

# Role of Children in Making India Developed and the Accomplishment of SDG

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India is one of the fastest growing developing countries of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in terms of economy, having an approximate growth rate of 7% over the last two decades. Not just that, from the last quarter of 2014, India's economy became the world's fastest growing major economy replacing the People's Republic of China. But what concerns people is that despite its gradual success in the economic scenario, its economic status is still classified as a low income country with majority of the population at or below the poverty line due to great economic disparity. This has led to a situation where most of the people, especially the children, are either undernourished or malnourished; do not have access to quality education. UNICEF has recognized poor sanitation as one of the reasons for malnutrition. Moreover, they are forced to live in abject poverty, denying them the fundamental rights and at last end up getting menial jobs in unorganized sector, which in turn aggravates the menace of child labour.

India can become a developed country, in the true sense of the word, if it develops in a holistic approach. A situation where not only the growth rate would be high but each and every children of India will have access to their birth rights, namely getting quality food, quality education, quality healthcare. Only then India can become developed. If the majority of the children remain sick and undernourished, India's dream of becoming a developed country will remain a dream and never materialize into reality. After all, a sick population won't be able to contribute in the development of a country. So, it is the children of India on whom India's success is dependent. These are the challenges which have to be overcome, not just by the government itself, but all those citizens of India who have comparatively better access to the fundamental rights.

Government of India along with UNICEF has launched certain programmes for the greater interest of the downtrodden children, which has been a noble initiative in this area. Starting with health, children can lead a healthy life if they get to live in a proper sanitized environment. This would ensure the end of water borne diseases, like malaria and cholera. As far as AIDS is concerned, there should be massive awareness programmes among the people about the use and the ready availability of the protection devices. With vigorous implementation of these programs along with the likes of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, India would be able to meet some of the targets highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals(SDG) as far as health is concerned. Overnight changes cannot and should not be expected but a consistent approach would definitely result in the realization of the health standards outlined in SDG.

As far as education is concerned, each and every child should have the access to quality education. According to the Government of India(GOI)- UNICEF Country Programme,2013-2017-under the programme component-Protective and learning environment, it ensures boys and girls live in a protective environment and have equitable access to and utilize quality education and protection services. This programme is very beneficial and will lead to the fulfilment of SDG in education sector. Moreover, with the present government's emphasis on skill development among youths will lead to

better enhancement of India's human resource. It seems in education sector, with the present trend, India would be able to accomplish the SDG much before 2030. Also, campaigns like Make In India would ensure that the educated youths have jobs and subsequently, better living standards.

Now, coming to nutrition, schemes like mid-day meal scheme, integrated child development scheme should be further encouraged. For that India should ensure that there is food security and food for all belonging to all groups and classes of people. With the growing population of India, India requires a second phase of Green Revolution. Or else, the overgrowing population would soon become a liability. Once India attains food security, the next step is to create an awareness on balanced diet. Consumption of a balanced diet would only ensure that each and every children is properly nourished and they are not deprived of any particular nutrient. India should depend their farming on genetic engineering so that the the agriculturally productive lands remain productive forever. All these would lead to the accomplishment of SDG.

Sanitation is one of the most important parameters as far as the overall development of any civilization is concerned. Because lack of proper sanitation would indirectly lead to poor health conditions and under nutrition. To ensure proper sanitation, there should be proper waste disposal management system, which would take care of the wastes. Implementation of proper drainage facilities so that there is no stagnant water in the drains. Prevalence of stagnant water becomes the breeding ground for mosquitoes and other disease causing microorganisms. Not just that, water security is also as important as food security. Availability of drinking water to all. To bring down the pollution level to lower the occurrence of respiratory diseases. In sanitation sector also, with whole hearted efforts, India can achieve the SDG.

For accomplishing all the above stated points, one needs to protect the children from abuse and discrimination. Not a single child's childhood should be lost by working in hazardous industries at meagre incomes. It is a total case of exploitation of their innocence, their hidden talents. With this regard, it is a common sight in India that children are employed in thatched food stalls, cleaning vehicles or working in homes as domestic help. The common citizens cannot and should not be ignorant and turn a blind eye to all these. Awareness must be created about the importance of children in the building of a strong nation. Law enforcement authorities should be more stringent against the defaulters. It is not just the duty of GOI or UNICEF, it is the duty of each and every citizen to make an effort in this regard. India stands at the doorstep of becoming a developed country and would eventually become a developed country if it can properly groom its children so they become a human resource and not a liability by 2030.