



Southern Voice

2015 On Post-MDG International Development Goals

Occasional Paper Series

32

Implications of Implementing SDGs at the National Level *A Case of Pakistan*

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SDGs AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL**
A Case of Pakistan

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Publisher

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First Published July 2016

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ISSN 2307-9827 (Online)

ISSN 2307-681X (Print)

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Preface

Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals is a network of 49 think tanks from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Since its inception in 2012, it has served as an open platform to provide structured inputs from the global South into the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, with a view to address the 'knowledge asymmetry' and 'participation deficit' that usually afflict such global discussions.

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was finally adopted at the Seventieth Session of the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015 by the member states. With the 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) placed as oncoming development priorities, *Southern Voice* is currently working to examine national experiences in meeting the early challenges of delivering the 2030 Agenda.

The research programme titled *National Level Implication of Implementing SDGs* is based on call for proposals among its network members, and through a peer process eleven country studies were commissioned for nine countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America. The broad areas of concern of the country papers are the following: (i) investigate the means of mainstreaming the SDGs into national planning process, within the context of its national priorities; (ii) explore the adequacy of coordination, management and leadership of the SDG implementation process, including the monitoring and evaluation mechanism; (iii) examine the adequacy of financing and other specific means of implementation of the SDGs; (iv) investigate the extent of partnerships and stakeholder participation, including institutional arrangements for implementing the SDGs; and (v) evaluate the capacity of the national statistical agencies and other data-related issues.

This country paper on Pakistan titled **Implications of Implementing SDGs at the National Level: A Case of Pakistan** is the third of the eleven country studies to be published under the Southern Voice Occasional Paper Series. The study has been authored by *Dr Khalida Ghaus*, Managing Director and *Mr Nadeem Ahmed*, Principal Economist at the Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC), Karachi and *Dr Shehryar Khan Toru*, Research Fellow; *Ms Rabia Manzoor*, Research Associate and *Mr Muhammad Sohaib*, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad. The paper identifies the challenges of implementing SDGs in the country in terms of governance related to inter-sectoral coordination, accountability and transparency, as well as financial constraints in developing a realistic plan of action. It also puts forward the suggestion of improving or reforming the bureaucracy for better performances in delivering basic services. The leadership of the federal government and controlling the inter-provincial political-rivalry receive importance in successful implementation of SDGs in the country.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation towards *Southern Voice*, particularly of *Dr Ruth Levine*, Programme Director and *Ms Sarah Lucas*, Programme Officer of the Global Development and Population Programme, at the Hewlett Foundation.

In connection to the publication of this paper, contribution of *Ms Umme Shefa Rezbana*, Senior Research Associate, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and the focal point at the Southern Voice Secretariat for

overseeing the programme is highly appreciated. *Ms Tarannum Jinan*, Administrative Associate, CPD is acknowledged for providing useful contribution in following-up of the country papers. *Ms Nazmatun Noor*, Deputy Director, Publication, CPD provided assistance in processing of the publication. I would also like to thank *Ms Erin Palmer* for her editorial inputs and feedback.

Hoping that the paper will be a useful addition to the ongoing discussion on challenges of implementing SDGs in developing countries.

Dhaka, Bangladesh
July 2016

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Authors' Acknowledgements

The Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC) and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) would like to express their appreciation for the invaluable input provided by those who agreed to be interviewed, including federal and provincial government officials, representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) (especially the Institute of Educational Development in Karachi), and staff of international donor agencies.

Special thanks are due particularly to *Professor Mustafizur Rahman*, Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, and *Ms Tanzen Rehman* (Executive Assistant) for providing logistical support. In addition, we would like to thank the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) for providing the financial support that has enabled Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals to publish this research. The research team also acknowledges the dynamic leadership of *Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya*, for all his efforts in strengthening the Southern Voice network.

The responsibilities for any limitations in the research rest with the research team.

The present study focuses on the implications of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the context of Pakistan. The study has identified the structural impediments confronted due to political and bureaucratic hierarchies to be the main reasons for the lower level of attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The research suggests that the primary approach for the provincial governments towards SDG implementation should be integrating the SDGs into the provincial Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF). In addition, leadership provided by federal government is considered to be essential for an improved coordination and management of forward and backward linkages. However, this is often challenged by the inter-provincial political rivalries and lack of monitoring mechanisms. The need and the importance of conflict management tactics have been identified as key factors to keep the provincial rivalry under control and also to bridge the trust deficit. This responsibility can partially be entrusted upon the SDGs Unit and the Secretariat. There are serious capacity issues (human and financial) both at federal and provincial government levels. All four provincial governments need to chalk out their respective plans to avail sources of Means of Implementation. Finally, the paper emphasises on conducting a mapping exercise to gauge the existing resource availability and the future resource needs for implementing the SDGs.

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Acronyms

ADP	Annual Development Plan
BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IED	Institute for Educational Development, Pakistan
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International NGO
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhawa
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MSP	Multi-Stakeholder Participation
MTDF	Medium Term Development Framework
MoI	Means of Implementation
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSA	Non-State Actor
NFC	National Finance Commission
PBS	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
PPHI	Peoples' Primary Healthcare Initiative
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
PSLM	Pakistan Standard Living Measurement
SAP	Social Action Program
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
SPDC	Social Policy and Development Centre
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Implications of Implementing SDGs at the National Level

A Case of Pakistan

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1. Introduction

In September 2000, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted a number of resolutions with the aim of alleviating poverty and promoting sustainable development across developing countries. One of these resolutions evolved into the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which served as a global framework for development through 2000 to 2015. The MDGs were ratified by all 189 UN member states, including Pakistan.

Pakistan was unable to achieve the MDGs, underperforming on 25 out of 33 indicators. There were several reasons for this failure, including lack of political will, weak institutional capacity, financial constraints, flawed policies, lack of coordination and monitoring mechanisms, and human resource constraints. Moreover, the MDG targets proved to be over-ambitious and were not well-aligned with local priorities and needs. Perhaps, they were seen by the government more as planning goals than as development goals. They did not articulate how economic development would be achieved, nor how human rights and social development should be addressed.

Lessons learned from the MDGs have been incorporated into a new development framework that focuses on inclusive growth, sustainability, and social transformation. It culminated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit held on 25th September 2015, at which world leaders adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs differ from the MDGs primarily because they encompass sustainable development while focusing on poverty reduction, and on equity and also equality. Based on the experience of implementing the MDGs, a number of additional changes have been incorporated in the SDGs. For example, Means of Implementation (MoI) which can be described as the “mapping of all types of resource needed for the achievement of SDG targets,” have been added to the new development framework for SDGs. In addition to other challenges for achieving the MDGs, the poor quality of ‘data’ was a major constraint for meaningful implementation of the policies and programmes. The availability of data, particularly disaggregated data, has been a crucial bottleneck in working on social development issues particularly in developing countries. The reliability, accessibility and utility of data are also pressing issues that have received attention under the ambit of the so-called “data revolution.” However, it remains to be seen how the SDGs will benefit from the data revolution in countries where it was difficult to translate and align data on social indicators along with the local preferences and priorities of the society.

Beyond data issues, there are also other challenges. For example, following of the principle of ‘equality’ has been ignored or breached by the political class of Pakistan – which largely constitutes the upper

and the elite social class. Applying the SDGs to the social and political context of Pakistan can thus be a real challenge.

