



Voluntary National Review Report 2019

Azad Jammu & Kashmir



Planning & Development Department

Azad Government of the State of Jammu & Kashmir

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADP	Annual Development Programme
AJ&K	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
AJ&KBoS	AJ&K Bureau of Statistics
AKCDC	Azad Kashmir Cabinet Development Committee
AKDWP	Azad Kashmir Development Working Party
AKSIC	Azad Kashmir Small Industries Cooperation
BOOT	Build-Own-Operate-Transfer
CDP	Community Development Programme
CDWP	Central Development Working Party
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DCC	District Coordination Committee
DDWP	Departmental Development Working Party
ECNEC	Executive Committee of National Economic Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FERRP	Flood Emergency Reconstruction and Resilience Project
FMD	Foot and Mouth Diseases
GoAJ&K	Azad Government of State of Jammu & Kashmir
GoP	Government of Pakistan

HLPF	High Level Political Forum
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LG&RDD	Local Government and Rural Development Department
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
MLA	Member Legislative Assembly
MoPD&R	Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform
NAP	National Action Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NJHEP	Neelum Jehlum HydroElectric Project
NNS	National Nutrition Survey
ODA	Official Development Assistance
P&DD	Planning and Development Department
PPC	Private Power Cell
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDMA	State Disaster Management Authority
SW&WD	Social Welfare and Women Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

This report presents AJ&K's journey towards the implementation of SDGs. The current landscape, demographic strengths, environment and governance system of AJ&K provide an excellent opportunity for achieving SDGs. Nevertheless, some challenges do exist, and the Government is working towards removing barriers to ensure successful execution of the 2030 Agenda.

Methodology for VNR Report

The report was produced after broad consultations with SDGs focal persons of line departments, academia, civil society organizations, NGOs, private businesses, media, youth, members of marginalized segments, and other stakeholders. Secondary sources such as official documents, reports and other online resources were also reviewed.

Advocacy and Awareness for SDGs

The advocacy and awareness mechanisms for SDGs in AJ&K have been divided into three broad categories: (i) general public and stakeholder engagement through informative workshops and forums, (ii) introduction of SDGs in the curriculum of primary, secondary and tertiary education institutions, and (iii) dissemination of information through the media to educate the public about SDGs in AJ&K.

Legal and Regulatory Regime for SDGs

Successful implementation of SDGs in AJ&K requires balancing the economic, social and environmental aspects of development alongside managing tradeoffs and potential conflicts that may arise in the planning process. Some successful examples of integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in AJ&K have been discussed in the report.

In order to implement 2030 Agenda successfully, Vision 2025 and AJ&K 12th Five-Year Plan have adopted the SDGs as a roadmap for development initiatives. AJ&K does not have a separate implementation plan for the SDGs - goals are expected to be achieved through the respective sectoral development strategies and implementation plans. Since the introduction of the 2030 Agenda in 2016, P&DD has been regularly analyzing its annual development allocations in the context of SDGs. The exercise is useful in gauging alignment of the development budget with SDGs, for identifying existing gaps in planning and providing further recommendations.

“Leave no one behind” is an important commitment under the SDGs and GoAJ&K recognizes the importance of ending extreme poverty, addressing discrimination and making fast progress for those furthest behind on the development trajectory. Discussions on the issue have revealed that additional efforts are required to bring marginalized groups into the development process in AJ&K which includes generating greater political will and administrative action. Establishing inclusive policies is a key starting point, and AJ&K's legal frameworks provide space for inclusive practices.

Institutional Mechanisms to Achieve SDGs

The Government of AJ&K, with the technical support of Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform and United Nations Development Programme, has established the SDGs Support Unit at P&DD. The function of the SDGs Support Unit is to help align all policies and actions of GoAJ&K with SDGs and to coordinate and track efforts throughout the State.

Stakeholder engagement is an important aspect of SDGs implementation and SDGs Support Unit has established four thematic working groups based on SDGs targets and indicators for implementation of the 2030 Agenda in AJ&K. SDGs focal persons from line departments, representatives from academia, civil society organizations, media, private businesses, youth, persons with disabilities, and other relevant stakeholders are a part of these thematic working groups. In AJ&K, the interaction amongst different line departments has been strengthened through a set of comprehensive hierarchical arrangements.

