

INTEGRATING CLIMATE ACTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A BHARTIYA FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into climate policies is essential for addressing climate change impacts and advancing sustainable development globally. This integration represents a profound shift in climate action, recognizing the inherent linkages between climate change and sustainable development. Scientific findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) underscore the urgency of limiting global warming to 1.5°C to foster sustainable development. However, significant gaps persist in the current integration landscape, especially in economically dominant nations, where critical social SDGs remain inadequately integrated into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). Drawing on insights from the IPCC's Assessment Reports, this chapter emphasizes the imperative of deepening the integration of SDGs into climate policies to address underlying vulnerabilities and inequalities. It highlights the importance of inclusive stakeholder engagement, maximizing synergies between climate actions and SDGs, and addressing systemic knowledge gaps for evidence-based policy-making. Additionally, the paper integrates findings from Section 3, mapping interlinkages between SDG 13 (Climate Action) and other SDGs. This analysis underscores the complexity of these relationships and provides a network graph of climate and SDG interlinkages, along with insights into key factors and linkages. The chapter concludes by outlining policy implications, urging policymakers to enhance SDG integration into climate policies to ensure effective and inclusive responses.

Keywords: Bhartiya Framework, Climate Action, Climate Policy Integration, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1. Introduction

A Multidimensional Framework for Climate–SDG Alignment

There is increasing agreement that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be incorporated into climate policies due to the intensifying effects of climate change and the pressing need for sustainable development. This integration represents a fundamental shift in the way that climate action is conceptualized and carried out on a global scale, rather than just a strategic improvement. Key findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) and Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), the Special Report on Global Warming

of 1.5°C (SR1.5) (Roy 2018), and the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report (Denton et al. 2014; Fleurbaey et al. 2024; Denton et al. 2022) provide compelling scientific evidence for this necessity. These studies emphasize that keeping global warming to 1.5°C is not just a climate obligation but also a significant chance to promote sustainable development in a number of fields. The understanding that climate change and sustainable development are inextricably connected provides justification for incorporating the SDGs into climate strategies. Climate change is a serious threat that might undo years of work toward development objectives, such as ending poverty and guaranteeing food and water security, which would have an impact on

infrastructure, livelihoods, and health. On the other hand, a number of SDG-promoting tactics, like expanding access to clean energy, boosting health, and guaranteeing food and water security, can also have a major positive impact on the climate. For example, switching to renewable energy sources enhances public health by lowering air pollution and lowering carbon emissions.

The need to incorporate SDGs into climate strategy is urgent in both wealthy and developing nations. Developed countries frequently have the means and know-how to put high-impact climate solutions into practice, which can be in line with larger international commitments to sustainable development. Integration is even more crucial for developing nations, which often face greater vulnerability to the effects of climate change but also have a difficult time obtaining the resources required to put sustainable solutions into place. Developing nations may maximize their limited resources, draw in international climate finance, and carry out initiatives that concurrently fulfill several developmental and environmental goals by coordinating their climate policies with the SDGs.

Furthermore, encouraging inclusive stakeholder engagement requires that SDGs be incorporated into climate policies. This strategy promotes equality and inclusivity by guaranteeing that the opinions of the most disadvantaged groups are heard and taken into consideration in plans for climate action. A wider range of resources and creative solutions can be mobilized by including a wide range of stakeholders, such as local communities, civil society, and the commercial sector, which improves the effectiveness and sustainability of climate responses.

The importance of this integration is further demonstrated by its capacity to optimize synergies and manage trade-offs. For instance, biodiversity and food security may be impacted by land use regulations intended to lower emissions. A more comprehensive approach to planning and decision-making that acknowledges and balances these interdependencies is promoted by including SDGs into climate policies. It makes it easier to find win-win solutions that improve

development outcomes and climate resilience, including agroforestry techniques that increase soil fertility and biodiversity while sequestering carbon.

