



## Combating Poverty: Achieving SDGs in Tharparkar

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### Abstract

*Fight against poverty and sustainable development has equal importance in today's development discourse. This paper explores the relationship between poverty and sustainable development and how they can be inclined to achieve Sustainable development goals. Economic factors have also been explored in this paper and the social, economic and behavioral improvement which only the improvement of the economic factors can bring to the locale. It has also been observed that poverty is mainly the factor that causes problems when addressed social problems that can be minimized. Poverty counts on the basic necessities of life for individuals improving it can improve the locale. In the end, the discussion is concluded and measures are suggested which can be adopted to make the poverty reduction strategies more effective.*

**Key Words:** Poverty, Sustainable Development Goals, Policy, Degradation, Migration

### Introduction

Fight against poverty was first coined in 1992, in The Rio Summit. The term changed the development scenario of the world and began a new chapter for the development organizations. First conference of the world discussing the poverty discourse was organized in 1995 by the United Nations, in which a detail discussion was made on the poverty alleviation strategies of the world which resulted in the formation of the millennium development goal at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century these MDGs was later made more explanatory and change to Sustainable Development Goals which became the 2030 vision of United Nations (Nair, 2012).

### Poverty

Poverty as per a generalized definition is considered as people having a lack of choices and lack of access to the basic necessities of life which can be basic education, material means, lack of freedom and dignity. Many of the social scientists argue on the dimensions of poverty, poverty is rather a multidimensional approach which has a less linkage with material approaches but has a main focus on the quality of life people are spending. In 1995, the United Nations adopted two definitions of poverty. Defined as: "A condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information". The study uses the definition of poverty offered by Todaro and Smith as they defined it as "Anyone living on less than \$ 2 a day is deemed as poor in absolute terms" (Todaro & Smith, 2012, pp. 212).

There are certain indicators that are used to measure poverty which is known as the Human Poverty Index which measures poverty by looking at five aspects which are illiteracy, poor nutrition, lack of health care, increased death rate and lack of access to safe water. When these all mentioned factors are combined, they tell the level of poverty in a particular locale.

Many of the scholars agree that one of the major key causes of poverty is an unequal distribution of the resources in a particular economy. Income disparity is often presented as the percentage of income to a

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percentage of the population. Low income combined with the absence of safety nets complements other factors, such as low enrolment of children in schools, ill health, vulnerability, migration and low agricultural output.

The critical income or consumption cut-off point below which an individual or household is considered to be poor. The World Bank from 2008 used \$ 1.25 as the global poverty line (World Bank, 2008). However, from 2015 the poverty line was established at US\$1.90. The people living below this income are considered to be in extreme poverty.

Poverty is multi-dimensional; its causes are extensive and similarly, its effects are multi-sectoral. Poverty causes severe and persistent deprivation and when designing policies to meet the needs of the poor it is imperative to understand its dynamics.

### **Strategies for Poverty Alleviation**

Across the globe, poverty alleviation strategies can be differentiated on the basis of the eradication and prevention policies of poverty. (Clark & Qizilbash, 2005, pp. 1342-43).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century particularly, particularly Malinowski (1929), Radcliffe-Brown (1980[1930]), and Evans-Pritchard (1946) highlighted the role of anthropology in promoting social change. Development was first coined after World War II (Escobar, 1991; Lewis, 2005). In these poverty reduction strategies included in the development discourse main focus was on the technical, education and infrastructural dimensions while a little focus was made on the cultural and social dimensions (Escobar 1991, 1995; Mair 1984; Nolan 2002, pp. 65). Later on, working of anthropologists on the development discourse was coined as the development anthropology (Gardner and Lewis 1996, pp. 77), however, until present anthropology has continued its unclear connection with development under the guise of poverty reduction and ending of marginality. The later approach studied the development intervention in critical perspective in reviewing social and cultural processes (Sillitoe 2007, pp. 157). Development anthropologists also focussed on anthropology's involvement in improving living conditions and prosperity of marginalized groups of people. Gardner and Lewis, 1996, pp. 25 argued,

*"Anthropology can contribute to more positive forms of developmental thought and practice, by both working in development and also by providing a critical account of development".*

Pakistan since its independence has made success in combating poverty. Each government employs new policies to fight poverty.