Financing to Achieve the SDGs

The GoAJ&K is heavily dependent on the Government of Pakistan for budget financing. There was a significant increase in the development budget of AJ&K in the fiscal year 2017-18 to PKR 23.28 billion from PKR 12 billion in 2016-17. For the financial year 2018-19, the allocation has been kept at PKR 23 billion. This rise in the development budget is expected to go a long way to addressing the sustainable development needs of the State and bridge some of the financing gaps required for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The AJ&K has not yet conducted a financial gap analysis to explore the level of funding required to achieve the SDG targets. Given the recent increase in development funding, GoAJ&K's focus is on improving the alignment of the existing budget towards critical sectors in the short-term, with a view to improve funding streams for SDGs in the medium-term.

Furthermore, implementation of SDGs necessitates capacity development of government line departments towards result-based management. In this regard, planning cells of government line departments as well as the P&DD sections can enhance their skills related to (i) evidence-based policy making, (ii) resource efficiency in planning including value-for-money and (iii) generation of quality data to ensure credible cost-benefit analysis of proposed and/or approved projects.

Key Initiatives on SDGs

Some of the key initiatives undertaken by GoAJ&K include (i) mapping of the Annual Development Programmes with SDGs, (ii) establishment of four thematic working groups for implementation of 2030 Agenda, (iii) undertaking SDGs baseline data gathering and target setting, (iv) conducting research studies for mainstreaming SDGs, (v) development of AJ&K SDGs district localization plan and (vi) developing a strong partnership with AJ&KBoS.

A successful example of integration of three dimensions of sustainable development in AJ&K emerged through a collaboration between an environmental activist and a rural community with support from government line departments. The community was purchasing commodities from the market, cutting down trees to construct houses and had poor infrastructure. A village development plan was introduced by the activist with the help of GoAJ&K line departments that engaged the

community youth. Without external financial support, the community was able to improve its health, education, agriculture and livestock outcomes, as well as its economy through ecotourism.

Another example of success in AJ&K is the International Fund for Agricultural Development funded Community Development Programme. GoAJ&K provided technical support to an unemployed, agricultural landowner Mr. Shakeel. Who through support from CDP planted onions on a cost-sharing basis, had produced 6000 kilograms of onion through his own hard work and inputs from CDP. Shakeel and his brothers are now gainfully employed with a monthly income of PKR 40,000.

A recent challenge for AJ&K has been the expectation of water scarcity following the construction of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydro Electric Project. A long tunnel has been constructed to divert substantial portion of Neelum river's water; as a result, numerous natural springs have dried up, and the ecosystem is under threat. Most importantly, due to this project, AJ&K faces drinking water shortages and increased dumping of sewage in the river is creating environmental concerns. Additionally, it is expected that the microclimatic conditions in the environment of Neelum River will change significantly and the river will lose its ability to act as a heat sink in the summers. This story from AJ&K highlights the need for hydropower projects to be eco-friendly, with limited ecological footprints to ensure sustainable development.

Challenges and Way Forward for SDGs

The AJ&K SDGs baseline data gathering exercise has underscored the need for regular data collection, data reporting and use of data in development planning. Given the limited resources, implementation of SDGs requires careful planning and execution; in this regard the process of prioritization of SDGs in AJ&K is currently under way.

In order to ensure successful implementation of SDGs, GoAJ&K plans to undertake numerous steps including (i) continued awareness campaigns at all levels, (ii) developing a roadmap for localization, (iii) further strengthening institutional mechanisms, (iv) conducting a gap analysis of existing laws and policies, (v) engaging with federal and provincial counterparts on SDGs implementation, (vi) embedding a culture of evidence based policy making, (vii) aligning PC-Is with SDGs, (viii) generating political will through collaboration with Legislative Assembly, (ix) developing knowledge sharing platforms, (x) engaging with the private sector, (xi) strengthening partnership between AJ&KBoS and other statistical institutions, and (xii) developing a mechanism to manage foreign aid in AJ&K.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Mechanisms for SDGs

In the last few years GoAJ&K has made concerted efforts to increase its statistical capacity including the establishment of a Bureau of Statistics at P&DD which has been functional since September 2016. The objective of the AJ&KBoS is to produce accurate and quality information with reliable statistics for realistic, efficient and effective planning and operation to accelerate the development process. At present, AJ&KBoS publishes an annual statistical yearbook which contains an exhaustive list of indicators; however, the data is not being used by the relevant line

departments. The eventual goal is to make the publication relevant for policy makers, development planners and researchers in order to ensure holistic data use across sectors.

