INDIA'S ACHIEVEMENT IN SDG - ECONOMY

NEWS: India has reported significant progress, as reflected in the SDG index, which ranks countries on their attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

India's Overall Progress on SDGs

1. **Improvement in National SDG Index Score**:

   - India's overall SDG Index score has shown significant progress, increasing from **57 in 2018** to **71 in 2023-24**, reflecting sustained efforts in implementing sustainable development strategies.

2. **State-Level Progress**:

   - On average, states have seen a **5-point increase** in their composite index scores between **2020-21 and 2023-24**.

   - Certain states have shown **remarkable progress** with improvements of **up to 8 units**, indicating effective policy execution.

3. **SDG Localisation to Drive Policy Competition**:

   - The creation of **state and district SDG indices** has encouraged **competitive federalism**, prompting states and districts to enhance policy innovation and delivery mechanisms.
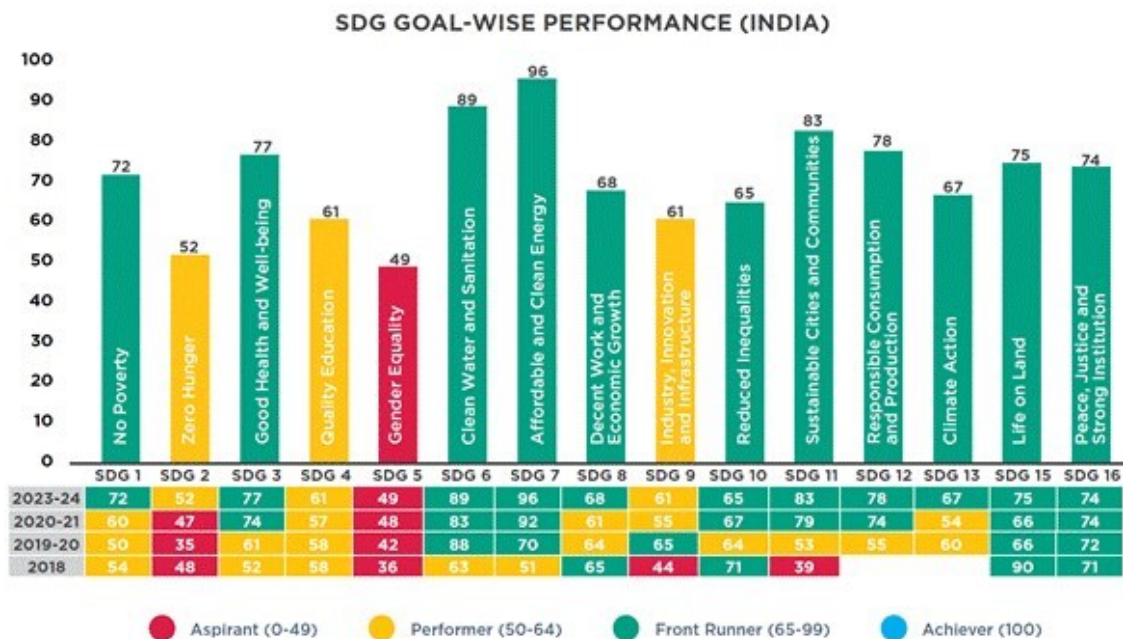
State-wise Performance and Challenges

1. **Top Performing States**:

   - **Kerala and Uttarakhand** achieved scores of **over 80** in **eight SDG goals**, indicating strong, well-rounded development.

   - **Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and West Bengal** scored **above 80** in **six SDG goals**, reflecting effective implementation strategies.

   - **Punjab and West Bengal** have shown **consistent improvement** across almost all goals, indicating balanced and inclusive development.

2. **Areas of Decline**:

   - A number of states reported **declines** in key goals:

     - **Goal 1 (No Poverty)**

     - **Goal 5 (Gender Equality)**

- **Goal 10 (Reduced Inequality)**

- **Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)**

- **Nine or more states** have reported a **drop in scores** in the above goals.

- Some states experienced a **decline in six or more goals**, signaling the need for corrective measures.

SDG GOAL-WISE PERFORMANCE (INDIA)

	SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 15	SDG 16
2023-24	72	52	77	61	49	89	96	68	61	65	83	78	67	75	74
2020-21	60	74	74	57	48	83	92	61	55	67	79	74	54	66	74
2019-20	50	35	61	58	42	88	70	64	65	64	53	55	60	66	72
2018	54	48	52	58	36	63	51	65	44	71	39			90	71

● Aspirant (0-49) ● Performer (50-64) ● Front Runner (65-99) ● Achiever (100)

About the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

1. **Global Adoption**:

   - The SDGs were adopted by the **United Nations General Assembly in 2015**, with an aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by **2030**.

2. **Scope and Targets**:

   - The agenda consists of **17 goals** and **169 specific targets**, covering diverse issues such as poverty, education, health, environment, and governance.

