



CASE STUDY

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW: India

Background Information

As home to the world's second-largest population, and the fastest-growing major economy, India's scale ensures that it will have a significant impact on the outcome of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

India completed its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) in the spirit of international cooperation and presented at the 2017. The hope is to help others learn from its experiences, just as India has learned from other countries, with the goal of advancing the SDGs broadly. In fact, VNRs are being created as a vehicle to share the experiences of national efforts that are being made in pursuit of the SDGs, including their successes, challenges, and lessons learned. The goal of doing so is to help accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

Quotes

"Much of India's development agenda is mirrored in the Sustainable Development Goals. Our national plans are ambitious and purposeful; Sustainable development of one-sixth of humanity will be of great consequence to the world and our beautiful planet."

-Narendra Modi

Approach, Delivery, & Challenges

From a big picture perspective, India's leaders advocated for a balanced approach to addressing the three pillars of the SDGs (economic, social, and environmental) as they helped shape the 2030 Agenda. They have also launched numerous programs to address the country's relatively low per-capita income, while its large size has been the primary hindrance to progress. In working to make improvements along these lines, India has set ambitious targets, including universal access to electricity, elementary schools, housing, sanitation, roads, and the internet, as well as aiming for significant expansion of clean and renewable energy.

To make the necessary transition, India has central and state governments, industry, civil society, technical experts, and academics collaborating on the goals. The central government has sponsored programs to create jobs, connect villages, build homes for the poor, and make education available, and it is working to implement these with state governments. But while working vigorously to reduce poverty, India stands



committed to environmental protection. The country has committed to reduce emissions intensity by 33%-35% (per unit of GDP) by 2030 relative to its 2005 levels. It is also working to add 2.5-3 billion tonnes of carbon sink via additional tree cover.

India has several ongoing programs that map nicely with the SDGs. One good example comes from Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), the world's largest financial inclusion program. India deployed a biometric identity system, and mobile telephony on the back of the PMJDY program's infrastructure. Thanks to this, the government was able to disburse 1.6 trillion Rupees (\$25 billion USD) to 329 million beneficiaries via direct transfers. Doing so also made the relevant government programs more efficient. Chief Ministers from government sub-groups provided feedback to the central government to help improve the digital payment program.

In January 2015, the Government of India created a policy think tank, NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India), for achieving the SDGs. The think tank has two hubs from which all its work is centered. The first, the Team India Hub leads collaboration between the states and India's central government. The second, the Knowledge and Innovation Hub, focuses on building expertise for the nation's most pressing needs. India's current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, is the Chairperson of NITI Aayog. Early on, the NITI Aayog released a draft Three-Year plan covering the years 2017-2020 that aligns with the country's ongoing 15-Year Vision and 7-year strategy. These plans adhere to India's federal tradition, and they were prepared with active involvement of the sub-national governments.

NITI Aayog led the VNR preparation efforts via a multidisciplinary Task Force that coordinated the work between the relevant entities. At the non-national level, state and union territory governments reported their progress on the programmes and initiatives they were involved with.

India has some interesting efforts underway at the sub-national level as states have been given flexibility to organize their SDG efforts. Here are a few highlights from those programs:

- Assam, Madhya Pradesh, and Punjab have all created state level institutions to lead local SDG efforts:
 - Assam developed a vision for delivering its SDG targets and it also adopted an integrated framework for implementing the plan. A few villages and towns are implementing pilots to demonstrate the attainability of the state's goals;
 - Punjab's SDGs Support Unit provides technical support and advocates for the use of evidence, analysis, and different perspectives for SDG-informed local policy;
 - Madhya Pradesh's State Planning Commission established four units to deal with different aspects of the SDGs, including planning and policy support, project monitoring, knowledge management, as well as an international division.
- Andhra Pradesh has developed baselines, targets, and milestones as well as implementation strategies;
- Bihar is finalizing its roadmap, while delivering related projects that are improving gender equality, road connectivity and drainage, while expanding the availability of toilets, clean drinking water, electricity, higher education, and job training;
- Haryana focused on stakeholder engagement in developing its Vision 2030 document with strategies are founded on five principles – integrated planning and decentralized implementation, equitable development, building human capital, promoting citizen centric services and green growth;



- Kerala is focusing initially on indicators for SDG 3 (Health). The state is deploying efforts to increase entrepreneurship, while developing its base of knowledge in education, science, and technology, and working to promote environmental and social sustainability.

Benefits & Lessons Learned

India's Parliament has organized several forums for policy development as it prepares to deliver further progress on poverty reduction, gender equality, and mitigating climate change. NITI Aayog is coordinating and leading these events. So far, the group has mapped out the 17 SDGs and 169 targets to the appropriate Nodal Central Ministries, Centrally Sponsored Schemes, and major government initiatives they align with. Sub-national governments have carried out similar efforts. They completed a mapping exercise which aligned the goals with the appropriate departments and programmes in their respective states. And the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation has developed a list of draft national indicators for tracking India's efforts towards the SDGs. The draft plan was then placed in the public domain for broad consumption and feedback.

Future VNRs will be conducted along with bi-annual reviews with state governments for identifying good practices and ongoing challenges. The output of those reviews will be used for identifying and implementing appropriate course corrections. Implementing the SDGs is already yielding insights, and India will endeavor to document and disseminate the knowledge that's gained, while providing support for dealing with challenges. A knowledge management system will be managed at the national level to provide a central repository for those working on the goals.

Opportunities & Next Steps

Going forward, India will maintain close collaboration between national and sub-national governments, alongside active participation with all other relevant stakeholders. Strategies for collaboration are being developed with the interdependencies and interlinkages of the goals in mind. NITI Aayog will continue leading capacity building efforts and consultations that are already in progress. External expertise is being engaged to fill specific gaps in knowledge and experience (for things like planning, modelling, and monitoring) and all the knowledge that's developed will be held within Samaves, a network of resource institutions that's being led by NITI Aayog.

The regional to national nexus is the core of India's SDG efforts, but the country will continue to nurture partnerships at the regional and global levels to ensure a comprehensive approach. Leveraging funding and technology from developed nations will help India drive towards its goals, while also benefiting those beyond its borders.

Sources & Verification

Central Intelligence Agency, "India" *The World Factbook*, 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>.

"Preparation for the HLPF & Voluntary National Reviews Platform," *IFP FIP*, May 31, 2017, <http://ifp-fip.org/en/preparation-for-the-hlpf-voluntary-national-reviews-platform/>.

"Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals," *UN*, July 2017, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16693India.pdf>.

"Voluntary National Reviews: Synthesis Report 2017," *UN DESA*, 2017, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/126002016_VNR_Synthesis_Report.pdf.



VNR country focal point:

Mr. Manish Chauhan
Joint Secretary (UNES)
Ministry of External Affairs
Government of India
Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan
New Delhi

Case study author

Chris Oestereich