The study encompasses the following broad objectives:

- Investigate the consequences of implementing the SDGs at the national level in Pakistan, particularly the extent to which *Vision 2025* is aligned with them;
- Examine how the global SDG targets will be embedded in the national context, specifically understanding the opportunities and challenges posed by the SDGs;
- Understand the challenges of national planning process in sector-based programmes identifying the plausible financial, resource framework, the monitoring, reporting, and accountability mechanisms, and to assess the institutional capacity for implementing the SDGs;
- Study the adequacy and availability of financial resources for SDGs; and
- Anticipate how intra-governmental coordination and multi-stakeholder participation (MSP) will be ensured in this process, including looking at the level and nature of partnerships.

The remaining part of this report is divided into five sections. Section 2 outlines how the SDGs have been integrated and mainstreamed in Pakistan's national planning process. Section 3 highlights the process of coordination, management and leadership of SDG implementation. Section 4 examines the adequacy of financing and other MoIs for the SDGs in the country. Section 5 explains how partnership and stakeholder participation, including institutional arrangements, have been ensured in the planning and identification of implementation barriers of the SDGs. Section 6 provides an overview of the capacity of the national statistical agencies and other data-related issues. Finally, the conclusion and recommendations are based on the key research findings and an assessment of implementation mechanisms by all levels of governments.

1.1 Methodology

A team of researchers from Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC) and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) conducted a selective review of literature on the MDGs and the political economy of development. The list of selective literature will be provided in the annexure. The literature review helped identify the barriers to and constraints in realising Pakistan's development goals. Based on this review, the team developed a semi-structured questionnaire for government functionaries to understand how the SDGs would be articulated in the national vision. A copy of the semi-structured questionnaire is attached as Appendix 1. They also undertook qualitative research through informal interviews and focus group discussions with representatives of public, private and civil society organisations (CSOs) working within the domain of the MDGs and the SDGs. They included senior public officials – such as the deputy chief, the secretary of development and members of the federal and provincial planning commissions – as well as CSOs, non-government organisations (NGOs) and think tanks. Key informants were identified from the sampling frame through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Data was gathered first at the federal level and then in all four provinces.

The focus groups generated discussions on barriers and limitations confronted during the implementation of the MDGs, along with the opportunities and constraints of the SDGs in light of Pakistan's development priorities and particularly its principal national planning document, *Vision 2025*. FDGs also addressed the importance and benefits of MSP in formulating a framework to facilitate the process. The informal interviews focused on issues of governance and the SDG implementation framework.

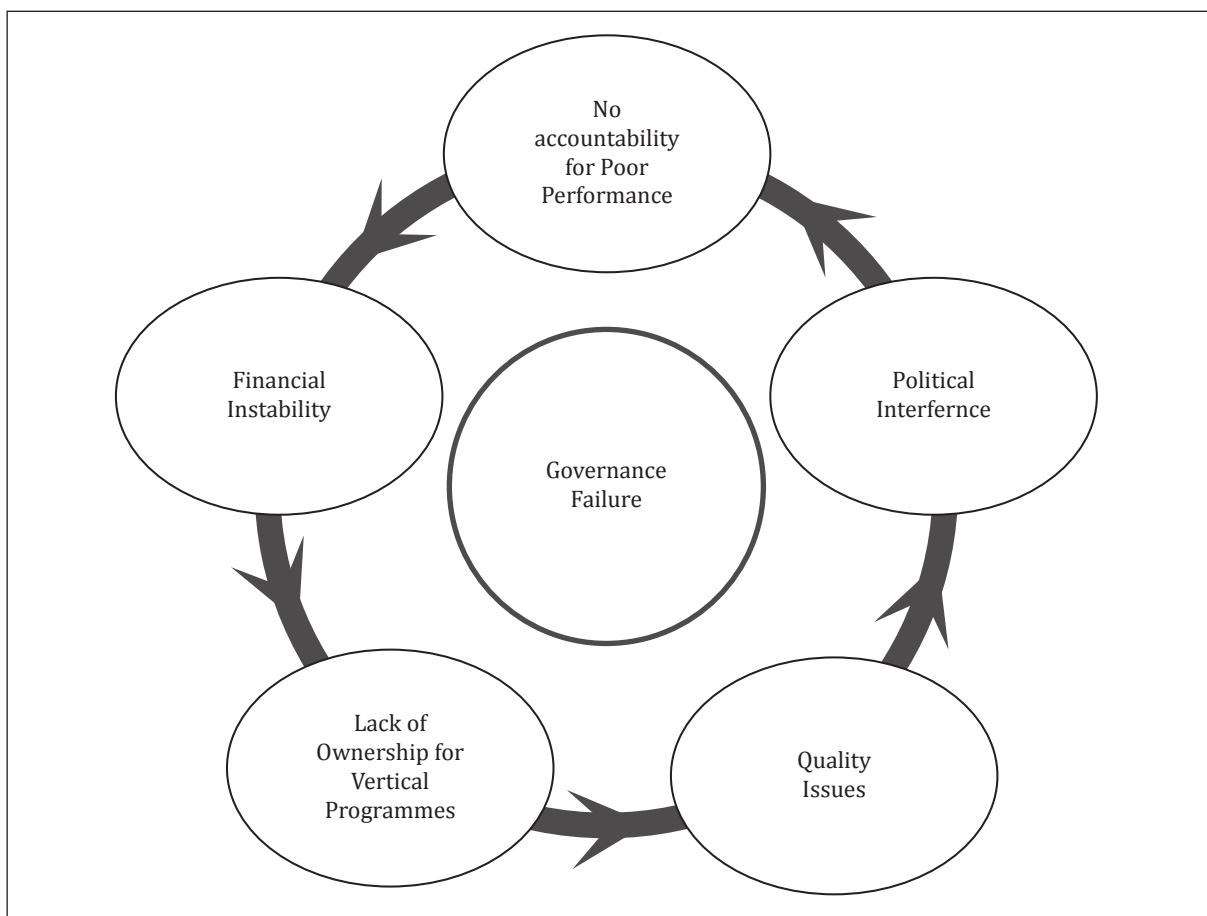
While collecting data, the team confronted problems in finding SDG-related data at disaggregated level. The federal government has initiated a national dialogue on the SDGs, particularly on data resources;

while the provincial governments on the other hand are facing difficulties in prioritising and developing sectoral plans that are important for integrating the SDGs into the national development framework.

2. Integration and Mainstreaming of the SDGs in the National Planning Process

This section examines the issues of governance, inter-organisational coordination and ownership confronted by the state institutions which are responsible for the implementation of the MDGs and the SDGs in Pakistan. Poor governance along with absence of accountability and transparency, the financial instability, lack of ownership of vertical programmes, and political interference are some of the factors that have been identified for Pakistan’s failure to deliver on various goals of MDGs. Moreover, issues of accountability, transparency and corruption have been identified as core governance problems at all levels in public sector organisations. Public sector spending for poverty alleviation, eradication of hunger or even improving enrolment – all have affected due to either mismanagement of resources or mis-governance (SPDC, 2012).