1. Introduction

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) has an area of 13,297 square kilometers¹ and the population is 4.05 million²; however, the population density of AJ&K is high i.e. 304 persons per square km³. AJ&K lies on the Himalayan belt, with the northern districts having a mountainous terrain and the southern districts constituting plains. In AJ&K, 17.37 percent of the population lives in urban areas whereas 82.63 percent lives in rural areas, with a majority depending upon off-farm employment for income. The reason for low income generation through farming include small land holdings, scarcity of cultivatable land and low productivity of mountain ecosystems⁴. AJ&K's economy is based on subsistence agriculture, livestock rearing, tourism, small/cottage industry and hydro power. Furthermore, remittances play a significant role in the economy of the State. The Government of AJ&K is committed to capitalizing on the viability of tourism, agriculture and small and medium industry sectors in the region, in light of the principles and targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

AJ&K plays an important role in the geography and economy of Pakistan. As a source of three major rivers, Neelum, Jehlum and Poonch, and numerous other streams, it is critical for water resources and generation of hydropower in Pakistan. Moreover, AJ&K has abundant resources in the form of forests, mountains and freshwater ecosystems which have boosted tourism in the region and provided direct or indirect source of employment to 22 percent of the population⁵. Besides such natural resources, AJ&K also has high quality human resources in the form of an educated population with a literacy rate of 76.6 percent⁶ and emerging university and research centers. Furthermore, the peaceful law and order

AJ&K AT A GLANCE

Area: 13,297 sq.km

Division: 03

Districts: 10

Tehsils: 32

Villages/Mouzas: 1,769

Population: 4.05Million

Population Urban: 17.37%

Population Rural: 82.63%

Population Growth Rate: 1.63%

Density: 304 persons/sq km

Infant Mortality Rate: 66/1000

MMR: 201/100,000

Literacy Rate: 76.6%

Unemployment: 11.2%

Road Density: 0.70/sq km

¹ AJK At a Glance, AJ&K Bureau of Statistics P&DD, 2018.

² AJ&K Statistical Yearbook 2018, Bureau of Statistics, P&DD GoAJK.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Study on Producing Skilled Workforce for Potential Economic Sectors in Azad Jammu & Kashmir, GIZ, 2017.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ AJK At a Glance, AJ&K Bureau of Statistics P&DD, 2018.

situation in major cities of AJ&K provides an opportunity for private investment, which can further contribute to the socioeconomic development of the State.

The Azad Government of the State of Jammu & Kashmir (GoAJ&K) approach to development is similar to that currently adopted in Pakistan; it aims to enhance economic growth while trying to improve human well-being through achievement of SDGs.

The current landscape, demographic strengths, environment and governance system of AJ&K provides an excellent opportunity for the implementation of SDGs. There has been an increase in development spending in recent years and new policies are being developed for multiple sectors to ensure coherence with the SDGs. Additionally, there is increased awareness about the importance of environment and sustainability amongst the public and demand for improved economic and social outlooks.

However, AJ&K does recognize the challenges that exist for SDGs implementation. In order to truly achieve the goals and targets set out by the SDGs, AJ&K would need to drastically increase cooperation between line departments, move towards institutionalized data collection, develop a strong monitoring and evaluation system and re-align finances keeping in view new challenges and development priorities. It would also need to collaborate with the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development partners and other international agencies to implement the 2030 Agenda, in order to ensure holistic development and avoid duplication of efforts.

1.1 AJK and SDGs

Following from the national experience of implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the integration of the SDGs has been localized to the provincial and area level context, with each region taking a lead in the mainstreaming of 2030 Agenda in its territory. High level of political will of all stakeholders has been witnessed for the implementation of SDGs in AJ&K.

Azad Government of the State of Jammu & Kashmir (GoAJ&K) recognizes that in order to successfully localize 2030 Agenda, the goals, targets and indicators need to be properly aligned with the State's development plans and sectoral strategies. In light of this, Vision 2025 and AJ&K 12th Five-Year Plan have been explicitly linked with the SDGs to ensure the proper and continuous implementation of 2030 Agenda. Moreover, the State has also re-aligned its annual development allocations to better address the requirements of the SDGs. Also, baselines of indicators and targets for 2030 have been clearly reflected against concerned Sectors/Departments to ensure realization of SDGs in an effective manner.

