



India – Post 2015: Investing in Sustainability

2015 stands to go down in history as the year when the world got together to develop and agree upon a universal agenda for growth i.e. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus we are presented with a huge opportunity as well as a great responsibility to utilise these goals and targets to align and track national progress with the triple bottom line of environment, social and economics.

India's Status Quo

India's position with respect to the SDGs is critical not only because of the large population whose basic needs and well-being are dependent on it; but also because choices that India makes, to achieve economic, social and environmental well-being will have implications on the world economy and planetary well-being.

Over the last two decades, India had a consistent average GDP (constant prices) of around 6 per cent and this economic growth has allowed India to reduce the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty from an approximately 65 per cent in the 1950s to 22 per cent today. India's achievements in industry, agriculture and space science are well known and Indian entrepreneurs are successfully competing in the world economy. India is credited with the creation of 100 billionaires in the last 25 years.

However, the overall assessment of India's social, economic and environmental conditions is not healthy. India is still home to 680 million people who cannot meet essential needs like food, water and shelter. We are using resources at a rate 70 per cent above its bio-capacity. The surging energy demand that is fuelling the 6 per cent economic growth had propelled India to the top three carbon polluters. 25 per cent of India's total land is undergoing desertification while 3 per cent is facing degradation. India also finds itself in the midst of a dramatic journey of urbanisation. By 2050, some 700-800 million people will live in cities – 50 per cent of the nation's population. Given the growing demand for resources by different sectors, there are increasing stresses on our ecosystem with over-utilisation of natural resources.

The battle for people's and planet's well being is challenging. The challenges are not just due to the bulk and intensity of the problems such as poverty, climate change, degradation of natural capital, inequalities, vulnerability and exclusion, institutional overlap/failures, but also the intertwined nature of these challenges. For instance, if exploitation of resources as an issue is dealt with in isolation, its precautionary measures may harm the poorest of the society under an assumption that the poorest are most dependent on natural resources and may be degrading the environment because of lack of an alternative option.

TARAGram Yatra... Investing in Sustainability

TARAGram Yatra (TGY) is an annual event led by the Development Alternatives Group in partnership with international thinking-learning organisations, designed to deliberate on issues of development with the mission of inspiring sustainability in policy and practice. The Yatra – a journey of knowledge and learning to attain higher goals – brings together top-level practitioners and policy makers from across the world. Such an approach offers the potential to identify and build upon spaces of hope for transformation.



Objectives

India currently is faced by expectations both from its own citizens as well as from the international community. The challenge for India is in ensuring inclusive green economic growth which does not compromise on the environment or people's well-being for growth numbers. India has to make some critical choices while deciding its priorities. These priorities have to be picked such that there are synergetic solutions on a broad spectrum instead of trade-offs amongst different goals and targets. TARAGram Yatra 2015 has identified three priority areas to address in this context.

- Resource Efficiency for an Urbanising India
- Building Resilience in Agriculture for Food Security
- Energy Driving Low Carbon Local Economies

Aligning these national interests with the global interests of sustainable development requires knowledge, capacities and institutional mechanisms to inculcate principles and targets of SDGs in development processes.



Through the Yatra, we hope to advance a compelling, practical and solution-oriented vision of well-being for people, profit and the planet — one that binds together and gives balanced weight to economic prosperity, equitable opportunity, a healthy and productive environment and participatory governance. With a mix of dialogue and field visits, scheduled to take place from 7th to 10th of October 2015, the Yatra **"India – Post 2015: Investing in Sustainability"** will identify the investments and investor partnerships we need to ensure that the development path we choose is sustainable.

The deliberations seek to answer the following questions

- How can we play up the synergies and optimise trade-offs for resource consumption across sectors?
- What kind of investments will trigger the movement towards sustainability?
- What is the ecosystem required for these investments to have maximum impact?
- What role will different public and private stakeholders play in realising these investments?





Theme 1: Resource Efficiency for an Urbanising India

India is currently facing unprecedented urbanisation. More people are moving to cities and towns, causing their number and size to increase rather rapidly. Urbanisation has increased from 27.7 per cent in 2001 to 31.1 per cent in 2011. The rapid urbanisation in the country will demand more houses, better transportation facilities and better public services. With the current annual requirement of 2.5 million new dwelling units in the country, only 15 per cent of the requirement is being constructed. This growing trend is bound to put heavy pressure on the limited resources available.

This theme will deliberate on investments required, in terms of tangible resources (land, water, energy, building materials) and intangible resources (policy, institutions, capacities/skills) in order to adopt resource efficiency in an urban environment. Further it aims to build understanding on possible pathways to achieve these resource synergies, while exploring needs and requirements of key stakeholders, and the role they play in triggering this change.

Theme 2: Building Resilience in Agriculture for Food Security

The 2014 Global Agricultural Productivity Report estimates that India's domestic production will only meet 59 per cent of the country's food demand by 2030 at the current growth of Total Factor Productivity (Global Harvest Initiative, 2014). Producing more food, using current methods and techniques, will require more water, more energy and more land. Further, simulations show that reduced yield due to climate change will probably affect India with limited options to expand agricultural land. On the top of all resource and climate concerns, farming as a livelihood is becoming unattractive to people living in rural areas, particularly small to medium farmers, due to low priority, high input cost, and no control on market.

