



THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF YOUTH IN INDIA AND INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The interest in the youth and their contribution to the achievement of the SDG goals has increased in the recent times with academic research being undertaken by Governments to measure their role is a good sign towards creating opportunities for the young persons. Governments of India and Indonesia have taken a number of steps to encourage the youth to make a contribution to the achievement of the SDG goals especially those dealing with the eradication of poverty and gaining education and skills. In this article we will examine the measures taken by the governments to be compatible with the United Nations plan to augment life and conditions of livelihood by 2030.

Keywords: Government programmes, sustainability, SDG goals, UN programmes, Youth

INTRODUCTION

Studies into the field of sustainability has surged considerably since the last decade resulting in impactful research. This could be ascribed to the increasing awareness of global warming and the cognized impacts of this phenomena. On another note, “there is an increase in education and awareness relating to energy consumption and their prices, the knowledge of the science behind climate change, and the business effect that environmental and social sustainability could have on the business” (Carter & Easten 2011). This research is important to understand what the term means and measure the delivery that can quantify the progress towards achieving sustainability goals. The research analyses the measures that the governments have taken to acknowledge the involvement of the youth in popularising and implementing the SDG goals.

METHOD

The method adopted for this paper is descriptive analysis involving summarizing and organizing data to describe the sustainability and the approach adopted by the Government of India and Indonesia in involving the youth to achieve SDG goals. The research uses measures like mean, median, mode, and standard deviation to understand and analyse the main features of data available through the government and United Nations working papers. This research combines insights which is developed from a diagnostic perspective and uses predictive analyses to combine the data to arrive at a decisive conclusions.

The earliest mention of the term sustainable was in 1650s when the German word *Nachhaltigkeit* was used to refer the preservation of soil to support the sustainability of wood supplies which needed to be protected for the future (Grober, 2012). The interest in

sustainability continued in the 19th century often fuelled by the ideas of the depletion of resources due to rising population and its impact on the environment. In 1962, Rachel Carson, a marine biologist published her book “Silent Spring” in which she assessed how the use of chemicals is harming wildlife and would very soon poison humanity by causing diseases such as cancer. Several Governments reacted to the work by banning a number of chemicals a decade later after the public anger which originated in the fear that poisoning and pollution would soon impact on the food supply chain (McLaughlin, 2010). Social critiques in the later years attributed environmental degradation to several systemic factors such as profit driven business cultures, never ending greed to exploit earth’s resources etc.

Several attempts were made to define sustainability in the subsequent years, but none of them were comprehensive as all of them either dealt with social, economic or environmental activities. In the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, the concept of sustainable development received its major international recognition for the first time. Though the term sustainability was not explicitly mentioned, but the international community agreed on the concept in principle that any long term development would also include the idea of development and the environment.

It was only during the making of the ‘Our Common Future’ during the Brundtland World Commission Report of 1987, the environmental and non-environmental aspects of sustainability became popular. The report looked at the environmental impact of the economic activities in both developing and industrialised economies while promoting basic human needs. The Brundtland Report's mandate was to investigate the numerous concerns raised in previous decades, namely, that human activity which had severe and negative effects on the planet, and those unchecked patterns of growth and development which would be unsustainable. The classical definition of sustainable development "development that meets present needs without jeopardising future generations' ability to meet their own needs" was coined during this period. The Planet Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002 saw 191 national governments, UN agencies, international financial institutions, and other important groups gathered to look at progress since the summit at Rio.

Defining Youth

Youth is a concept based on the category of age and belonging to an idealized and institutionalized grouping. Youth have a number of attributes in general and they differ in needs and aspirations created through social interactions and social existence. In order to understand young people, it is crucial to study them in the contexts of their social lives (Ansell et al., 2020). Youth is a transitory stage and their actions determine their characteristics since they belong to a diverse heterogeneous group within population.

