandemic. In such a situation, certain issues pertaining to sustainable development are of severe concerns in India like India's role in achieving sustainable development goals, the necessity of prioritizing the attainment of long term sustainability goals amidst pandemic and many more.

SDGs and India:

During the ongoing pandemic, sustainable development which requires building a coherent balance and creating responsibility for economic activities and development, has taken a back seat in many countries. With no exception, the fast growing economy of India is under severe threat during these catastrophe as well. The Declaration on the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development comprising of 17 Sustainable development goals (SDGs) was signed by India and other countries at the UN summit on Sustainable Development in September, 2015. These goals covered a wide range of areas, designed to be a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. These 17 SDGs are non-binding in nature and they helped to set the earth on a sustainable trajectory while ensuring a dignified life for all.

India's role is very significant in the formulation of SDGs and many of the country's national development agenda has been mirrored in them. It tries to make a balance among the economic, social and environmental pillars of the SDGS. The ideology of 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikash' meaning 'Collective Effort, Inclusive Development' has reflected the aim to establish a sustainable future considering everybody's need. Universal rural electrification, elementary school education for all, enhancing and developing road and digital connectivity for all and extending clean and renewable energy, sanitation and housing for all are some of the initiatives to this direction. There exist certain programmes at the governmental level too contributing towards the attainment of SDGs- like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) which aims at implementing SDG 1 i.e No poverty by initiating the world's largest financial inclusion programme. There exist several anti-poverty programmes as well. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has generated over 2 billion person-days of employment specifically for the marginalized section of the society.

Some efforts have also been made towards SDG 2 aiming at creating Zero hunger. Providing food at affordable prices through Public Distribution System, Mid-day meal programme, promoting organic farming and issuance of soil health cards to the farmers are some of the efforts to improve food and nutrition security in India. The declining trend of

maternal mortality ratio has indicated that the country is contributing towards SDG 3 (Good health and well-being for people) as well. Mention may be made here about the National Health Policy 2017 which created targets for universalising primary health care. Numerous measures have also been initiated towards promoting gender equity in India that is SDG 5. 'Beti Bachao, Beto Podao' is very significant in this respect (Niti Ayog, 2017). The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has also been widely acclaimed and has increased the country's score on 'Clean water and Sanitation'. Similarly use of clean cooking fuel, Door to door waste collection and processing etc- all are very critical achievements of India towards attaining several SDGs. But the country has to traverse a long way in order to step up its performance in poverty, hunger, gender and climate fronts (Prasad & Singh, 2021). But during the Covid-19 pandemic, attaining sustainable development goals has become more challenging as all the countries including India are now engaged with Covid-19 recovery process too. In such a situation the SDGs like no poverty, zero hunger, establishing good health and well-being, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities cannot be reached easily. However, the pandemic had brought short term "immediate relief" in areas related to responsible consumption and production, climate actions and lives below water and on land (Pandey, 2020).

Lockdown and its effects:

In order to contain the spread of the pandemic a nation-wide lockdown had been announced on March 24, 2020 by the Prime Minister of India, later there were relaxation in some areas and in certain services and the country witnessed the unlock period too. Like every event on earth the lockdown has both positive and negative impacts. It has led to sudden shut down of economic activities resulting in massive losses to the economy. The vulnerable groups of the society are affected the most. However, the consequent halt to a significant proportion of economic activity, has led to reduced pollution and an improvement in environmental indicators across the country. The Ganga, for example, had better quality water for the time being, than it has seen in decades. The reason behind that was the fact that lockdown had lessen the amount of domestic and industrial wastes that are dumped into river without treatment. The Air Quality Index (AQI) across major cities had improved, particularly due to limited or no vehicles on road too (Kanitkar and Nagarajan, 2020). Industrial activity induced Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions had been reduced to a great extent as there was lesser consumption of fossil fuels. Limited energy demands also reduced global coal consumption during this period. It has been reported that coal dependent power generation reduced to 26 percent in India. Even the total power generation had also been reduced to 19 percent after lockdown (Rume & Islam, 2020). Less vehicles on road slowed down the noise pollution as well. The negative impacts on environment and sustainability are also matters of concern. Increased generation of biomedical wastes, haphazard disposal of safety equipment like masks, gloves etc, lack of proper waste recycling during quarantine period – all had negatively impacted public health and environment during this time. Besides, the announcement of lockdown in a short notice which actually was a panicky approach of completely shutting down all domestic transport, had created hardship for many specially for the migrant labours who had to

