

Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals

**Dr. Hilal Ahmad, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, S.J.N.M. (P.G) College,
Lucknow**

Abstract

MDGs are predecessor of SDGs. – MDG targets for 2015 were set to get us “halfway” to the goal of ending hunger and poverty. – It had narrow focus on poverty reduction. MDG set only 8 goals and 21 targets. The SDGs are designed to finish the job to get to a statistical “zero” on hunger, poverty, preventable child deaths and other targets. Sustainable Development goals and targets have been adopted by UN General Assembly in its 70th session held in September, 2015. The UN adopted the document titled "Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". This came into force with effect from 1st January, 2016. The SDGs are a comprehensive list of global goals integrating social, economic and environmental dimensions of development consisting of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and associated 169 targets. Moreover, the SDGs are universal (for all nations – developed, developing and least developed). SDGs are neither binding nor any legal obligation on the member countries but they have become de-facto international obligations. This research paper is written to analyze the progress and difference between MDG and SDG.

Key Words: Sustainable Development Goals; Poverty; Millennium Development Goal, Agenda 2030

Introduction

International development agenda has been set, led and funded by the United Nations (UN) and its technical agencies from their inception in the late 1940s. Till 1990s, the approach was fragmented and disjointed initiated by its specialized agencies to address three dimensions of development — economic, social, and environmental. The Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) saw the convergence of development agenda of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); World health organization (WHO); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and other development agencies¹. Recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect further strengthening convergence of the development agenda. The SDGs also strengthen equity, human rights, and nondiscrimination. In 2000, with the advent of the new millennium, the United Nations set eight goals to all erstwhile member countries (191). The objective of these Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was to combat poverty, hunger and discrimination by 2015. The Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration; 191 United Nations member states and at least 22 international organizations, committed to helping achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. MDGs emphasized three areas: human capital, infrastructure and human rights (social, economic and political), with the intent of increasing living standards. MDGs set concrete targets and indicators for poverty reduction in order to achieve the rights set forth in the Declaration.

There were altogether 8 goals with 21 targets and a series of measurable health indicators and economic indicators for each target. The 8 millennium goals are 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger 2. Achieve universal primary education 3. Promote gender equality and empower women 4. Reduce child mortality 5. Improve maternal health 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases 7. Ensure environmental sustainability 8. Develop a global partnership for development.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the United Nations global development goals. These are bold universal agreements to end poverty in all its dimensions and craft an equal, just and secure world. SDG has 17 goals and 169 targets and it covers multiple aspects of growth and development. It is also known as a successor of MDGs (Millennium Development Goals). It was adopted by 193 countries of United Nations General Assembly on 25th September 2015. SDG is officially known as “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” It is built on the principle agreed upon under resolution, “The Future We Want”. Unlike the MDGs, that targets the developing countries, the SDGs apply to all countries whether rich, middle or poor countries. The SDGs are also nationally-owned and country-led, wherein each country is given the freedom to establish a national framework in achieving the SDGs.

Progress in MDGs and Build Up to SDGs

The MDGs generated new and innovative partnerships, galvanized public opinion, and showed the immense value of setting ambitious goals. By putting people and their immediate needs at the forefront, the MDGs reshaped decision-making in the developed and developing countries alike. It helped to lift more than one billion people out of extreme poverty, to make inroads against hunger, to enable more girls to attend school, and to protect our planet. Yet inequalities

¹ Kumar S. Health in international development Agenda: Present, past and future. *Indian J Community Med.* 2013;38:129–31.

persist and the progress has been uneven. The world's poor remain overwhelmingly concentrated in some parts of the world. Several women continue to die during pregnancy or from child birth related complications. Progress tends to bypass women and those who are lowest on the economic ladder or are disadvantaged because of their age, disability, or ethnicity. Disparities between rural and urban areas remain pronounced².

