



PERSPECTIVE SHIFT ON PEOPLE & PLANET IN PAKISTAN

National Framework and targets for SDGs

National Framework and targets for SDGs The Planning Commission of Pakistan proposed the National Framework for Sustainable Development Goals in 2018 reckoning it to be an important step in operationalizing the SDGs by determining national priorities.

Prioritization exercise of the SDGs

The Planning Commission conducted the prioritization exercise of the SDGs at the national level based on review of existing policies, exploring theoretical underpinning of each policy, analyzing empirical findings and statics, as reported. The process of developing seven core comparative criteria describes to have reckoned data gap analysis, current state of target/indicator, its significance in the national development context and adherence to sustainability question. The criteria are outlined as:

- i. **Width** (how many people are affected)
- ii. **Depth** (how badly are they affected)
- iii. **Multiplier** (how many other targets it contributes to)
- iv. **Level of urgency** (status of target/indicator is poor)
- v. **Low resource requirement** (is there value for money)
- vi. **Less structural change** (institutional change required can be managed)
- vii. **Relevance for all provinces** (easily achieved in each province)

The exercise split the goals across categories I, II and III as below:

Categories	Description	Goals*
I	Require immediate policy intervention as desirable outcomes could be achieved in the short run.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 16
II	Require relatively longer timeframes and consistent policy support.	5 and 11
III	Require major institutional reforms as the goals have long gestation periods.	13 and 14
Note	Goals (9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), (10 - Reduced Inequalities), (12 - Responsible consumption and production), (15 - Life on land) and (17 - Means of Implementation) are barely traceable through the descriptions used.	

*The framework does not specify the number for goals placed under categories and rather uses their lumped description. Hence, the number reflected here have presumptive alignment based on descriptions used in the framework.

The omission of Climate Action from category I, reckoned to be the most critical for Pakistan's strategic survival given its ranking as the 7th most vulnerable country on Climate Risk Index and potential hazardous implications for social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainability, poses serious questions on the scientific accuracy and methodological exactitude of the tool in the backdrop of lack of serious political will on the mandate. The rationale for placement of critical goals in Category III due to major institutional reforms and long-term planning requirements is ambiguous. Despite the emphasis of no more business-as-usual, the conventional rationality might lead to a similar ramification of reactive and fragmented planning as it were with the MDGs. Specially, reckoning the fact that the longevity of reforms processes is outweighing the severity of implications. On the flipside, those requiring longer reforms process should still be initiated at some point given the magnitude of their repercussions - Climate Change being the most significant. To enhance the transformative scope of the SDGs, national level programming also needs to be attuned to normative principles laid out in ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, BPfA, ICPD and ILO conventions, for holistic progress towards development, dignity and rights.

Perspective Shift on People & Planet in Pakistan

The National framework's objectives cover economic growth, enhanced human capital, tech-based knowledge systems complementing growth, peace & security, social development, and environmental protection, by order of priority. However, some of the objectives either overlook right-based considerations or do not sufficiently reflect in the framework itself which could undermine the equitable, dignity-based, and transformative scope and ambition of the Agenda 2030. The overall approach requires a perspective shift to enhance sustainability of development programming:

a) Goal 1, 2, 3: Life Worth Living for All

Structural barriers to address inequalities have been overlooked while placing emphasis on providing the marginalized with a minimum level of basic services (restricted to social protection and healthcare). Standard of living, measured in terms of real income per capita, access to essential services and poverty rate,¹ approximates the quality of life.¹ HDI being one of such measures ranks Pakistan at 147th out of 188 countries in 2017.² Amid acute poverty and inequality traps, there is little hope that poverty alleviation strategies offer for the people deprived of basic human, physical and productive assets and restricted access to essential services. World Bank concluded that the country's safety net programs are fragmented; have a limited coverage of approximately 2-3% against a poverty rate above 25%; and, the implementation and evaluation capacities are inefficient across institutional set-ups.³ Abysmal global rankings are indicative of decades of exclusionist patterns and marginalizing governance widening inequalities reflective of GINI index estimating 30.7 (2013 est.) inequality in Pakistan.⁴ The situation urges the need for pro-poor growth policies to be consistent, considerate of the structural barriers, cross-cutting across strategic sectors, and, regulated by effective governance to reach the most marginalized for poverty eradication.

b) Goal 4: Universal Quality Education

Education for employability is prioritized ahead of education for emancipation, the focus is constrained to developing human capital, resulting in a compromised perception of educational attainment - bound to affect educational planning and governance. Even though the country could only achieve 58% literacy rate (against the MDGs target of 2015)⁵ and is ranked 2nd worst in the world with 24 million children out of School.⁶ Enshrined in goal 4 of the SDGs, enhancement of educational outcomes requires a perspective shift both at policy and implementation level. Universal Education needs to be approached as a fundamental human right, not a privilege, leading to structural reforms in the entire landscape. Education as the key to sustainable development requires injection of resources in the sector as a strategic investment in future - thereby lifting the prospects for progress against poverty, hunger, inequality and extremisms. Bolstering educational outcomes against the SDGs in Pakistan would require redressal of challenges like inequitable financing, weak governance, classified educational system and barriers in access to education of the most marginalized.

c) Goal 8: Inclusive Economic Growth

Decoupling economic growth from human development is not recognized as a strategic imperative resulting in development programming that places economic growth ahead of human rights. Despite the country's long history of poor scores on the Human Development Index, ranked at 147 out of 188 countries, assessed in areas of life expectancy, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living (including GNI per capita)⁷ and similar trends in gender equality at 143rd out of 144 on Global Gender Gap index.⁷

¹ Along with measurement of gross domestic product, gross national income, political and cultural freedom, environmental conditions, safety and security.

