# LEGAL LITERACY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: ALIGNING LAW WITH GLOBAL GOALS

*by*

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the critical role of legal institutions in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda. Effective legal frameworks are crucial for promoting development and guaranteeing accountability as countries around the world struggle to meet these lofty goals. This article presents an extensive examination of legal approaches, policy frameworks, and institutional procedures, showing how law may be an effective instrument for advancing sustainable development. In order to highlight important tactics for using legal institutions to further the SDGs agenda, the study looks at case studies and best practices from several jurisdictions, including India. These tactics include of stakeholder involvement, judicial activism, enforcement measures, and legislative improvements. The study also explores the benefits and difficulties of incorporating legal ideas into initiatives for sustainable development and makes suggestions for legislators, attorneys, and other stakeholders. The concept of sustainability in higher education institutions has become crucial and transformative, indicating a global understanding of the relationship between society well-being, the environment, and education. This introduction delves into the various aspects of sustainability in the context of higher education, highlighting its importance in forming morally and responsibly-minded behavior's. This talk explores the meaning, application, and significance of sustainability in academic institutions as HEIs take on a greater role in creating a sustainable future.

Indian Journal of Contemporary Legal and Social Issues

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## I.INTRODUCTION

The protection and improvement of the human environment has become a worldwide concern. Human activities in different spheres of life have increasingly threatened the environment.[2] India's own air quality crisis illustrates the scale of this threat: the World Air Quality Report ranked India as the world's fifth most polluted country in 2024, with six of the ten most polluted cities globally located within its borders. Such findings underline the urgency of embedding environmental accountability within legal and educational structures, since regulatory gaps translate into direct and measurable public health consequences.[3] Sustainability in HEIs involves the integration of environmental, social, and economic principles into the core functions of universities and colleges.[4] Environmental Considerations are being ignored by mankind in decision-making. Human behavior has destroyed the environment.[5] It's important to encourage moral and responsible behaviour in operations, research, and teaching in addition to lowering carbon footprints. The concept of sustainability in higher education institutions has become crucial and transformative, indicating a global understanding of the relationship between society well-being, the environment, and education. This introduction delves into the various aspects of sustainability in the context of higher education, highlighting its importance in forming morally and responsibly-minded behavior's. This talk explores the meaning, application, and significance of sustainability in academic institutions as HEIs take on a greater role in creating a sustainable future.

Indian Journal of Contemporary Legal and Social Issues

The dynamic environment of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has made the quest of sustainability—which encompasses environmental, social, and economic dimensions—a multidimensional and necessary task. "Towards Sustainable Futures: Strategies for Achieving the SDGs Agenda through Law" sums up our investigation into this important subject. Given the significant role academic institutions play in moulding the next generation of leaders and

[2] Verma, S. K., An Introduction to Public International Law, 3rd Edi. Satyam Law International, New Dehli, 2019.
[3] India Ranks Fifth in Polluted Air Globally in 2024, Says IQAir Report' (Business Standard, 11 March 2025) <https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/india-ranks-5th-in-world-air-quality-index-with-most-polluted-cities-iqair-125031100434_1.html> accessed 11 August 2026.
[4] Oishika Benarji, India's position in sustainable development goals, www.blog.ipleaders.in/indias-position-insustainable-dwlelopment-goals/ (Last Visited on June 6, 2026)
[5] Fujita, K., & Mizushima, T., Sustainable Development in India: Groundwater Irrigation, Energy Use, and Food Production, Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003036074, (June 23, 2026, 07:45 PM)

influencing social norms, it is critical to comprehend and promote sustainability in these settings.[6]

This extended discussion aims to unravel the layers of sustainability within HEIs, providing a thorough rundown of everything from concept definition to problem solving, creative project exploration, and technology's role as a catalyst. We examine case studies that highlight effective sustainability measures using a lens that combines local and global viewpoints, offering concrete illustrations of best practices. The investigation goes beyond the here and now, taking into account prospective future developments that could influence the sustainable environment in higher education.