India has made a substantial improvement in MDGs but the progress is mixed. The under-five mortality rate (U5MR) has come down from 126 (1990) to estimated 48 not reaching the target of 42 by 2015. However, the estimated child deaths have come down from 3.36 million (1990) to 1.2 million (2015) that translates to 3,300 child lives saved every day. U5MR in India is still above the world average (43), and is higher compared to Sri Lanka (10), Nepal (36), and Bangladesh (38). In India Infant mortality and neonatal mortality rates have come down to 38 (target 27) and 28 (from 88), respectively³. India achieved a maternal mortality rate (MMR) of 167 (2011-2013) and expected to reach 140 in 2015 down from 437 in 1990, which is well above the target of 109⁴. If we go by the latest UN estimates of MMR of 560 in 1990,⁵ the target should be 140 and India is on track to achieve this target. The target of safe drinking water has been achieved in rural areas and is likely to be achieved in the urban areas as well. The target of sanitation is likely to be achieved in urban areas and missed in rural areas⁶.

To create a new, people-centered, development agenda, a series of global consultations were conducted both online and offline. Civil society organizations, citizens, scientists, academics, and the private sectors from around the world were all actively engaged in the process. The SDGs include 17 goals and 169 targets.⁷ Indicators are expected to come out in March 2016. The 17 goals in abridged form are as follows:

1. No poverty;
2. Zero hunger;
3. Good health and well-being;

² New York, USA: United Nations; 2015. United Nations. Millennium Development Goals Report; p. 3. [[Google Scholar](#)]

³ New York, USA: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); 2015. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed Progress Report; pp. 90–1. [[Google Scholar](#)]

⁴ New Delhi, India: Social Statistics Division, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India; 2015. Government of India. Millennium Development Goals. India Country Report; p. 19. [[Google Scholar](#)]

⁵ Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2013 Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, The World Bank and the United Nations Population Division. <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/monitoring/maternalmortality-2013/en/>

⁶ Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2013 Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, The World Bank and the United Nations Population Division. <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/monitoring/maternalmortality-2013/en/>

⁷ UN General assembly. 69th Session. Agenda Item 13(a)
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

4. Quality education;
5. Gender equality;
6. Clean water and sanitation;
7. Affordable and clean energy;
8. Decent work and economic growth;
9. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure;
10. Reduce inequality;
11. Sustainable cities and communities;
12. Responsible consumption and production;
13. Climate action;
14. Life under water;
15. Life on land;
16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions; and
17. Partnership for the goals.

The SDGs can be broadly divided into three categories: First, an extension of MDGs that includes the first seven SDGs; second group is inclusiveness (jobs, infrastructure, industrialization, and distribution). It includes goals 8, 9, and 10; and the third group is on sustainability and urbanization that covers the last seven goals: sustainable cities and communities, life below water “consumption and production; climate action; resources and environment; peace and justice; and the means of implementation and global partnership for it”. **Health goals;** the third SDG — “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” — is wider-ranging compared to the health goals in MDGs that were limited to child and maternal mortality and communicable diseases. The social determinants of health though not spelled as such but are addressed through Goals 1 (poverty), 2 (hunger), 4 (education), 5 (gender equality), 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 9 (industry innovation and infrastructure), 10 (reduced inequalities), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 12 (responsible consumption and production), 13 (climate action), and 16 (peace, justice and strong Institutions).

Difference between SDGs and MDGs

SDGs benefit from the experience of MDGs. SDGs carry forward the unfinished agenda of MDGs, they reflect continuity and consolidation of MDGs while making these more sustainable by strengthening environmental goals and further strengthening global partnership by including CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) and private sector.

There are seven major differences in MDGs and SDGs;