traverse a long distance to reach their homes. Some of them collapsed on their way and many died out of road accidents. The crowd of these migrant labours further helped in spreading the disease. During the second wave of the crisis the picture is equally grim. The loss of jobs, lack of proper infrastructure to provide sustainable health services had worsened the situation to a larger extent. The government is in oblivion about the fact that 80 percent of population works in the unorganised sector, and where millions depend solely on their daily wages for sustenance. The crises actually alerts and underscores the significance of state and city governments in delivering public services.

An effective and long-term and persisting sustainability is the urgency of the time when the humanity is facing an unprecedented threat induced by a virus. Lockdown triggered positive inputs to the environments are short term and not the result of any proactive measure for pollution control or climate mitigation but for the sudden shut down of industrial activities. As a result lack of conscious nature based action towards making a sustainable existence may lead the country to go back to the pre lockdown levels of pollution again. It may exacerbate its vulnerability to upcoming crises and jeopardize country's sustainable efforts to development. So India's development policies require a balance between growth and environmental protection as path of de-growth and resultant clear environment can never be a viable option.

India's policy responses to the First and Second Waves of Pandemic:

Schemes announced during the First Wave: Sustainable development aims at removing inequality in all its forms and it has conceived that creating intergenerational equity in using the natural resource is also an issue of concern. But the systemic rot of our socio-political structure has been exposed during this pandemic. There were several steps were taken by the government since the first lockdown announced to help the affected masses to fight against corona virus. Several schemes were outlined aiming to aid the poorest of the poor, with food and money in hands, while making them capable of buying essential supplies and meeting essential needs. Under the Atmanirvar Bharat Scheme, a mega stimulus package of Rs 20 Lakh crore has been announced by the Prime Minister on 12th May, 2020 which included the various liquidity measures announced by the RBI in February, March and April, and the earlier "fiscal package" announced on March 27, 2020. During this announcement, a call was made for working towards an "Atmanirbhar Bharat" by being "vocal for local" through measures taken under what the PM called the four Ls (land, law, liquidity and labour). The aim was to benefit farmers, workers, tax payers, MSMEs and cottage industry. The goal of achieving Self-reliance basically banked on economy infrastructure, technology driven system, and dynamic demography and demand. In November, 2020 the GoI launched Atmanirbhar Bharat 3.0 to boost the covid hit economy. The Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar yojana was also announced to create job opportunity amid pandemic. Under the Pradhanmantri Garib Kalyan package, there are certain components like Insurance scheme for health workers fighting COVID-19 in Government Hospitals and Health Care Centres, free food and gas distribution; and social security measures for affected workers. Mention may be made here about the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) aiming to provide free ration for over 80

crore people during the crucial lockdown months. It entails the distribution of 5 kg of wheat or rice to each family every month till June 2020 (Zee Media Bureau, 2020). Later, the announcement of the PMJKAY extension of by five more months, till the end of November 2020 was another path breaking deal that comes for the much needed relief for the poor (Harikrishnan, 2020). On 23 April, 2021, the central government decided to resume providing free food grains to poor beneficiaries in May and June to tide over the economic distress during the second wave of the pandemic too. The COVID-19 relief package has also included provisions for all women account holders under PMJDY to receive Rs. 500 every month for April, May, and June, 2020. Promises were made to increase the MNREGA wages that would provide an additional Rs. 2,000 yearly benefit to a worker (Ministry of Finance, 2020).