Marginalized adrift our policy focus, social development continues to be a tradeoff for economic growth in the race for international competitiveness.⁹ Diverting funds away from the social sector has been the norm in national budgetary processes, resulting in downhill stride of social development prospects in the country. Development perception and programing, therefore, requires a perspective shift to realize transformative outcomes for the most marginalized. Finally, the decisions of aid, and trade are not just about revenue and growth; they have implications directly affecting the State's capacity to advance human rights. It is imperative to decouple economic growth from human development, while ensuring that cultural, social, economic and political rights for all should be at the heart of micro and macroeconomics.

d) Goal 10: Zero Inequalities

Conservation of natural resources is emphasized to save a resource base for next generations. Albeit, the current generation continues to bear the brunt of inefficient land distribution resulting in perpetuating inequalities. Inequitable distribution of land continues to be the single most dominant factor for widening inequality traps and increasing food insecurity (currently 48.6% with striking disparities among provinces).¹⁰ Agricultural Census 2010 revealed that 11% big landlords own 45% of the land while the 89% small farmers own 55% of the land. A small portion of these farmers owns less than 12.5 acres while a big majority owns less than 5 acres of the land.¹¹ Land reforms, in retrospect, have brought about different changes but none of substantive impact in restructuring inequitable land distribution and the associated power patterns. The issues of enforced evictions, politically patronized land accusation, and hegemonic pattern of agricultural subsidies needs to be addressed to curb structural marginalization of the poor. To meet the expectations set by goal 10 of the SDGs, Pakistan requires a clear visioning of its economic priorities, uniform growth strategy across sectors, efficient governance for regulation and quality assurance, and, a socially-just redistributive policy ensuring that the growth is inclusive - where the poorest of the poor share its benefits and are not left behind.

e) Goal 13: Proactive Climate Action

Environmental protection is least prioritized in the framework and subsequently no emphasis on climate adaptation measures or mitigation strategies despite Pakistan's ranking as 7th most vulnerable country on the Climate Risk Index¹² struck by 141 extreme weather events between the period of 1997-2016 costing losses worth \$3.8 billion¹³ and affecting millions of lives in the process. And yet, integrating climate change into mainstream planning and budgetary processes as part of Medium-Term Budgetary Framework, a key recommendation of Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional Review (CPEIR);¹⁴ or National Framework on SDGs, remains unlikely as evident of the meager allocation of Rs. 815 million for fiscal year 2017/18.¹⁵ The government must prioritize climate change mandate to redress environmental threats, prevalent air and water pollution, depleting natural reservoirs and decaying terrestrial ecosystems. Climate change mandate requires efficient governance and strong political will in Pakistan to meet country commitments against SDGs. Climate Justice must be seen as a policy consideration recognizing a people and planet centered approach to development through policy imperatives rooted in equality and justice.¹⁶ At the international level, beyond the politics of aid and tug of war on Climate Change, it is a moral imperative deep into the ethos of the international community to recognize that those mainly responsible for climate change should commit the most of their finances and technology required for adaptation measures. In line with the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDRRC) of the Paris Agreement,¹⁷ the developing countries must be supported in capacity building, financing and technology transfer to control GHG emissions, set up early-warning systems, mitigation strategies and response measures to ensure sustainable development.

f) Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Humane Institutions

Ranked 110th in Democracy Index (2017);¹⁸ and 20th among Fragile States,¹⁹ the country needs to prioritize democratization of state and social institutions at the heart of its pursuit of SDGs implementation. Prioritizing Goal 16 should lay the foundations for transformative visioning, efficient implementation and robust review - critical to the country progress against the bare minimum expectations of the Agenda 2030. Shrinking democratic spaces for civil society, evident of the country's ranking at 139 out of 180 countries in World Press Freedom Index 2018,²⁰ require altering the course to widen the scope for dialogue, democratic dissent and accountability. Moreover, in line with Development Justice principles, the government needs to institutionalize the review of systemic barriers, i.e., patriarchy, fundamentalisms and neo-liberalism, to address the current patterns of inequality in Pakistan. It is imperative that the government takes proactive steps in collaboration with the civil society in setting national priorities, developing complementary indicators, setting up robust implementation mechanisms, and establishing an effective review process to translate the slogan of inclusion and transformation into tangible results for people and the planet alike.

ⁱⁱ The Gini index measures the area between the Lorenz curve and a hypothetical line of absolute equality, expressed as a percentage of the maximum area under the line. Thus, a Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality.

Karachi Research Chair (KRC) is an independent, not-for-profit, policy think-tank striving for democratization, development, equality, justice and peace in Pakistan, especially Karachi. KRC is an attempt to abridge the widening gap between academic discourse and policy processes through a knowledge-platform where reform strategies could be deliberated, formulated, and evaluated for efficiency and sustainability. It is a strategic space for collective reflection and collaborative action to deliberate and advocate reform strategies prioritizing the most marginalized. KRC follows a tri-dimensional approach operating as a think and do-tank in public interest. Together with its role in providing policy advice, it also strives to mobilize social endorsement through sensitization initiatives at the public level. The forum also conducts policy advocacy through strategic engagements with government and civil society at the local, national and global levels.

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