IDEAS UNLEASHED, 3rd Edition
ICG–GOA UNIVERSITY ESSAY COMPETITION 2018

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
The challenges for Goa

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all its people enjoy peace and prosperity. They build on the success and limitations of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which expired in 2015. What is distinctive about the SDGs is that they emerged out of an unprecedented consultative process that brought national governments and millions of citizens from across the world together to discuss, negotiate, and adopt a path to sustainable development. In all, 17 goals were identified (please see poster of SDGs below) and these include some key areas that the MDGs left out, such as climate change, economic inequality, and sustainable consumption.

The 17 SDGs – which are linked to 169 targets - form part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by 193 Member States at the UN General Assembly Summit in September 2015, and which came into effect on 1 January 2016. The targets are meant to steer the 17 goals towards clearly specified outcomes by 2030. Therefore, Goal 1 for example, includes the target of reducing by at least half the number of people living in poverty, and *eradicating* extreme poverty. Similarly, under Goal 5, the target is on *eliminating* violence against women.

SDGs and India

India has expressed a strong commitment to realizing the SDGs. This is evident from the many public statements made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well as other senior and key government officials at various meetings and on other occasions. India's national development goals, expressed as *sab ka saath, sab ka vikas* (development with all, and for all), converges neatly with the SDGs. As a large, populous country with a growing economy, India will undoubtedly play a leading role in determining the global success of the SDGs.

NITI Aayog has been entrusted with the task of coordinating the SDGs. It has been mapping all relevant social schemes as they relate to various SDGs and their targets. Furthermore, it has identified lead and supporting ministries for each target. NITI has correctly emphasized the interconnected nature of the SDGs across economic, social, and environmental domains. That is, success or failure in one or more of the SDGs affects outcomes in others.

For the moment though, India lags behind in achieving the SDGs. Last year, it ranked 116 out of 157 nations worldwide in terms of its performance with respect to the SDGs. However, at the same time, it should be noted that national-level data and international comparisons do not reveal the true picture of the Indian reality. This is because India is a large, populous, and diverse country with a federal system, and economic, social, and other similar outcomes are determined less by what the national government does (or does not) and often more by what state governments do (or not do). Many areas identified in the SDGs – health and education to name just two - are under the direct control of state governments. As a result, the progress made by India's states in achieving the SDGs is uneven; while some states are making good progress, others are not. This is precisely why the UN in India supports state governments in localizing the SDGs to address key development challenges at the state level. NITI too works closely with state governments in mapping various national-level social schemes - *Swachh Bharat* for example - that are at the core of the SDGs. State governments are the key to India's progress on the SDGs since they are best placed to 'put people first' and in ensuring that 'no one is left behind'.

The SDGs and Goa
Goa is among the leaders in Indian states on a range of social indicators, including those which are part of the SDGs. Still, there are several areas of concern. For example, as Goa becomes more urbanized and builds and expands its physical infrastructure, the environmental sustainability of such 'development' has come to be questioned in many quarters. Also, despite tourism, Goa has a complex relationship with 'outsiders' as it navigates the twin processes of modernization and development. Goa must therefore face up to the challenges that lie ahead in realizing the SDGs by 2030 because it cannot wish away old and newer areas of concern.

Essay topic
This is the 3rd Edition of *Ideas Unleashed*, an essay competition for college and university students in Goa, jointly organised by ICG and Goa University. The first was organized in 2014 and the second in 2016. This edition's topic – **Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The challenges for Goa –** is of substantial and immediate relevance to Goa. We invite students from across the state to engage with the issue of sustainable development, highlight and discuss the key challenges Goa faces in realizing these goals, and make viable recommendations. What steps can the state government and civil society take to address the shortcomings in achieving the SDGs? What role must the state and civil society - including the private sector and especially business groups – play in this regard, especially considering that the SDGs themselves emerged from a consultative process involving both national governments and millions of citizens from across the world?

Select references
1. *The Guardian* - https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/19/sustainable-development-goals-united-nations
2. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform - https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs
3. United Nations Development Programme – Sustainable Development Goals - http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html