Simultaneously certain schemes were announced to generate employment and to sustain the livelihood activities of many. The Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan is one of them. The targeted masses were the returnee migrant workers and rural citizens. This scheme has been launched for 25 target driven works for infrastructure development and boosting employment in 16 districts of six states for returnee labourers. The scheme includes a resource envelope of Rs. 50000 crore. The Pradhan Mantri SVANidhi Scheme was launched to help COVID affected street vendors to resume their livelihood activities (Arfa, 2021). All these policies and schemes are launched with the hope to sustain the lives and livelihood opportunities of the affected masses of the country for a long period of time. To achieve SDGs like reduce poverty, Zero hunger, establishing good health and well-being, removing inequalities, creating decent work scenario and sustain economic growth, these policy responses to pandemic in the forms of humanitarian aid and to provide economic stimulus are designed and various schemes have come into prominence. But the question remains whether the fruits of such efforts are equally reaped by all; is everybody able to earn sufficiently for the sustenance.

Reports outlined that out of approximately 390 million Jan Dhan accounts in India 54 percent are held by women. However, inactive bank accounts, lack of information regarding operational status have led to non-accessibility to these cash relief for many women. The National Coalition of Civil Society Organisations, along with Oxfam India, conducted a survey over a span of two weeks between April 28 and May 12, 2020 in rural areas of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The respondents were 12,588 women Jan Dhan account holders. The survey found that 16 per cent women reported their Jan Dhan accounts were either not operational, or that they were unsure about the status of their account (Kapil, 2020). The Central government's move to provide food to migrant workers going home during the nationwide lockdown was also not satisfactory. Under the Free Food Scheme, out of allocated 800,000 tonnes of food grains only 246,000 tonnes were distributed. Only 31 percent people identified in the programme benefited from it (Varma, 2021). The scheme of Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan is also not satisfactory and requires restructuring. These are considered as short term

policies and the country needs both short and long term policies at this juncture. One of the reasons behind the non -functioning of these schemes is the country failed to enumerate the actual size of these labours working in unorganised sectors across the country. The 2011 census counted that there are 41 million inter-state migrant workers and they contributed 10 percent of India's GDP. No policy response will work significantly until the enumeration can be done properly. The schemes must focus on health, education of the children and general wellbeing of these set of population. They must be considered as priority in the vaccination drives too ("Migrants", 2021). So, the schemes and projects remained in the papers without much success and relevant policy solutions. The government failed to develop a coherent approach for implementing structural economic reforms. The situation becomes more complicated when India reopens its work places, places of worship, hotels and restaurants. While in many countries lock down had been eased off after flattening the curve, in India the process of opening had been started when the infection rates were higher, testings were insufficient, and the tentacles of the virus are increasing reaching new areas of rural India. The situation exposes the infrastructural failure in health service system which is evident in the lack of developing testing capacities and restrained access to protective equipment. Consequently, during the second wave the situation has become beyond control in all respects.

The Second Wave of the Pandemic: The crisis situation has become even more deadly when the second wave of pandemic hit the country from January 2021. Maharashtra, Uttarpradesh, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Chattishgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Rajasthan are hit by the second wave very fiercely. As of 23rd April 2021, these states reported 75.01 percent of the new cases. Maharashtra had the highest daily new cases at 67,013 followed by the UP with 34,254 fresh infections. West Bengal is not lagging behind, as new covid cases are continuing to spurt here too (SNS, 2021b). The reasons behind this catastrophe are multiple- the public gatherings without following the COVID norms, not using masks, sanitizers and above all the weak governmental regulations to make people aware of the situations, no prohibition for religious gatherings and election campaigning. Certain states announced lockdown which again resulted in calamity for the migrant labours. The process of vaccination has started in India, but the rising corona cases have wreaked havoc on the masses. To confront the crisis, the Prime Minister in his speech on 20th April 2021, suggested the states to consider lockdown as the last resort and he prioritised creating micro containment zones as more effective and economically viable option. But Maharashtra, in view of the rising cases imposed several new lockdown-like restrictions, including a ban on inter-city and inter-district travel, and allowed only those working in the essential services to travel in local trains in Mumbai just the next day of The Prime Minister's address to the nation (PTI, 2021a). Delhi has also been in the throes of crisis and announced lockdown till 3rd May, 2021. It is witnessing people struggling to find beds in hospitals and hospitals also turning away patients. Even patients dying waiting outside of the hospitals for admission. Such crisis is very inevitable as demands for beds and oxygen have outstripped their supply (Joshi, 2021). Owing to the COVID induced grim situation, and shortages of medical oxygen all over India, the Central

