

# Achieving SDGs: Progress, Gaps and Recommendations from Indigenous Perspectives

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15 December 2021.

NHRC

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## High-Level Dialogue on Indigenous Navigator and Sustainable Development Goals

### Mainstreaming SDGs in national, provincial and local development plans

- NPC claims:
  - Progress satisfactory:
    - 15 percent of the Nepali population were below the international poverty line (\$1.9 at 2011 PPP value) and 16.7 percent were living below the national poverty line (\$1.25 at 2011 PPP value) in 2019, which was significant progress compared to 2015 proportions.
    - 28.6 percent of the population were experiencing multi-dimensional poverty in 2019 compared to the baseline MPI of 44.2 of 2015.
  - About 70 percent periodic targets met
  - National resources mobilized optimally
  - Huge resource gap exists,
  - International support not received as expected and needed



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# NPC: National Review of SDGs, 2020:

- Indicators of targets and disaggregation of the data:
  - 425 indicators identified/developed in 2017 by NPC,
  - Out of the 425 indicators, data on only 249 indicators were regularly or intermittently available,
  - Data for 75 indicators were partially available
  - Data for 100 indicators were not obtainable at all,
  - Data for 178 indicators has no base year (2016) statistics and most indicators have no baseline disaggregated data to measure progress across gender/sex, age, social group/ethnicity, disability, location, income /wealth and subnational levels.
  - Present national review report (NPC 2020) states that 494 indicators have been identified for 169 global targets (159 targets, if 10 targets relating to Goal 14 not counted thinking them irrelevant) and among them include 237 global indicators (recently revised 230 indicators) and 257 national indicators added.



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# ...NPC: National Review of SDGs, 2020...

- Relevant indicators of some targets appropriate to Nepal's situation and context have not been yet identified and national aggregates or approximations (data) of some 173 indicators (global and national) only computed for the progress monitoring of SDG targets.
- Disaggregated data are very limited that make disparities in achievements across gender/sex, age, social group/ethnicity, disability, locality (rural/urban) and subnational level (province/local level) beyond our understanding and the very essence of the SDGs 'leave no one behind' have been undermined.
- The Nepal SDGs Status and Roadmap: 2016-2030 had committed to data standardization (definition, unit of measurement, method of computation) and data disaggregation by gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, location (rural-urban), administrative units/subnational level, and income or wealth, which were not fulfilled.
- If the data do not represent realities of Nepali social structure, any assumptions to be made about the progress of Nepal is meaningless, only partial.
- Data disaggregation is vital to see who are benefitting from the development processes, outputs and outcomes and how are historical injustices or cumulative disadvantages are addressed.



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# Striking gaps in monitoring the progress:

- Ownership and control over land and other forms of property, access to natural resources and financial and other basic services, vulnerabilities to climate change and disaster risks, lack of capacity and resilience are some of the basic, associated factors of poverty and hunger, are not dealt in the report.
- Target 2.3 demands the status of indigenous peoples, along with other family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, relating to the increase in their agricultural productivity and agricultural production contributing to increased income for their food security and improved nutrition, which is lacking in the report.
- The completion rate (23.4%) of secondary education and upper secondary education (9-12 grades), which the global indicator 4.1.2 stresses, has not been presented where inter-groups' disparities of educational attainment, capability and productivity can be discerned if the relevant data disaggregated.
- Gender disparity is presented in various target achievements in the report, but disparities on other identity grounds have not been elucidated.



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# ...Striking gaps in monitoring the progress:...

- The report is silent about imparting knowledge and skill to the learners through education and information needed for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
- The report failed to mention that principles of infrastructure development of SDGs have been almost ignored in practice.
- The report also camouflages the progress on resolving problems of slum dwellers, informal settlements and inadequate housing going against the spirit of SDGs.
- Data tables presented in the report do not provide the data relating to the proposed 494 national indicators, and the data related to less than 175 indicators are only minimally helpful to monitor the progress in achieving SDG targets.
- The mapping of complementary national indicators with global indicators have not been done except the comparative presentation of number of global indicators and national indicators added.



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# ...Striking gaps in monitoring the progress:...

- The list of similar indicators and the list of unaddressed targets have not been presented in the report.
- Data snapshots as needed have not been exhibited thoroughly.
- The problem of data periodicity is equally perplexing as timely data generation has not been taken seriously since the last few years.
- The progress at the sub-national (province and local) levels in SDGs achievements have been totally ignored and so, absent. It seems that NPC, being SDG nodal agency, has not prepared performance indicators of SDG implementation for sub-national levels.
- Data disaggregation by locations of residence (rural/ urban) has also been disregarded.
- Lack of presentation of metadata delineating goal, target, indicator, data source, description/definition of indicator, unit of measurement, method of computation, periodicity, type and level of disaggregation, mapping of national indicators with global indicators and references has also rendered the government's SDGs progress review 2020 imperfect.