Chart 1: Governance Failure in Pakistan



Source: Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

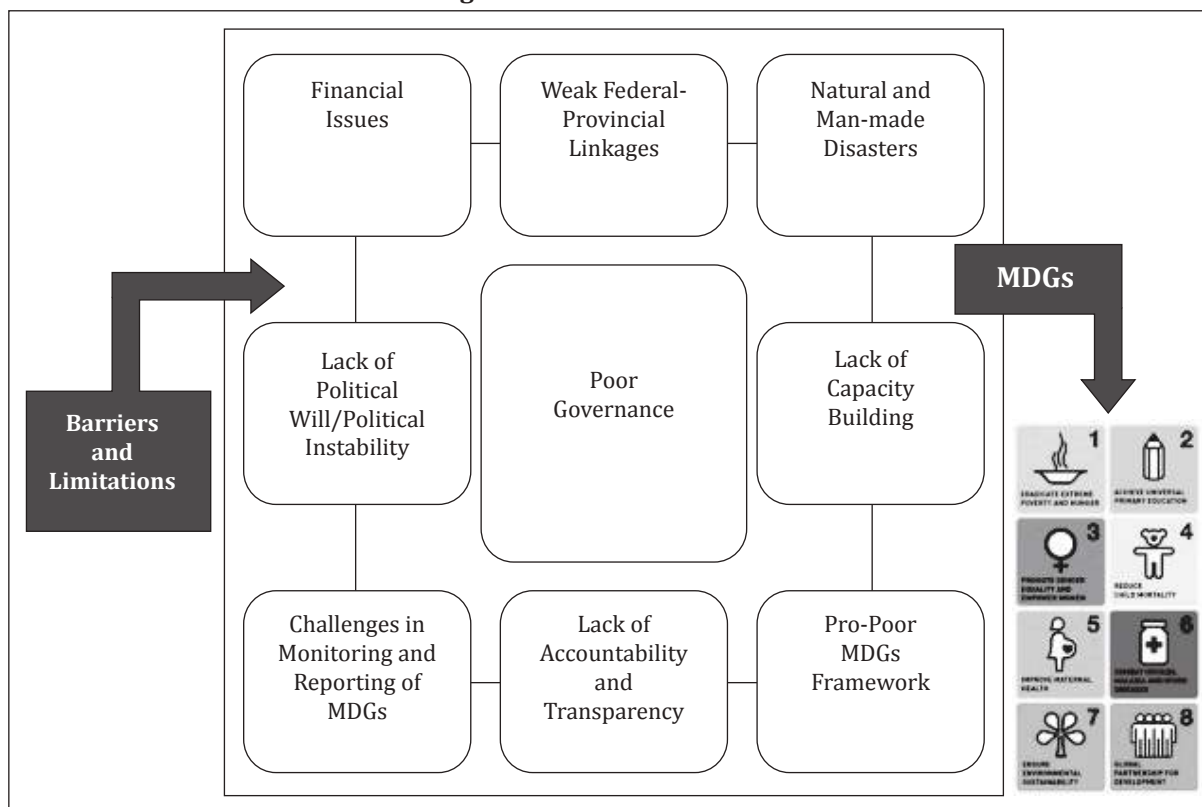
The MDG framework was primarily aimed at drawing attention of human and social development needs, i.e. to address the issues of hunger, poverty and equality. Unfortunately, the framework ignored the two important pillars of accountability and rule of law. Apparently, the Government of Pakistan made its commitment to the international goals without realising the level of commitment that was required at the national level. There were four principal factors that had a major impact on policy decisions and resource allocation in Pakistan. First, in 2001, only a year after the MDGs were endorsed, the global community declared a “war on terror” that was initially aimed at Afghanistan. The impact of this so called war had spiralling consequences for neighbouring Pakistan which predominantly occupied the government’s attention (SPDC, 2010). Second, the spillover effect of the war on terror,

along with the emergence and strengthening of non-state actors (NSAs), caused social and political polarisation that resulted in new security challenges. Third, external and internal threats, along with the urgencies created by low intensity conflict (which posed new threats to societal security), the military expenditures increased manifold, whereas government neglected the social sector (SPDC, 2010). Fourth, since Pakistan passed its 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010, which had devolved the financial, administrative and political authorities, the development planning should also have been readjusted simultaneously to tune the institutional arrangements; however the pace of the readjustment continued to be slow.

Inadequate financial resources proved to be a major impediment to achieving the MDGs. For example, in the Sindh province, important policy decisions, such as how much resources would be required to achieve the education targets, have not been adequately undertaken, resulting into problems of reconciling actual spending against targeted spending. In Punjab, the province’s Annual Development Plan (ADP) was aligned with financial investments which enabled it to perform better than the other three provinces in achieving the MDG targets. However, provincial performance on ‘majority of indicators’ remained off track due to lack of financial resources and mismanagement. In Balochistan, for example, the delay in disbursing funds caused major problems in completing development projects on time. In retrospect, it can be said, that the presence of a secretariat, both at the federal and provincial levels could have helped in identifying a proper monitoring and reporting mechanism. This would have helped in monitoring the progress on each of the targets, and would also in maintaining a much-needed linkage between the provinces and the ministries.

Natural and man-made disasters also constrained achievement of the MDG targets (Chart 2). In 2001, Sindh and Balochistan were affected by droughts. In 2005 a high intensity earthquake hit several areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), leaving 75,000 dead and causing widespread damage to infrastructure, including health facilities and schools. In 2010, extensive floods in parts of the Punjab, KPK, and Sindh destroyed economic and social infrastructure, affecting 18 million people socially and financially. According to National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA),