Including the Sustainable Development Goals in national climate policies is not just a method to improve policy; it is also a vital step in making sure that climate efforts are inclusive, wide-ranging, and in line with the goals of the global sustainable development agenda. Aligning climate action with SDGs will be essential to coordinating inclusive and successful responses that protect the environment and advance a prosperous, just future for all as the world works to reach the targets of the Paris Agreement.

2. Bharat's Exemplary Global Role

Bharat stands among the few nations that have actively and effectively aligned their climate action and sustainable development strategies across all major multilateral platforms — including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), WTO, Paris Agreement, G20, BIMSTEC, and SAARC. Its commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) reflects not only policy coherence but also a deep civilizational ethos rooted in the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — “the world is one family.” Guided by this worldview, Bharat promotes peaceful coexistence, harmony with nature, and the collective prosperity of all nations and communities. As one of the fastest-growing major economies, Bharat's model of development — balancing economic growth with environmental stewardship and social inclusivity — is increasingly seen as a role model for the Global South and a moral compass for the world. Its leadership during the G20 Presidency (2023), proactive initiatives like Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment), and achievements in renewable energy, afforestation, and sustainable mobility underscore Bharat's commitment to a holistic, equitable, and green future for humanity.

3. Assessment of Current Integration Practices

3.1 Overview of SDG Integration in Climate

Policies

Integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

into national climate policies is essential for ensuring that climate actions contribute effectively to sustainable development. This integration aligns climate policy frameworks with the SDGs, aiming to enhance synergies and manage trade-offs across economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

Globally, the recognition of the importance of integrating SDGs into climate policies is growing. However, the extent of integration varies significantly across countries and regions. Despite global agreements and the adoption of SDGs in 2015, many countries are still in the preliminary stages of incorporating these goals into their climate strategies. The United Nations report on "Synergy Solutions for a World in Crisis" (UNDESA and UNFCCC, 2023) highlights the benefits of coordinated actions between climate and sustainable development agendas, which can lead to greater achievements and mitigate the trade-offs often encountered when addressing these issues separately.

Integration issues are especially apparent in areas that are experiencing urgent climate changes and significant economic constraints. The main emphasis in many developing countries is on climate adaptation and mitigation, with little attention paid to how these tactics might also help achieve more general developmental

objectives like reducing poverty and enhancing health.

3.2 SDG Integration in G20 Nations

In the G20, which includes the world's major economies and contributes significantly to global climate issues, the integration of SDGs into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) shows a varied landscape. Notably, countries like Canada and Germany are incorporating educational and gender-responsive strategies into their climate actions. These initiatives aim not only to reduce emissions but also to enhance adaptability and resilience, illustrating the potential for multifaceted benefits such as improved health outcomes and economic opportunities.

Social elements are frequently underrepresented in the integration of social SDGs, such as SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 10 (Reduce Inequalities). The examination of the G20's NDCs makes this underrepresentation clear, especially for SDGs like education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), and decreased disparities (SDG 10). This research highlights the important gaps that may be filled by integrating these SDGs to improve more thorough and efficient climate governance.

