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Pakistan has affirmed its commitment to the 2030 Agenda of SDGs. How modest is Pakistan's progress and what are the challenges that Pakistan faces in realizing these goals?

1) Introduction:-

Pakistan has committed to work alongside other nations of the world for sustainable development via Sustainable Development Goals (2015) Agenda. While the country started working on this agenda back in 2016, the progress it has made is rather slow.

Goals like health, affordable and clean energy have seen progress but the progress on other goals is either stagnated or is showing very slow progress. This slow progress is mostly due to challenges like revenue mobilization, policy failures, regulatory hurdles, climate disasters and poor security situation. What the country needs to achieve SDGs goals is policy overhaul, commitment to policy implementation, budgetary allocations and a strong political will to achieve

these goals by 2030.

2) Pakistan and SDG Progress a Decade Later :-

SDGs refer to a set of 17 goals and 169 targets that were adopted by world community in September 2015 and came into force on 1st January 2016. Since then different nations have made variable progress on these goals. Monitoring of progress is periodically done on global level and regional level. Countries are supposed to come up with national indicators to gauge own progress. When it comes to Pakistan, we see sporadic efforts to incorporate these goals in various policies. Half-hearted commitment has produced modest gains only.

3) Gauging Pakistan's SDG Progress :-

To gauge national progress we can rely on official data and research done by Think Tanks. However, the most accurate progress report is given by SDG Reports.

a) Global Ranking

In terms of global comparison, Pakistan stands at 140 out of evaluated 167 countries.

SD Report (2025), Pakistan

Global Ranking	Overall Score	Progress Made
140 out of 167	57.3	17 %

b) Disappointing Regional Performance

Pakistan's performance when seen in the regional context is not encouraging either. Among its South Asian neighbours, Pakistan 2nd last, only above Afghanistan (SD Report, 2025)

c) Areas of Actual Progress

Pakistan has shown progress in a few areas which are discussed as under.

i) SDG: 3 Zero Good

Health and Well-being

In this area, Pakistan has been able to make strides in awareness and prevention. Maternal mortality rate and neonatal mortality

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rates have also been lowered to reach 186/1lac and 40/1000 respectively.

ii) Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6)

In this area, sporadic efforts have led to improved sanitation facilities and clean water availability for many especially in the rural areas. This has also helped lower the burden of water borne diseases. Incidence of cholera and typhoid has also decreased.

iii) Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7)

Since 2015, Pakistan has made huge progress to root out power outages and energy shortfall. It is also emerging as a leader in clean energy in South Asia with solar power contributing 33% to the energy mix (Economic Survey of Pakistan, FY 2024-25).

d) Areas of Stagnated Progress or Regression

While the progress in these areas is encouraging, the regression in several other goals is equally alarming.

ia) SDG 2 : Zero Hunger

Due to climate induced crop failures, poor planning and storage facilities, Pakistan is showing regression in this area. According to Global Hunger

Index (2025), Pakistan has been ranked at 109/127 which is a serious level of hunger.

ii) SDG 1 : No Poverty

Due to rising economic disparities and lack of social safety nets, the country is losing its battle against poverty. A new poverty line has been set by World Bank (i.e \$4.20/day) which has placed 44.7% of population of Pakistan under poverty line.

iii) SDG 4 : Quality Education

A high dropout rate and 22 mn out of school children indicate that Pakistan is failing to provide quality education to its children. Pakistan currently has a literacy rate of 60.65% with high gender and provincial disparities -

iv) SDG 5 : Gender Equality

In terms of gender equality, the country's performance is abysmal. The recent global gender gap report has placed Pakistan at 148 (last rank) with a parity of 56.7% (GGGR, WEF, 2025).

v) SDG 11 : Sustainable Cities and Communities

Poor planning, haphazard growth and environmental degradation

is making Pakistani cities ~~and anything~~ but sustainable. Urban sprawl, encroachment and slums have become common features of the cities.

4) Challenges :-

Following are the challenges that are impeding the progress on SDGs :-

a) Policy Implementation

Long-term policy implementation is the most important way to achieve SDG goals; however, in Pakistan, this has always been an issue. Consider laws for women empowerment for instance. There are numerous such laws and policy frameworks but their ground implementation remains low.

b) Budgetary Constraints

This is another big challenge. Whenever, a department starts to make progress, the government cuts its budget and the results are in the form of decline in progress. The same has happened to education, urban planning and gender parity goals.

c) Bureaucratic Hurdles

Bureaucratic hurdles and red tapism are the biggest impediment

in the way of policy implementation. These hurdles are the biggest challenge when it comes to goals like building strong institutions and ensuring rule of law.

d) Over-reliance on Foreign Assistance

Since SDGs are a global level commitment, most people in the country believe that they can only be achieved through hefty foreign fundings and the government doesn't need to spend much in this area.

e) Resistance to Change

There is also a general resistance to change amongst the public especially in the areas of gender equality, education, climate action and sustainability.

5) Analysis:

Sustainable development goals offer countries a roadmap to achieve development for present and future generation. However, countries like Pakistan with weak institutional structures and monetary hurdles are struggling to make progress on these goals. Countries like these need to not only bolster efforts for SDGs but also require support

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and guidance from first world countries on SDGs policy making, implementation and monitoring.

6) Conclusion:-

Almost five years are left for Pakistan to seriously pursue its SDG goals. Although the progress in the previous decade has not been impressive, Pakistan can achieve a lot in the next five years through commitment and long-term planning.