This theme will deliberate on key policy actions required to ensure conservation and enhancement of the natural resource base in agriculture and policy imperatives to optimise production from a given landscape. At the community level, it aims to explore models with multiple cash flows that can be identified and leveraged by farmers to increase income opportunities. It shall also explore different sorts of community institutions that can facilitate empowerment of the most marginalised, including landless and marginal farmers, and women, through micro-credit, cooperatives, self-help groups, etc.

Theme 3: Energy Driving Low Carbon Local Economies

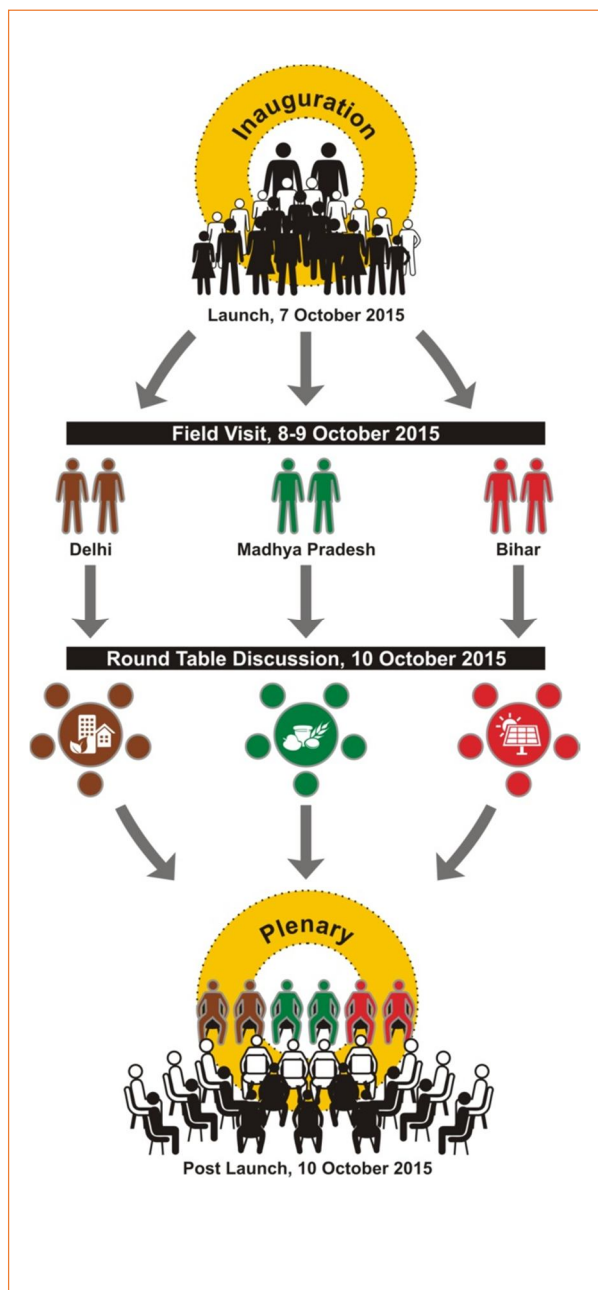
Given the systematic exclusion of large sections of the population from development and the large resource footprint that the rest of the population has; it is imperative for India to look for low-carbon development alternatives that include the poor. Decentralised low-carbon production systems are drivers of inclusive low-carbon economic growth as they spread the benefits of development over a larger area, allowing a greater number of people to gain access to economic opportunities than would be possible in centralised production systems. Low-carbon production systems enable economic growth that does not transgress environmental limits.

The low carbon transition has to be driven by a technological revolution, which would produce, disseminate and employ green technologies for low-carbon production. The development of these technologies has to be driven by appropriate thrusts in finance, markets, policy, skills and capacities etc. This theme will explore how these technology ecosystems can be built in various sectors of the economy to enable low-carbon local development, using decentralised renewable energy sector as an example.



Structure of TARAgam Yatra 2015

BACKGROUND



Day 1: Delhi (7th Oct 2015)

Inauguration and Dinner

Day 2 and 3: Field Visits (8th-9th Oct 2015)

Learning from practical evidence-based solutions

- New resource streams and technologies – Delhi
- Land - water management and sustainable agriculture - Madhya Pradesh
- Decentralised renewable energy and livelihood creation - Bihar

Day 4: Delhi (10th Oct 2015)

Pre-Lunch - Round Table Discussions

Examining potential transformative policy strategies

- Resource Efficiency for an Urbanising India
- Building Resilience in Agriculture for Food Security
- Energy Driving Low Carbon Local Economies

Post-Lunch - Plenary Session

Ideating on key investments to align national priorities with Sustainable Development Goals

Parallel Events

- Exhibition 7th and 10th October 2015, Delhi
- TARAgam Mela, 9th October 2015, Orchha, MP

About Development Alternatives

Development Alternatives (DA) is a not for profit organisation engaged in research and action for sustainable development. It innovates *Eco-Solutions* and implements programmes aimed at markets, people and environment for enhanced livelihoods. For more information about our work, please visit: www.devalto.org