An universally agreed international definition of the youth age group does not exist. For statistical purposes, the United Nations define ‘youth’ as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years in the context of preparing for the International Youth Year (1985). It was earlier accepted by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/28 of 1981. Therefore, all UN statistics on youth in demography, education, employment and health use this definition to define youth (United Nations, n.d.).

The following table summarizes these differences in the operational definition and nuances of the term ‘youth’ and how it varies from country to country, depending on socio-cultural, institutional, economic and political factors.

Table 1. Differences in the operational definition and nuances of the term ‘youth’

Entity/Instrument/ Organization	Age (Years)
UN Secretariat/UNESCO/ILO	Youth: 15–24
UN Habitat (Youth Fund)	Youth: 15–32
UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA	Adolescent: 10–19 Young people: 10–24 Youth: 15–24
UNICEF/ The Convention on Rights of the Child	Child under 18 (No definition of Youth)
The African Youth Charter	Youth: 15–35
Many countries give equal treatment under the law-often referred to as the ‘age of majority.’	The reference to age of majority is commonly understood as 18 years.

From the above table, we can conclude that youthhood is understood to be the most energetic and productive period of young persons. A country’s ability and potential for growth is mainly determined by the size and strength of its youth population. It is believed that developing countries with large youth population could see tremendous growth, provided they invest in young people’s education, health and guarantee their rights. It can undoubtedly be said that today’s young generations are tomorrow’s innovators, creators, builders and leaders. As youth are increasingly demanding more just, equitable and progressive opportunities and solutions in their societies, the need to address the multifaceted challenges faced by young people such as access to good education & health, better employment and gender equality need to be addressed as soon as possible.

Youth in India

World’s most population under 21 lives in India. More than half of Indians are under the age of 25, and more than two-thirds are under the age of 35 (Basu, 2007). The current generation of Indian youth is eager to become involved in a wide range of activities that support long-term development. For the implementation of a sustained development programmes, India has realised that young people should have a feeling of purpose, value, and success. It is felt that if the nation want good growth, then we need to involve young people in the process (Connell et al., 2001). Many of the problems that India as a nation face have their roots in the communities in which they are located. Efforts by young people are essential to achieving sustainable development. Local institutions help promote economic growth, social and political development, and environmental protection. India's youth may be assigned additional jobs and obligations to ensure their long-term development. It is critical that young people contribute meaningfully to sustainable development (Hart, 2013).

India has almost half of its population under the age of 25 and this current projection on youth has been coupled with increased employment opportunities and productivity in recent years across major industries, specially manufacturing and services. This has persuaded policymakers to expand skill development programmes relevant to market-demands locally and internationally. The report of the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness 2015-16 ranks India in higher education and training at 90th in the world, much lower than many peer economies including China (63rd), South Africa (83rd) and Indonesia (65th). This is because of a lack of formal skills training coupled with lower educational attainments and weak

standards of technical training. Such institutional outcomes have increased the capacity-divide between professional, skilled and unskilled cohorts.

India has implemented the policy of decentralisation of the skill development programmes across various ministries and departments including institutions such as the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET). The Government has involved NGOs, industrial associations and donor organisations as well in implementing these programmes. The current government has made a commitment to increasing and improving the quality of human resources by increasing currently low levels of public spending on education and policy interventions in education and skills development. For this purpose, public investment allocations has been encouraged in central and state-level budgets. The newly established Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship helps to integrate the policies across states and make skills development standards uniform nationwide. The central government has promised to set up 1,500 institutes through public-private partnerships (PPPs) which will engage youth from low-income families and the marginalised classes (Bloom et al., 2000). The participation of women (above 14 years old) in the labour force has not increased, primarily due to cultural barriers and low education-levels, especially in urban areas where the job market demands an educated/skilled labour force (Das et al., 2015). The Indian government need to look carefully into the factors which prevent increased female participation, including: physical security in workplaces, the burden of unpaid family work and cultural norms in religious minority populations. The government has shown great interest in 'make-in-India' campaign which has promoted the manufacturing sector.

