# ROLE OF INTERNET GOVERNANCE IN ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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## Abstract

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On 1 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) officially came into force. Till 2030, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. Internet has very important role to play in achievement of SDGs and it will help countries & people to overcome existing barriers. However, to achieve the same, it is important that Internet Governance is strengthened and its inclusiveness & diversity is ensured

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## Introduction

In last few decades, internet as emerged as one of the most powerful tool for social change. Whether it is the revolution in Arab countries, providing healthcare services in remote areas of India, providing platform for citizen's voices in China or improving access of information among farmers in Africa, internet has played tremendous role in all these. It has provided tools to citizens and practitioners all across the world to access information, raise their concerns and strengthen accountability of public services. It has also helped small entrepreneurs, farmers and artisans to access the global markets & boost their incomes.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.Sustainable development has been focus of policy makers, civil society, academicians and researchers for considerable time and it was specially brought at the forefront during the Earth Summit in 1992. Three core objectives i.e. economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability are the pillars for Human development. There are enough examples of using internet for promoting all three pillars of Human development and strengthening the internet governance will help in achievement of SDGs.

## Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Internet

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 17 goals with and 169 targets, is an ambitious attempt to promote social and economic development across the countries in an environment friendly manner. Though each goal is important however overall betterment in the life of the people will only take place only when all the goals are achieved together. Also, direct reference of ICTs as driver for social change is mentioned as specific targets in only 4 of the 17 goals. However, ICT as tool for enabling the achievement of all SDG goals and for promoting positive social change, has very important role to play. In order to fully utilize the potential of ICT as driver of social change, it is very important that barriers in its availability & access by people from different strata are addressed. Some of the initiatives that need to be undertaken are –

a.      **Improving Availability & Access** – The availability and access to ICT services, specially in parts of the developing countries, are still a challenge. There is need to give

dedicated focus on it through providing required funds, creating enabling environment for the development of ICT services in the countries and developing required infrastructure. Innovative mechanism also need to be developed to provide ICT services in the remote areas and in difficult terrains.

b.  **Improving Affordability** – Another key challenge is the affordability of the ICT services. In developing countries where significant percentage of the population is under poverty line, making ICT services affordable for all the citizens, is a challenging task. However, it can be overcome through partnerships between Government and private sector and development of new cost-effective technologies.

c.  **Improving availability of content and applications as per local need** – The internet can become truly for all only when people will have access to applications and contents as per their need & in their language. It will also major driver to improve the use of internet services specially among the people from the disadvantaged section of the society.

d.  **Strengthening capacity of the users** – In order the get the maximum benefit of the important that users are aware about how to use it, depending upon their need & purpose. This will require awareness generation and capacity building among user's at large scale.

e.  **Reducing carbon footprints** – In order to ensure that the growth of the ICT doesn't have negative impact on the environment, it is important that issues related with its disposal and energy requirement are addressed. The technology should be made more energy efficient and usage of renewable energy should be promoted. Also, as far as possible, parts of the devices should be reused and the parts which can't be reused, should be disposed in environment friendly manner.

Undertaking the above mentioned activities will contribute in sustainable growth of internet as tool to achieve SDG, however it will also require strengthening of internet governance. Some of the key initiatives which need to be undertaken for strengthening internet governance are –

a.  **Make it inclusive and ensure that diversity is well represented** - In order to ensure that all strata of the society get benefit from the internet, it is very important that internet governance is inclusive and diversity is well represented in it. Then only concerns and issues of the vulnerable and marginalized will also get addressed.

b.     **Improving Multi-stakeholder participation** - For further growth of internet and making it more inclusive, multi-stakeholder participation is very important. There is need to involve stakeholders from all concerned groups and need to give special focus on involvement of left-outs.

c.     **Open and interoperable standards** – It is very important that internet remains accessible for all. It will require that all stakeholders are able to develop new applications and offer new services based on the need & requirement. It is also important for developing the solutions of local development challenges.


**Conclusion**

The Internet is for everyone and in last few decades, its tremendous potential as tool for social change has been seen in all the areas. Development of SDGs, provide a tremendous opportunity to address the global development challenges and facilitate human development across the countries. Internet has important role to play in achievement of all SDG goals. However, it will happen only when all stakeholders are involved and inclusiveness & diversity is ensured.