Chart 2: Causes of Failure in Achieving the MDGs in Pakistan



Source: Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

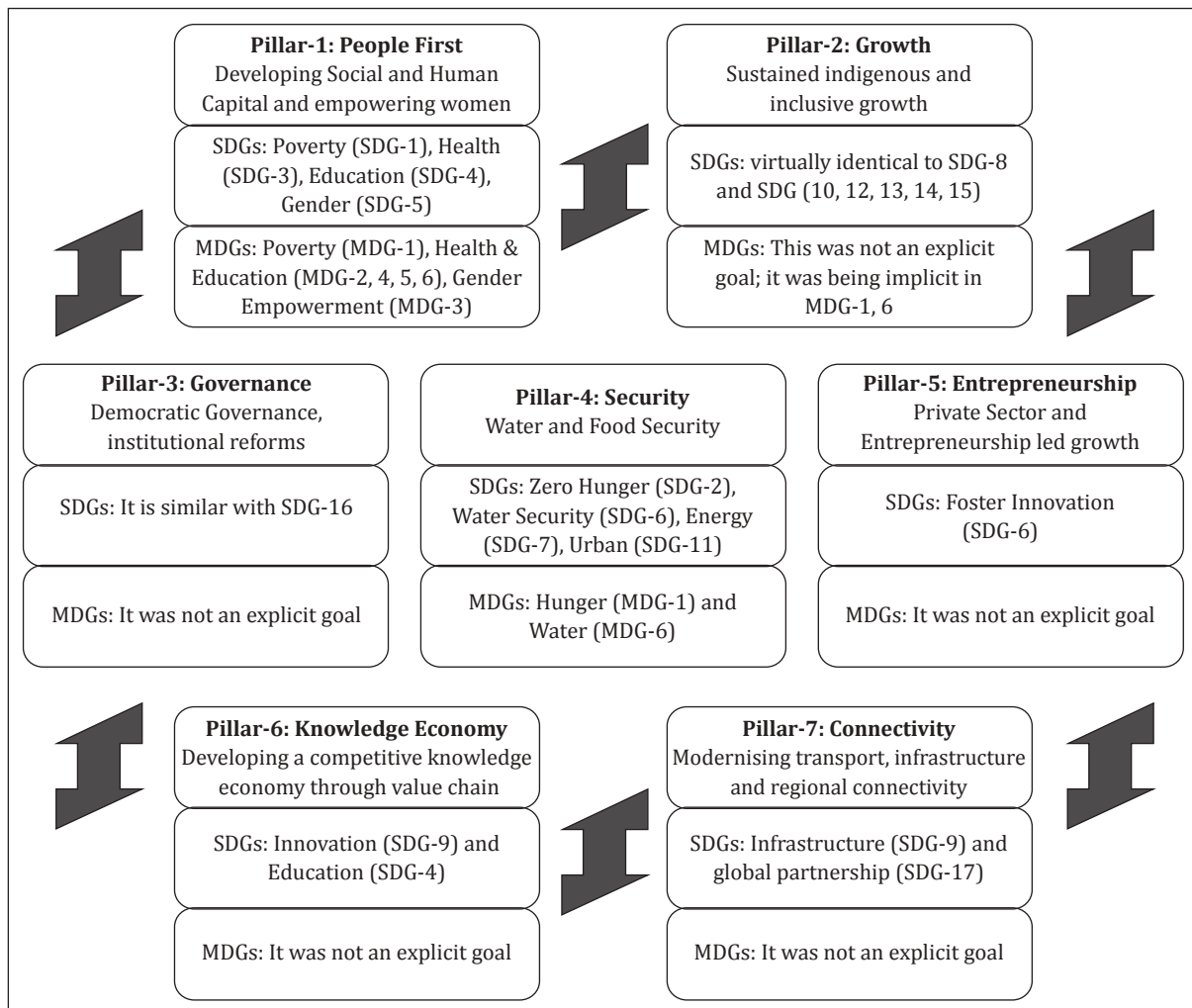
Sindh and Balochistan experienced flooding in 2011 that affected more than 8.5 million people. These natural disasters have had a negative impact on the economy and also proved to be consequential for the MDGs – particularly their financial repercussions.

The success of the SDGs will depend on how well they are integrated into Pakistan’s planning process, the adequacy of funding, and the efficient use of resources at the federal and provincial levels. The Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms (the country’s central planning authority) has demonstrated strong commitment to the SDGs (The Nation, 2015). The response of provincial governments (other than Punjab) has been slow, despite the fact that the provinces are responsible for implementing and monitoring the progress of the SDG (interviews with Provincial officials, 2015). It is not yet clear how provincial governments will integrate the SDGs into their respective planning processes, particularly the Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF) which is the policy measure programme to strengthen the social, economic and physical infrastructure at the provincial level. In addition to that provincial governments are still in the process of streamlining the MTDF in line with the federal government’s overall development objectives as outlined in Vision 2025.

2.1 Alignment between Pakistan’s National Goals and the SDGs

Pakistan’s development for the next decade is outlined in Vision 2025 – the Government of Pakistan’s comprehensive framework for achieving both the SDGs and Pakistan’s own national development goals. It was developed after several consultations at the federal and provincial levels, and is based

Chart 3: SDGs and Vision 2025



Source: Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

on seven pillars¹, each with its own targets. Chart 3 illustrates how these pillars are aligned with one or more of the SDGs. The other important elements that can translate this particular vision into plans and programmes are “participation of the relevant people” and “political will of the government.” The provincial governments have yet to develop an exclusive framework for implementing the SDGs.

Prepared in close consultation with civil society, academia, and the private sector, Vision 2025 recognises the importance of people-centred inclusive growth through democratic governance and active public-private partnership. The Vision 2025 aims to achieve the SDG targets of increase energy flows, ensure food security and water availability particularly for agriculture sector because of the intensity of the issues and their impact on the well-being of the people. Moreover, the Government of Pakistan has shown its political commitment to the SDGs by declaring them a ‘national development agenda.’ The Ministry of Planning and Development and Reforms at federal level, has created an SDG Unit within the Planning Commission and requested each province to follow suit (Member Social Sector, Planning, Development and Reforms, 2015).

3. Coordination, Management and Leadership of the SDG Implementation Process

In order to enhance coordination and support for the SDGs in Pakistan, the federal government has established a designated SDG Unit in the Planning Commission. The Government of Punjab has also established an SDG Unit in its planning and development department. The primary task of the federal SDG Unit is to develop and strengthen coordination with the four provincial governments, particularly to improve the monitoring and reporting mechanisms. KPK, Sindh and Balochistan provinces are in the process of establishing similar units (Member Social Sector, Planning, Development and Reforms, 2015).

For SDGs, emphasis is put on inter-governmental coordination and linkages with various government departments. An important mechanism for inter-provincial coordination will be the quarterly meeting on SDGs held by the Federal Ministry of Planning and Development and Reforms with the provincial Ministers of Planning and Development of the four provinces and the Additional Chief Secretaries of the Planning and Development Departments. This will help provincial governments to align their planning agendas with Vision 2025 and the SDGs.

There are serious coordination issues even within different departments of the same ministry. For instance, the Education and Literacy Department in Sindh province has different departments for primary, secondary, college and vocational education. During the Third Party Validation Survey for the World Bank, it was found that there were issues of compliance, reporting, management, coordination, supervision and intra-departmental linkages. In order to implement the SDGs effectively, each provincial government will have to establish working manuals for viable coordination mechanisms with clear roles and responsibilities delineated for each department and individual.

3.1 SDGs: Some Challenges

Pakistan’s economic and social development presents a worrisome scenario for future generations. The country has high maternal and infant mortality rates along with low birth weight of children. Low literacy levels and continuing decline in the quality of education also impede country’s development potential. In addition, Pakistan’s economy is underperforming, with the lowest economic growth rate in South Asia for the last five years. For example, in 2010, the real gross domestic product (GDP) growth was 10.3 per cent in India, 6.0 per cent in Bangladesh, and 8.0 per cent in Sri Lanka, while in Pakistan it was only 2.6 per cent. The real growth rates of these countries are above 6.0 per cent in 2015 while Pakistan is still struggling to have growth rate of over 5.0 per cent (Ministry of Finance,

¹Severn pillars of Vision 2025: developing human and social capital; achieving sustained, indigenous, and inclusive growth; governance, institutional reform and modernising the public sector; energy, water and food security; private sector-led growth; developing a competitive knowledge economy; and modernising transportation infrastructure and achieving better regional productivity.

2015). In addition, natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods have complicated the challenges already being confronted by the government. Against this backdrop, the SDGs can be considered a development opportunity that can help revitalise the economic, social and natural resource potential of the country.

