

# The Raffles Review

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Gee Whiz! Global Goals, Gaps and Governance



## SOURCE

[Mind the gap? A comparison of international and national targets for the SDG agenda](#) is an Overseas Development Institute (ODI) report published in June 2015.

## KEY POINT

Successful achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will lie in aligning them with national development strategies, for which public service excellence is vital.

## BIG IDEAS

- The report (covering 75 countries, selected across regions and income groups) found that among the gaps between the SDGs and existing national ambitions, only 29% of low-income countries (LICs) currently have targets to reduce income equality, and 32% of middle-income countries (MICs) aim to eradicate extreme poverty.
- On average, only 52% of selected national targets that correspond with the SDGs, across all 75 countries, extend into the period of the SDGs, but will still require updating before the SDGs expire in 2030.
- Broken down by country income groupings, the biggest gaps between global-national ambitions will be in eradicating extreme poverty, access to pre-primary education and secondary education completion (LICs), water and sanitation and energy (MICs), and renewable energy (HICs).
- The gaps underscore the need for global target-setting to take into account national timeframes to avoid the one-size-fits-all approach that failed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) process.
- Development metrics vary across countries, but by differentiating indicators for certain country groupings and using common methodologies, reliable and credible country comparisons can be made to reward competition between comparator countries, which may lead to better national accountability.
- Information about the gaps alone does not explain how each country can close them to achieve the SDGs. A framework that steers countries towards selecting relevant and useful targets is needed in order to guide adequate resource mobilisation and bring about context-specific, practical and positive national outcomes.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

- Transformational public service reform is essential in the developing world to ensure good governance, accountability and the rule of law, all of which are key to achieving the SDGs.
  - Governments must confront domestic challenges and intensify efforts to improve public service, along with the empowerment of civil society and setting up of rigorous accountability mechanisms.
  - Where a culture of impunity, lack of motivation and widespread corruption persists within the public service, the impetus for achieving the SDGs will require a more nuanced understanding of context and the impact of capacity and feasibility in attempts to close the gaps between global and national ambitions.
  - As with the MDGs, the final formulation of the SDGs is unlikely to address the complexity and influence of political settlements on the gaps between global and national targets. It is therefore incumbent on the political and public sector leadership to be realistic, innovative and politically smart in SDGs-related action.

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