1. MDGs were drawn up by a group of experts in the ‘basement of UN headquarters’ whereas SDGs have evolved after a long and extensive consultative process that includes; 70 Open Working Groups, Civil Society Organizations, thematic consultations, country consultations, participation of general public through face-to-face meetings and online mechanisms and door to door survey;
2. While MDGs were focused with only 8 goals, 21 targets and 63 indicators, SDGs include 17 goals with 169 targets. An expert analyses by noble laureates at Copenhagen consensus, suggest that if the UN concentrates on 19 top targets, it can get \$20 to \$40 in social benefits per dollar spent, while allocating it evenly across all 169 targets would reduce the figure to less than \$10. Being smart about spending could be better than doubling or quadrupling the aid budget⁸;
3. MDGs had a focus on developing countries with funding came from rich countries. All countries, developed or developing, are expected to work towards achieving SDGs;
4. The pillars of human development, human rights and equity are deeply rooted in SDGs and several target; seven targets explicitly refers to people with disabilities, six to people in vulnerable situations, and two to non-discrimination. These were not even mentioned in the MDGs; MDGs had 3 direct health goals, 4 targets and 15 indicators had emphasis on child, maternal mortality and communicable diseases. SDGs have one comprehensive goal emphasizing well-being and healthy living;
5. MDGs had a time span of 25 years though adopted in 2002 baseline data for the year 1990 was used and some of the baselines were revised subsequently which shifted ‘the goal post’. For the SDGs, the baseline is from 2015 estimates. It may be revised as more recent data becomes available;
6. SDGs include a vision of building vibrant and systematic partnerships with private sector to achieve sustainable development. It builds on, UN Compact which was launched in year 2000 and IMPACT 2030;
7. MDGs had no concrete role for the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), whereas SDGs have paid attention to this right from the framing stage itself with significant engagement of civil society actors. The CSOs can play an important role to hold governments accountable at the local level.

⁸ Kydland F, Stokey N, Schelling T. Smart Development Goals. <http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/post-2015-consensus/nobel-laureates-guide-smarter-global-targets-2030>.

Table-1

Differences between MDGs and SDGs

Differences based on	Millennium Development Goals	Sustainable Development Goals
Successor or predecessor	MDGs are predecessor of SDGs.	SDGs are successor to the MDGs.
Number of Goals	MDGs consists of 8 goals	SDGs consists of 17 goals
Number of targets	MDG had 21 targets	SDG has 169 targets
Number of indicators	MDG had 60 indicators	SDG has 232 indicators
Formulation of the goals	It was produced by a small group of technical experts	It was produced by UN Open Working Group (OWG) made up of 30 members representing 70 countries. SDG drafting process also included intense consultation process among: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 193 UN member states – Civil society organizations – Academicians – Scientists – Private sectors and – Other stakeholders all around the world
Zero goals	– MDG targets for 2015 were set to get us “halfway” to the goal of ending hunger and	– The SDGs are designed to finish the job to get to a statistical “zero” on hunger, poverty, preventable child

	<p>poverty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It had narrow focus on poverty reduction. 	<p>deaths and other targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It has wide focus on poverty reduction and tries to embed environmental, economic and social aspects together.
Applicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – MDGs mainly targeted developing/least developed or poor countries. – It was designed in the context of “rich donors aiding poor recipients.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SDGs targets and applies uniformly to all the countries; rich, middle income and poor. – It appeals all countries to take action.
Pillars for sustainable end of hunger	<p>MDGs ignored the three crucial pillars for sustainable end of hunger i.e. empowering women, mobilizing everyone, and collaborating with local government</p>	<p>SDGs have addressed these three pillars more strongly i.e. SDG have ensured stronger gender roles, people’s participation and government participation</p>
Focused areas	<p>It mainly focused on social dimensions and better health</p>	<p>It focuses on social inclusion, economic growth, better health and environmental protection. SDGs also strengthen equity, human rights and non-discrimination</p>
Development agendas	<p>MDG could not focus holistically on development. It also missed to address root causes of poverty.</p>	<p>SDG focuses holistically on development.</p>
Scope of work	<p>MDG only emphasized on the prevalent challenges</p>	<p>SDG emphasizes on present and upcoming challenges</p>
Distinguishing Hunger and Poverty.	<p>Hunger and poverty are combined together in MDG</p>	<p>SDGs treat the issue of poverty separately from hunger and, food and</p>

		nutrition security
Cost	MDGs were less costly compared to SDG	SDGs are much more costly compared to MDGs
Source of funding	MDGs were largely envisioned to be funded by aid flows, which did not materialize	SDGs put sustainable, inclusive economic development at the core of the strategy
Peace Building	MDGs did not include peace building in their core agenda and goals	SDGs include peace building to the success of ending poverty and hunger.
Data Revolution	MDGs did not prioritize monitoring, evaluation and accountability.	SDGs target by 2020 to “increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.”
Quality Education	The MDGs focused on quantity (e.g.: high enrollment rates) rather than quality. This might have declined quality of education in many societies.	SDGs focus on the quality of education and the role of education in achieving a more humane world: “education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”

