



Sustainable Development Goal - 8

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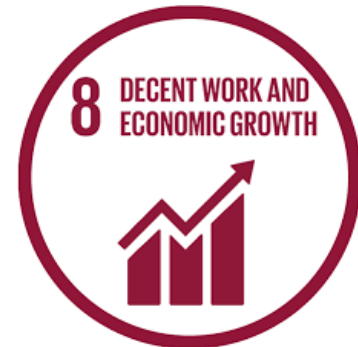


Dear Friends,

This month we shall discuss the eighth Sustainable Development Goal: Decent work and economic growth.

In this blog, we shall try to explain:

- What it is and why is this relevant
- What are its indicators and targets
- Where do we stand in India
- What can we do to support the goal



As stated earlier, I have little to contribute on my own. I have attempted to provide a few references, so that if anyone is interested in probing deeper, you could do so.

What is SDG 8 and why is this relevant [1]

SDG 8 aims to “Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all”. This is one of the first of the 4 economic goals within the SDG framework. As you might recall, Sustainable Development (SD) attempts to strike a balance between economic growth and societal justice while respecting the environmental limitations of our Mother Earth, what we capture under the 3Es: economy, equity and ecology. Societal justice essentially boils down to ensuring that the gap between the less privileged sections of humanity and the rest is bridged. There are two fundamental tools for achieving this objective: quality education for the children and gainful employment for the elders. Viewed from this perspective, you may see that SDG-4 and SDG-8 are complementary tools, trying to strike a balance between economy and equity.

Please note the key words – ‘employment’ and ‘decent work’ for all. Decent work implies productive employment, fair remuneration, job security, insurance cover for families and scope for personal development, without any discrimination on the basis of gender, race, voice etc.

The opening paragraph for the SDG-8 [1] notes:

“Roughly half the world’s population still lives on the equivalent of about US\$2 a day with global unemployment rates of 5.7% and having a job doesn’t guarantee the ability to escape from poverty in many places. This slow and uneven progress requires us to rethink and retool our economic and social policies aimed at eradicating poverty”.

Needless to say, the ongoing pandemic has affected the poor the most, and all global leaders are concerned that whatever little gain the world had witnessed in the past 2 decades is going to be washed away by this pandemic. The International Labour Organization (ILO) based in Geneva predicts as under [2]:

“The continued sharp decline in working hours globally due to the [COVID-19 outbreak](#) means that 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy – that is nearly half of the global workforce – stand in immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed, warns the International Labour Organization”.

The overall status [1] shows the global unemployment rate marginally going down from 6.4% in 2000 to 5.6% in 2017. Informal employment is the norm, covering 61% of all workers. This implies that these categories get affected first, whenever there is any problem. Women are paid less than men for the same work, and do 2.6 times the unpaid care compared to men. Overall, 470 million new jobs must be created for “new entrants to the labor market between 2016 and 2030”.

What are its indicators and targets? [3]

The indicators for SDG-8 include real GDP growth rate, extent of informal employment, ecological footprints, unemployment rates, abolition of child labour, safety and security of the workforce, tourism, access to basic financial services and supporting international trade. The details follow.

8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, *at least 7 per cent real GDP growth per annum in the least developed countries*

8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors measured by *annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person*

8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services. This is measured through “*proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex*”. This proportion should come down.

8.4 Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead. These are measured through *material footprint, material footprint per capita, and material footprint per GDP and domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP*

8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value, measured by *average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation and persons with disabilities and unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities*.

8.6 By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training, measured by *proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training*.

8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. This is measured by *proportion and number of children aged 5–17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age*.

8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment. There are two measures for this: *Fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 workers, by sex and migrant status and level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on International Labour Organization (ILO) textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status*

8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products, measured by *direct contribution to GDP as a proportion of total GDP and in growth rate*

8.10 Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all. There are two measures for this: *number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults and (b) number of automated teller machines (ATMs) per 100,000 adults and proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider*

8.A Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries, measured through *Aid for Trade commitments and disbursements*

8.B By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization measured through *existence of a developed and operationalized national strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy*

Where do we stand in India?