UNDP (2016, pp. xi) report titled Multidimensional Poverty in Pakistan estimates that Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) measures that 38.8 percent of Pakistan's population is below the poverty line. What becomes evident from such statistics is that the capacity of the state has always been limited to tackle core issues at all levels. It also reveals that the policies of the state have been less effective in combating poverty. This has led to accelerate disparities and to entail dismal regional performance as widely witnessed in Pakistan. Given the relatively low performance and capacity of the state to support and provide basic amenities to its citizens, the rise of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has become the basis of alternative development-oriented sources in Pakistan.

Though the context and capacity of NGOs' development are debatable, what is clear is that the NGO sector is making a difference globally (Banks & Hulme, 2012; Brass, 2012; Kabeer, Mahmud, & Isaza Castro, 2012; Kornatowski, 2010).

### **Sustainable Development**

"Sustainable development" is a recently induced concept in the development discourse but it has been a very old concept that has been adopted for centuries to achieve progressive development.

The concept of sustainable development revolves around strategic planning to achieve future goals and prolong the impacts of the development discourse for utilization over a long period of time. Sustainable development is often linked with the environment it is worth mentioning here that it covers all the aspects ("The Sustainable Development Paradigm", 2012).

## Capability Approach

The Economic philosopher Amartya Sen found the capability approach and other several social scientists like Martha Nussbaum contributed to the advancement of the capability approach. Capability Approach came into being as a measurement of welfare in modern economics (Atkinson & Bourguignon, 2000).

The idea of functionings' and capabilities are at the heart of the CA (Amartya Sen, 2003b, pp. 5-6) where the functionings are conceptualized as "beings and doings." (Amartya Sen, 1992, pp. 40-43; A. K. Sen, 1985). That is essentially about numerous states of "human beings" and doings/activities, which an individual can undertake. To illustrate, the realized states of "being" and "doing" of a person is primarily about "being healthy, being well-sheltered, moving out freely, or being well-nourished." This aspect of the CA approach is relevant to measure the impact of various development initiatives such as health insurance, low cost housing schemes, water facilities and investment funds. Inherently, the notion of functioning is all about possible opportunities that one has in life. Measures of welfare and poverty in the context of functioning are concerned with "non-market goods and services" in any given economy as indicated in the work of Sen.

Whereas, the capabilities are individual's real "freedoms" or "opportunities" to attain functionings, therefore, traveling is a "functioning," however, the "real freedom/ opportunity" to traveling is the consistent capability. The differentiation as done by the CA between functionings and capabilities is essentially between the "realized" and the effectual possibilities between "achievements," and "opportunities" from which people could choose. The capacity-building opportunities along with cash grants to build one's assets are added for providing opportunities for additional earning through enhancing capabilities of an individual to pursue his/her well-being with their own prowess on a sustainable basis.

Accomplished functioning is those that individuals select. For instance, an individual's ability set may comprise entree to diverse functioning connected to "mobility," like bicycling, taking a public bus, walking, so on and so forth. The functioning to which people truly make a choice to get to work or school can be the public automobile.

Similarly, the notion of utility is taken, as both an "output" and a "functioning" itself as stated in Sen's many accounts of developing the concept. Essentially, the idea of utility is an outcome/output because what individuals select to do as well as to be naturally, has an "effect" on their intellect of idiosyncratic well-being (for instance, the preference of bicycling to school or work on a bright day). Nevertheless, the CA also takes into consideration the notions of "subjective well-being" as an appreciated "functioning" in its own right and integrates it into the framework of CA.

CA maintains that the pertinent information concerning human functionings and capabilities is necessary to analyze the circumstance of individuals and to assess their well-being. Thus, its analysis offers part of what is required for social assessments of people's well-being. This is what makes the CA more striking to a variety of "theorists" and academics since interactive contrasts are desirable for a variety of diverse exercises, such as how well two contrasting individuals/groups/societies are doing at the same time or linking one individual at two distinct instants in time. Thus, in the "narrower" use of the CA, the emphasis is often firmly on the appraisal of personality functioning and capabilities level.

## Poverty and Sustainable Development

Studies related to Poverty and Sustainable Development refers that projects with a futuristic approach whether from the private or public sector has not only resulted in progressive human development but also sustainable development. A cross country analysis of Africa by Arimah (2004) suggests that investments, especially in health and education primarily for female and other community members, are some of the strategies for human development that directly impact poverty. A similar type of research also indicates that the development of human capital is not only crucial for human development but is also a pre-condition for sustained growth (Baldacci et al., 2004; Pelinescu, 2015). This relationship has also been confirmed in the context of Pakistan. (Ali, Chaudhry, & Farooq, 2012).