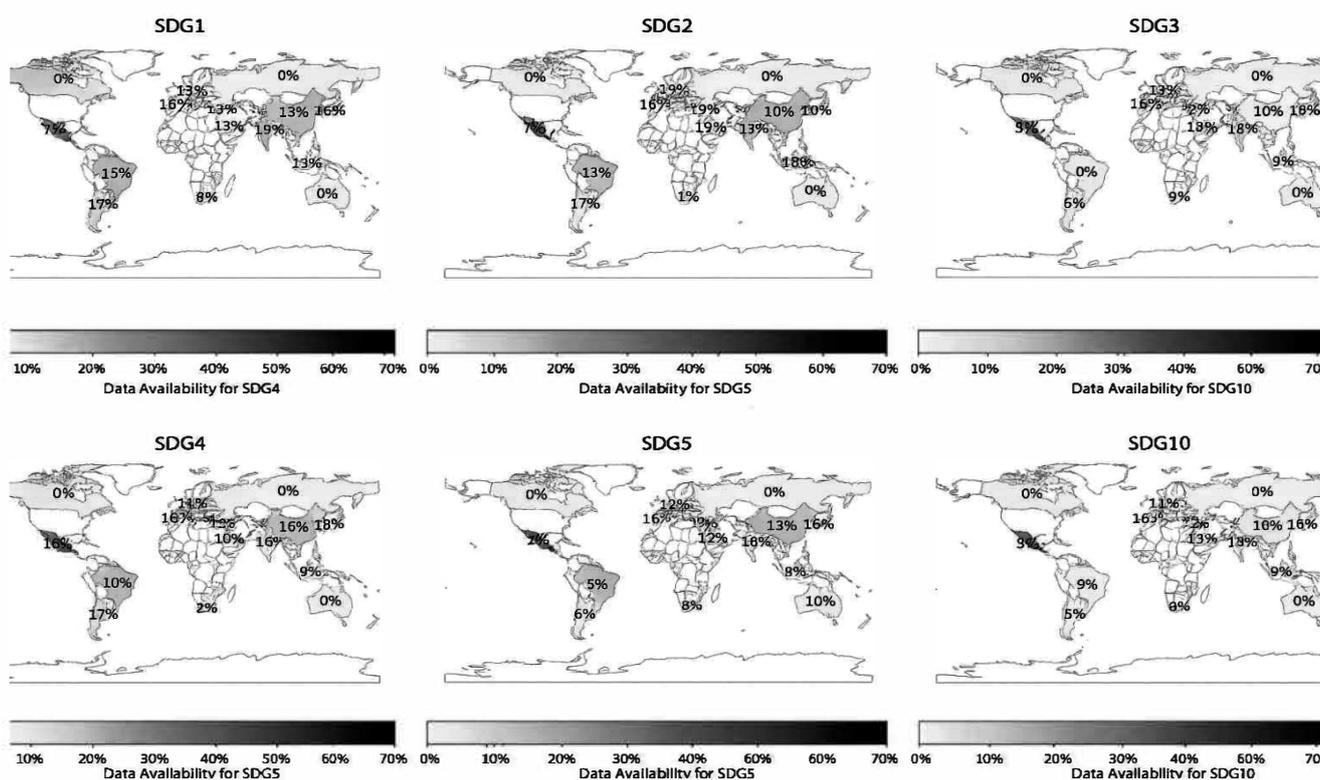


Fig 1: Integration of Social SDGs in G20's NDCs

Note: The percentage value indicates the number of SDG targets reflected in NDCs as a share of the total number of SDG targets under that SDG.

Source: Compiled based on text analysis of G20's NDCs

3.3 SDG Integration in SAARC Nations

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which has made a number of sincere attempts to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into state policies. The majority of SAARC nations have matched the 2030 Agenda with their national development frameworks, despite regional disparities in progress. For example, Bangladesh and India have created comprehensive SDG implementation plans with distinct monitoring metrics. While Nepal has localized SDGs into province planning following its federal restructure, Bhutan incorporates them into its Gross National Happiness (GNH) concept. Regional progress is hampered by issues like climate vulnerability, political unpredictability, institutional inefficiencies, and a lack of funding. The lack of cross-border cooperation limits the possibility of regional solutions to transboundary problems including migration, water security, and climate change as well as shared learning. SDG results

in South Asia could be accelerated by more regional collaboration, capacity-building, and resource sharing. Together with integrated policy frameworks, a regional SDG dashboard or index for SAARC can improve transparency and track group progress. In order to ensure inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development for more than 1.8 billion people, the SAARC region must transition from intention to implementation as the 2030 deadline draws near.

