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EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC POLICY IN ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, provide a comprehensive global framework for achieving inclusive, equitable, and environmentally sustainable development. In India, the realization of these goals largely depends on state-level public policies and their effective implementation. Karnataka, one of India's economically progressive states, has introduced several policy initiatives aligned with the SDGs. This paper examines the effectiveness of public policy in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Karnataka, with specific reference to economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development. Relying on secondary data from government reports, policy documents, and development indicators, the study assesses progress across selected SDGs and identifies key challenges and policy gaps. The findings reveal that while Karnataka has made notable progress in poverty reduction, education, and economic growth, significant challenges persist in agricultural sustainability, regional disparities, and environmental management.

KEYWORDS: *Public Policy, Sustainable Development Goals, Inclusive Growth, Governance*

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development has emerged as a central objective of public policy across the globe. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a universal framework comprising seventeen goals aimed at eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, promoting inclusive economic growth, and protecting the environment. In federal countries like India, the achievement of SDGs is critically dependent on state-level policy formulation, implementation, and governance capacity.

Karnataka has been among the leading Indian states in adopting development-oriented public policies in sectors such as agriculture, education, health, financial inclusion, and infrastructure. The state government has aligned its planning and budgeting processes with SDG indicators and has incorporated sustainability concerns into various sectoral policies. Against this backdrop, the present paper seeks to analyze the effectiveness of public policies in Karnataka in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature underscores the pivotal role of public policy in achieving sustainable development, emphasizing that policy coherence, institutional capacity, and effective governance are essential for translating SDGs into measurable outcomes. UNDP researchers Curry, Kathel, and Guha (2023) highlight institutional ownership and multi-level governance for SDG localization in India, while Sundarasen, Rajagopalan, and Zyznarska-Dworczak (2023) note sustainability reporting as a tool for accountability. Singh, Kanaujia, and Singh (2022) stress robust governance frameworks, and Unni, Rathi, Gupta, and Chakraborti (2022) reveal that administrative efficiency and resource capacity drive sub-national SDG disparities. Karnataka has performed well in social indicators like literacy and health but faces challenges in agriculture, environmental sustainability, and regional disparities, highlighting the need for continuous policy evaluation and outcome-based monitoring (Clearcut Media, 2023).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To implement the SDGs in Karnataka's policies and programs for inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development
2. To assess Karnataka's progress in selected SDGs related to economic, social, and environmental development.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on secondary data collected from government publications, Karnataka Economic Surveys, NITI Aayog's SDG India Index reports, policy documents, and reports of national and international agencies. A descriptive and analytical approach is adopted to evaluate the effectiveness of public policies in achieving the SDGs. Selected indicators relating to poverty, education, health, agriculture, and the environment are used to assess progress and identify gaps.

Public Policy Framework for SDGs in Karnataka

The Government of Karnataka has systematically integrated the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** into its state-level planning and governance. The state has aligned its development visions, such as Vision 2020 and Vision 2025, with the **Karnataka SDG Vision 2030**, ensuring that economic growth, social welfare, and environmental sustainability are embedded in official

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planning. This alignment is reflected in the state's improved SDG performance, with Karnataka achieving a score of **75 in the NITI Aayog SDG India Index 2023–24**, ranking fifth among major Indian states. Sector-specific policies in agriculture, health, education, and rural development translate these goals into concrete action. Notable progress has been observed in health indicators, for instance, the **maternal mortality ratio declined from 108 (2014–16) to 63 (2019–21)**, exceeding the SDG target ahead of schedule. In parallel, initiatives in clean water, sanitation, and skill development contribute to social well-being, though challenges remain in areas such as gender equality and quality education.

To promote **inclusive growth**, Karnataka has prioritized welfare measures and social protection schemes, allocating around **₹52,000 crore (14% of the state budget)** to programs that provide basic services and support for vulnerable populations. Initiatives include housing, food subsidies, electricity, and transportation support, helping reduce inequality and ensure access to essential services. The state has also institutionalized robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including **state-level steering and goal-specific committees**, as well as digital platforms like **Avalokana**, which track progress across over 600 SDG indicators. Multi-departmental coordination and periodic reporting enable evidence-based decision-making, while collaboration with NGOs, the private sector, and civil society expands participation and accountability in SDG implementation.

Assessment of Progress toward SDGs in Karnataka

To strengthen the analysis, selected quantitative indicators from official sources are incorporated to reflect Karnataka's progress toward the SDGs.

- **Economic Dimension**

Public policies aimed at economic growth and employment generation have contributed to progress in SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). According to the NITI Aayog SDG India Index, Karnataka consistently ranks among the better-performing states with an overall SDG score above the national average. The state's poverty ratio declined steadily during the last decade, supported by livelihood programmes, employment schemes, and financial inclusion initiatives. Karnataka's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) growth has remained relatively robust, averaging around 7–8 per cent in recent years, reflecting the effectiveness of industrial, MSME, and services-sector policies. However, agricultural income volatility and regional imbalances across northern and southern districts remain major concerns.

- **Social Dimension**

Karnataka has shown notable progress in SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). The state's literacy rate, at over 75 per cent, is higher than the national average, reflecting sustained investment in education policies. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) have declined significantly over the years due to expanded public health infrastructure and targeted health programmes. Welfare schemes related to nutrition, housing, and social security have improved access to basic services. Nevertheless, disparities persist between urban and rural areas and among different social groups, indicating uneven policy outcomes.

- **Environmental Dimension**

Environmental sustainability remains a challenging area. Karnataka has made progress in renewable energy adoption, with renewable sources accounting for a substantial share of installed power capacity, supporting SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). Policies promoting rainwater harvesting and watershed development have contributed to improved water-use efficiency in some regions. However, data from state environmental reports indicate continued groundwater depletion in several districts, rising urban air pollution levels, and increased climate vulnerability of agriculture. These issues highlight gaps in policy implementation related to SDGs 6, 11, and 13.

Challenges in Achieving the SDGs

Despite significant policy efforts, Karnataka continues to face several challenges that limit the effectiveness of public policies in achieving the SDGs. Inadequate coordination among government departments, fiscal constraints affecting the long-term sustainability of programmes, and persistent regional and social inequalities hinder equitable development. Weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms further reduce the ability to track progress and adjust interventions effectively. Additionally, climate-related risks, particularly affecting agriculture and rural livelihoods, pose significant obstacles to sustainable development outcomes, underscoring the need for strengthened governance, resource allocation, and adaptive policy measures.

Policy Suggestions

To enhance the effectiveness of public policy in achieving the SDGs, the study suggests several key measures. Strengthening inter-departmental coordination is essential to ensure policy coherence, while increased investment in sustainable agriculture and climate-resilient practices can address environmental and livelihood challenges. Targeted, region-specific development programmes are needed to reduce regional disparities, and improving data systems and monitoring frameworks will enable more effective tracking of SDG progress. Additionally, promoting community participation and decentralized governance can enhance the implementation and responsiveness of policies, ensuring that interventions are inclusive, context-specific, and sustainable.

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CONCLUSION

Public policy is pivotal in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals at the state level. Karnataka's experience demonstrates that well-designed and effectively implemented policies can make a substantial contribution to economic growth and social development. However, achieving comprehensive and sustainable outcomes requires addressing policy gaps, strengthening institutional capacity, and promoting inclusive implementation. Continuous evaluation, robust monitoring, and adaptive policymaking are essential for Karnataka to make sustained progress toward the SDGs in an equitable and resilient manner.

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