government has announced some plans and proposals like waiving of basic customs duty and health cess on import of oxygen and oxygen related equipment for three months with immediate effect, quick custom clearance of such equipment etc. (SNS, 2021c) The Prime Minister has also urged states to act in unison to fight the crisis and not to stop any oxygen tanker irrespective of its destination. Railways and air-force are also being deployed to lessen transportation time for oxygen tankers. (PTI, 2021b). To make the next vaccination drive for 18 plus citizens starting from 1st May, 2021 successful, the central government asked states to register additional private vaccination centres while ensuring effective crowd management. It also emphasized on online registration for beneficiaries in 18-45 age group for inoculation (PTI, 2021c).

Therefore, the second wave of the pandemic has exposed the indigence of our health sector. In such a situation attainment of SDGs has been considered as ironical while the basic right to life has been jeopardised.

The SDGs in the Indian scenario amidst pandemic:

Covid 19 teaches us a lesson that we are hardly politically and economically equipped in the face of global emergencies. In such a situation attaining the sustainable development goals is a challenge. Abrupt shut down of industrial activities may clean the environment for the time being but at the same time one should admit that science, technological advancements and industrial activities move hand in hand. The urgency of preparing vaccine, manufacturing ventilators, and scaling up the capacity of medical infrastructure requires technical supports. SDG 9 i.e industry, innovation and infrastructure building comes into prominence in this regard. The good health and wellbeing for people depends on it to a large extent as well. Therefore sudden lock down had a negative effect on this when pandemic was at its peak in April 2020. During the 2nd wave of the pandemic, the weakness of our health and medical infrastructure has come into prominence in a more dreadful way. In this present scenario the most important medical equipment is oxygen cylinders which are running short miserably. Though 90 percent of oxygen supply is used for medical purposes now cutting the industrial use, but demand is outstripping supply. States like Kerala has surplus oxygen and it has increased the supply of Oxygen in other states, while Delhi having a worst covid situation has to rely on import due to lack of indigenous oxygen plant. The federal health ministry had invited bids for new oxygen plants in October 2020 almost after 8 months of the first wave of the pandemic. According to the report it had sanctioned 162 of which only 33 have been installed so far - 59 will be installed by the end of April and another 80 by the end of May 2021 (Moole, 2021) Such negligence has not only slowed down the process of attaining sustainability in the health sector but also has snatched the basic right to lives for many.

The first two SDGs i.e poverty eradication and zero hunger are almost impossible to achieve in the present scenario. As the Covid-19 cases surged worldwide in 2020, a hunger crisis was looming large. The impact of this health emergency along with unsustainable and bad development policy has been catastrophic on India's poor who are pushed to the brink. Not only that, in 2020, due to shut down many people have lost their jobs and there are

drastical cuts in salaries. The 68 day lockdown had brought catastrophe to the lives of the people. The rate of unemployment in India then was alarming. A report by the Pew Research Center underlines that due to the 2020's pandemic induced recession, the middle class of India may have shrunk by a third and the number of poor people who earns less than ₹150 per day more than doubled. ("Corona virus", 2021). The economic condition of the migrant labours is also fatal. In 2020 at the onset of lockdown in 2020 they headed towards their native places in the most dreadful ways possible as they failed to acquire any means of sustenance in their adopted cities. In 2021, during the second wave of the pandemic the Prime minister urged to chief Ministers to retain the migrant workers where they are by creating certain incentives. But the labours fear a repeat of the previous experiences. Though previously the government promised to roll out a tech driven system of one nation one ration card and to generate a system to register migrant labours so that initiatives could be taken on the basis of the proper enumeration of them, the present exodus of migrant workers has proved the non-implementation of such processes (Saksena, 2021). Lack of financial assistance, absence of effective labour policy pushed this community to extreme poverty.

