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**EXPLORING THE CONTRIBUTION OF MEDIA IN ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN INDIA**

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ABSTRACT

Media is an important participant in regard to societies reaching the goals of development-both as a contributor and a beneficiary. News media can play an important role in floating awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Media in all its forms has a crucial role to play in the development agenda to ensure that citizens are well informed. The media has important roles to play, to inform, to educate, and to provide a platform for public debate and discussion. It could serve as catalyst for citizens' empowerment and help to hold government and authorities to account. Third world countries like India have been facing odd situations in terms of poverty, environment, health, politics, and education. There have been efforts by the government and non- government agencies to sensitize the citizens and to make them acknowledge the programs intended at improving their socio-economic welfare. Communication is a vital tool in mobilizing people in the direction of the participatory process which in turn makes development an achievable goal. The present paper is an attempt to provide comprehensive information and explore the significance of the role of media as a powerful tool towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal in India. The qualitative approach is conducted to explore deeper insight of SDGs understanding from news media. This study found that not all SDGs are informed well. Only several SDGs are framed based on the concern of public policy.

Keywords: Media, News media, Sustainable Development Goals, India.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a key factor for developing knowledge and participation. News plays a significant role in conveying objectives and major focus areas of both governmental as well as public interests. Furthermore, news can be considered to be creative source of information (Moutidis and Williams, 2019). News analysis can also play an active role in terms of defining the status of the road map for localizing the SDGs. Generic patterns in sustainability related media agendas can contribute to support addressing challenges (Barkemeyer et al., 2013). The localization of the SDGs is critical as local spaces are key factors of the successful implementation and preservation of the goals (Taskforce, 2016).

The Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs are integrated, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. Countries have committed to prioritize progress for those who are furthest behind. The SDGs are designed to end poverty, hunger, AIDS, and discrimination against women and girls. The creativity, knowhow,



technology and financial resources from all of society are necessary to achieve the SDGs in every context (UNDP, 2021).

The 17 SDGs and 169 targets are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by 193 Member States at the UN General Assembly Summit in September 2015, and which came into effect on 1 January 2016. These goals are the result of an unprecedented consultative process that brought national governments and millions of citizens from across the globe together to negotiate and adopt the global path to sustainable development for the next 15 years (United Nations, 2021). The 17 SDGs adopted by UN member states are SDG1- no poverty, SDG 2-zero hunger, SDG3-good health and well-being, SDG4-quality education, SDG 5- gender equality, SDG 6- clean water and sanitation, SDG 7- affordable and clean energy, SDG 8 decent work and economic growth, SDG 9- industry, innovation and infrastructure. SDG 10 reduced inequalities, SDG 11- sustainable cities and communities, SDG 12- responsible consumption and production, SDG 13- climate action, SDG 14- life below water, SDG 15- life on land, SDG 16- peace, justice and strong institutions and lastly SDG 17- strengthening global partnerships for the goals (Business Standard, 2021).

These goals provide a powerful aspiration for improving our world. The word ‘sustainable’ itself means something that lasts long while ‘development’ implies a change that is considered desirable in a society. It involves socio-economic change leading to improvement in the conditions of life (Fariyad and Moin, 2017). It was this realisation of the links between environment, economic development, and poverty which resulted the coining of the term ‘sustainable development’ by the United Nation's Brundtland Commission in 1987. It is generally defined as development “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations General Assembly, 1987), with as basic pillars economic development, social development, and environmental protection at the local, national, regional, and global levels (United Nations, 2002).

Declaration of Human Rights established this in its Article 19 which reads:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (United Nations, 1948). This helps us recognize that freedom of expression has two dimensions: (a) to “impart” which is what press freedom is founded on, and (b) to “seek” and “receive” which is often called “freedom of information”. The one is the output of communications, and the other the



input. Target 16.10 aims to “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements” (United Nations, 2014).

One in eleven primary-school aged children are out of school worldwide. In 2018, 1.7 million people were newly infected with HIV. One-third of all women in the world have experienced violence in their lives. Amid these and a myriad of other global challenges, how can the development community scale up and accelerate shifts in social norms and behaviour at scale? The answer may lie with greater use of mass entertainment media (The World Bank, 2019). Indeed, billions are spent each year by governments and development institutions to change social norms and behaviours. Yet, systematic reviews show the traditional approaches used are not effective in promoting behaviour change nor have the reach and scale compared mass entertainment media (The World Bank, 2019).

