**Pathways to Realize Health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

*‘Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.’*

Health is a prerequisite to promote sustainable development. According to research, if supported by sustainable measures, the number of premature deaths can be reduced by 40% in the next two decades (Norheim 2014). It can reduce under 50 mortality as well as reduce one third mortality of those between the ages 50-69 years. It is a well-established fact that development returns to investing in health are even greater than initially thought.

If we take the health sector into consideration, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 which focuses on healthy lives and well-being for all, has nine targets and four additional/optional targets (which makes 13 targets and 26 indicators), out of which three are same as in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), three are related to emerging issues of non-communicable diseases and injuries, whereas three are cross-cutting and related to health systems. Under SDGs, though only Goal 3 is related to health, there are many other goals which have a huge impact on health whether it is environment, poverty, nutrition, hunger, sustainable production and consumption, climate change, agriculture or education. Healthy lives for all depend not only on health sector development, but on progress made in other sectors. SDGs are very complex and multi-sectoral by nature, therefore, it is important to have different views, perspectives and roles played by a variety of stakeholders.

In Pakistan, the relatively high levels of Maternal Mortality Rate, Infant Mortality Rate and Under-5 Mortality Rate, low nutritional status and disparities in immunisation rates are deeply associated with the social status and education of women. Another important factor which contributes to poor health, especially of children, is water and sanitation - 86 percent of the population has access to improved water sources, whereas the 76 percent has access to sustained sanitation facilities (UNDP 2016).

One of the main reasons that Pakistan could not achieve the MDGs was late acknowledgment of the development goals by the government in 2003. Moreover, the national development framework was not aligned with the MDGs. However, to accomplish the SDGs by 2030, the government is now putting in more effort to align its policies with them, but these need to be aligned with efforts by other stakeholders. To achieve the SDGs requires a transformation of thinking on how development is being viewed. The agenda to ‘leave no one behind’ strongly calls for addressing the equity challenges that persist in the health sector. These inequities have adverse effect on the right to health, and can only be addressed through targeted action on its social determinants. To address challenges of health sector, it is required to advocate, implement, and practice innovative public health policies which can close the persistent gap of inequities. To address the gaps at structural, functional and institutional dimensions which exist at policy, programme and service delivery levels in Pakistan, a joint action of all the social sectors with health is indispensable. Therefore, it is critical to discuss the increasing complexity and interconnectedness of health and development.

Pertaining to this, a national-level integrated framework is required and it is need of hour to incorporate the SDGs into the policies and actions at all levels of government and at the same time all the relevant stakeholders need to be involved in SDGs process if the aim is to make progress on Agenda 2030. This panel seeks to explore the challenges and opportunities in health sector on moving towards a framework for implementation of health-related SDGs. The following few inquiries will be brought forth in the panel discussion:

- What are the existing institutional mechanisms to implement the SDGs at national and provincial levels and how these arrangements are interlinked with each other? What is the role of other stakeholders in this regard?
- What are the gaps and challenges in implementing the integrated and multi-sectoral approaches to achieve the health sector goals?
• What are the challenges and opportunities for health policy institutions to align their plans and policies with SDGs?
• How can the data gaps be filled and what collaborations are needed to do that and what monitoring mechanisms are useful in this respect?
• How we can contribute to the systematic follow-up and review of SDG-related implementation?
• How we can incorporate the social determinants of health in plans and policies within and outside of health sector to achieve the goal of healthy lives and well-being?
• How a closer collaboration between health and other sectors can be ensured in this regard, and how the monitoring of other health-related indicators can be taken into account like determinants and risk factors for health, and how it can be ensured that the other sectors give due attention to health issues?
• What should be the best way to align the health goals with other sectors and what could be the framework for implementation in this regard?

References


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