## High-Level Dialogue on Indigenous Navigator and Sustainable Development Goals

# Present state of indigenous peoples of Nepal

- Some 80 groups identified by 2011 census (59 groups recognized) and are categorized as (i) endangered groups, (ii) highly marginalized groups, (iii) marginalized groups, (iv) disadvantaged groups and (v) advanced groups.
- Half of the population of 90 percent indigenous groups are experiencing extreme poverty
- About 80 percent of the indigenous persons are affected by some kinds of diseases
- About 75 percent of young people aged 5-24 years have not completed 10 years of education, less than 5 percent of educated young people have completed tertiary education





## High-Level Dialogue on Indigenous Navigator and Sustainable Development Goals

# ...Present state of indigenous peoples of Nepal...

- About 90 percent of indigenous workforce have not received vocational and technical training suitable to labor market
- About 70 percent of indigenous work force are underemployed
- Indigenous peoples comprise about 10 percent of the government jobs
- Indigenous peoples' representation in command posts of the state is almost nil.
- They are just above the Dalit and backward Madhesi groups and below the Khas-Arya groups in all counts.



## High-Level Dialogue on Indigenous Navigator and Sustainable Development Goals

# Causes of indigenous peoples' plights and problems

### ○ Immediate causes:

- Discriminatory state structures
- Malicious political actors/decision makers and exclusionary plans, policies and programs
- Inequitable distribution of power, resources and opportunities
- Cultural and epistemic colonization of indigenous peoples
- Politicization of manipulation of indigenous issues and concerns



## High-Level Dialogue on Indigenous Navigator and Sustainable Development Goals

# Causes of indigenous peoples' plights and problems

### ○ **Underlying causes:**

- Discriminatory Constitution of 2015
- Continuation of social and political hierarchy
- Inequalities of wealth, power, opportunities, and privileges between/among diverse social groups
- Widespread political patronage, rampant corruption and bribery, malfunctioning federalism and democracy
- Money and power-driven political processes and outcomes
- Continuation of Hindu hegemony



## High-Level Dialogue on Indigenous Navigator and Sustainable Development Goals

# Causes of indigenous peoples' plights and problems

- **Root causes: Historical state structures, actions and coercive processes**
  - Repression, subjugation and domination due to historical sovereign status
    - **Indigenous status:** 7,000-10,000 years BP, Hunters-Gathers, Cave Dwellers, Great Travelers, now called Indigenous Peoples, occupied cis-Himalayan regions
    - **First settlers:** Gradually they domesticated wild animals, fowls and seeds, demarcated ancestral territories, cultivated lands, began to permanently settle, developed homesteads/villages, forts, sacred sites/structures, cultures and finally small chiefdoms/kingdoms and confederacies of chiefdoms/ kingdoms
    - **Gorkha conquest:** Conquest of Khasan, Jadan, Magarat, Tamu-mai-hyula (nine Gyu-Rong), Mang-yul (Gyalbo-Chhungi), Bal-yul (Kathmandu Valley), Chaukot/Koinch (Near Kirat), Khambuwan, Limbuwan, Tharuhat/Tharuewan and other petty kingdoms/chiefdoms



## High-Level Dialogue on Indigenous Navigator and Sustainable Development Goals

# Causes of indigenous peoples' plights and problems

- **Costs of defeat:** Thousands murdered, mutilated, enslaved, sent into exile and their lands confiscated, properties looted
  - land grabbing, plundering, looting and extortion of wealth and riches, 'a type of organized banditry' (Olson 1993, Riaz and Basu 2007), was a usual way of sustaining and retaining large Gorkhali army, for more than sixty years (Levi)
  - **Distribution of plundered wealth:** (i) food items found to be used immediately by the soldiers, (ii) 1/5th of the gold and silver jewelries including turquoise and pearl found anywhere to be given to soldiers who plundered and rest to be presented to the government, (iii) 1/6th of the Kuchin and high value cloths to be given to the concerned soldiers and the rest to be presented to the government, (iv) all copper, brass and other metal utensils including horses and mules to be distributed to soldiers who obtained, (v) 1/10 of yak tails to be given to soldiers who obtained and the rest to be presented to the government , and (vi) regarding cash, distribute to soldiers after setting aside portion of it to the government' (Sharma, Vaidya and Manandhar 1992:101).