3. **Nature of Commitment**:

   - Although **non-binding**, all member states, including India, have committed to the SDGs, recognizing them as a **collective global responsibility**.
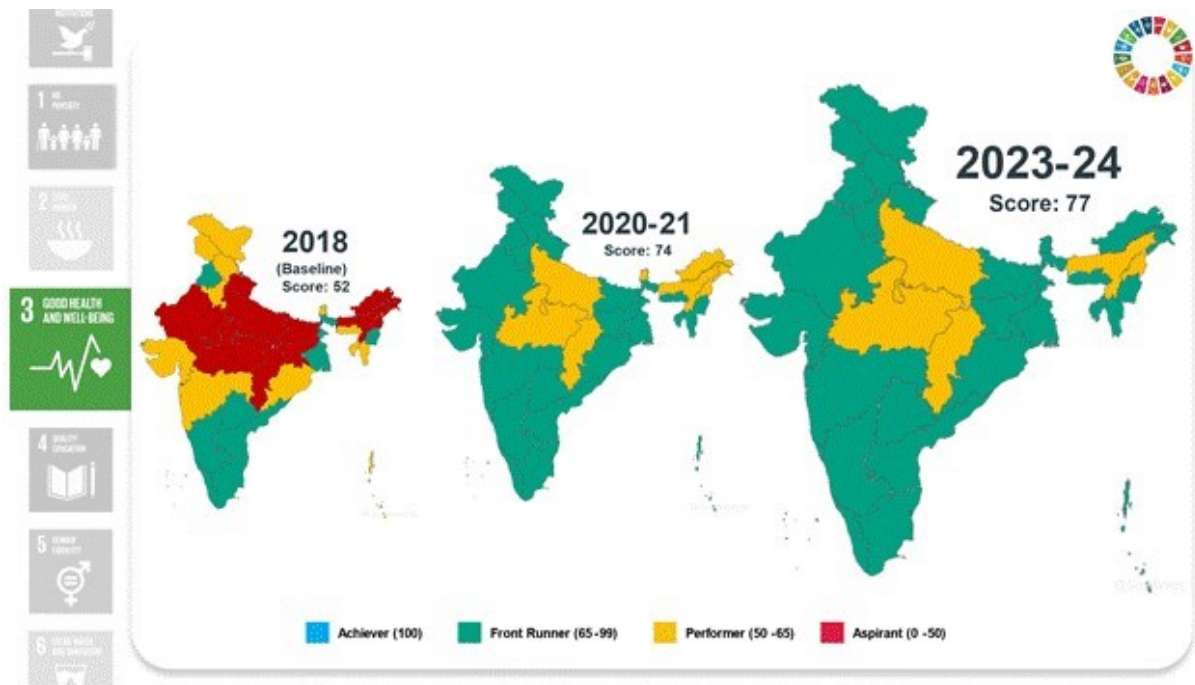
Key Government Initiatives Aligned with SDGs

1. **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) – SDG 6**:

- Aims at universal sanitation access and eliminating open defecation through the construction of toilets and promoting hygiene.

2. **Poshan Abhiyaan – SDG 2**:

   - Seeks to improve nutrition outcomes for children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers through technology-enabled monitoring and convergence.

3. **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) – SDG 5**:

   - Focuses on preventing female foeticide, improving girl child education, and promoting gender equality.

4. **National Solar Mission – SDG 7**:

   - Promotes renewable energy with a focus on increasing solar power generation capacity and reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

5. **Skill India Mission – SDG 8**:

   - Aims to enhance vocational skills among youth and improve employability through large-scale skilling programs.

6. **Jal Jeevan Mission – SDG 6**:

   - Ensures every rural household receives piped water connection with an emphasis on water quality and sustainability.

SDG Localisation in India

1. **Definition and Importance**:

   - Refers to the **adaptation and implementation** of SDGs at the **state, district, and local levels**, considering specific regional priorities and capacities.

2. **Guiding Principle**:

   - The principle of **"Leaving No One Behind" (LNOB)** underpins localisation, focusing on the inclusion of all regions and vulnerable groups.

3. **India's Localisation Strategy**:

   - **NITI Aayog** functions as the **nodal agency**, coordinating with states and UTs to align local plans with the SDG 2030 Agenda.

   - Tools like the **SDG India Index**, **National Indicator Framework (NIF)**, and **District Indicator Framework (DIF)** help monitor and evaluate local progress.

   - Several states have set up **SDG Coordination Centres** and have begun integrating SDGs into budget planning and departmental goals.

- Programs such as **financial assistance for disabled persons** in UTs like Andaman & Nicobar promote inclusive development.

- **UNDP partnerships**, such as those in **Ladakh**, provide technical and financial support to speed up localisation efforts.

- **SDG-based budgeting** helps ensure that financial outlays are directly tied to specific SDG priorities.