The envisaged growth in this sector, however, will require another 10 million skilled workers. Another 50 million will be required in the services sector. The existing data informs us that there are 7 million new labour force entrants every year and more than 5 million lack formal training (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship India, 2016). NSDA is an autonomous body created to coordinate and harmonise skill-development activities as part of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship's (MSDE) special initiatives. The agency aims at skill development missions, consolidation with other partners on schemes related to skill development and integration of the labour market information system (LMIS) largely helping to integrate data and evaluation and, in turn, understanding the market's demand and supply needs. National Skill Development Fund (NSDF) financially supports these initiatives.

The key entities responsible for spearheading the work involving the youth in achieving SDG goals in India are NITI Aayog. NITI Aayog is mandated with the task of coordinating work on SDGs by adopting a synergistic approach, involving organizations, academia and business sector to achieve India's SDG targets. A comprehensive mapping of SDG targets with schemes and programmes has been developed to bring together economic, social and environmental pillars, with a focus on their interlinkages. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has also been leading discussions at the global level on the indicator framework for the SDGs.

NITI Aayog has formulated the SDG India Index to track the progress of 62 Priority Indicators to provide a holistic view on the social, economic and environmental status of the country and its States by creating aggregate measure which can be understood and used by everyone—policymakers, businesses, civil society and the public. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship to implement the same. It aims to mobilise the private sector also to offer outcome-based skills training, certification and activities based on a reward

system. Monetary rewards are offered as an incentive to learning, advocacy and mobilisation of youth activities and scaling up participants' training. The scheme aims to offer youth with fully funded and government-certified training in the industrial sector. This project is also trying to create links with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) programme through the 'Life-MGNREGA' scheme that aims to promote self-reliance and improve the beneficiaries' skill base. This skill development plan in rural areas supported by placing rural youth under Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY-SP).