By navigating the dimensions of sustainability, we aspire to contribute to a discourse that inspires actionable strategies, fosters collaboration, and cultivates a harmonious coexistence between academic pursuits and environmental, social, and economic responsibility. In response to unprecedented global concerns such as climate change, poverty, inequality, and biodiversity loss, the United Nations established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015.

This global commitment finds measurable resonance in India, where NITI Aayog's SDG India Index recorded a composite national score of 71 out of 100 in 2023-24, an improvement from 66 in 2020-21 and 57 in the 2018 baseline year. While front-running states such as Uttarakhand and Kerala scored 79, the persistence of wide inter-state disparities in the Index suggests that uneven legal and institutional capacity across the country continues to shape the pace of SDG implementation.[7]

Indian Journal of Contemporary
Legal and Social Issues

These 17 interconnected goals seek to address urgent concerns and create a more sustainable and equitable world by 2030. Achieving the SDGs necessitates collaborative efforts across multiple sectors, and the law plays an important role in creating laws and practices that can propel progress toward these goals. This article investigates the ways for implementing the SDG goals through legal structures and processes.[8]

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[6] https://sdgs.un.org/topics/institutional- frameworks-and-international-cooperation- sustainable-development
[7] NITI Aayog, 'NITI Aayog Releases SDG India Index 2023-24' (News on Air, 12 July 2024) <https://newsonair.gov.in/niti-aayog-releases-sdg-india-index-2023-24> accessed 11 August 2026.
[8] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/law-sdgs-sdgsandme

## II. SIGNIFICANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY IN LEGAL EDUCATION

This article discusses the role of law, and specifically legal education, in tackling the challenge of sustainable development.[9] At the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, or Earth Summit, world leaders accepted an ambitious strategy for achieving sustainability.[10] Sustainable development is considered as one of the most important notions to emerge from the twentieth century, as it redefines human progress. It is believed that improvements in these areas are beneficial because they expand human freedom, opportunity, and quality of life. Thus, sustainable development requires us to be "socially responsible economic development" that protects the resource base for the benefit of future generations while achieving improvements in these other areas.[11] One of the most important ways for furthering the SDGs is to incorporate their concepts and targets into national legislation. This includes aligning laws and regulations with SDG targets to guarantee policy coherence and consistency. Countries must provide legal education that explicitly relate to the SDGs, establishing particular targets and timetables for their fulfilment where the government can also institutionalize their commitment to sustainable development by incorporating and enforcing sustainability concepts and accountability mechanisms.

The importance of sustainability in higher education institutions stems from its power to shape future generations of thinkers, innovators, and change makers. By incorporating sustainable practices into education, institutions help to build a workforce that is not only skilled in their disciplines but also aware of the larger impact of their activities on the environment and society. While law schools have begun to address sustainable development, they have not done so in any organized or systematic way. This Article suggests that law schools need to play a leading role in national and global effort to achieve sustainability. This gap is beginning to narrow at the policy level: in September 2024, the University Grants Commission directed all higher education institutions to introduce a dedicated environmental education component within undergraduate curricula, in line with the National Education Policy 2020. Extending a comparable mandate specifically to legal education would help ensure that sustainability is

Indian Journal of Contemporary Legal and Social Issues

[9] Oishika Benarji, India's position in sustainable development goals, www.blog.ipleaders.in/indias-position-insustainable-dwlelopment-goals/ (Last Visited on June 6, 2023)

[10] U.N. Conference on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, U.N. Doc. A/CONF.151.26 (1992), available at http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/ [hereinafter Agenda 21]; U.N. Conference on Environment and Development, Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, U.N. Doc. A/CONF.151/5/Rev.1, 31 I.L.M.