During the quarantine phase and nationwide lockdown disruption in supply and distribution channel all over the world negatively impacted the availability and accessibility of food. India was not an exception. Lockdown may be effective in halting the spread of the pandemic, but India's hunger situation which was dire even before and after the lockdown, reached at its peak for last one year. Consequently there is a real threat that India's death toll on account of hunger may increase to unforgivably higher numbers (Rampal, 2020). When the situation is already grim, the second wave of the pandemic touched India. Some states declared lockdown again leading to fear psychosis among the migrant labours as well as other masses. The country is far from attaining the goal of zero hunger and the pandemic has deepened the crisis in many ways. First, the public distribution system is the most effective response to the threat of food insecurity. But the country has not yet materialised the universalised PDS so many poor are left out of the system which has exacerbated the hunger crisis during this period too. Secondly the quantity of grains given through the system is minimal and employment loss and meagre income badly affected the dietary diversity too. The community kitchen formed in different parts of the country during lockdown for providing cooked meals in urban centres especially for migrant and stranded labours came to an end once lockdown has been lifted in July 2020. This was a source of nutrition for many for a period of time. However, after lockdown slump in earnings and employment as well as the wrath of pandemic continues, consequently the problem of food insecurity still remains as glaring as before. The Supreme Court has directed not to stop the mid-day meals in schools for children and supplementary nutrition of ICDS for children, pregnant and lactating mothers even during lockdown. But due to closure of schools during and after lockdown these services were not provided fully in many states. Finally there are multiple schemes like PMGKY, having measures of food and cash transfers which were all based on transfers to existing beneficiaries, as a result many were excluded from the

benefits pertaining to these schemes. All these factors made SDGs like poverty eradication and zero hunger unattainable (Sinha, 2021).

Reducing inequalities is one of the significant goals of the Sustainable Development. But inequality in its various manifestations has been surged in India during this pandemic. Though the disease has affected all irrespective of the economic and social status, but inequality comes when the question of providing essential services comes into prominence. If we considering the health care services, it is evident that there are inter and intra state and rural –urban disparities. In terms of availability of hospital beds, a report of 2020 has shown that states like Bihar are well below the national average of 0.55 beds in the public sector per 1000 population while others like West Bengal (2.25 beds/1000) and Sikkim (2.34 beds/1000) have considerably more. Health being a state subject such events take place. There is also a huge skew in the distribution of doctors working in urban and rural areas, with the urban to rural doctor density ratio being 3.8:1((Dutt and Prasad, 2020). There also exist differences among salaried and daily wage earners. The labours, agricultural workers, workers in informal sectors are affected by this pandemic disproportionately as they failed to earn a penny for those days they did not work. The situation has further been worsened during the second wave of pandemic. The lack of a national plan to deal with supply of oxygen, essential drugs, method and manner of vaccination has created unequal treatments in these fields. Beds are not available in government hospitals and many died gasping for oxygen outside of hospitals. Private nursing homes are charging exorbitantly which in turn deepens the rich-poor dichotomy. Given the escalating no. of cases and the insufficiency in the supply of medical equipment, it has become imperative to have the population vaccinated. The immunization programme started with the frontline workers and gradually other masses were included according to the age group. Now the union government has decided to extend the vaccine programme to all adults from 1st May, 2021(Singh, Misra, Chauhan & Besra, 2021). The vaccination programme is not beyond criticisms. It requires a systematic process of allocation across the states. But there exists non transparency in their allocation across the country. Inequity in the allocation of vaccine has worsened the situation. The central government failed to deliver its responsibility to ensure vaccine equity through free immunization for all the poor across all ages. Under the third drive, the manufacturers would supply 50 percent of their laboratory released doses to the central government and they are free to send the rest 50 percent to the state governments and in the open market SNS, 2021(SNS, 2021a) his change in current vaccination policy which shifts the financial burden to state governments and letting private hospitals buy the life-saving vaccine at Rs.600-1200, leads to unjust competition both among States, and between State governments and private hospitals. The dual pricing of public good like vaccine Covishield at Rs 150 for the centre and Rs 300 for the states also has sharpened centre-state conflict. The private hospitals might sell them to the patients even at higher rates though the Central government directed them to transparently declare their self-set vaccination price. Many of the 18-44 age groups may fail to buy the vaccine in such a situation. So universal vaccination drive remains an irony now. Inequity engulfs the process of vaccination too.

