From Millennium to Sustainable Development Goals and need for institutional restructuring

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In the year 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration to commit to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and set out a series of goals with time-bound targets. These came to be known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with 8 goals, 21 targets and 60 indicators to be achieved by the end of 2015. The period of MDGs – one of the most resonant and unifying commitments in the history of the international community – will come to an end in 2015. Post 2015, the development agenda will include Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), India needs to have a relook at institutions that are primarily responsible for these goals. This note dwells on water resources.

Progress on MDGs

The achievement of various countries varies significantly. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation (MOSPI) tracks India's progress on MDGs on the basis of datasets generated by the concerned Ministries/Departments at both national and state/union territory level. Our progress is a mixed bag (Table 1). For some indicators, we have already achieved the target level well ahead of the deadline, like halving the percentage of population below poverty line (indicator 1A). For some indicators, it is expected to reach close to the target level by end 2015, if not actually meet the target level, like the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education (indicator 9). However, some areas of concern are indicators such as share of women in wage employment in the nonagricultural sector (indicator 11), and proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, urban and rural (indicator 31). One of the reasons for this far-from-satisfactory performance of India is the rigid structural limitations of the concerned institutions.

Post 2015 development agenda – SDGs

During the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), popularly known as the Rio + 20, in 2012, in the wake of time limit of MDGs

Table 1. Summary of India's progress on Millennium Development Goals

Millennium Development Goal	Target	Status
Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one US dollar per day.	On-track
	Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	Slow or almost off-track
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.	On-track
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015	On-track
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality	Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five morality rate.	Moderately on-track
Goal 5: Improve maternal health	Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.	Slow or off-track
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Target 7: Have halted, by 2015, and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.	On-track as trend
	Target 8: Have halted, by 2015, and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.	Moderately on-track
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	Target 9: Integrate the principle of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources.	Moderately on-track
	Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.	On-track for the indicator of drinking water, but slow for the indicator of sanitation
	Target 11: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.	The pattern not statistically discernible
Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development	Target 18: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.	On-track

Source: Millennium Development Goals, India Country Report 2014. Social Statistics Division, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India; www.mospi.nic.in

in 2015, Member States agreed to establish a process to develop a set of SDGs for adoption in the post-2015 period. It was agreed that a new global development framework through a set of SDGs would take the place of MDGs after 2015. The proposal contains 17 goals with 169 targets covering a broad range of sustainable development issues, including ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, making cities more sustainable, combating climate change, and protecting oceans and forests. This proposal on goals is expected to be adopted at a summit in September 2015. The proposed goals are: (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 ages. (4) Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long 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) Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. (10) Reduce inequality within and among countries. (11) Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. (12) Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. (13) Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. (14) Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. (15) Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage 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 revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Institutions and SDGs

A close observation of SDGs indicates that some indicators are more important than others in the sense that proper management of that particular indicator will have an influence on other parameters, for instance water resource. Water resources, per se, appear to be the common thread for most of the objectives, from ending poverty to achieving food security to healthy lives and so on. Deservingly, concern for water is expressed in proposed goal 6 mentioned above. The targets/indicators for this goal are by 2030, among others: improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping of chemicals and hazardous materials, doubling publicly operated wastewater and sludge treatment, and increasing recycling and reuse by x% globally.

India has about 16% of the world's population compared to only 4% of its water resources. The annual per capita availability of renewable freshwater in the country has fallen from around 6042 m^3 in 1947 to 1845 m^3 in 2007. Given the projected increase in population by the end of the 21st century, the per capita availability is likely to drop below 1000 m^3, a situation labelled as water scarcity (NIH 2010). The Central Pollution Control Board (2011) reported that organic pollution continues to be the predominant pan-Indian pollutant of water resources. It reported that nearly 60% of the observations have Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) levels, one of the cumulative parameters to indicate water quality, less than 3 mg/l, 22% between 3

and 6 mg/l, while 18% above 6 mg/l. Similarly, the presence of total and faecal coliform bacteria that indicates the presence of pathogens in water. Together such factors make water resources even more scarce. These shortages would be further aggravated by climate change, population stress, irrigation requirements and industrialization, etc. The environmental challenges of water resources development and management may be addressed through four broad approaches: (1) improving efficiencies and minimizing losses; (2) recharging groundwater aquifers; (3) abatement and treatment of water pollution and (4) reuse and recycling of wastewater. The Pollution Control Boards are pivotal in this context. However, ever since their establishment on ad-hoc basis, there are caught in a 'dynamic stall' equipped with concentration-based standards that have no or little concern for receiving water bodies, poor record of enforcement, etc. It is time for the Boards to take the lead along the path to ensure sustainability. Revamping the standards should be the first step towards that direction.

1. Central Pollution Control Board, Status of Water Quality in India – 2010. Monitoring of Indian National Aquatic Resources Series: MINARS/2010–11, Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India, 2011.
2. Rakesh Kumar, Singh, R. D. and Sharma, K. D., *Curr. Sci.*, 2005, **89**(5), 794–811.
3. NIH, Water Resources of India, National Institute of Hydrology, Roorkee, Uttarakhand, 2010.

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