In preparation for the SDGs, the federal government has demonstrated its commitment by organising a series of seminars, workshops and high-level meetings with the provincial governments. Despite the fact that the Chief Executives (Provincial Chief Ministers) of the four provinces are signatories to this national document, the current governance structure in Pakistan is also seriously constrained by the different political affiliations of the governments of each province. For instance, Punjab's Chief Minister is affiliated with the Pakistan Muslim League (N), the same party as that of the federal government. The governments of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces are affiliated with two leading opposition parties, the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) respectively. Balochistan province is led by a coalition government comprised of Pakistan Muslim League (N), Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party and the National Party. At present, developing a political consensus in Balochistan on issues related to human development can be difficult, with physical infrastructure development needs taking precedence because of its non-availability. It is therefore important that the provincial governments do not allow their internal conflicts to overshadow provincial development priorities and create an imbalance whereby social development continues to be neglected in favour of physical infrastructure development. This will require conflict management tactics to protect the development goals from intra-provincial political rivalries.

4. Adequacy of Financing and other Means of Implementation (MoI) of SDGs in Pakistan

Another major area of concern is the availability of adequate financial and human resources from the government and international donor agencies. The role of the latter will be crucial in ensuring the required financial resources for development needs of the country and its population. The studies, undertaken locally have criticised the external financial assistance provided to Pakistan on the grounds of duplication of interventions (parallel programmes) and lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (United Nations, 2009). It has been argued by the Chief of Foreign Aid Projects, Government of Balochistan that donor-funded programmes have lacked analytical evaluation studies to document the impact of intervention. In future, international interventions need to be aligned with SDGs, and more importantly, these interventions need to have improved monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. For the SDGs, the respective provincial governments should design a methodological framework that facilitates the monitoring of the impact of interventions with a specific focus on documentation and dissemination. However, one of the toughest tasks of "government implementation officials" is to measure the success of interventions and analyse the changes realised after the project has been implemented. To overcome the problem of monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms, an integrated approach is needed. One of the key advantages that SDGs can offer is an integrated approach to the policymakers as its 17 goals and 169 targets are dependent on each other to a great extent. At policy level, the federal, provincial and international donor agencies are having an intense focus on "integrated approach" which is vital for the success of SDGs.

According to the Chief of Section, Government of Balochistan, the first major constraint for effective implementation of SDGs will be financial, human and institutional resource gap. The provincial governments in Pakistan have no extra funds for SDGs and the human and institutional capacity is also inadequate. The financial capacity of the federal and provincial governments can be increased by the international donor programmes and resource mobilisation at federal and provincial levels. However, the human capacity issues can be dealt with education and training.

The availability of human resource and financial capacity are critical components of the SDGs implementation framework. Pakistan has abundant natural resources including coal, natural gas, water, etc., which is steering and supplementing economic growth over the last four decades. However, the quality of human resource has been declining continuously because of a deplorable education

infrastructure and lack of on-the-job training opportunities. Since 2007-08, the public and private investment was as low as 4 and 10 per cent respectively which drastically slowed the pace of economic growth (Ministry of Finance, 2015). Despite, low real economic growth of below 4 per cent in the last five years, the current government has taken strong measures to ensure rapid economic recovery that have been appreciated by international donor agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. With improvements in some macroeconomic indicators such as low inflation, improvement in energy supplies, low energy prices, etc., it is expected by the macroeconomic policy analysts that Pakistan's economic growth will soon catch up with that of its neighbours.

Realising the importance of availability of financial resources for development projects, the federal and provincial governments have initiated programmes such as withdrawal of tax exemptions at the federal level and improvements in tax administration (particularly sales tax) at the provincial level to mobilise domestic resources. The core objective is to increase Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio. "Each provincial government has established a Provincial Revenue Authority to increase and mobilise the existing pool of resources. In addition, provincial governments are engaging the private sector in the development framework by giving incentives to businesses. The provincial governments are also undertaking massive policy reforms to increase the ease of doing business in the country" (interviews with SDGs focal provincial government officials). In addition, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is considered a major economic breakthrough for the country. CPEC is a USD 46 billion collection of infrastructure development projects that link Gwadar Sea Port of Pakistan to Central Asian countries. The deep sea port of Gwadar will be established to provide trade route to Central Asian countries. Under CPEC, the specially designed policy interventions made through collaboration between the federal government and Chinese authorities, are intended to provide the impetus required to improve economic growth. If the Government of Pakistan fails to implement the much-needed policy interventions to improve the economy, the implementation of the SDGs will face many challenges.

Implementation of the SDGs may also be impeded by the increasing cost of providing social services, particularly in areas where population density is low. For instance, Balochistan has the largest land mass and the lowest population of all four provinces. It has the lowest population density as in some cases a village has only 10-15 households. The distance between two villages has also impacted the per capita investment on social services.

4.1 Availability of Financial Resources

Pakistan's economy is currently plagued with a number of challenges, including low investment, productivity loss, high deficits and external account imbalances. Several internal and external factors are causing a direct impact on the country's economic performance. For instance, shortage of energy is the major cause of low industrial growth in Pakistan. Long hours of power cuts/outage and non-availability of natural gas in the winter season has substantially declined the industrial productivity. Deteriorating law and order and terrorism-related security issues affecting the urban areas is yet another major challenge for industrial and service economy growth (SPDC, 2010). Economy is also adversely affected due to inflation of oil prices, particularly cost of food, leading to food security issues in both urban and rural areas. Though, the recent plummeting of international oil prices has eased the burden on the government and consumers, yet the GDP growth of Pakistan is at the lowest rate of 4.24 per cent per annum (Ministry of Finance, 2015).

Under current macroeconomic conditions, Pakistan has to confront serious challenges in financing the activities required to fulfil the SDGs and its own national development objectives. The federal and provincial governments are in the process of calculating the financial costs of and resources required for the implementation of the SDGs by mapping the indicators. Table 1 presents the percentage increase in Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) expenditures exclusive for MDGs, i.e. from 2001-02 to 2013-14.

Table 1: PRSP Expenditures for MDGs (as % of GDP)

(Million Rs.)

Indicators	2001-02	2013-14	ACGR	2001-02	2014-15
Education	56,506	537,598	20.65	1.60	2.14
Health	17,508	173,420	21.06	0.57	0.69
Environment/Water supply & sanitation	4,644	32,000	17.45	0.14	0.13
Population planning	1,331	12,609	20.61	0.04	0.05
Social security & welfare	3,664	23,809	16.88	0.11	0.09
BISP & Bait-ul-Maal*		69,672			0.28
Total PRSP expenditures	133,495	1,934,178	24.95	3.91	7.72

Source: PRSP Full Report FY2002-03, PRSP Secretariat, Finance Division, Government of Pakistan (GoP), September 2003.

Note: PRSP Budgetary Expenditures of FY2013-14 & FY2014-15 (Provisional)

*BISP & Bait-ul-Maal are Social Safety Programs

The growth of PRSP expenditures in almost all of the accounting heads of MDGs increased substantially from 2001-02 baseline; however, the expenditures as a percentage of GDP did not increase proportionately. For example, it has always been argued by the development professionals and policy analysts that health sector has never been high on the priority list of the government – which explains the marginal increase from 0.57 per cent to 0.69 per cent of GDP from 2001-02 to 2013-14. Although the total PRSP expenditures increased during the last 13 years, it was not been reflected in MDGs (Table 1). If government is sincere, then, the government(s) both at the federal and provincial levels will have generate local funds and address the syndrome of dependency on external flow of funds.