In order to institutionalize the process of data gathering, the SDGs targets and indicators were divided across relevant line departments. Excluding targets relevant to global and national contexts, AJ&K has identified 32-line departments whose mandate is closely aligned with SDGs targets and who are responsible for routine data reporting on SDGs. Furthermore, AJ&K is

undertaking Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), National Nutrition Survey (NNS) and Child Labour Surveys in 2018-19; these surveys will be a source of authentic data on SDGs indicators and will provide updated information necessary for effective planning in AJ&K.

In 2016-17, the overall development budget of AJK was PKR 12.55 billion whereas the allocation for 2017-18 was PKR 23.00 billion - an unprecedented increase. For the financial year 2018-19, the allocation has been further increased to PKR 25.500 billion; this is the right step in generating the necessary resources required to achieve SDGs in AJ&K. Given these recent increases, at present AJ&K's focus is on realigning its resources to achieve SDGs priorities with a view to explore avenues for additional resources in the medium-term.

1.2 Objectives of the Report

This report is designed to provide information about the initiatives taken to implement SDGs in AJ&K since 2016. It provides an overview of:

- i. The political commitments made by the AJ&K to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;
- ii. The processes and systems through which SDGs are being institutionalized in AJ&K;
- iii. The progress on SDGs since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda including AJ&K's governance and implementation mechanisms; and
- iv. The opportunities and challenges in implementation of the SDGs agenda in AJ&K.

1.3 Methodology

AJ&K Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report has been prepared following the guidelines provided by Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform (MoPD&R), Government of Pakistan in light of United Nations (UN) guidance on VNR for the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). GoAJ&K has considered the latest reliable and authentic social, economic and environment data in preparation of this report. Recent exercises on establishing SDGs baseline and performance targeting setting as well as an analysis of the development budget and 12th Five-Year Plan (2018-2023) with respect to SDGs provided crucial information for the VNR process. Moreover, AJ&K reviewed the existing government laws, policies and plans as well as the collected statistical data to develop a coherent picture of SDGs processes in AJ&K.

Numerous consultative sessions were organized with stakeholders for collection, analysis, synthesis and drafting of this report. Stakeholders including relevant line departments, media, youth, private sector, civil society, NGOs, marginalized groups and academia shared their insights on successes and challenges as well as opportunities for implementation of SDGs in AJ&K. Separate meetings with the Secretaries of Government of Azad Jammu & Kashmir were also arranged and their inputs included in the framing and drafting of this document; various government line departments also provided supplementary information. A diverse group of stakeholders in the consultative process ensured inclusivity in the formulation of the State VNR Report.

This report is divided into nine main sections. Section 1 highlights the background, evolution and adoption of SDGs in AJ&K. Section 2 discusses the efforts made in AJ&K for advocacy and awareness of SDGs. Sections 3 reviews the existing legal/regulatory regimes in AJ&K and Section 4 evaluates the institutional mechanisms in place to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Section 5 explores the financial situation in AJ&K, including sources and types of funding available to achieve the relevant SDGs. Section 6 reviews the key initiative undertaken in AJ&K to move towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and Section 7 lists some key challenges and ways forward in implementation of SDGs. Section 8 focuses on the monitoring, evaluation and data regime in AJ&K and Section 9 provides a brief conclusion to the report.

2. Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns for SDGs

The first step of SDG localization in AJ&K is to raise awareness on SDGs, by including all stakeholders in the process, and promoting clear and accountable local leadership for the implementation of SDGs. The Planning & Development Department (P&DD), GoAJ&K has engaged different line departments and other development stakeholders in discussions and dialogues to gather their inputs for localization of SDGs in AJ&K and to generate local/regional ownership in the implementation process. Unlike the case of the MDGs, the Government is making all possible efforts to bring the SDGs Agenda to the forefront. The advocacy and awareness mechanisms for SDGs have been divided into three broad categories – general public and stakeholder engagement including Government departments, reflection of SDGs in curriculum and dissemination of information through the media.

2.1 General Public and Stakeholder Engagement

In order to increase ownership and awareness about the 2030 Agenda, a wide range of information sessions and SDGs launching events were undertaken in AJ&K. Through such sessions stakeholders like government line departments, other government agencies, civil society, youth, academia, media, marginalized groups, farmers and the private sector were engaged in informative discussions on SDGs. The goal is to establish effective institutional arrangements for religiously implementing the 2030 Agenda and urging respective actors to independently take actions on this front as well.