3.4 SDG Integration in BIMSTEC Nations

An important step toward inclusive regional development is the incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the framework of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, or BIMSTEC. The BIMSTEC nations—Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand—share developmental issues like poverty, inequality, climate vulnerability, and energy availability. Member countries have been increasingly aligning their national policies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in recognition of these common issues. For example, Bhutan prioritizes Gross National Happiness in addition to SDG metrics, while India has included SDGs into its NITI Aayog plan. National SDG implementation roadmaps have been created and integrated into planning procedures in Bangladesh,

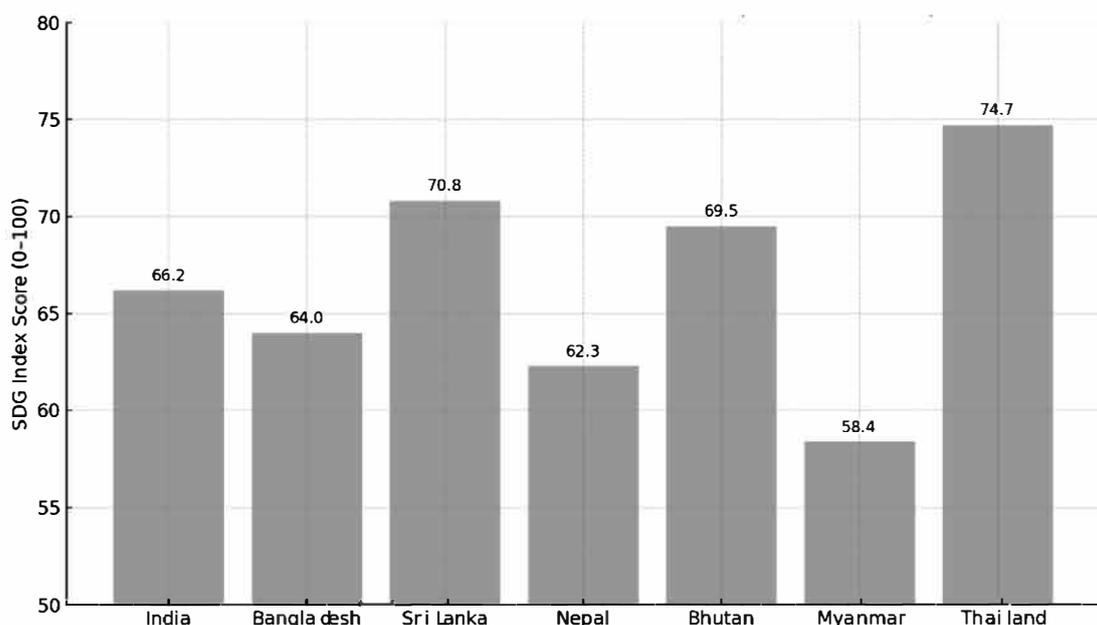


Fig. 2: SDG Index scores of BIMSTEC Countries
(Source: - Sustainable Development Report 2024)

Nepal, and Sri Lanka. As a regionalized SDG model, Thailand markets its “Sufficiency Economy Philosophy”.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been incorporated into the BIMSTEC countries, demonstrating differing degrees of regional advancement. Thailand is ranked first with an SDG Index score of 74.7 in 2023, which reflects its strong performance in sustainable energy, healthcare, and education. Bhutan and Sri Lanka, which prioritize social development and environmental preservation, come in second and third, respectively, with ratings of 69.5 and 70.8. With a score of 66.2, India has made steady progress, but it still has issues with climate resilience and gender equality. Nepal (62.3) and Bangladesh (64.0) show moderate progress, especially in the areas of access to clean energy and poverty alleviation. Myanmar suffers from political instability and a lack of institutional competence, as seen by its lowest score of 58.4. These differences highlight how urgently BIMSTEC must improve regional collaboration in the implementation of the SDGs. BIMSTEC can accelerate collective progress and close development gaps by promoting sustainable finance, standardizing regulations, and improving data exchange. Since the group's primary priority areas—public health, agriculture, energy, and the environment—align with a number of fundamental SDGs, concerted efforts can be crucial to guaranteeing that no member nation falls behind in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda.

