

A Concise Approach to Health and Sustainable Development

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Abstract:

The developmental pace of human civilization can be sustained through quality healthcare services, along with an accelerated rate of economic growth, by raising the perception of sustainability in society. The World Health Organization, in this context, defines the term 'health' as a 'particular state of human beings where three parameters of well-being, namely physical, psychological, and social function, are simultaneously provided without the existence of any diseases.' It is undeniable that the progress of human society can be nourished only through fulfilling the goal of ending poverty and inequality. As sustainable development contributes a major part to human development, priority should be given to environmental protection. However, the dismal fact is that in many third-world as well as second-world countries, humans are still victims of discriminating factors grounded in worldwide socio-economic settings. The injustice and inequalities against them for a long period produce a detrimental retrogression of their health. In this connection, the physical and mental well-being of humans demands a lot of attention for attaining sustainable development throughout the world according to SD-Goal-3.

Introduction:

The true meaning of sustainability is 'that can be maintained', and the meaning of development is 'the act or instance of growth'. 'Sustainable Development (SD)' was first introduced and developed by The World Commission on Environment and Development in a seminar report entitled "Our Common Future" in 1987. The main function of this report was to create mass awareness for sustaining the Earth's life support system with proper scientific management (Mensah, 2019). SD may be defined as meeting or fulfilling the needs of present generations without compromising the needs of the next generations. The concept elaborates on using planetary resources judiciously and immediately compensating for their uses. So, we can understand sustainable development as something that has to do with the long durability of resources, species of Earth, ecosystems, commodities, etc. This type of give-and-take policy will result in maintaining the Earth's balance between resource generation and resource

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consumption (Elsawy & Youssef, 2023). UNESCO's recent report shows the ultimate goal of SD is to construct a properly balanced Man and Biosphere relationship. The modern concept of SD has a focus on social development, economic development, and environmental protection for the future. Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 - all are relevant and interlocked, aiming to achieve good health for all on this planet (Elbakidze et al., 2013; Kaur et al., 2023).

Goals of SD:

The voice was raised around the world on educational improvement, poverty eradication, inequality elimination, and climate change. The environmental leaders of the world gathered on Sep. 25, 2015, at the UN in New York to adopt an agenda to be completed by 2030 for SD (Oluwasuji, 2023). In this agenda, 17 new Sustainable Development Goals were established. The original concept of SDGs was derived from the UN Conference on SD held at the Rio Conference in 1992, where Agenda-21 was also adopted. The main objectives of this conference were to create and establish a set of universally applicable goals that balance three main backbones of society, i.e., environmental, social, and economic perspectives (Shi et al., 2019). The 2030 agenda for SD adopted 17 Goals that form a collaborative and integrated approach among the countries of global partnerships to achieve the three corners of SD – economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion (Mishra et al., 2023).

Health and SD in Global Scenario:

Development that can satisfy the demands of present generations without posing an ultimatum to future generations is called sustainable development (Mukherjee et al., 2022). The term ‘ultimatum’ refers to the formation of environmental, social, and economic crises due to irrational decisions made for the benefit and profit of present generations only. Therefore, any developmental activity must be carried out through sustained use of available resources, enabling our descendants to meet their needs as well (Polasky et al., 2015; Ghosh et al. 2022; Erfani et al., 2023). Our future is already in danger due to the overuse of non-renewable natural resources that cannot be replenished. Hence, we must keep an adequate amount of fund resources for our future use. Thus, sustainable development can be achieved only through the use of renewable resources like hydroelectricity, geothermal energy, wind energy, solar energy, etc (Holden et al., 2014). Accordingly, sustainable development is nothing but the maintenance of a balance between the present and future generations' needs by employing several new inventions for the betterment of the environment, society, and economy internationally (Fallah Shayan et al., 2022).

Health and Sustainable Development in Indian Scenario:

Indian storyline depicts a progressive picture towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Summit in New York, in September 2015, put forth 17 goals and 169 of its targets to achieve a secure world by 2030. To acknowledge the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (SD) 193 member states of the

United Nations came forth to raise voice for human rights (Unesco. et al., 2021). To reduce adverse effects on human health, mainly rural poverty should be alleviated, and access to necessary food procurement should be ensured. Among the 17 SDGs, the 1st Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-1) is 'No Poverty,' which is indirectly interlinked with human health and the intent to annihilate poverty from its root (Atukunda et al., 2021). To achieve success in this goal, the Indian government launched the Food for Work Programme (FWP) in 1977-78, which was later restructured as the National Food for Work Programme in 2001. Presently, the Food for Work Programme functions as a component of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which confirms at least 100 days of the "right to work" for the poor in rural areas for their livelihood security (Swapna, 2018). Besides this, Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana, and Rural Employment Generation Programme are the most important driving schemes to eradicate poverty and generate employment, which, in turn, lifts the purchasing power capacity of the rural poor. Thus, increased income normally assures good health (Gupta, 2016).