Endorsing gender equality has also become an irony. The confinement and quarantined existence coupled with deteriorating socio-economic landscape have increased domestic violence in many households. Not only that as a measure to combat the disease the imposed shut down of schools have forced girls out of school and placed them at heightened risk of violence in their home. The lives of women, children and pregnant ladies are also at stake due to disruption in the basic life-saving health services and strained health care during this catastrophe. Moreover, during the home confinement there exist differences in workload between women and their male counterparts. In many cases women with full-time payed job have to look after the house hold chores and child rearing singlehandedly. Due to strict social distancing, the working women have to execute their professional duties from home while taking care of the household works at the same time without help from others. Women are the primary caregivers in many families. As a result the chances of infections from a contagious disease are greater for them. In this way gender inequality has been intensified during this crisis too.

SDG 17 which entails strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development is very significant now in the present context. International cooperation is highly required to attain the SDGs during pandemic on the one hand and to fight the virus on the other. Equitable and affordable access to safe and effective COVID 19 vaccines should be ensured in order to end the pandemic. It necessitates multilateral cooperation contributing towards vaccine production and distribution at all levels. Countries are expected to provide vaccines to vulnerable nations. India contributed greatly to this goal. It has lifted its ban on exports of the drug HCQ according to the rising demands, sent medical teams to countries in the neighbourhood. It has also initiated Vaccine maitri programmes under which India exported more than 66 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to 95 countries worldwide. Of these about 10 million were grants from the government, 20 million were sent as part of the global COVAX facility, and the rest 36 million were commercial exports. As part of multilateral diplomacy, the Quad Plan for production of one billion vaccines to be offered to South East Asian countries, and the India-South Africa effort at the WTO to have all vaccine patents (TRIPs) waived for the coronavirus pandemic duration are also significant(Haider, 2021).

Though India has extended its hands to strengthen the global battle against novel Corona virus, but it has been criticised also as proper estimation of the required vaccine for domestic purpose has been neglected. Before going for the extensive export of vaccine, the country should ramp up its production corresponding to the domestic and international demands. Now the country is in dire need of medical equipment like oxygen cylinders and vaccine too. Many countries like UK, UAE, Pakistan have extended their hands. However as panic is spreading all over with the rising cases, many nations are now concentrating on meeting the domestic needs first. The US restricted export of raw material for vaccine production to India some days ago which has been recently lifted after diplomatic conversation among dignitaries of two countries. India's vaccine diplomacy has also come to a halt and replaced by inward 'vaccine natinalism' and it has stopped exporting to other

countries due to its own rising cases. Even it has failed to fulfil its paid commitments to Bangladesh and UK (Kakar, 2021). Such events have proved that amid pandemic global partnership for a better sustainable future where poverty, hunger, inequity, diseases will not prevail, remains unattainable. Inequity has been magnified in all spheres due to the pandemic.

Some of the SDGs are significant in reducing the threats of Covid-19. Like access to clean water which is required for cleaning hands as prescribed by the World Health Organisation to fight the virus. Similarly to establish sustainable cities and communities is essential during this pandemic as it can help the inhabitants of a crowded place to stay away from the spread of the virus. In the present scenario, the education for all has become another problematic. During lockdown and even the present new normal the chances for reopening the academic institutions are less. In such a condition online teaching-learning is the only option for knowledge spreading. But many students failed to make access to online learning due to digital divide, high internet charges and poor internet connections in remote places. These instances have shown that SDGs are required for combatting the pandemic too. But in India even before pandemic, the ambience to attain several SDGs is not conducive. During and in the post Covid era this would lead to further hardships for the country.