[11] John C. Dernbach, Targets, Timetables and Effective Implementing Mechanisms: Necessary Building Blocks for Sustainable Development, 27 Wm. & Mary Envtl. L. & Pol'y Rev. 79, 84–87 (2002).

treated as a core competency for future lawyers rather than as an optional addition to the syllabus.[12]

## III. INTEGRATING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS INTO THE CURRICULUM

Higher education institutions may help their students develop the information, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to long-term development in India and around the world by incorporating the SDGs into their curriculum and operations. In an era marked by global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and social inequalities, HEIs have a responsibility to address these issues locally and globally. Sustainability initiatives in higher education bridge the gap between acknowledging global imperatives and taking tangible actions at the community level.

Balancing Tradition with Innovation: Sustainability creates a dynamic tension between sustaining academic traditions and adopting new ideas. HEIs must strike this balance by incorporating sustainable practices into existing institutions while cultivating a culture of constant innovation that is responsive to society's and the planet's changing requirements.[13] The five principles of sustainable development are: (1) traditional extensive economy, (2) intensive traditional economy, (3) alternative economies, (4) eco-development, and (5) entropy sustainable development.[14] These principles aim to balance economic, ecological, social, and cultural sustainability.

Providing Skills Training and Leadership Development: Empowering future leaders to achieve sustainable development goals takes more than just academic knowledge; it also necessitates practical skills training and leadership development. Law schools may provide workshops, seminars, and training programs on negotiation, conflict resolution, advocacy, and policy analysis—all critical skills for furthering the SDGs. Furthermore, mentorship programs that connect students with experienced practitioners in the field of sustainable development can offer useful advice and networking possibilities. By investing in skills training and leadership

[12] Alivia Mukherjee, 'UGC Urges HEIs to Implement Environmental Education in Undergraduate Programmes' (Careers360, 23 September 2024) <https://news.careers360.com/ugc-urges-heis-implement-environmental-education-in-undergraduate-programmes> accessed 11 August 2026.
[13] SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, www. undp.org/sustainable-development-goals, (Last Visited on June 6, 2026)
[14] https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/principles-of- sustainable-development/

development, the law schools and institutions can equip students to be effective advocates and change agents for sustainability in legal practice and beyond.

Promoting Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Sustainable development necessitates a comprehensive approach that crosses traditional discipline boundaries. Law schools helps to stimulate interdisciplinary collaboration by forming alliances with other academic disciplines, including environmental science, public policy, and economics. Collaborative research initiatives, collaborative degree programs, and multidisciplinary seminars can help to foster information exchange and new problem-solving approaches. By encouraging students and faculty to collaborate across disciplines, law schools will help to educate future leaders who understand the interconnectedness of sustainability concerns and can build comprehensive, cross-cutting solutions.

Promoting Pro Bono and Public Service Work: Law schools can instill a sense of public duty and social responsibility in students by encouraging them to participate in pro bono and community service activities connected to sustainable development goals. Giving students the opportunity to use their legal abilities to address serious social and environmental challenges can boost their feeling of purpose and civic involvement. Furthermore, law clinics that focus on environmental justice, human rights, or sustainable business practices can provide students with hands-on experience while also making significant benefits to local communities. Law institutions can foster a culture of social impact by encouraging future leaders to apply their legal expertise for the greater good.[15] This aspiration, however, faces practical constraints. A 2024 survey conducted by the Supreme Court's Centre for Research and Planning found that over sixty per cent of legal aid clinics in Indian law schools had not assisted a single lawyer in any case, with many functioning only as awareness camps rather than active service providers. Strengthening faculty supervision and institutional accountability for these clinics would therefore be a necessary precondition before pro bono legal education can meaningfully advance the SDGs.[16]

Indian Journal of Contemporary Legal and Social Issues

[15] https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article- 14898-pro-bono-legal-services-examining-the- reason-and-contributing-factors-of-it.html

[16] Atul Krishna, '60% of Law School Legal Aid Clinics Have Not Assisted Any Lawyer in Any Case: Supreme Court Report' (Careers360, 28 November 2024) <https://news.careers360.com/60-pc-law-college-school-legal-aid-clinics-cells-dormant-supreme-court-report-nalsa-bci-not-assisted-any-lawyer-pil-free-advice> accessed 11 August 2026.