Differences Between MDGs and SDGs

1. **Scope and Coverage**:

   - **MDGs** had **8 goals** focused largely on developing nations.

   - **SDGs** include **17 universal goals**, covering social, environmental, and economic development for all countries.

2. **Approach**:

   - MDGs were **top-down**, whereas SDGs were created through **consultations with governments, civil society, and private sector**.

3. **New Areas Introduced in SDGs**:

   - Goals such as **climate action (SDG 13)**, **sustainable cities (SDG 11)**, and **inequality reduction (SDG 10)** were added to ensure holistic progress.

Challenges in Budgeting and Expenditure for SDGs

1. **Inadequate Fiscal Space**:

   - India faces **budgetary constraints**, with competing demands from health, education, and infrastructure sectors.

   - Global estimates suggest a **$4 trillion annual funding gap** for developing nations to meet SDG targets.

2. **Mismatch Between Spending and Outcomes**:

   - Despite increased budget allocations, some states have shown **limited improvement**, e.g.:

     - **Odisha** (Goal 4 & 10)

     - **Haryana** (Goal 16)

     - **Meghalaya** (Goal 1 & 4)

3. **Weak Monitoring and Evaluation**:

   - Absence of **real-time data** hampers assessment of policy impact.

   - Lack of frameworks to measure interlinkages between goals affects resource optimization.

4. **Fragmented Implementation**:

   - Unequal implementation capacity across states.

   - Many local bodies **lack expertise** to execute SDG plans effectively.

5. **Short-Term Planning**:

   - Annual budgeting processes often prioritize **quick wins**, undermining the **long-term vision** required for sustainable development.

6. **Lag Between Spending and Impact**:

   - The benefits of increased investment may **take years to manifest**, making it difficult to attribute immediate progress to current efforts.

Challenges Beyond Financing

1. **Policy Implementation Gaps**:

   - Good policies often falter due to poor on-ground execution and **weak coordination** among departments.

2. **Measurement Limitations**:

   - **Inconsistent and outdated data** affects decision-making and resource allocation.

   - Lack of disaggregated data impacts targeting of marginalized communities.

3. **Ignoring Interlinkages Between Goals**:

   - Trade-offs, such as between **economic growth (SDG 8)** and **climate action (SDG 13)**, are not adequately addressed.

   - Missed opportunities for **cross-sector synergies** due to poor modelling.

4. **Governance Issues**:

   - States and districts often function in **silos**, leading to fragmented efforts.

   - Local institutions lack trained personnel and funding to effectively implement SDGs.

5. **Short-Term Focus**:

   - There is a lack of **multi-year budget planning**, which is essential for achieving long-term targets.

6. **Exclusion of Marginalised Groups**:

   - Vulnerable communities continue to face **structural barriers** in accessing development benefits.

   - **Urban-rural divides** in education, health, and infrastructure further widen the gap.

Global Examples of SDG Success

1. **Finland**:

   - Ranks high in **education, gender equality, and clean energy**, showcasing strong public systems and welfare policies.

2. **Sweden**:

   - Leading in **climate action** and **waste management** through the circular economy model and legal commitments like the **Swedish Climate Act (2017)**.

3. **Japan**:

   - Uses **technology and innovation** to improve disaster resilience and urban development under the **Society 5.0** initiative.

4. **Costa Rica**:

- A global leader in **biodiversity conservation** through policies like **Payments for Environmental Services (PES)** that support sustainable farming and forest preservation.

5. **South Korea**:

- Invests heavily in **technology for education and healthcare**, and has established strong **e-governance frameworks**.

Way Forward for India

1. **Strengthen Data Systems**:

- Develop real-time, **disaggregated data collection frameworks** to track SDG progress effectively.

2. **Enhance Coordination Across Levels**:

- Encourage **collaborative governance** between central, state, and local bodies to reduce duplication.

3. **Localised Budgeting**:

- Align **financial resources** with specific needs of states and districts through participatory and bottom-up approaches.

4. **Build Local Capacities**:

- Train local governments and staff to implement and monitor SDG-linked programs efficiently.

5. **Manage Trade-offs and Synergies**:

- Use evidence-based models to understand how interventions in one SDG area impact others.

6. **Boost Public Engagement**:

- Raise awareness among citizens and involve **civil society and private sector** in SDG implementation.

7. **Adopt a Long-Term Vision**:

- Shift from short-term outcome-based budgeting to **long-term, sustainable planning**, with scope for policy revision based on emerging data.

Conclusion

India's path to achieving the SDGs requires a **multi-sectoral, inclusive, and evidence-based approach**. Strong data systems, empowered local governance, effective budgeting, and long-term vision are key to translating intent into measurable outcomes. Active collaboration between all stakeholders will ensure that no one is left behind in India's sustainable development journey.

Source: https://www.business-standard.com/opinion/columns/sdgs-challenges-beyond-financing-as-progress-lags-in-some-states-125032701384_1.html