METHOD

This study used mixed-methods to explain and to explore the finding. The result of crawling was filtered by two types of official media: (i) print media that have digital and online media; and (ii) digital and online media that have not a print version. This study used Google news to crawl the articles from India and abroad online media. The search of Google News features started with English key words such as “sustainable development goals (SDGs)”, “sustainable development goals”, and “SDGs”. However, Google News did not crawl all the news. In addition, this study used Google Search by adding several keywords such as “India SDGs”, “Media India SDGs”, and “New channel SDGs”.

MEDIA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Information and public awareness campaigns are indispensable tools in making the general public understand the concept and be aware of its importance. The media is a key vector that can help give practical meaning to the concept and its relevance to daily life (UNESCO, 2005). Not only through traditional print and broadcasting, but through the use of ICTs, media provides a channel for dialogue and discussion between experts, institutions and citizens. In recent decades, the development of ICTs has advanced at such speed and on such a scale that it represents a global economic and social revolution, full of hope, even though there are challenges. In this context, the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, which UNESCO promotes as one of its principal mandates, is more than ever a practical driver of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2005).



The Global Media Forum is one example of free exchange, sometimes critical and provocative, about how different stakeholders are impacting on media's role in sustainable development. "Around the world, success in achieving the SDGs will ease global anxieties, provide a better life for women and men and build a firm foundation for stability and peace in all societies, everywhere," said the UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed (Chatterjee, 2020).

Media can do the same for the Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving the SDGs, and so improving the lives of millions of peoples, depends heavily on increasing public awareness, and the focused action and funding that such awareness ignites. One major shortcoming of development progress is the lack of widespread knowledge about the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. We must look to the media to push the SDG discourse; what is reported and how it is reported helps shape policy and has implications for the millions of people whose lives are affected. Knowledge is power and if citizens are aware of the issues, they are empowered to help determine the national response.

Traditionally, development experts have failed to explain the relatively new concept of sustainable development to influencers such as educators, politicians, and the media. Doing so is important, so that easily understood narratives are developed to raise public support (Chatterjee, 2020). The SDGs pledge that "no one will be left behind" and to "endeavour to reach the furthest behind first." In practice, this means taking explicit action to end extreme poverty, curb inequalities, confront discrimination and fast-track progress for the furthest behind. The media can shine a spotlight on those left behind, for example by using COVID-19 to examine the wider issue of universal health coverage, the subject of SDG (Irwaysyah, 2018). Previous studies show that specific topics about the environment such as climate change shapes the media agenda. Several media in different countries such as Australia, Germany, and India use print media to distribute the topics of climate change (Schmidt et al., 2013).

INTERNATION MEDIA AND SDGs

India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is among more than 30 organisations from across the world that has come together to form a global media compact aimed at advancing awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals. The SDG Media Compact is an initiative marking a new drive to advance awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals that were unanimously adopted by all world



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leaders at the United Nations in 2015. The Compact seeks to inspire media and entertainment companies around the world to leverage their resources and creative talent to advance the Goals (The Times of India, 2018).

The SDG Media Compact is inclusive and aims to embrace media companies from all regions and all platforms. Participating organizations will have the opportunity to create content partnerships with the United Nations, whereby the organization will increase its efforts to source and share high-value media content and newsworthy opportunities relating to the SDGs. Regular monitoring and review meetings will gauge engagement. The Compact is an initiative of the United Nations, in collaboration with the UN Foundation.

The founding Compact members include Al Jadeed TV-Lebanon, Asahi-Shimbun-Japan, Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcast Development, Association of Commercial TV in Europe, China Media Group, Daily Star Newspaper-Lebanon, Daily Tribune-Philippines, Deutsche Welle-Germany, Kathimerini-Greece, LBCI TV-Lebanon, Nikkan Kogyo Shimbun-Japan, Tass-Russia, This Day-Nigeria, TVC-Communications-Nigeria, TV-BRICS-Russia and VDL Radio-Lebanon (The Times of India, 2018).