## IV. PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Addressing threats to peace, justice, human rights, and fundamental freedoms is critical for today's global stability and well-being.[17] While governments are developing legislative frameworks to combat corruption, violence, and crime, the difficulties they seek to address endure, often beyond national borders and, increasingly, in globally interconnected ways.[18] To promote and preserve all people's safety, dignity, and human rights, many law schools and institutions are stepping up efforts to uphold the notion of the rule of law in promoting social justice and Human Rights, forging relationships of trust and mutual accountability. As a public good, national education systems have a key responsibility in upholding and advancing the principles of the Rule of Law. They can prepare future generations to hold state institutions accountable to these principles and equip learners with the knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviors they need to take constructive and ethically responsible decisions in their daily lives that support justice and human rights. It is on this basis that it is possible to build trusted and trustworthy institutions, therefore, Law schools have a key mission to promote social justice and human rights in order to achieve the SDGs. By incorporating these ideas into the curriculum, providing experiential learning opportunities, supporting diversity and inclusion, and fostering public involvement and advocacy, law schools can equip students to be successful advocates for social change. Law schools help to create a more sustainable and equitable world by supporting social justice and human rights.[19] Legal frameworks play a crucial role in promoting equality, justice, and inclusivity within societies. Governments can enact laws that protect marginalized groups, promote access to education, healthcare, and affordable housing, and combat discrimination in all its forms. For example, legislation can be introduced to ensure access to quality education (SDG 4), to combat child labor (SDG 8) and eliminate discriminatory practices in employment (SDG 10). By prioritizing social justice and human rights in legal frameworks, countries can advance multiple SDGs simultaneously, contributing to poverty eradication (SDG 1), good health and well-being (SDG 3) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10). The scale of the underlying challenge remains considerable: a 2025 report by the civil society alliance Just Rights for Children documented over 38,000 rescue operations involving children in exploitative labour and trafficking situations across India between April

Indian Journal of Contemporary Legal and Social Issues

[17] Ayesha Mehrotra, Sustainable Development laws in India, ONE FUTURE COLLECTIVE, 2018, www.onefuturecollective.Sustainable-development-laws-in-india/ (June 6, 2026, 10:45PM)
[18] Sustainable development goals, UN INDIA, www.in.one.un.org/page/sustainable-development-goals/ (Last Visited on June 6, 2026).
[19] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00003667 71

2024 and March 2025 alone. Such figures suggest that, despite India being a signatory to SDG Target 8.7 on ending all forms of child labour, enforcement mechanisms on the ground require considerable strengthening to match the ambition of the legal and policy framework.[20]

Additionally, Law schools can also form agreements with NGOs, legal assistance organizations, and human rights advocacy groups to give students with externship opportunities. These collaboration enable students to interact directly with underprivileged communities, offering legal assistance, doing research, and pushing for systemic change. Law schools and institutions can promote social justice and human rights by creating diverse, inclusive, and equitable learning environments. This includes attracting and keeping a diverse student body, professors, and staff, as well as providing supportive environments for underrepresented groups. By encouraging diversity and inclusiveness, law schools may ensure that different points of view are represented and that students are exposed to a wide range of experiences and perspectives.