5. Partnership and Stakeholder Participation including Institutional Arrangements

The lack of institutional capacity issues were observed at all tiers of the government departments engaged in the making of appropriate policies required for achieving MDGs. The government could not succeed in developing effective partnership(s) with different stakeholders (both) within the public domain (e.g. civil service) and the private sector (e.g. civil society). The stakeholder participation in the framework of development for implementation has been a reason for a lack of ‘ownership’ of MDGs across different segment of civil society, particularly the non-governmental sector. Their absence of the much-needed horizontal and vertical linkages between the different tiers of government and the line departments also weakened the resolve to govern and the results.

Institutional capacity also needs to be augmented by the defined rules, regulations, policies and procedures which are identified by the concerned departments, in a collective and integrated approach. In addition to that, greater efforts on the part of the political government as well as the bureaucracy are needed to strengthen the national integration process which is essential for the development of partnership among the government ministries and departments as well as the different stakeholders at the societal level. As stated earlier, the absence of feasible partnership at the time of the MDGs resulted in the methodological weakness, lack of institutional linkages, inadequate resource allocations and lack of ownership programmes at local level. For a developing country like Pakistan, better coordination is the key to success for any initiative. The federal government is trying to ensure strong institutional linkages and participation of all relevant stakeholders for SDGs. However, this endeavour has largely been restricted to consultation where participants from federal and provincial governments, media and development professionals have helped in reaching agreements of actions at all levels (federal, provincial and local). Despite giving priority to identifying challenges and impediments that will be confronted in achieving the goals at the provincial level, none of the provincial governments have come up with their provincial action plans or the framework required to take the progress forward. They will soon have to realise that progress (on SDGs) has to be made in tandem with the progress on security challenges and economic priorities.

5.1 Analysis of Institutional Capacity

Pakistan is a federation of five provinces – Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan – and three administrative units – Islamabad Capital Territory, Federally Administrative Tribal Area, and Federally Administrative Northern Area. The distribution of resources among the federation and its units is made through the National Finance Commission (NFC). Provincial governments have powers to raise their own taxes on certain economic activities that are not covered under federal taxation system. Provincial governments are also responsible for the well-being of those who live within their borders, particularly by providing basic social services such as education, health, water supply, housing, etc. (The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, Modified 2012). However, with the adoption of the 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010, the responsibilities of the provincial governments have increased substantially, as 21 federal ministries have been devolved at provincial level including education, health, water supply and sanitation, environment, etc. (The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, Modified 2012). The impact of these changes further reduced the already weak institutional capacity of provincial governments, for instance those federal government employees who have been transferred to the provincial governments continue to work under different service rules and institutional by-laws; not governed by the provincial service rules. Unfortunately, this state of confusion continues to negatively impact the integration of employees in the provincial service cadre, and it also prevents the development of linkages and coordination among departments and between ministries (SPDC, 2012).

Another critical factor that continues to erode the institutional capacity is the lack of relevant education and training opportunities for the mid-level or junior government employees. A neglect which has resulted in the lack of motivation among the employees and has been a major factor in preventing the development of their professional career. One important aspect is the weak education and employment linkage that results in compromising the quality of human resource employed in government institutions. Moreover, the remuneration of government employees is not compatible with the private sector, which has been a major reason why the dynamic young and graduate to get inclined towards the private sector. It appears that the government so far has ignored this reality and not taken any preventive measures.

The current institutional capacity and its impact on national development, particularly in terms of efficiency and compliance suggests that government institutions both at the federal and provincial levels require massive institutional reforms to augment their capacity for effective implementation of the SDGs. According to provincial officials, “each institution has to take a leadership role in formulating and implementing sectoral plans for SDGs. These sectoral plans should be developed within the framework of the national development objectives outlined in Vision 2025.” However, contrary to the provincial officials’ claim, it appears that government institutions lack a proactive role in planning new initiatives for SDGs that are aligned with national development. The provincial government officials also think that innovation and new ideas are needed to improve the existing implementation mechanisms and develop an integrated mechanism for implementing the SDGs.

Besides human and financial resource constraints, public service institutions in Pakistan are also implicated in corruption, nepotism, red tape and politicisation. The proportion of corrupt practices has substantially increased over the past 25 years as the government has failed to implement anti-corruption laws effectively. Politicisation of the bureaucracy is the major cause of government failure to take crucial measures against corrupt practices. Each government prefers to work with those bureaucrats who are willing to support the political objectives of the ruling party. This often involves frequent transfer and re-posting of bureaucrats that has negative consequences on departmental policies and programmes. For example, the Education and Literacy Department in Sindh province posted 23 Secretaries (highest bureaucratic position) in 20 years, meaning that each had a tenure of less than one year. These practices are not limited to Deputy Commissioner or Secretary levels, but also extend to key personnel at the lower levels, leaving a negative impact on departmental efficiency.

Moreover, to off set the negative impact of personnel transfer on the project, it is important to provide a proper briefing to the in-coming staff officer. Absence of such an arrangement usually has a slow-down effect on the implementation process observed at the time of MDGs.

5.2 Partnership and National Integration of SDGs

The absence of political commitment is one of the key constraints of development outcomes in Pakistan. Due to high development needs in the constituencies, the resource allocation has always been problematic as political elites and leaders in Pakistan face complex political and social constraints. In the implementation of SDGs the federal government will have to lead and demonstrate political commitment which overcomes the provincial diversity in culture, economy and resources. In addition to lack of political will, poor governance has also contributed in the MDGs failure in Pakistan. The third pillar of recently launched national Vision 2025 refers to the issues of governance, which essentially means looking and replicating the “best practices” of countries having similar characteristic like Pakistan. The governance problems in Pakistan could impede the integration of SDGs into the national vision of development because the politicians and policymakers are likely to focus more on developing project proposals rather on implementation mechanisms.

The participation of other stakeholders, such as CSOs, in identifying the integration challenges of the SDGs must be ensured. The integration of the SDGs into Vision 2025 is dependent on the social development perspective and vision opted by respective governments/officials concerned. In Pakistan, broad-based policies seldom deliver, such was the experience within the Social Action Program (SAP) in 1992 which was the first social development initiative in Pakistan. One of the primary reasons of the failure of SAP was the incapacity of the state institutions along with the incapability of the bureaucracy and the political leadership who failed in shouldering the responsibility of broad-base social development. The other reason for SAP failure was the behaviour of ‘State’ which operates on “clientelistic” politics (i.e. politics of patronage) (Lodhi, 2001). For integration of SDGs in the provincial development plans, there is a need to strengthen inter-provincial coordination and pursue a viable resource plan. Equally important, will be to, simultaneously minimise the consequential repercussions of security challenge and political instability.

Public-private partnership (PPP) model has been globally recognised as a mechanism to improve governance in service delivery. In this backdrop, the success of the SDGs would have to be rooted in the development of effective partnership between the public and private sectors. Over the last two decades, the security situation in the country is demanding vertical and horizontal collaboration among different stakeholders. The link between implementation of SDGs and security issues has paramount importance in designing policy objectives.