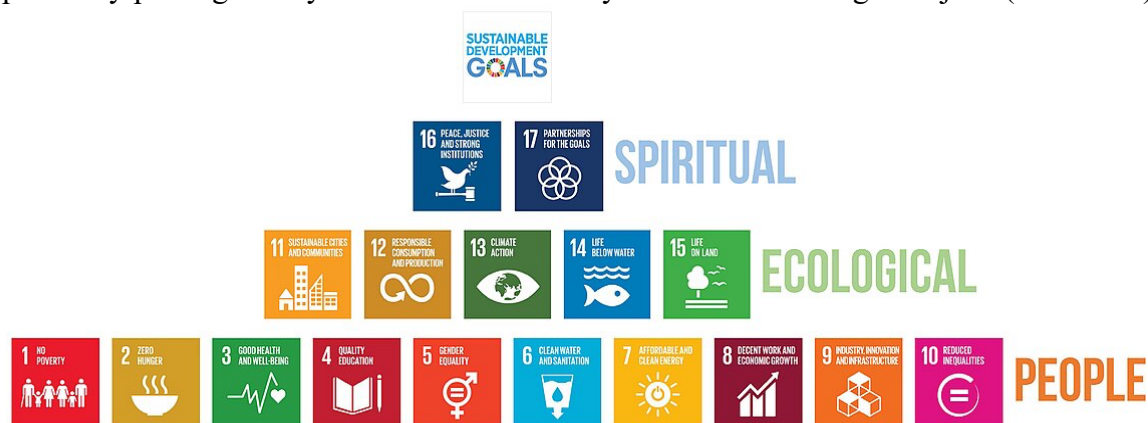


Figure 1. SDG India Index

Youth and accomplishment of SDG in Indonesia

Between 2019 and early 2021, quite a number of achievements have been attained by Indonesia in addition to the achievements of each Goal, including revision for the Metadata Indikator SDGs Indonesia (Indonesia's SDG Indicators Metadata) in its 2nd edition as a basis for the development of the 2020-2024. National Youth representatives in Indonesia are continuously engaged with the other stakeholders for the achievement of sustainability goals despite the various challenges that they face including the restrictions imposed by the Covid increased poverty, increased inequality, deteriorating food security and population nutrition, and the overstretching of healthcare services. All this happened through online mechanisms and various consultation series and it ensured the concept of inclusiveness in contributing the actual information and data regarding SDGs progression. Youth engagement in Indonesia is also evident through the consultation at various levels, particularly on various issues such as gender equality, child protection, and youth empowerment. These consultations such as the Woman and Child Musrenbang (Women Development Planning Meeting at District level), Village Discussion and Working Group on Violence against Women and Children, Village Children's Forum (FAD), and Consultation in Village Development Planning, which were led by various NGOs, Youth-led Organisations, and UN Agencies. Evidently, these programmes were in line with SDG 5, 10, 16, and 17.

Youth organisations and youth volunteers contribute towards SDGs progression in Indonesia. For example, the youth volunteers adhered to SDG 13 by helping the government with the disaster-affected communities and SDG 4 by sending 600 Young Educators under "Indonesia Teaches Programme" (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2019). Numerous youth organisations and youth groups for disabilities also disseminating SDGs to their fellow friends in various provinces in the country. In addition, to intensify the university roles as institutions that could promote SDGs and fulfil the concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the SDGs Campus Ambassadors was appointed to advocate

the SDGs to the community within the campus and off the campus (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2021). By having this initiative, youth in Indonesia have performed their roles as agents of change and communicated the SDGs to the target groups. As a target group, various issues related to youth has gained the government's attention. SDG 1 has always been one of the main concerns for Indonesia. About that, SDG 4 in Indonesia has been strongly emphasised and was linked alongside SDG 1, 8, 10, and 17 to resolve poverty and unemployment. Therefore, the working capacity of youth irrespective of gender and geographical settings have been strengthened with formal education, training and development, mentoring, and financial assistance. As a result of the establishment of educational initiatives such as the "Indonesia Smart Programme", the school completion rate has risen, and the education participation rate of young people is maintained at a positive trend (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2019) According to OHCHR (2024).

The vocational and entrepreneurial training programmes for the school and non-school population have also been strengthened. A social-based entrepreneurship training for youth, for example, was to produce young entrepreneurs and to offer alternative employment. The government has allocated a specific budget for vocational training, work-based learning, and apprenticeship programmes that can facilitate the transitioning of youth from school to work. Also, the Vocational Training and Skills Centre and Community Learning Centre were established to offer numerous skill-based training to the young people (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017, 2019). With the public-private collaboration and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) between the government institutions and businesses, the vocational training and programmes in Indonesia have increased the employment rate of the younger generation, including youth with disabilities. the government has undertaken specific measures to address health concerns (SDG 3). Programmes to deal with chronic diseases, awareness on sex education for young people, good health practices and youth health and nutrition improvement programmes have been the country health provider's focus with UN agencies such as United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017, 2021). As for the issues regarding gender equality (SDG 5), particularly on teenage and child marriage issues, the government has undertaken proactive actions to create public awareness through communicative and educational programmes (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2019). Environmental concern has also drawn youth attention in the country. The VNR 2021 has reported few youth-led initiatives, such as Plastic Reborn 2.0, to advocate sustainable plastic waste management. Teenagers were also engaged with technology in the advancement of SDG 13, in which the maritime and terrestrial weather forecast have been monitored with a smartphone application known as "Cuaca BMKG" (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2019). In general, Indonesia has reported their SDGs progress successfully by sharing their best practises. This will incentivize countries in the region to adapt and learn from these strategies.

During the COVID-19, the Indonesian Government undertook a series of measures through social protection programs by providing various kinds of assistance, such as provision of staple foods, conditional cash assistance (Program Keluarga Harapan), electricity subsidies, LPG subsidies, tuition subsidies (Program Indonesia Pintar), and the pre-employment card (Kartu Prakerja). In 2020, the government provided IDR 381 billion for social protection throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Build Forward Better is Indonesia's strategy in accelerating economic recovery and social reforms in 2021 to ensure concurrent response to COVID-19 and economic recovery.