## V. ENHANCING GLOBAL COOPERATION AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Many of the difficulties addressed by the SDGs cross national boundaries, needing international cooperation and legal frameworks. Countries can work together to address challenges like climate change, migration, and commerce by forming treaties, agreements, and conventions that encourage collective action. For example, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change establishes a legal framework for countries to collaborate to limit global temperature rise. Similarly, international accords like the Convention on Biological Diversity seek to protect biodiversity while ensuring its long-term usage. India's own climate commitments illustrate this dynamic: in March 2026, the Union Cabinet approved India's Nationally Determined Contribution for the period 2031 to 2035 under the Paris Agreement, enhancing its emissions intensity reduction target to 47 per cent from 2005 levels, after having already met its earlier target of 50 per cent non-fossil fuel based installed electric capacity five years ahead of the 2030 deadline. Such developments illustrate how international legal frameworks translate into binding domestic policy commitments that, in turn, require supporting legislative

Indian Journal of Contemporary Legal and Social Issues

[20] 'Over 53k Children Rescued from Child Labour, Trafficking in India: Report' (The Tribune, 2025) <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/delhi/over-53k-children-rescued-from-child-labour-trafficking-in-india-report> accessed 11 August 2026.

and regulatory action.[21] Countries may accelerate progress toward the SDGs and effectively handle shared concerns by improving global collaboration and legal frameworks. As far as the 2030 Agenda is concerned, Goal 16 is devoted to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all and to the establishment of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Goal 17 is related to strengthening the means of implementation and revitalization of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.[22] Legal frameworks serve as the foundation for accomplishing the SDGs. Governments can foster sustainable development by implementing laws and regulations that are in line with the aims. These frameworks provide a legal basis for action, ensuring that policies and activities are consistent with sustainable development ideals. Legislation, for example, can encourage the use of clean energy, regulate waste management, safeguard natural resources, and promote social participation. Nations that incorporate the SDGs into their legislative frameworks can institutionalize sustainable development principles and influence decision- making processes across multiple sectors. Effective implementation of the SDGs necessitates consistent and coordinated policy initiatives. Law is crucial in connecting national policies with goals and ensuring that they are effectively implemented. Governments can enact rules and regulations to encourage sustainable practices, promote responsible business behaviour, and incentivize sustainable investments. Legal tools, like as environmental impact assessments and strategic planning processes, can assist in incorporating sustainability issues into decision-making at all levels. Furthermore, strong legal frameworks provide accountability tools for monitoring progress, tracking compliance, and addressing potential infractions or setbacks.[23]

Indian Journal of Contemporary Legal and Social Issues

## VI. PRINCIPLE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

The right to a healthy environment is included in Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees every individual's right to life and individual freedom. Article 21 of the Constitution states that any alteration to the basic environmental components—air, water, and soil that are required for "life" and would be detrimental to "life" falls under its purview.[24] The 42nd

[21] 'Cabinet Approves India's Commitment to Reduce Emissions Intensity of Its GDP by 47% by 2035' (News on Air, 26 March 2026) <https://www.newsonair.gov.in/cabinet-approves-indias-commitment-to-reduce-emissions-intensity-of-its-gdp-by-47-by-2035> accessed 11 August 2026.
[22] https://sdgs.un.org/topics/institutional- frameworks-and-international-cooperation- sustainable-development
[23] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/law-sdgs - sdgsandme
[24] 11 Agrawal, H. O., International Law and Human Rights, 21st ed., Central Law Publications, 2017.

Amendment to the Constitution of India, also known as the Constitutional Amendment Act of 1976, expressly incorporated specific provisions for environmental protection and improved the form of the environment under the Fundamental Duties and Directive principles of state policy in the Indian Constitution at the time. This amendment was merely a response to the 1972 Stockholm Declaration, which emphasized that humans have a grave duty to protect and improve the environment for the benefit of future generations as well as the present.

The 42nd Amendment Act of 1976 included the addition of Articles 48-A and 51-A(g) to the Constitution as a part of fundamental duties (part 4A). Every Indian citizen, according to this law, must exhibit compassion for all living things and work to preserve and enhance the natural world, which includes trees, rivers, lakes, and biodiversity. As a result, the fundamental obligation that each citizen has to preserve and enhance the natural environment is referred to in Article 51 A (g). This arrangement of Crucial obligations streams from the World Charter for Nature embraced by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 28 October 1982

and perceives the freedoms of People and different elements by giving that all individuals will approach the method for review when their current circumstances have endured harm or corruption.[25]