Challenges

The four major challenges that need to be addressed for achieving the SDGs are as follows:

1. Some of the SDGs that have been included show that the cost of the SDGs is huge. The rough calculations have put the cost of providing a social safety net to eradicate extreme poverty at about \$66 billion a year,⁹ while annual investments in improving infrastructure (water, agriculture, transport, and power) could be up to a total of \$7 trillion globally. A major conference on financing for the SDGs, held in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa in July, failed to ease concerns that there will not be enough funds to meet the goals. It included a recommitment to the UN target on aid spending 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) set more than 40 years ago. Multilateral banks committed \$400 billion;¹⁰
2. Maintaining peace is essential for development. A threat to international peace and stability by non state actors is emerging as a major factor for both developed and developing countries. The recent crisis in Syria has forced 12 million people to leave their homes and made them refugees.
3. Measuring progress: A number of targets in the SDGs are not quantified. The indicators for measuring progress have not yet been identified. Even if they limit to two indicators per target there will be 338 indicators to monitor and report. "Having 169 targets is like having no targets at all."¹¹ Measurability will depend on the availability of data and capacity to measure them.
4. Accountability: There was a lack of accountability for inputs into MDGs at all levels. This challenge needs to be addressed in SDGs.

At the international level, most of the developed countries have not met the target of allocating 0.7% of GNI to international aid in the last 40 years. The lack of priority in funds allocation within country budget has also been a problem during MDGs. Similar lack of accountability exists at ministry, state, and local administration level. If we take SDGs seriously the accountability needs to be strengthened at all levels.

⁹ Report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing 2014. <https://sustainabledevelopmentun.org/content/documents/4588FINAL%20REPORT%20ICESDF.pdf> .

¹⁰ Speech by Jim Yong Kim, President World Bank at UNGA on 25 Sept 2015. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2015/09/25/speech-united-nations-generalassembly> .

¹¹ New York: The Economist; 2015. The Economics of Optimism. The Debate Heats up about what Goals the World should Set Itself for 2030. <http://www.economist.com/news/finance-andeconomics/21640361-debate-heats-up-about-what-goals-worldshould-set-itself-2030> . [Google Scholar]

Challenges for India

The momentum created by MDGs in India needs to be sustained with focus on completing the unfinished task of MDGs. India-specific goals, targets, and indicators along with the roadmap to achieve these should be drawn up by the concerned ministry and states and union territories. One major challenge will be to fund these goals. It is also important to estimate the budget required and to find out from where these funds will come. The preliminary estimates from global meetings suggest mobilizing required resources is going to be a major challenge. The need to establish a system of collecting relevant data to monitor the progress is vital to achieve these goals, targets, and indicators that are much larger in numbers compared to MDGs. The reliance on data from surveys needs to be minimized. The health goal will need a major effort in addressing non-communicable diseases and accidents and injuries while sustaining efforts to address maternal and child health and nutrition.

Conclusion

MDGs helped in mobilizing international community, leaders, politicians, civil society and sectoral ministries, and departments to focus on achieving these time-bound and measurably goals. We may not have achieved all these goals but have made a substantial progress in saving lives and improving quality of lives of millions of people within the country and globally. India has not made progress commensurate with its economic and technological might and needs to do more. MDGs have been easy to relate, understand, communicate, implement, and monitor, whereas SDGs, though to some extent, are a continuation of MDGs, yet suffer from the weakness of being too many and unwieldy to implement and monitor. This has probably resulted from large consultative process where everyone wants to see their areas of interest included. Providing required funding to these a reality remains a challenge. There is a need to improve accountability from international level to local level. The next 15 years is likely to see unprecedented mobilization of resources and efforts to make the world a better place to live for “we the people”, especially the marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

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