Youth organisations and youth volunteers also contribute immensely towards SDGs progression in Indonesia. Youth volunteers adhered to SDG 13 by helping the government with

the disaster-affected community and SDG 4 by sending 600 Young Educators under “Indonesia Teaches Programme” (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2019). Numerous youth organisations and youth groups for disabilities also disseminating SDGs to their fellow friends in various provinces in the country. In addition, to intensify the university roles as institutions that could promote SDGs and fulfil the concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the SDGs Campus Ambassadors was appointed to advocate the SDGs to the community within the campus and off the campus (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2021). Through this initiative, youth in Indonesia have performed their roles as agents of change and communicated the SDGs to the target groups. By involving the young people, the government has strengthened with formal education, training and development, mentoring, and financial assistance. As a result of the establishment of educational initiatives such as the “Indonesia Smart Programme”, the school completion rate has risen, and the education participation rate of young people is maintained at a positive trend (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2019). Also, the Vocational Training and Skills Centre and Community Learning Centre were established to offer numerous skill-based training to the young people (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017, 2019). With the public-private collaboration and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) between the government institutions and businesses, the vocational training and programmes in Indonesia have increased the employment rate of the younger generation, including youth with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

The Youth engagement is essential to have a lasting influence on young people and their communities. Youth participation is both limitless and unavoidable in order to achieve long-term sustainability. Youth activism, social responsibility, and involvement in global sustainable development cannot have individualistic focus on achieving personal sustainability. To achieve long term growth, it is vital to provide youngsters with a worldwide societal role. A single youth's strength may not have a significant influence, but when combined with other youths, strength and impact may be tremendous. Sustainability can only be achieved by integrating science, community, and culture. Youth involvement in science, community, and culture is essential. Engaging youths in the early phases of issue identification and design is critical to long-term sustainability. A commitment from all adolescents is required, and it should be a continuous process in which young people from all backgrounds are actively involved and dedicated. Young people need to be educated about sustainability and made aware of it by universities. Students may be encouraged to come up with new ideas by promoting sustainability on college campuses. The Youth in the 21st century need to be involved in long-term progress. To make this a reality, a lot of focus must be placed on youth employment and vocational training. "Developmental youth education" means an educating young person for their intellectual, emotional, moral, social, and physical growth. Observational learning may be used to learn complex social behaviours. Learning should take place in a social context that involves both the adult and the child's attitudes and behaviours, which will aid in the growth of the child. Positive youth development encourages young people to learn and practise new skills so that they can build their own resources. It gives students a chance to take on responsibilities that have an impact on others. This duty aids in the development of social maturity in young people by encouraging them to engage in mutually beneficial and gratifying relationships with others. A curriculum that teaches students about sustainability must take into account the diversity of their requirements, talents, interests, and behaviours. Youth peer education is critical for promoting full participation from all segments of the young population. Conventional methods of education differ greatly from environmental education, and this

relationship may be formed between environmental concerns and environmental issues. Educating young people about environmental responsibility is the first step. For sustainability, the goal is to be successful in innovation, competitiveness, and better education. It is suggested that young people can help develop a long-term business climate. Sustainable development and education are intertwined because of the global nature of Earth education at a global level. The most essential source of competitive advantage for youngsters is to come up with innovative and creative environmental technology. Environmental concerns are important to young people, and they feel they are the ones who can make a difference. Moral and ego growth may be stimulated as a result.

Human well-being should be included while assessing the world's ecological system at a global level. For the sake of solving global issues, young people must be exposed to the natural world around them. Positive effects on environmental education come from students' perceptions and experiences, which environmental educators share with them. Students may serve as critical assessors and positive contributors to the green economy. of their inactivity and lack of involvement in the community. Youth are consistently used by inter-generational conflict as problem-makers. Therefore, to understand youth better, the inter-generational power relationships should be examined.

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