The second goal of Sustainable Development is Zero Hunger, which is directly related to promoting regenerative agriculture. Lowering CO₂ emissions through the use of environmentally friendly appliances by 38 million tons annually, as well as supplying clean cooking fuel (e.g., LPG) to 80 million poor households, clearly reveals India's credibility towards sustainable development by controlling health hazards. An accelerated rate of investment is required to combat poverty, which has a direct effect on human health. The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) has the twin-concern authority to supervise the adoption and monitoring of the SDGs in the country and proactively realize the goals and targets (Voluntary National Review, 2020).

SDG-1(No Poverty) and SDG-2 (Zero Hunger):

Goal 1- Although poverty can manifest in many dimensions, its causes stem from unemployment, social exclusion, disasters, and diseases. That's why SDG 1 proposed 7 targets based on income poverty, including 1.1 and 1.2. Target 1.1 is focused on exterminating acute poverty; the second, bringing down poverty by at least 50%; the third, implementing a social protection system; the fourth, ensuring equal rights to ownership, basic services, technology, and economic resources. Target 1.5 aims to build resilience to environmental, economic, and social disasters (Küfeoğlu, 2022). The sixth target is to mobilize resources to implement policies to end poverty. The next one is to create pro-poor and gender-sensitive policy frameworks. Investment in all these poverty eradication actions is the need of the hour, as over 10% of the world's population still lives in extreme poverty, i.e., surviving on less than \$1.90 per person per day (Tladi, 2022).

Goal 2- This goal is indirectly connected with health. The objective of this goal is to end starvation and malnourishment by 2030. The UN has formulated 8 targets for SDG-2, where food-related access, malnutrition, markers, production systems, agricultural practices, diverse

genetic forms of seeds, cultivated plants, domesticated animals, research, and technology, etc., are to be noted. The paucity of connected or coordinated activity from food production to utilization at all levels hampers progress on SDG 2 (Saha, 2023; Haziqah Syafiqah Juhari, 2021; Katoch, 2024).

Sustainable Development Goal-3 (Good Health and Well-Being):

SDG-3 is concerned with “Good Health and Well-being”, formulated by the United Nations in 2015. It is the third goal of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, with the mission statement: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”. It comprises reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health, including communicable and non-communicable diseases. In addition to these, Universal Health Coverage (UHC), which encompasses safe, effective, affordable, and quality medicines and vaccines, falls under the purview of this goal (Qu et al., 2023). SDG 3 aims to avert undesirable distress from avoidable diseases and untimely deaths by focusing on the objective of improving both the physical and mental health conditions of the country's overall population, as well as their well-being. Sustainable development is directly related to the good health and welfare of all age groups worldwide (Singh Thakur et al., 2021). The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in severe human affliction associated with deaths, impeding the progress of the goal significantly (Kalal & Charola, 2021). Countries with a high concentration of diseases and marginalized groups of the population have become the priority areas of Goal 3, requiring significant investments in research, health issues, mortality reduction, and overall supervision (Khattak et al., 2023).

Relation between SDG-3 and SDG-5:

There exists a strong relationship between Sustainable Development Goal-5 and Sustainable Development Goal-3, as Gender Equality and the empowerment of all women and girls depend on Well-being and Good Health (Leal Filho et al., 2023). But how are these two goals interrelated? SDG-5 has nine targets to achieve gender equality. By 5.1, Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere, and next, Eliminating all forms of violence and exploitation of women and girls; 5.3- Eradicate early forced marriage and female genital mutilation or harmful practices, and in the fourth corner, Value unpaid care and promote shared domestic responsibilities; 5.5- Ensure full participation in leadership and decision-making, and next also, Universal access to reproductive rights and health; 5.7- Equal rights to economic resources, property ownership, and financial services; 5.8, and it is to promote the empowerment of women through technology, and the last one, adopt and strengthen policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality (Karim et al., 2023). The targets of SDG 3 aim to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, which includes Maternal mortality, Neonatal and child mortality, Infectious diseases, Non-communicable diseases, Substance abuse, Road traffic, Sexual and reproductive health, Universal health coverage, and Environmental Health (A. Durokifa, 2021; Saha et al., 2022a; Saha et al., 2022b; Saha &

Khatua, 2024; Saha et al., 2023). SDG 3 is directly and indirectly interconnected with several targets of SDG 5. It is undeniably true that good health and well-being are unachievable without boosting gender equality and women's empowerment globally (Kuhlmann et al., 2022).