Similarly, with regard to economic growth and an increase in gross national product, existing sources also reveal that investing in human development is crucial as it leads to an increase in the gross national product. Pasquale Tridico, (2011) in his book "Institutions, Human Development and Economic Growth in Transition

Economies” discussed that “the notion of human development is associated with the gross national per capita and that rigorous human development is foremost for an increase in the gross national income”. The author further notes that “institutions do matter for creating inclusive policies and social settings for human development”. That is because institutions are core bastions when it comes to public investments in any aspect of human development ranging from health to community services.

It is worth noting here that the approaches and policies used by various actors in the area of poverty reduction and human development vary and depends largely on the actors involved whose involvement is the key source for sustainable development.

### **Tharparkar District**

Tharparkar has the lowest social and development indicators not only in Sindh but also all over Pakistan with a headcount of 87 percent. Negligence of the concerned authorities has resulted in an increase of multi-dimensional poverty headcount in Tharparkar district.

The Government of Sindh along with other development partners is making its efforts to develop a local framework for the achievement of SDG’s in the province. The government of Sindh also signed on the global development agenda 2030 for the better tomorrow of the province. This agenda focuses on the reduction in poverty, human prosperity, eco-system, and a rich and green environment. (Kafle, Shesh Kanta, 2017).

As a part of the localization plan government of Sindh has committed to make Islamkot a model division to address the socio-economic challenges faced by the local community. The Government of Sindh has also signed an agreement with multiple local development organizations of Tharparkar to find actionable solutions to create a longer impact at the grass-root level.

Efforts are also being made by development organizations and the government to develop skills of youth and provide them employment opportunities. Empowerment of marginalized segments of the society which include youth, minorities, women and special persons is part of the long-term localized development plan.

### **Methodology**

Due to the financial and time constraints, secondary data analysis has been used to study poverty reduction for sustainable development. Various reports and existing literature on poverty and sustainable development were studied and reviewed in order to understand how poverty in the world affects the economy, in this regard definition of poverty, mechanisms for poverty alleviation, the definition of sustainable development and the relationship between poverty and sustainable development has been studied. Reports from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank economic integration and many others have been consulted to get the latest statistics to draw conclusions and propose recommendations.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Poverty alleviation and development discourse are closely linked with the sustainable development, but while designing the development discourse sustainable development is completely neglected, the reasons behind this negligence is that a linkage is not established between poverty and sustainable development while many scholars favor that poverty alleviation is the outcome of the sustainable development, sustainable development is the broader concept as it has a futuristic approach in the beginning when the concept of poverty eradication was coined it was not linked with the sustainable development due to which issues are being faced by the poor as non-sustainable development. Poverty alleviation has an impact on policy development but it has no link with sustainable development.

As discussed, previously, sustainable development is often linked with the environment only it has a reason to link with the environment but it cannot be ignored in other discourse. It can be linked to the utilization of the existing resources in the manner that they can be used in the future and they don’t create any hindrance and problems for future generations.

Both Amartya Sen and Nussbaum intended to use the capability approach for understanding and evaluating various forms of poverty. In fact, Sen focused on hunger and health in his extensive works on famine to develop

the “Basic Capability” approach (Sen, 1984, 1999). He also furnished prominence to literacy, housing and avoiding indignity. They further contended that development, however, should be a little more acquiescent to the problems and fears of poor people. Therefore, some social scientists incorporated matters such as earnings, employment opportunities and physical protection in their account of the good (Carr-Hill, 1986). To use the capability approach to end poverty it shall not ignore these basic achievements of life.

Actually, Sen’s (1981) original inquiry on poverty, hunger and starvation concluded the ability of the beneficiaries to have complete command over resources. Sen argued that such rights on commodities could be secured by the state in times of economic emergency or social distress largely depending upon the kind of the entitlement schemes operational in certain circumstances within a particular society. Sen (1983, pp. 755) argued the failure to understand the significance of entitlements has resulted in the death of millions of people during famines. Similarly, for measuring personal welfare or human development, material things are not valuable in themselves and commodities are no more than means to other ends (Sen, 1987, pp.16). Further, the earning and commodity requirements of individuals mainly depend on ‘contingent circumstances’ and can differ extensively (Sen, 1999, pp.70–71).