3.5 Insufficient integration and Implications

Particularly in economically powerful countries that have a big influence on international policies, the overall integration of SDGs into climate policies is still too shallow or limited. Climate policies run the danger of failing to address underlying vulnerabilities and inequities due to the low level of integration of essential social SDGs, which would undermine the development pathways' overall sustainability. In order to include the SDGs into climate strategies, this section urges governments to take a more integrated planning approach that takes sustainability's social, economic,

and environmental facets into account. In addition to closing current divides, this kind of integration would strengthen the ability of the international community to address climate issues in a way that upholds justice and equity.

4. Analyzing the Systemic Links Between SDG 13 and Other Goals

4.1 Systemic Knowledge Gaps in Understanding Climate and SDG Interlinkages

Significant information gaps remain in properly comprehending the relationships between SDG 13 (Climate Action) and other Sustainable Development Goals, despite the valuable insights provided by assessments like the IPCC's AR6 and the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C. The intricate and cross-cutting relationship between climate change and sustainable development is one major obstacle (Denton et al. 2014). Without taking into account all pertinent actions and SDGs under a single systemic framework, current assessments frequently examine these relationships sector-by-sector or action-by-sector. Critical interactions and co-benefits that are only apparent when looking at the system as a whole may be missed by this segmented approach. The implications of these information gaps for integrated policy-making are significant. Policymakers may find it difficult to create plans that optimize synergies and minimize trade-offs if they lack a thorough grasp of how climate policies relate to different developmental goals. Missed chances to use climate action for wider advantages like social justice, poverty alleviation, and economic growth may arise from this mistake. Furthermore, the public's view of the significance of an integrated strategy may also be impacted by the lack of knowledge regarding these intricate relationships. It becomes difficult to garner broad support for such programs when the links between carrying out climate policies and accomplishing more general sustainable development goals are unclear or only partially understood. Comprehensive climate solutions that are seen as unrelated to or even harmful to other facets of societal advancement are less likely to be supported by the public and political players.

Note: The code in parenthesis indicates the SDG code, and each node represents an SDG target. The color of the node indicates the corresponding SDG, and its size reflects the frequency of SDG key phrases in the text data. The co-occurrence frequency of pertinent SDG key words is shown by the width of each edge, which shows a link between two nodes. A minimum spanning tree is used to depict the graph, showing only the necessary edges to connect every node.

4.5 Key climate and SDG linkages

To enlighten on the main challenges and assist in setting priorities, it is crucial to understand the important links in the climate-SDG interlinkage system. The top 50 important links are shown in Figure 5 according to the frequency of co-occurrence. The frequency at which two SDG phrases appear together in a sentence without any guidance is known as the co-occurrence frequency. The most important connections in addressing climate

change are those between energy and adaptation and mitigation, energy and technology, energy and land, and energy and climate change and mitigation. The text data's narratives describe the relationships between the various SDGs.

Understanding the main connections in the climate-SDG interlinkage system is essential for raising awareness of important concerns and helping to establish priorities. The top 50 important linkages are shown in Figure 5 according to the frequency of co-occurrence. The frequency of two SDG phrases occurring together (without guidance) in a sentence is known as the co-occurrence frequency. Energy and climate mitigation, energy and technology, energy and land, adaptation and mitigation, and climate change and mitigation are the most important connections in addressing climate change. The text data's narratives clarify the relationships between the various SDGs.