Art IV of the Constitution manages Part IV of DPSP, these directions are intended to direct the Fate of the country by committing three Wings of the state to execute these standards. According to Article 47, it is the responsibility of the state to raise nutrition standards, standard of living, and public health. Article 48A, which was added by the 42nd Amendment Act of 1976, states that the state must work to improve and protect the environment as well as forests and wildlife. The Directive Principles structure the key component and the social heart of the constitution and the constitution charges upon the state to carry out these goals of sustainable development with the help of Directive Principles of State policy in India. In the case of MC Mehta Vs Union of India[26] which is popularly known as the CNG case the court reiterated that articles 39(e), 47, and 48A without anyone else and on the whole Expense an obligation on the state to get the strength of individuals and work on general wellbeing and secure and work on the environment protection.

Indian Journal of Contemporary Legal and Social Issues

[25] Singh, G. Environmental Law, Second Edi., Eastern Book Company, 2016.
[26] (1998) 6 SCC 63

## VII.REFLECTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIAN LEGAL SCENARIO

One of the few countries in the world with extensive environmental laws is India. Article 21 was heavily used by Indian courts to apply the law to the decision-making process regarding environmental perspectives and provisional duties.[27]

Parliament can pass laws to put into effect international treaties, conventions, or decisions made at international conferences[28] as per Article 253. As a result, in 1974, the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act was enacted to carry out the provisions laid down at the Stockholm conference.

The purpose of this law is to keep or restore the health of the country's water supply while also preventing and controlling water pollution. It also provides for the creation of Boards for the prevention and control of water pollution in order to accomplish the aforementioned goals. The Water Act forbids the release of contaminants into bodies of water after a certain threshold and lays out penalties for defiance. The Central Pollution Control Board, established by the Water Act at the center, establishes standards for controlling and preventing water pollution. The Central Pollution Control Board and the State Government direct State Pollution Control Board operations at the state level. Notwithstanding this institutional architecture, implementation gaps persist: the Central Pollution Control Board's own 2022 assessment identified 311 polluted river stretches across 279 rivers in India, with several, including stretches of the Tunga, Bhadra and Tungabhadra, remaining severely polluted despite decades of statutory regulation. This suggests that the Water Act's enforcement machinery, though comprehensive on paper, continues to face considerable practical constraints at the state level.[29]

Indian Journal of Contemporary Legal and Social Issues

The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 (hereafter referred to as "Air Act") is a law to allow for the prevention, control, and reduction of air pollution as well as for the establishment of sheets at the focal and state levels in order to accomplish the aforementioned goals. To address difficulties associated with air pollution, the Air Act established requirements for ambient quality of the air. The Air Act regulates appliances that contribute to air pollution

[27] Ayesha Mehrotra, Sustainable Development laws in India, ONE FUTURE COLLECTIVE,2018,www.onefuturecollective.Sustainable-development-laws-in-india/ (June 6, 2026, 10:45PM)
[28] Objectives of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.
[29] Ajith Athrady, 'Stretches of Tunga, Bhadra, Tungabhadra Rivers Highly Polluted: Minister' (Deccan Herald, 28 March 2023) <https://www.deccanherald.com/amp/story/india%2Fkarnataka%2Fstretches-of-tunga-bhadra-tungabhadra-rivers-highly-polluted-minister-1204188.html> accessed 11 August 2026.

and prohibits the use of polluting fuels and substances to combat air pollution. According to the Air Act, the State Government can appoint any field or area within the State as an air pollution controlling area or area after conferring with the State Pollution Control Boards. The Act stipulates that State Pollution Control Board approval is required before the construction or operation of any industrial facility within the pollution control area. SPCBs are additionally expected to investigate production procedures, pollution control tools, and the air in air pollution control zones.