## High-Level Dialogue on Indigenous Navigator and Sustainable Development Goals

# Causes of indigenous peoples' plights and problems

- Those who surrendered brutally suppressed, lived in misery
- Autonomy, self-rule, enjoyment of human rights ended
- New administrative divisions decomposing indigenous ancestral territories and histories
- Treated as people of the enemy state: binary psychology of conquerors and defeated people pervaded in administrative culture
- **Outcome:** political exclusion
- A passage from eminent Brahman scholar Rammani Acharya Dixit' Bhalo Kura (Good Things):  
This land is of savages, mountain folks, villagers  
And of the brawny and the boor,  
Keep it always like this, O God!  
Monarchy is to the Aryas the only means of weal-  
For democracy we Arya subjects have no real zeal.  
Make the ministry for ever from Brahman and Chhetris;  
That too only from the higher clans of Brahmans and Chhetris  
you take,  
While making the ministry, never and nowhere  
Matwalis should be included even by mistake.  
(Translated and cited by Kumar Pradhan in his voluminous work: The Gorkha Conquest, 1990: 166, 253)



# Causes of indigenous peoples' plights and problems

## ▪ Land dispossession and economic marginalization

- Land as state possession
- Usurpation/confiscation of indigenous lands, including Kipat or communal lands and distributed to Brahmans, Chhetris and Sanyasis as Birta, Suna Birta, Jagir, Raikar, to farmers as Sera (palace fields), Rakam (land for laborers/load carriers) and the lands given to temples and trusts as Guthi
- Heavy taxes on lands, rigorous process of tax farming and exploitation, expansion of cultivable lands and deforestation, various forms of levies, coerced unpaid labor (about 75 days a year by one family)
- Promotion of feudalism, conversion of collective land ownership into individual land ownership, development of landlordism, landlords as tax collectors, administrators and adjudicators
- Continuous processes of indigenous land dispossession and alienation for almost two centuries



# Causes of indigenous peoples' plights and problems

- **Rigorous assimilation (ethnocide), Sanskritization and enforcement of hierarchical caste system (Brahminization)**
  - Entrenchment of Brahmanic mode of domination: caste system, untouchability and female heteronomy
  - Institutionalization of graded inequalities, discrimination, and injustices
  - The lower the caste status the less the privileges, opportunities and higher the punishments/penalties
  - Severe gender discrimination
  - Cultural destruction, marginalization and identity loss of indigenous peoples (some 30,000 books/manuscripts, documents, artefacts, items/objects, sites of cultural, archaeological and historical values destroyed)
  - Building humiliating identity of indigenous peoples as Matawali (alcohol drinkers)
  - Experiences of linguistic genocide





# Causes of indigenous peoples' plights and problems

## ▪ Hinduization and its costs on indigenous peoples

- Extermination/erosion of indigenous religions/ belief systems
- Ritual occupation and imposed levies (socio-economic security of Brahmans)
- Freedom from taxes/levies, exemption from capital punishment for Brahmans
- Severe penalties on caste rules violations (Brahmans' sacredness and superiority, commensality, connubiality, untouchability, death rituals, etc.)
- Slaughtering of cow and oxen (death penalty with all cruelties, mutilation, land and property confiscation, enslavement of family members and relatives)
  - Royal Order of March 1806 reads: "Cut off flesh from his back and put salt and condensed citrus juice on the wounds. Make him eat the flesh himself and kill him" (Michael 1997:87, Source: RRS XII.11:169).
  - The Royal order issued in 1810 states: "Persons who commit the heinous crime of slaughtering oxen in Hindu land flayed alive, impaled, or hang(ed) upside down until they are dead. Their property shall be confiscated and members of their families enslaved" (Ibid).



## High-Level Dialogue on Indigenous Navigator and Sustainable Development Goals

# Causes of indigenous peoples' plights and problems

- **Nation building and multiple oppressions (complete loss of autonomy, identity, dignity, institutions, norms and values, history and heritage, lands and natural resources)**
  - Key motto: One country, one monarch; One country, one language (Khas Nepali); one country: one dress (Labeda-Suruwal, Sari-Cholo)
  - Aggressive enforcement of monoculturalism, monolingualism, mono-religionism and negation of diversity and pluralism
  - Retention and entrenchment of caste core (brahman-Chhetri) hegemony
  - Recognition of caste core as nation
  - Nation state building through destroying actual nations and political oppositions
  - Nation state building developing new state structures to replace indigenous state structures
  - Nation state building for demeaning multi-party democracy
  - Hundreds of indigenous political cadres/activists killed in armed struggles, imprisoned, exiled to neighboring countries and their properties confiscated, rarely received reparation after 1990.



## High-Level Dialogue on Indigenous Navigator and Sustainable Development Goals

Recommendations: Some proposed indicators for measuring indigenous peoples' progress in achieving SDG targets (Global indicators developed by Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators- IAEG-SDGs)

- **Of the total of about 410 government's national indicators, 78 indicators have been refined/ modified to ensure data disaggregation and identify those who are left behind.**
- **About 147 new indicators have been proposed to capture the SDG progress of all segments of society, including indigenous peoples, accurately and appropriately.**
- **About 185 indicators are left untouched.**