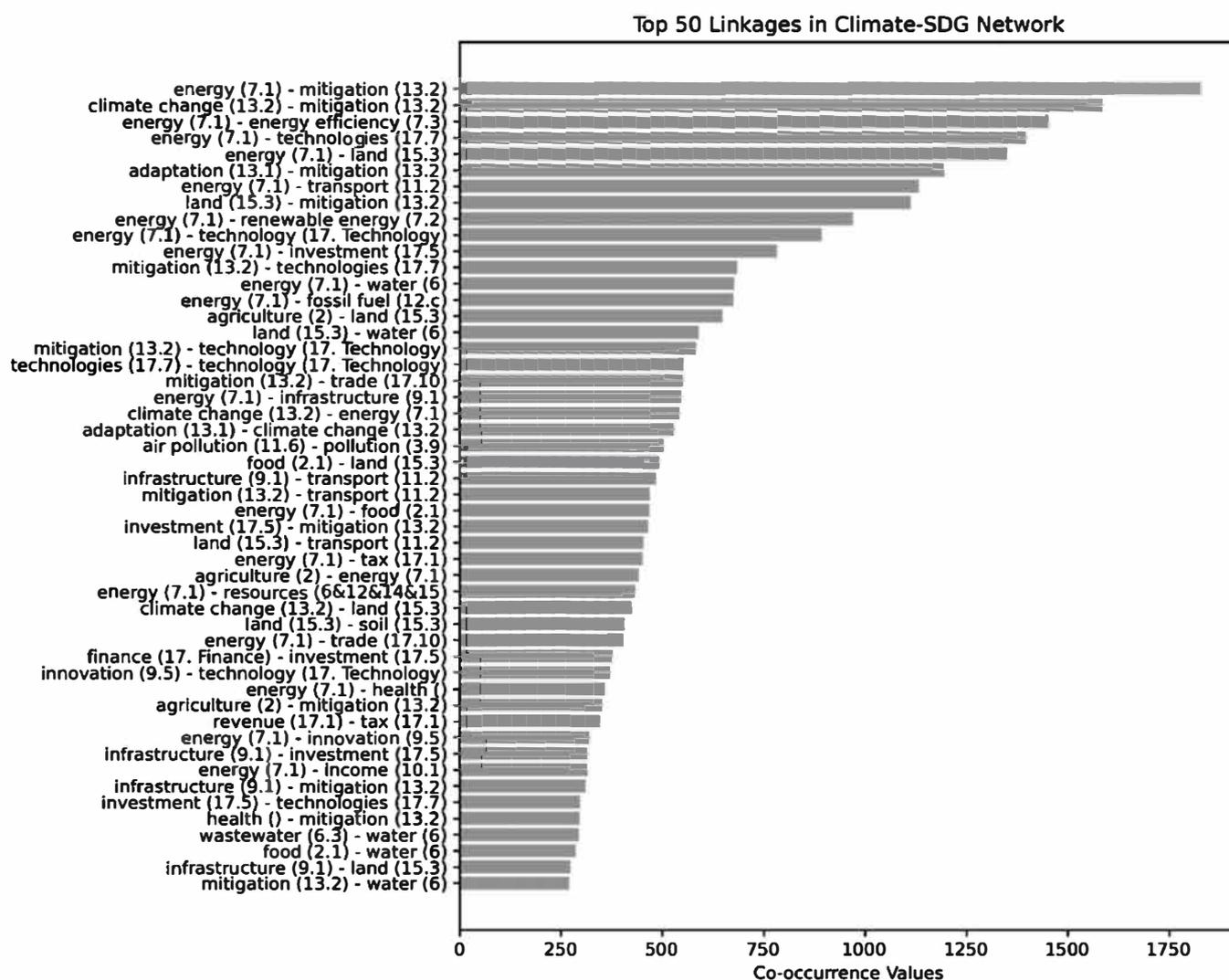


Fig. 5: Key Climate and SDG Linkages Ranked by Co-Occurrence Frequency

Note: The code in parenthesis represents either an SDG target (e.g., Target 7.1 for energy) or a broader goal (e.g., SDG 6 for water)

5. Bhartiye Civilizational Wisdom as the Guiding Force for Global Sustainability

Bharat's philosophical tradition offers a timeless vision of balance between humanity and nature — a vision now urgently needed in an age of ecological crisis and moral fragmentation. Long before the modern concept of “sustainability” was coined, Indian civilization articulated a holistic worldview where *dharma* (righteous duty), *artha* (prosperity), *kāma* (well-being), and *moksha* (liberation) coexisted in harmony — each supporting the other within the cosmic order.