The environment is safeguarded and improved by the Environment Protection Act of 1986 (hereafter referred to "Environment Act"). The legislation known as the Environment Protection Act establishes a framework for rapid and appropriate responses to environmental risks and provides the foundation for investigating, planning, and implementing long-term environmental safety standards. It is an overarching rule created to provide a framework for the coordination of focal and state experts as specified by the 1974 Water Act and the Air Act. The word "environment" has a very broad definition under section 2(a) of the Environment Act. It encompasses the links between individuals, other living beings, other living beings, microbes, organisms, and property as well as the relationships between the surface air, the earth, and the sea.

In order to safeguard and enhance the quality of the environment, manage the area of organizations, minimize risky waste, guarantee general well-being, and provide government assistance, the Central Government is empowered by the Environment Act to establish standards for any industry or activity emissions and discharges of pollution into the atmosphere. The Central Government occasionally releases notices for the protection of environmentally sensitive regions or instructions for concerns relating to the Environment Act.

Indian Journal of Contemporary Legal and Social Issues

The National Green Tribunal Act (NGT Act), which was approved in 2010, aims to support the establishment of a National Green Tribunal (NGT) for the effective and prompt resolution of cases involving climate insurance, the safeguarding of forests and other common assets, as well as ensuring the enforcement of any legal rights related to the climate and providing assistance and compensation for damages to people and property and issues related to or coincidental to those damages. Commentators have, however, questioned the consistency of the Tribunal's functioning: investigative reporting in 2022 highlighted episodes where special benches disposed of a large volume of pending applications within a short period, raising concerns among legal practitioners about whether such rapid disposal reflected genuine

resolution of underlying environmental grievances. This points to a continuing need for closer scrutiny of the NGT's institutional capacity relative to its expanding docket.[30]

There are a few regulations that straightforwardly or by implication manage perilous waste administration. The Factories Act of 1948, the Public Liability Insurance Act of 1991, the National Environment Tribunal Act of 1995, and the Environmental Act's rules and notifications are the relevant statutes.[31]

## VIII. ROLE OF INDIAN JUDICIARY

Indian Judiciary and especially Public Interest litigation have played an important role in the implementation of sustainable development which insists on the balanced synthesis of developmental and environmental imperatives. In the case of Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v. Union of India[32] The Supreme Court ruled that sustainable development, which strikes a balance between ecology and development, is part of customary international law and rejected the traditional definition of development. High Court repeated that the "Precautionary Principles" and "Polluter Pays Principle" comprised basic standards of global regulation and expressed that "Precautionary Principles" and "Polluter Pays Principle" and the extraordinary idea of the onus of confirmation have consolidated International law as is obvious from Articles 47, 48-A and 51-A(g) and that, as a matter of fact, in different natural resolutions, like the Water ( Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and different rules, these ideas are directed and reflected in the same manner.

Indian Journal of Contemporary Legal and Social Issues

In the case of Subhash Kumar vs. State of Bihar,[33] the Hon'ble Apex Court held that the right to life under Article 21 incorporates the right to a healthy climate and implies the right to delight in contamination-free water and air for pleasure throughout everyday life.

In the landmark judgment on environmental jurisprudence in India, M.C. Mehta vs. Kamal Nath, [34] The Hon'ble Supreme Court ruled that the State Government breached the public trust

[30] 'National Green Tribunal Is Suddenly Clearing a Lot of Cases. It's, Well, Odd' (Newslaundry, 23 August 2022) <https://www.newslaundry.com/2022/08/23/national-green-tribunal-is-suddenly-clearing-a-lot-of-cases-its-well-odd> accessed 11 August 2026.
[31] Vaish V. & Mehta H., Environment Laws in India, MONDAQ, August 31, 2017. (June 6, 2023. 07:45 PM) www.mondaq.com/india/waste-management/624836/environment-laws-in-india.
[32] (1996) 5 SCC 647.
[33] AIR 1991 SC 420/ 1991 (1) SCC 598
[34] (1997) 1 SCC 388

by leasing ecologically fragile land to Motel management because natural resources like the air, sea, waters, and forests are so important to the people as a whole.