The following images [4] offer some national as well as global status on SDG-8 and trends:

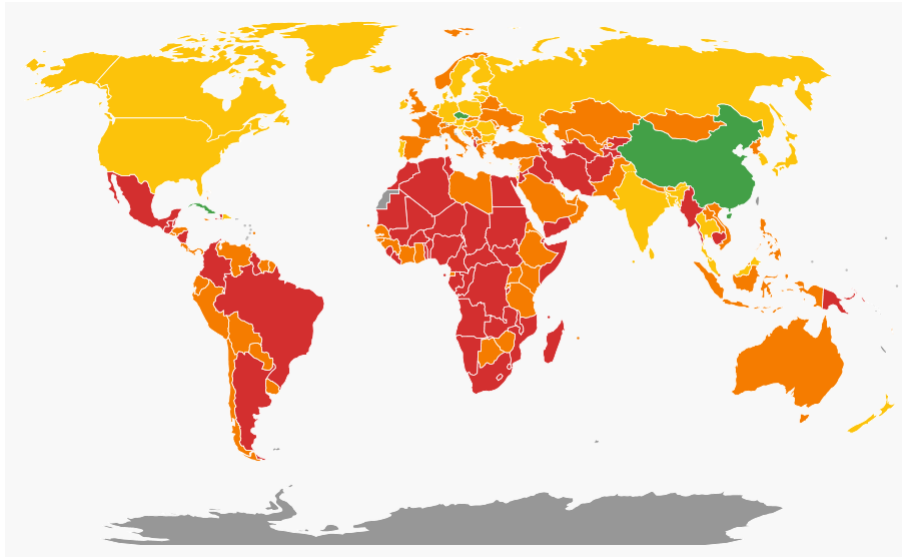


Fig 1. Status of SDG-8 in 2020

The above figure shows that the status in India comes under the category ‘Challenges remain’ while the trend (below) shows that India is on the right track.

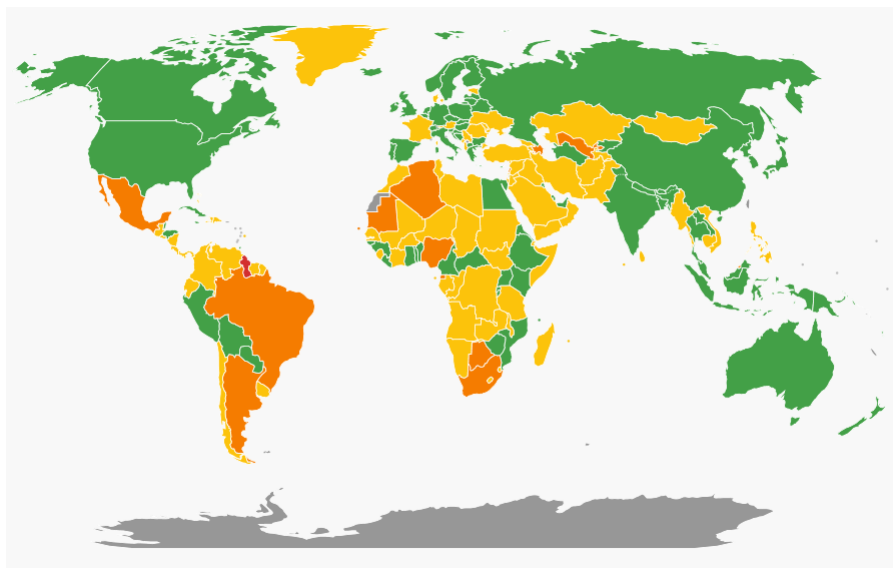


Fig 2. Trends SDG-8 in 2020

Specifically, India’s standing in 2019 [5] is shown below:

SDG8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

Adjusted Growth (%)	1.0	●	●●
Prevalence of Modern Slavery (victims per 1,000 population)	6.1	●	●●
Adults (15 years +) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider (%)	79.9	●	↑
Unemployment rate (% total labor force)	3.5	●	↑
Fatal work-related accidents embodied in imports (deaths per 100,000)	0.1	●	●●

The standing in 2020 [6] is as under:

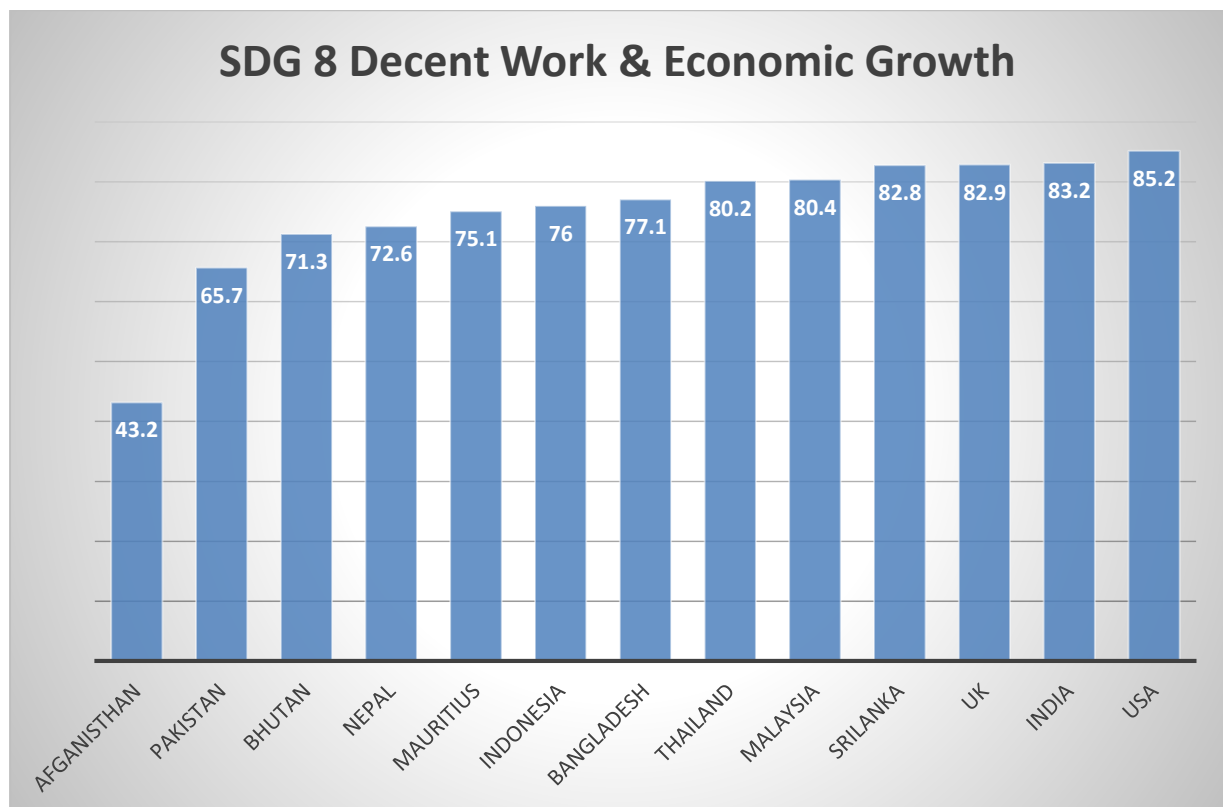
SDG8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

Adjusted GDP growth (%)	1.4	2018	●	●
Victims of modern slavery (per 1,000 population)	6.1	2018	●	●
Adults with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider (% of population aged 15 or over)	79.9	2017	●	↑
Unemployment rate (% of total labor force)	5.4	2019	●	↑
Fatal work-related accidents embodied in imports (per 100,000 population)	0.1	2010	●	↑

■ Major challenges	■ Significant challenges	■ Challenges remain	■ SDG achieved	■ Information unavailable
↓ Decreasing	→ Stagnating	↗ Moderately improving	↑ On track or maintaining SDG achievement	

This shows that the adjusted GDP growth has improved, but the unemployment rate has deteriorated.