Conclusion:

The various sustainable development goals are designed to bring us in sync with a sustainable future for all. However the pandemic has created such a situation which inhibits the attainment of these goals as discussed. The pandemic while exposing our vulnerability to the virus and the structural inefficiency, has proved at the same time that in order to overcome the human and economic devastation caused by Covid-19, efforts to achieve the SDGs must be accelerated. However Covid-19 recovery policies must include the key concern of SDGs- 'leaving no one behind'. The present governmental policies failed to become all-encompassing in many cases. No relief policies for the pandemic are fruitful until the vulnerable groups including unemployed youth, daily wage earners, migrant labours, children debarred from online learning opportunities, and women, who are experiencing a disproportionate increase in the burden of care work as well as greater risk of domestic violence are taken into considerations. SDGs can be helpful in preparing the support system to combat such future shocks. India with a high population density is a hotspot for Covid-19 and it requires cooperation from outside for testing kits, medical equipment, new drugs and vaccines also. This necessitates global partnership and solidarity among countries for disseminating the best practices. Equitable and affordable access to safe and effective COVID 19 vaccines should be ensured in order to get end the pandemic to a large extent.

The threat of pandemic actually unfolds that sustainability must be secured in order to ward off the worst effects of infectious diseases like Covid-19. We require new dimensions of growth without jeopardizing the stock of natural resources while maintaining a balanced system of governance and practices. The health and well-being of all living beings on earth

are inextricably linked with that of the environment. So, the much needed green growth at this juncture underscores the judicious and sustainable use of natural resources and that only can be materialised if the health system is not compromised. The urgency of the time is to prioritize the acceleration and maintaining the progress already made towards SDGs, improving the quality and efficiency of basic services as well as promoting and capitalising the environmental gains due to lockdown so that the degradation of environment can be reversed.

References

1. Arfa, Javaid.(January 14, 2021). List of Important Government Schemes Launched in India in 2020. Retrived from <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/important-government-schemes-launched-in-india-1610603485-1> Accessed on 24th April, 2021.
2. “Coronavirus Pandemic may have doubled poverty in India, says Pew study”. (March 21 2021). *The Hindu* .Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/coronavirus-pandemic-may-have-doubled-poverty-in-india-says-pew-study/article34110732.ece> Accessed on April 30, 2021.
3. Dutt, Pankhuri and Prasad, Urvashi.(2020). Understanding inequality and Covid-19 Pandemic.
Retrieved from <https://government.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/healthcare/understanding-inequality-and-covid-19-pandemic/75216392> Accessed on 23rd July, 2020.
4. Haider, Suhashini. (2021). “ What went wrong with India's vaccine diplomacy?” *The Hindu*, April 23. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/worldview-with-suhasini-haidar-what-went-wrong-with-indias-vaccine-diplomacy/article34394622.ece> Accessed on April 30, 2021.
5. Harikrishnan, S. (2020). India’s Economic Response to the Pandemic-Has it been Enough? *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/economy/indias-economic-response-to-the-pandemic-has-it-been-enough>). Accessed on 22nd July, 2020.
6. Joshi, Mallica. (April 26, 2021) “No let-up, Delhi extends lockdown until May 3”. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/delhi-lockdown-extended-by-week-kejriwal-covid-19-7288242/> Accessed on 30th April, 2021.
7. Kakar, Harsha. (, 2021). Nations Look Inwards as panic spreads. *The Statesman*.
8. Kanitkar, Tejal,. & Nagarajan, Aravindhnan. (2020). “No, the lockdown is not a green moment”.*The Hindu*, May 22. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/opinion-no-the-lockdown-is-not-a-green-moment/article31645692.ece> Accessed: 20th July, 2020.