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) recently issued internal guidance on how to report on climate change, which links to every goal, while **The Guardian** updated its style guide in 2019 to introduce terms like “climate emergency” and “climate crisis” though the use of “climate change” remains accepted, too. In September 2018, the United Nations organized the **SDG Media Compact**, currently consisting of 85 major news media companies around the world, to propel the media toward more active SDGs-related coverage.

A report by the **Brookings Institution**, a think-tank based in Washington D.C., kept track of SDGs related coverage of the media between 2000 and 2016. They uncovered an interesting phenomenon: coverage of SDG issues by the US and European media has increased in years with UN conferences and events and decreased in years without such events. Meanwhile, media coverage has been continuously visible in developing nations such as India, South Africa and Nigeria (World Economic Forum, 2020).

INDIAN MEDIA ON SDGs

The Indian subcontinent’s progress on the Global Goals is of special significance, not only because India



signed the official UN declaration but also because the SDGs provide a powerful framework for India incorporated to engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Even more interestingly, the CSR policy under section 135 of the Companies Act came into effect around the same time that the SDGs were formed. Sustainable development is the key for success. This digital age has witnessed numerous successful social campaigns in print and visual media at a global level, that are targeted at achieving Sustainable Development Goals like NDTV-Toyota Green Campaign on NDTV. It was the first ever nationwide campaign to save the environment and it was launched in April 2008. The Campaign was aimed at creating awareness about the environment, by involving the people of our: country to make a difference.

Other Television channels like Doordarshan , Star TV ,Zee TV ,ETV Network airs different shows addressing sustainability issues like climate change , poverty , ecosystem and environment protection , inequality and economic development. With a lot of government support and initiatives like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has motivated people to participate in Development programmes. Television as a mass medium has a huge appeal to common person. For such reason, television: is used in a planned manner to motivate people to participate in developmental programs. Feature, documentaries or development campaigns regarding SDG's should be such that it creates interest in the mind of viewers, contents should be contemporary to attract people of all ages and should be capable of influencing viewers to take part in the developmental programs (Fariyad and Moin, 2017).

Mainstream media in India has been grossly ignorant of the SDGs, barring a few environmental issues that make headlines. However, independent media and portals like Down to Earth, Quartz, The CSR Journal, India Development Review and Better India are doing a phenomenal job of highlighting the newsmakers and stories relevant to the SDGs. This coverage is especially pertinent for responsible businesses and NGOs that seek to replicate the positive impact and scale of successful sustainable development projects (Fernandes, 2021). Advancing Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved through the following programmes by the media professionals:

- To enlighten audience through short films with a combination of fiction and scientific information with interesting themes revolving around SDG's should be conceived.
- Documentaries with interesting themes on SDG's should be produced.
- Films with a message in them on SDG's should be encouraged.
- News Channels can have a small discussion of 10-12 minutes with 2-3 experts regarding recent



developments in the field of SDG's.

- Acquisition of celebrity films and documentaries which are already-produced in various countries should be dubbed in local languages and available to general public through school, colleges or other platforms.
- Different programmes for farmers with information related to farming.
- Competitions and Quiz Shows at National, state and local level should be organized.
- Weekly talk show where the anchor will interview an eminent person about Developments in SDG's may also be slotted on different TV Channels (Fariyad and Moin, 2017)

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that, Indian News media is not lagging behind the International one in case of covering the news related to SDGs and making people aware of it. Rather, Indian media show comprehensive approach towards this. There is an urgent need for effective Television shows documentaries, short films, debates etc., to create awareness about Achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Some interesting science content based shows and films have to be worked out at grass root level for creating scientific awareness and information among the masses regarding SDG's. It is worth taking into account that effective popularization on television requires a special kind' of discourse, which is not just a simplified scientific message but a different one, with its own characteristics, values difficulties.

To conclude, different media channels are playing an important role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It needs to focus more on the developmental aspects rather than focusing too much on the entertainment aspects of society, So, we can say, the role different media in in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals is very significant. Rapid mobile penetration in India offers unparalleled opportunities for content sharing on digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Though the lack of affordable internet connections and poor connectivity remain a challenge, mobile technology is a powerful enabler across many sectors.



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