In the following graph we offer a comparison of SAARC nations, 3 ASEAN countries and UK, and USA on the performance on SDG-8 in 2019. India holds the second position in this comparison group, next only to the USA. UK and Sri Lanka are very close to India on this score.



If we look at the indicators level, the comparison is shown below [5]:

This data should be cited as: Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G. (2019): Sustainable

Country	Normalized Score sdg8_adj growth	Dashboard Color sdg8_adj growth	Normalized Score sdg8_slav ery	Dashboard Color sdg8_slav ery	Normalized Score sdg8_acc ounts	Dashboard Color sdg8_acc ounts	Normalized Score sdg8_une mp	Dashboard Color sdg8_une mp
Afghanistan	41.70	red	0.00	red	7.49	red	67.29	orange
Bangladesh	72.92	yellow	83.31	green	45.70	orange	84.71	green
Bhutan	72.62	yellow			27.90	red	92.41	green
India	79.80	green	72.26	yellow	78.13	yellow	88.06	green
Mauritius	77.16	green	95.64	green	88.96	green	74.19	yellow
Nepal	59.31	red	72.95	yellow	40.64	red	91.38	green
Pakistan	63.50	orange			14.45	red	85.44	green
Sri Lanka	71.50	yellow	90.35	green	71.35	yellow	85.68	green
Indonesia	74.32	yellow	78.52	yellow	44.41	red	84.96	green
Malaysia	79.15	green	68.57	yellow	84.07	green	88.78	green
Thailand	70.19	yellow	59.62	orange	79.99	green	96.98	green
United Kingdom	71.39	yellow	90.55	green	96.05	green	86.24	
United States	74.62	green	94.27	green	92.52	green	86.08	
China	89.53	green	87.43	green	78.51	green	83.41	green

What can we do to support the goal?

Here is a quotation from [1]:

“Providing youth the best opportunity to transition to a decent job calls for investing in education and training of the highest possible quality, providing youth with skills that match labour market demands, giving them access to social protection and basic services regardless of their contract type, as well as levelling the playing field so that all aspiring youth can attain productive employment regardless of their gender, income level or socio-economic background.

“Governments can work to build dynamic, sustainable, innovative and people-centred economies, promoting youth employment and women’s economic empowerment, in particular, and decent work for all. Local authorities and communities can renew and plan their cities and human settlements so as to foster community cohesion and personal security and to stimulate innovation and employment”.

Individually we could support education and training of disadvantaged youth, providing guidance to them about the skills that are in demand; and helping them to get access to state and central governments social protection and basic services schemes. For example, the Directorate General of Training, Government of India [7] website states:

“Presently, training courses under the Craftsmen Training Scheme are being offered through a network of 15,042 ITIs (Govt. 2,738 + Private 12,304) located all over the country with total trainees enrolled 22.82 lakhs (in the trades of 1 year and 2 year

durations) on NCVTMIS portal with an objective to provide skilled workforce to the industry in 138 NSQF compliant trades”.

Other options include guiding the youth to train and prepare for joining Indian defence services. Those who would like to sail in the high seas could be guided to go for maritime training institutes [8].

Essentially, it calls for taking personal interest in guiding youth, according to their capabilities towards different non-traditional employment opportunities as well. I propose a scheme ‘Each one Reach one in One year’ (labelled as 1-1-1). Every college student may be inspired to hand-hold one eligible individual, every year, and ensure that any one of the myriad of state and central government schemes available for employment, education, healthcare, housing etc. actually reaches the eligible beneficiary.

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