Relation between Health Education and SDGs:

The main goal of SD is human resource development, and all aspects are related to different areas of education, such as health and environment, education for SD, peace education, vocational education, higher education, etc. EE and health education for SD focus on a particular field of specialization, specifically instructing us to protect natural resources and nature. The utilization of resources, the rate of production of resources and mental and physical fitness must be considered (Sarkar et al., 2022; Krishnamurthy & Sahay, 2023). The concerned organizations are fully responsible for maintaining the practice of the course and curriculum in our educational system to achieve the SDGs. With such diverse attention to achieving this goal, it is hoped that heartfelt efforts will bring a sound rate of environmental literacy and a positive attitude towards the environment and different burning environmental issues (*Educazione agli obiettivi per lo sviluppo sostenibile*, 2017). Education is the fundamental component for achieving SD worldwide. It acts as a positive catalyst in the proper management of resources through the incorporation of successful scientific techniques. Education instils knowledge, spirit, skills, intelligence, efficiency, and experience within students, which will help them become good leaders, decision-makers, and responsible environmentalist citizens in society (Pauw et al., 2015).

Universal Health Coverage (UHC):

People at all levels have access to a full scale of quality health services when and where they require them without monetary hardship. Presently, the global community has renewed its commitment to reach Universal Health Coverage worldwide. It is time for immediate and tangible action to make progress on the right track (National Academies of Sciences et al., 2018). Political leaders should enact policies that ensure equitable access to essential health services without economic hardship and that ensure good health and well-being is not an advantage for a few but a right for all. Countries must contribute to a resilient and fair health system with primary health care as the foundation and make universal health coverage a reality (Kruk et al., 2018). India foresees its path towards UHC, which is based on an assured range of extensive primary health care associated with vigorous secondary and tertiary protection, with rapid public investments crucial to this approach. Every 12th December is observed as UHC Day to call for strong and equal health protection that leaves no one behind (Kumar & Roy, 2016).

Some healthy steps for a healthy environment:

- Water conservation and management;
- Develop a rainwater harvesting system;

- Follow artificial groundwater recharge techniques;
- Enlarge watershed management techniques in semi-arid areas;
- Increase the area of ecologically unstable wasteland by implementing afforestation, reforestation, agro-forestation, social forestation, and joint forest management concepts;
- Use the rate of consumption of renewable energy;
- Resettle and rehabilitate refugees;
- Abide by environmental ethics;
- Express concerns regarding the terrible performance of global warming and drastic climate change;
- Adhere to the laws and legislations of the Environmental Protection Act (1986);
- Address issues involved in the enforcement of environmental legislation; etc.
- Green environment and green building for all.

Significance of quality health education & SD:

A quality health education provides strong support in acquiring a magnificent order of thinking and learning, thus creating healthy capabilities to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate complex facts in decision-making, planning, and problem-solving for achieving sustainable development (SD). Some initiatives were taken to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the year 2000, with the main focus on education in formal, non-formal, and informal forms as an essential mechanism to achieve SD (Hariram et al., 2023). It was believed that education would bring advanced changes in the teaching-learning process, fostering a thinking approach that stimulates learners to ask questions, analyze, engage in critical thinking, and make decisions that are less competitive more cooperative, and learner-centric (Sellars et al., 2018). Health education is essential for all in this aspect, contributing to creating a better and more secure world for subsequent generations. This will help live for people in a better and more secure world for subsequent generations. To measure improvements in education-based outcomes, there is an emphasis on holistic development (Kumar & Preetha, 2012).

Conclusion:

Despite numerous conservation efforts taken so far, our environment is becoming increasingly poorer than before. The prospect of drastic changes raises some basic questions about the present world, where we will bequeath nature and natural resources to future generations. Our present lifestyle must be reoriented and reshaped to rectify the damage done in the past by our ancestors. In terms of technological advancement, the present world is much better than in previous years, and it will be even better in the upcoming tomorrow than in the current condition. Universal Health Coverage (UHC), which is based on an assured range of extensive primary health care associated with vigorous secondary and tertiary protection through rapid public investments, is crucial to this approach. We need to foster environmentalism, environmental ethics, and eco-feminism attitudes within ourselves and

others, which will contribute to a healthier future for our descendants. In the past two decades, considerable efforts from research fellows, environmentalists, environmental scientists, ecologists, social scientists, geologists, geographers, and demographers have taken initiatives to combat various burning environmental issues (e.g., population growth, biodiversity loss, habitat destruction, ozone layer depletion, environmental pollution, low mortality rate, global climate change, food and energy insecurity, etc.). This has been done with the help of both governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Although countries have taken initiatives to achieve zero population growth status, this situation is still unstable or absent. Nations' breakthrough works and efforts have succeeded in the dimension of renewable energy production, agro and social forestry creation, better advancement of pollution control technologies, increases in mass awareness, elimination of poverty and illiteracy, reduction of resource wastages, etc. These efforts will help make our planetary environment a much healthier place to live together in a harmonious rhythm. We all should recognize these efforts personally and collectively to protect our nature and natural resources, which, in turn, protect our health.

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