The Supreme Court interpreted and implemented the doctrine of Sustainable Development inNarmada Bachao Andolan vs. Union of India[35] the Hon'ble Court stated and observed that "Sustainable Development means what kind or extent of development can occur, which can be sustained by nature or ecology with or without mitigation". The supreme court noted that the Sardar Sarovar dam's construction would not cause an ecological catastrophe but rather enhance it. This assessment stood in contrast to the findings of the World Bank's own independent review, the 1992 Morse Commission report, which found serious flaws in the environmental and resettlement planning for the project and led the World Bank to withdraw its remaining funding for it in 1993. The divergence between the Court's assessment and that of the independent review illustrates the difficulty of judicially evaluating complex ecological claims within the confines of adversarial litigation.[36]

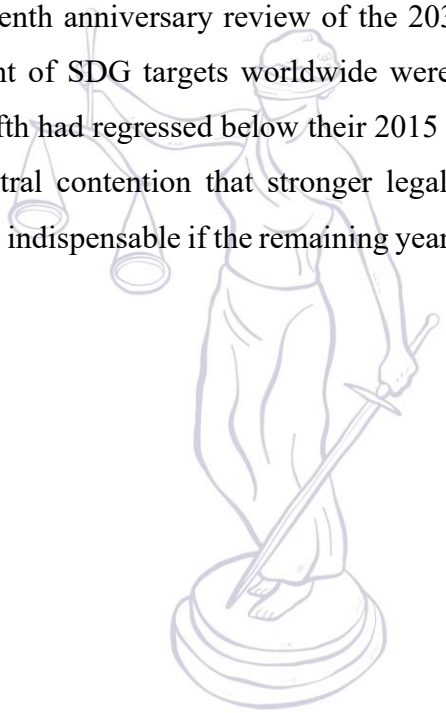
This interpretation is a narrow interpretation of the court without recognizing the other negative impact of the dam constructions. In the landmark case of T.N. Godavaraman Thirumulpad vs. Union of India,[37] the Apex Court observed that "As a matter of preface, we may state that adherence to the principle of Sustainable Development is now a constitutional requirement." Each case's facts must be considered to determine how much damage has been done to the environment and ecology.

In Indian Council of Enviro-Legal Action vs. Union of India,[38] The Supreme Court concluded that while widespread environmental destruction and violation should not be allowed to occur as a result of economic development; simultaneously, the need to protect biology and climate shouldn't hamper monetary and different turns of events. As a result, both environment and development have received attention, and the goal is to strike a healthy balance between both.

## IX. CONCLUSION

[35] (2000) 10 SCC 664
[36] 'Independent Review of the Sardar Sarovar Project Published' (World Bank Group Timeline, 18 June 1992) <https://timeline.worldbank.org/en/timeline/eventdetail/1911> accessed 11 August 2026.
[37] (2006) 1 SCC 1
[38] (1996) 3 SCC 212

The Sustainable Development Goals are a global commitment to ensuring a more sustainable, inclusive, and fair future for all. Achieving these goals will necessitate collaborative efforts across all sectors, with the law playing a critical role in accelerating progress. Countries may advance sustainable development agendas and create a better world for current and future generations by incorporating the SDGs into national legislation, boosting environmental protections, supporting social justice and human rights, and increasing global cooperation. We can achieve sustainable futures in which prosperity is shared and the planet flourishes by implementing smart legal structures and systems. The urgency of this task is underscored by the United Nations' own tenth anniversary review of the 2030 Agenda, which found in July 2025 that only 35 per cent of SDG targets worldwide were on track or showing moderate progress, while nearly a fifth had regressed below their 2015 baselines. This assessment lends weight to the paper's central contention that stronger legal institutions, rather than policy pronouncements alone, are indispensable if the remaining years to 2030 are to yield meaningful progress.[39]



Indian Journal of Contemporary
Legal and Social Issues

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