5.1 The Vedas and Upanishads: Ecological Dharma and Universal Oneness

The *Rigveda* declares — “माता भूमिः पुत्रोऽहं पृथिव्याः” (*Mātā bhūmih putro'ham pṛithivyāḥ*) — “The Earth is my mother, and I am her child.”

This ancient conception of Earth as a living mother forms the spiritual foundation of ecological ethics. The *Upanishads* proclaim the essential unity of all existence — “*Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*” (“All this is indeed Brahman”). This insight into interdependence anticipates the modern principle of ecosystem integrity. In this view, environmental destruction is not merely material exploitation — it is a violation of cosmic order. Thus, Indian philosophy does not separate man from nature; it calls for reverence rather than domination of the environment — a worldview that directly aligns with the 21st-century pursuit of sustainability.

5.2 Bhagavad Gita: Duty, Balance, and Self-Discipline

The *Bhagavad Gita* teaches *nishkama karma* — action without selfish desire — and harmony between internal and external equilibrium. In the context of climate action, this implies that nations and individuals must act responsibly for collective good, not for short-term economic gains. Krishna's message of balance between *yoga* (discipline), *karma* (action), and *jnana*

(knowledge) offers a framework for sustainable lifestyles rooted in self-regulation, moderation, and mindfulness — essential virtues for combating overconsumption and ecological degradation.

5.3 Kautilya's Arthashastra: Sustainable Statecraft

Kautilya's Arthashastra presents one of the earliest models of environmentally conscious governance. It prescribes conservation of forests, water management, and responsible use of natural resources as duties of the state. Kautilya recognized that the economic prosperity of the kingdom depended on ecological balance — an insight that modern economists rediscover in the “green economy.” His governance model integrates economic pragmatism with ethical responsibility, showing how statecraft can sustain both prosperity and ecological order.

5.4 Mahatma Gandhi: Trusteeship and Simplicity

Mahatma Gandhi transformed ancient spiritual principles into a modern socio-economic ethic. His idea of “trusteeship” views every individual and institution as a trustee — not owner — of wealth and resources. He warned:

“The Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed.”

Gandhi's emphasis on *simplicity*, *self-reliance*, and *moral economy* provides a practical blueprint for de-growth and sustainable living. His life exemplifies the ecological virtue of restraint (*aparigraha*) and harmony with nature.

5.6 Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya: Integral Humanism (Ekatma Manav Darshan)

Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya's philosophy of Ekatma Manav Darshan (Integral Humanism) argues that development must balance material, moral, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of human life. He rejected both capitalist consumerism and Marxist materialism, envisioning a model of progress grounded in social harmony, cultural identity, and self-sufficiency. In global terms, his thought expands sustainability beyond economics — toward a “human-centric” development paradigm that respects both

individual dignity and ecological interdependence

5.6 Dattopant Thengadi: Labour, Culture, and Swadeshi Ecology

Dattopant Thengadi emphasized that true progress must arise from Swadeshi (self-reliant) and value-based development, not blind imitation of the West. He saw climate and environmental crises as symptoms of alienation between man, society, and nature, calling for reorganization of the economy around local production, dignified labour, and cultural ethics. Thengadi's vision of “*Integral Labour*” and “*Cultural Nationalism*” aligns with the idea of sustainable livelihoods — rooted in community participation, cooperative ownership, and ecological responsibility.