5.3 Multi-stakeholder Participation (MSP)

Multi-stakeholder engagement has become an important element of sustainable development. It aims at mobilising and sharing knowledge, technology, skills and financial resources, and ensuring the participation of a broad cross-section of the population in order to achieve the objective of an egalitarian society. There exist different perspectives for MSP within different organisations. For SDGs, the federal and provincial government can use multi-stakeholder engagement process to ensure participation on a specific issue based on effectiveness of implementation mechanism with defined responsibilities of each stakeholder. For the development of implementation framework, partnership among different stakeholders will contribute in the transparency and accountability through regular dialogue and discussion after agreeing upon a development agenda. Stakeholders with varying expertise and capacity add value to development programmes by pooling their resources and assets to find solutions for development challenges. The best examples of the multi-stakeholder process in Pakistan is the initiatives under PPP. For example, Peoples’ Primary Healthcare Initiative (PPHI) was launched in 2005 to improve the first level healthcare facilities at district level. This PPP model contracted-

out management of the Primary Healthcare Infrastructure in 60 per cent districts of Pakistan. MSP networks such as the PPPs are vital for the implementation of necessary development agenda by sharing knowledge and resources mainly because public sector alone cannot achieve and solve the complexities of sustainable development (ODI and FDC, 2003). In an ideal scenario, multi-stakeholder partnerships also result in participation of think tanks in decision-making, acquire funds from donor communities and empower citizens through the provision of better services. For instance, the benefits of multi-stakeholder participation in planning and budgeting process were enormous in the province of Balochistan, mainly because it helped in incorporating the viewpoints of different yet important actors.

In general, the categorisation of stakeholders as decision-makers, implementers and beneficiaries is important from the viewpoint of roles and responsibilities. Hazelwood (2015) is of the view that the multi-stakeholder approach was a response to the implementation challenges of meeting the MDGs. Public-private collaboration will require a significant scaling-up of the collective responsibility of diverse stakeholders to measure the change after SDGs implementation. The universal review process should build on national ownership, broad participation and transparency as proposed in the Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General, 2014. The Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals initiative has promoted the idea of clear and transparent criteria for post-2015 development agenda, which should be validated by participatory processes (understanding and recognising the views of countries from South) to adapt universal global targets. The 17th goal of SDGs emphasises on the need to 'strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development' which, is a reflection of MSP for sustainable development.

The local government structure in Pakistan provides an ideal platform for MSP. Devolved administrative authority and a truly empowered local community can work with the provincial governments for the integration of SDGs into local planning process. For the effective implementation of SDGs, local planning, knowledge, collective action and service delivery will be key instruments as local communities understand the local development needs more than the provincial governments. Functional participation of local governments, diverse local actors, and donors will ensure the effective and strategic implementation of SDGs. Whereas the role of donors has always been limited only to suggest innovative development approaches according to local needs and have had insignificant influence on local development policy, by adopting politically feasible and flexible approaches locally, public opinion can be mobilised in favour of deepening public commitment, and spending on development that is in line with national aspirations and commitments. However, the relationship and accountability structures between local and provincial governments will have to be continuously monitored and managed by the federal government.

MSP offers the following advantage in the implementation of the SDGs in Pakistan.

- Financial resources directed towards MDGs were one of Pakistan's greatest challenges in achieving the MDG targets. To implement the SDGs, donor agencies and private sector (philanthropic organisations) together can play a constructive role in the financing or supplementing of government programs.
- The collaboration of CSOs and business sectors with government officials in decision-making process will help develop a framework for prioritising key issues of the development sector, such as citizens' participation and organisational linkages problems, etc.
- Under MSPs, the Government of Pakistan can work with international and national institutions to improve institutional capacity in service delivery.
- CSOs and research organisations can work with government officials by producing situational analyses and research reports on social issues.
- Partnership with heterogeneous stakeholders will help improve the level of horizontal and vertical coordination among departments and across various sectors. This can be achieved by forward and backward linkages among different departments.

- Accountability of public officials may be improved with the participation of non-government actors in planning and implementing of development goals.
- Engagement of the media in promoting the SDGs will widely create awareness and highlight success stories in providing social services.

5.3.1 Challenges to MSP

- The major challenge confronting MSPs in Pakistan is the issues of sustainability of the partnership process. Chances are that partners from such a wide range of background will operate differently, and their interests will differ. Such diversity could create hurdles in implementation such as difference in social sector priorities, etc.
- The principal stakeholders of Pakistan's development agenda are the national, provincial, and local governments. Securing the formal commitment of the private sector to engage with government agencies might be difficult in the long-run, due to limited financial resource capacity of the private sector.
- The financial support from international donor agencies and international NGOs (INGOs) has not been considered by many as a development partnership, rather the engagement of donors from the West is largely viewed by several religious-political parties and their followers, as a threat to the security of Pakistan.

6. Capacity of the National Statistical Agencies and other Data-related Issues

Poor availability and reliability of data were the most pressing challenges to realise the MDG targets. For example, health-related baselines from 1990 were derived from unreliable household surveys without reference to birth and death registers, health records or health statistics (Safdar *et al.*, 2002; Fehling *et al.*, 2013). Data on school completion were also difficult to obtain. Pakistan's reports on its progress toward the MDGs were difficult to interpret because they were based on unsupported assumptions and data of poor quality (Ministry of Planning, 2015a).

The federal government needs to develop the required infrastructure as well as build the capacity to coordinate the oversight and monitoring of the SDG implementation process by using information technology. Vision 2025 highlights the importance of e-governance for bureaucratic transparency and efficiency, and for engaging citizens in monitoring and accountability. Increasing access for citizens, to technology through enhanced connectivity and networking is a core objective.

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) is Pakistan's principal institution for collecting and publishing data in Pakistan. It will coordinate with the federal and provincial governments to measure progress toward the SDGs. During the last 10 years, the accessibility of data has improved considerably – unlike the 90s, when the data issues were identified as a major impediment for any type of independent monitoring and evaluation of government programmes. The provincial governments have also shown their resolve to design e-governance monitoring tools for SDGs (for instance, a tool that will help take progress in enrolment by district, etc.) The use of high-tech information technology will help improve the 'accessibility' issues and will help improve departmental linkages.

The high-level meeting convened by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms at the federal level attended by Federal Minister of Planning, Chief Ministers of all the four provinces and policymakers on the SDGs gave special consideration to the data availability, its quality and accessibility, the level of disaggregation and data requirements for SDG goals and indicators. One of the major outcomes of this particular meeting was the decision to conduct SDG baseline survey by provincial governments. Through their SDG Units, they will be responsible for mapping indicators by sector and by district, and for estimating the financial resources. The federal and provincial governments will finalise the methodology for undertaking the baseline survey soon after the SDG Units are established in each province. Currently, each province is conducting a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey with the help

of the UNICEF. There is a possibility of incorporating the SDG-related indicators in the next survey – which is held once every three years. The provincial governments are now in the process of finalising the indicators. The involvement of CSOs and think tanks such as SPDC in identifying and mapping the SDG indicators could improve the data quality as CSOs are end-users of government data, and have the relevant expertise of identifying gaps in the existing databases.