9. Kapil, Shagun. (2020). "Covid-19 relief did not reach Jan Dhan a/cs of many women:Survey. *Down to Earth*, July,3,. Retrieved from <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/governance/covid-19-relief-didn-t-reach-jan-dhan-a-cs-of-many-women-survey-72113> Accessed on 25th April, 2021.
10. "Migrants back in National Focus". (2021). *The Statesman*, 25th April, 2021.
11. Ministry of Finance. (March 26, 2020). Finance Minister announces Rs 1.70 Lakh Crore relief package under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana for the poor to help them fight the battle against Corona Virus
Retrieved from <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1608345> accessed on 24th April, 2021.
12. Moole, Janhavee.(April 24, 2021). A nightmare on repeat - India is running out of oxygen again, Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-56841381> Accessed on 30th April, 2021.
13. Niti Ayog, Government of India. (2017). Voluntary National Review Report: On the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from http://niti.gov.in/writereaddata/files/India%20VNR_Final.pdf Accessed on 30th April, 2021.
14. Pandey, Kiran.(July, 2020). Covid 19 will have severe impact on SDGs. Retrieved from <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/governance/covid-19-will-have-severe-impact-on-most-sdgs-report-72123> Accessed on 22nd July, 2020.
15. Prasad & Singh. (2020). SDG Index 2019: Where does India stand? January 28. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/sdg-index-2019-where-does-india-stand/article30673450.ece> Accessed on April 30, 2021.
16. PTI. (2021a). "Shiv Sena questions PM Modi's suggestion of lockdown as last resort". *The Hindu*, April 22.
Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/shiv-sena-questions-pm-modis-suggestion-of-lockdown-as-last-resort/article34382673.ece> Accessed on 30th April, 2021.
17. PTI. (2021b). "Air Force, Rlys to transport o2 tankers: PM". *The Statesman*, April 24, p.1.
18. PTI. (2021c). "Set up more private centres before Covid jabs for 18-plus". *The Statesman*, April 24, p.1 .
19. Rampal, Jeevanth.(May, 2020). The hunger challenge of lockdown. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/the-hunger-challenge-of-the-lockdown/article31480844.ece#> Accessed on 23rd July, 2020.
20. Rume, Tanjena. & Islam, S.M. Dedar-UI. (September, 2020). "Environmental effects of COVID-19 pandemic and potential strategies of sustainability". *Heliyon*, 6(9), pp1-5.
21. Saksena , Devendra. (2021). "Covidnama". *The Statesman*, April 28, p.6.
22. Sinha, Dipa. (February 15, 2021). "Hunger and food security in the times of Covid-19". *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40847-020-00124-y> Retrieved from

- <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40847-020-00124-y> Accessed on 28th April, 2021.
23. SNS. (2021a). “Above -18 can get Covid jabs from 1 May, April 19, 2021”. *The Statesman*, 19th April, p.1.
 24. SNS. (2021b). “Over 3.32 lakh fresh cases in India, record 2,263 fatalities”. *The Statesman*, 23rd April, p.1
 25. SNS. (2021c). “Central Government waives customs duty on O2, Covid vaccines”. *The Statesman*, 25th April, p.1.
 26. Vaccine allocation must be rational, Akancha Singh, Nand lal Mishra, Alka Chauhan, Biswajit Besra, *The Statesman*, April 25, 2021, p. 7)
 27. Varma, Gyan. (2021). Less than a third of migrants benefitted from government’s Free Food Scheme. Retrieved from <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/less-than-a-third-of-migrants-benefitted-from-govt-s-free-food-scheme-11597717705605.html> Accessed on 25th April 2021.
 28. Zee Media Bureau. (June, 30, 2020). Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana: All about Centre’s Scheme to Help India’s Poor. Zee News. Retrived from <https://zeenews.india.com/india/pradhan-mantri-garib-kalyan-yojana-all-you-need-to-know-about-centres-scheme-that-aims-to-help-poor-2292799.html> Accessed on 30th April, 2021.