5.7 The Bhartiye Model: A Synthesis for the Future

Bringing these streams together, Bharat offers the world a civilizational model of sustainable development where:

5.7.1 The Vedas and Upanishads provide the spiritual ecology of unity and respect.

5.7.2 The Gita provides moral discipline and responsible action.

5.7.3 The Arthashastra offers institutional and governance mechanisms for sustainability.

5.7.4 Kautilya Gandhi, Deen Dyal Upadhyaya, and Dattopant Thengadi supply modern socio-economic frameworks that harmonize economy, environment, and ethics.

This synthesis forms the Bhartiye Model — a living philosophy combining science, spirituality, and social justice, capable of guiding humanity toward a more compassionate, balanced, decentralised, equitable and sustainable civilization.

6. Conclusion and policy implications

A revolutionary change in how countries handle both climate action and socioeconomic development is marked by the incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into climate policies. Instead of treating development and climate change as separate fields, this method emphasizes how closely related they are, with advancements in one directly

affecting the other. The accomplishment of all 17 SDGs is seriously threatened by climate change, especially those pertaining to life on land (SDG 15), clean water (SDG 6), zero hunger (SDG 2), and poverty eradication (SDG 1). On the other hand, well-crafted climate policies that are in line with SDG principles can have a positive impact on several goals at once, including advancing renewable energy (SDG 7), sustainable cities (SDG 11), and climate resilience (SDG 13). The urgent need to keep global warming to 1.5°C is emphasized by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), especially in its Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C and its Fifth (AR5) and Sixth (AR6) Assessment Reports. The threats to ecosystems, food security, water availability, and human well-being increase exponentially beyond this threshold, which is not arbitrary, particularly for populations who are already at risk. Unprecedented greenhouse gas emission reductions as well as revolutionary adjustments to the energy, agricultural, transportation, and land-use systems—all essential to sustainable development—are required to meet this goal. The above mentioned Bhartiye Framework can be guiding force for achieving these SDGs goals.

Even though these synergies are becoming more widely acknowledged, the state of climate policy frequently fails to successfully integrate SDGs. Among the difficulties are disjointed institutional frameworks, inadequate funding, a lack of cross-sectoral collaboration, and inadequate data systems for monitoring advancement. Developing nations, in particular, must balance meeting their basic development demands with adapting to the more severe effects of climate change. Policy coherence must be improved through comprehensive stakeholder engagement, integrated planning, and customized climate finance structures in order to get beyond these obstacles. The world community can only guarantee that climate action not only reduces risk but also promotes fair and sustainable development by achieving such alignment.

In this context, the *Bhartiye Framework* offers a moral

and institutional compass for achieving global SDG targets. It envisions a world where sustainable development is not merely an economic objective but a civilizational imperative — guided by balance, compassion, and collective responsibility.

6.1 Several policy implications can be drawn up: -

6.1.1 Strengthening the SDGs' incorporation into climate policies must be a top priority for policymakers. The sustainability of development paths is seriously threatened by the underrepresentation of important social SDGs in climate policies, such as gender equality, education, and decreased inequality. To guarantee that climate policies address underlying vulnerabilities and advance equity, policymakers must give top priority to including these social dimensions into climate strategies.

6.1.2 In order to generate widespread support and mobilize resources for successful climate action, inclusive stakeholder involvement is crucial. To guarantee inclusive, egalitarian, and sustainable climate responses, policymakers should place a high priority on including a broad variety of stakeholders, such as local communities, civil society, and the commercial sector.

6.1.3 To optimize resource allocation and accomplish several developmental and environmental goals at once, it is crucial to manage trade-offs and maximize synergies between climate activities and SDGs. To improve development outcomes and climate resilience, policymakers should use an integrated planning strategy that finds win-win solutions.

6.1.4 Filling in systemic knowledge gaps about the connections between the SDGs and climate change is essential to supporting evidence-based policymaking. To better understand the intricate relationships between climate action and sustainable development goals, policymakers should give research and data collection activities top priority.

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