In fact, with a certain package of commodities and services people can live a substantively better life. Contrary to the commodity approach, Sen (1985, pp. 23–24) asserted the three most significant elements especially the happiness, desire accomplishment and choice within the context of development to be viewed as the collective understanding of utility. Sen viewed happiness and desire-fulfillment, as more serious contenders for evaluating the well-being of individuals.

Development interventions linked with the poverty alleviation not only resulted in sustainable development in Tharparkar but also achievement of SDGs poverty alleviation activities were interlinked with income-generating activities which resulted in improvement of the society in terms of education, health, employment which overall improved the condition of the locale. The changes were not only social and economic (Moore, 1967, pp.3), but they also improved the culture, behavior and structure (Agabrian, 2003, pp.290).

The economic anthropologists especially the Formalists believe that human desires are in fact endless in nature that not only includes the desires for the survival of individuals in a respectable manner but also pertinent for their socio-economic development. Whereas substantive beliefs, that economy is an “instituted process of interaction between man and the environment resulting in a continuous supply of want-satisfying material means” (Polanyi & Hopkins, 1957). The existence of humans largely depends on their relations with fellow beings (Froggatt, 2001, pp.142); therefore, the economic processes are also relatively ‘embedded’ in these social relations (Jenkins 1977, pp.73). The change due to poverty alleviation in the community resulted in an improvement in the social relations in society. An increased tendency of capitalistic behavior of the members of the community was also observed. Such an economizing behavior of individuals is in fact to improve their living standards or at least maintenance of their well-being that is rational and universally applicable (Seabrook, 1996, pp. 199).

If the poverty alleviation practices are sustainable, they result in the achievement of Sustainable development goal and it is pertinent from the discussed discourse of Tharparkar.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the above findings, it is inferred that linkage is to be established between poverty and sustainable development for achievement of Sustainable development goals, the existing model doesn’t support such relationship based on the literature and findings following recommendations are made

### **Improving the Concept**

Sustainability and development both have always been highly controversial due to which their clear interpretations have not been done, in order to achieve the SDGs a relation and proper interpretation is necessary. The linkage will not only strengthen the economic condition but it would be helpful in creating social, cultural and behavioral change.

The concept improvement is a recommended analytical framework to be formed to discuss the matter and come up with brilliant suggestions that would be much helpful in achieving the SDGs. Linking Sustainable

development and poverty alleviation would reduce the blame game which is played to blame the poor for environmental degradation, it would be helpful to investigate the main reason and come up with concrete reasons which are resulting in environmental degradation.

When MDGs were changed to SDGs a proper framework was the need of time but instead, the only elaboration was made if the framework has been established at that time the achievement of SDGs had been more proactive.

### **Establishing Linkage**

The linkage between exists between the poverty reduction on the achievement of SDGs which is pertinent from the experience of Tharparkar. From time to time UN agencies demand policy explanation multiple issues which are done from time to time but links are still missing, links are to be established between poverty reduction, SDGs, environment degradation and Sustainable development. In social context studies are applicable across the globe with certain cultural modifications, so studies and evaluation of the programs should be conducted which are resulting in the achievement of multiple factors through poverty reduction, is the key to all the SDGs if it is addressed it means that all the SDGs are being addressed.

### **Poverty Reduction Policy**

Guiding institutes for poverty reduction should lay a guideline for countries having higher poverty ratio to have policy for poverty reduction and have the other SDGs as indicators as measuring tool for the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy as discussed in the previous sections there is a lot of debate on the poverty reduction definition, poverty reduction has many other indicators other than SDGs if linked can result in achievement of SDGs through poverty reduction.

### **New Horizons**

As discussed in the previously mentioned poverty reduction and sustainable development are interlinked with each other so it is the need of time to explore new aspects for poverty alleviation, as the previous methods have become old and outdated, they need to be updated with respect to sustainable development and achievement of SDGs.

### **Research Potential**

The achievement of sustainable development and SDGs through poverty reduction has a lot of potentials to be explored further this paper examines the achievement of SDGs through poverty alleviation only in Tharparkar the study can be expanded and it will give new aspects which would be a good addition to the development discourse.

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