Considering that there are more than 300 indicators of the SDGs, the baseline survey will be an extensive exercise that will require substantial financial and human resources (interviews with provincial government officials, 2015). To maintain the quality of the survey, the provincial governments are planning to conduct it in two or three phases. After it has been completed, they will map financial resources. They will subsequently analyse the national and provincial plans from the viewpoint of SDGs targets and indicators. The baseline survey will probably take one to two years to meet international standards. The complex survey will be undertaken at the household level using multi-stage, stratification and cluster sampling of an international standard. The federal and provincial governments have also agreed that the Pakistan Standard Living Measurement (PSLM) and other national survey results will be examined prior to dissemination and the provincial governments will be consulted on regular basis.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has highlighted the major challenges of Pakistan in the implementation of SDGs from different perspectives. The post-2015 development agenda of the SDGs has been reflected in Pakistan's Vision 2025 which, among other things, recognises the challenges encountered in achieving the MDGs. The present-day discussion on the SDGs and the vision document, particularly on the political corridors, has been traced, to build an understanding of the political commitment and thinking of the current government recognising the social and economic development needs of the country by prioritising and translating core development objectives into concrete policy and programmes. Achieving the 17 goals and 169 targets will be an enormous task for the governments at all levels, and the key challenge will be to club the available institutional capacity, resources and the development vision into a viable implementation framework – which needs to be developed with political consensus and inputs from relevant civil society experts. To achieve the SDGs, multi-stakeholder participation is a useful platform that would provide the required impetus for development. Any misunderstanding of development vision by the local political actors can also create hindrance for the provincial governments in implementing the SDGs.

The leadership of the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform at the federal level will be instrumental in ensuring coordination, resource availability, monitoring and development of partnerships with other stakeholders. However, provincial governments will need to develop a framework that enables tracking of SDG indicators with the help of performance evaluation criteria of the initiatives in each implementation department and line agencies working under the government.

The dominant emphasis of international community and public policy researchers is on the implementation framework for SDGs that minimise the negative impacts of 'the political economy of development.' The provincial governments should concentrate on "incentives such as the cash voucher scheme for girls' primary enrolment" and resource allocation across social sectors. Moreover, federal government is taking lead in the implementation of SDGs and have declared it as a 'national agenda' by addressing policy options and decisions. Another way to implement SDGs is to develop a consensus through MSP or involving the private sector in improving the quality of basic service provision. For example, in some sectors the government may be able to focus on improving or reforming the bureaucracy through collective action, especially through the local governments. There is a need to link 'research' with the SDGs implementation at provincial and local levels. A long-term research project would be beneficial to identify reforms for improving institutional and sectoral performance in Pakistan that go beyond project-specific approaches.

Lastly, the provincial governments are only in the stage of understanding the SDGs goals and targets from the perspective of their own planning vision. However, provinces have agreed with the overall development vision of 2025 from the viewpoint of SDGs. The study has found a different level of understanding and preparation for SDGs at provincial level. Punjab, for instance, is far ahead of other provinces in terms of aligning its development goals with the SDGs. Balochistan is facing problems related to equity and underdevelopment, causing concerns that the SDGs may be too ambitious to attain in the province. Inter-sectoral coordination, issues of governance related to accountability and transparency, and financial constraints still need to be addressed in developing a realistic plan of action. Like Balochistan, Sindh and KPK are also facing similar challenges.

It is therefore too early to determine the implications of implementing the SDGs, since the federal and provincial governments are in the process of establishing and redesigning their implementation mechanisms. In addition, determining the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder engagement and assessing policy statements will require evaluation studies to reflect on the evidence and tracking of progress of the SDG indicators.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire: National Level Implications of Implementation of SDGs

Barriers and Limitations of MDGs

1. How do you see MDGs as a concept and its implementation?
2. Please tell about the key challenges in meeting the targets of MDGs.

Probing Questions

1. Financial constraints?
2. Governance Issues?
3. Monitoring and Evaluation Issues?
4. Lack of coordination between federal, provincial and district level?
5. Lack of coordination with-in sectors?
6. Availability of baseline data, its quality and accessibility at disaggregated level i.e. gender, rural-urban, district level, etc.?
7. Any other?

National Agenda of Development from SDGs Perspective

1. Do you think there is a national agenda of development in Pakistan?
2. If response no, then ask
3. Do you think that vision 2025 is a national agenda of development?
4. Who are the stakeholders in the formulation of agenda?
5. Were you consulted in SDGs formulation process?
6. Do you think that SDGs are in line with national development agenda? If not, kindly explain briefly.
7. Is there sufficient political support for the realization of SDGs?

Benefits of Multi-Stakeholder Participation

1. How can intra-governmental coordination and multi-stakeholder participation be ensured in SDGs process?

Probing Question:

1. Are you happy with the inter-governmental coordination in the SDG implementation process? If not, please explain briefly?
2. In your opinion, what type of challenges may be faced in multi-stakeholder participation?
3. How can we engage multi-stakeholders (e.g. Media, Business, CSOs and Think Tanks) in the development agenda considering social and political dynamics of Pakistan?

Implementation of SDGs and its Success

1. Explain three important constraints and limitations that may prevent achieving SDGs?
2. Identify key areas of strength for SDG implementation?
3. What are the prospects of SDGs success?

Probing Question:

1. What are the chances of successful implementation of SDGs in Pakistan? How can it be ensured? Can we achieve it successfully?

Appendix 2: List of Interviewees (alphabetically)

Mr Qaiser Alam

Chief, Macroeconomic
Planning and Development Department
Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Mr Rana Azhar

Chief, Education
Planning and Development Department
Government of Punjab

Mr Muhammad Saleem Jalbani

Assistant Chief
Planning and Development Department
Government of Sindh

Ms Rehana Memon

Secretary, Development
Planning and Development Department
Government of Sindh

Mr Arif Hussain Shah

Chief of Section, (MICS, Programming, Federal Projects),
Planning and Development Department
Government of Balochistan

Mr Zahir Shah

Chief, Public Sector Development Programmes
Planning and Development Department
Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Dr Aman Ullah

Joint Chief Economist
Planning and Development Department
Government of Punjab

Dr Naeem uz Zaffar

Member Social Sector
Planning Commission of Pakistan

Participants of FGDs

Dr Ayesha Bashiruddin, (Head, Research & Policy Studies/Associate Professor, Institute for Educational Development (IED), Pakistan)

Dr Nelofer Halai, (Professor, IED, Pakistan)

Dr Sarfaroze Niyozov, (Director, IED, Pakistan)

Dr Sadruddin Pardhan, (Professor Emeritus, IED, Pakistan)

Dr Mir Afzal Tajik, (Associate Director, IED, Pakistan)



Launched in 2012, **Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals** (Southern Voice) is a network of 49 think tanks from Africa, Asia and Latin America, which was set up to serve as an open platform to contribute to the global discourse pertaining to the formation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the challenges of implementation, monitoring and mid-course review of the SDGs. *Southern Voice* addresses the existing 'knowledge asymmetry' in the global debates and 'participation deficit' of the developing countries by generating evidence-based knowledge, sharing policy experiences originating in the Global South, and disseminating this knowledge and experience among key stakeholders. *Southern Voice Occasional Papers* are based on research undertaken by members of the network as well as inputs received at various platforms of the initiative. The *Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)*, Bangladesh hosts the Secretariat of *Southern Voice*.



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