The Planning and Development Department, GoAJ&K – the department primarily responsible for implementation of SDGs – conducted awareness and advocacy sessions with all the Secretaries to the Government, to inform them about the SDGs and encourage incorporation of its principles in their respective departments' vision, policies, strategies and overall development planning. It is important to raise awareness at the higher levels of Government to ensure implementation and facilitate localization at the grassroots level. In conjunction with awareness raising for other departments, awareness sessions within the P&DD were also undertaken to ensure every official in the department fully comprehends the 2030 Agenda, can act as an ambassador for SDGs during their interaction with other line departments and facilitate the process. Other organizations such as Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) have conducted workshops in AJ&K on SDGs and have invited various government departments for participation to establish baselines for goals relevant to their respective mandates.

The larger public was also informed about the SDGs through various mechanisms. A major aspect was engagement with the academia and holding awareness sessions at the University of AJ&K, both with the staff as well as students to encourage discussions and research on SDGs in the local context. The sessions proved to be a success as the SDGs Unit in P&DD regularly coordinates with the academia on various seminars and the University is considering making SDGs a mandatory component of student thesis for certain subjects in order to ensure generation of knowledge and recommendations for SDGs implementation in AJ&K.

Regional meetings with Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioner, local persons were also arranged under a mass awareness campaign strategy which helped bring new stakeholders on board. Advocacy and awareness raising is undertaken regularly by the SDGs Support Unit through workshops, meetings, consultative and technical sessions with multiple stakeholders including government, UN agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), media, academic institutions and statistical institutions. In this aspect, the VNR process also proved to be an important awareness-raising tool. In an effort to involve multiple segments of society and ensure participation from various sectors, the SDGs message was further disseminated amongst groups that would otherwise not be part of regular, formal interactions at the government level.

Awareness is also generated by linking SDGs with most research and reforms being undertaken by the Government and private sectors. For example, when the Local Government and Rural Development Department (LG&RDD) held a workshop on the implementation of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system in AJ&K in October 2018, the platform was used as an opportunity to raise awareness on SDGs, serving to further boost the interest in both CRVS and the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, when results from an agricultural research study were presented at P&DD, the occasion was used as an opportunity to raise awareness on SDGs, especially on Goal 2 amongst agriculture researchers in order to ensure future alignment of their research with SDGs.

2.2 SDGs in Curriculum

To ensure a long-term, continuous and integrated approach to sustainable development, GoAJ&K is also planning to introduce SDGs in curricula at various levels. The Education (Schools) Department recently informed P&DD that it is discussing the possibility of introducing SDGs in school curricula to create awareness amongst students and ensure long-term engagement with the Agenda. Moreover, the University of AJ&K has also explored the option of developing an SDGs module which could be taught to students in order to ensure integration of studies and research with the actual needs of AJ&K. Such steps will go a long way to not only raise a well-informed populous but also a more aware workforce that is willing to engage on issues of sustainable development. Furthermore, Kashmir Institute of Management (KIM), an institution responsible for training of civil servants, is also exploring the possibility of introducing a module on SDGs in its management curriculum for mid-career professionals; this will ensure a deeper understanding of SDGs amongst current government officials and ease implementation of SDGs in AJ&K.

2.3 Media Platforms

Various traditional and social media platforms are also being used to spread awareness about SDGs and receive input on the work being done in AJ&K. A dedicated module on SDGs has been launched on the official AJ&K P&DD website that informs visitors about the SDGs and the progress AJ&K is making for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. While there is limited use of computers and emails in official government channels, social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp are widely used. Therefore, a lot of informal engagement with both government and non-government stakeholders is being conducted through these channels. Presently, an SDGs Communication Support Group has been set-up on WhatsApp and its members include representatives from the media, academia, civil society, NGOs, lawyers and disability advocates

in AJ&K. The group regularly discusses new ideas for generating awareness and shares updates and progress towards implementation of SDGs. The group is also used to disseminate information to the wider public through members' social networks including Facebook to reach a larger audience.

Additionally, traditional media such as local cable channels and newspapers are also involved in spreading the message on sustainable development. A communication plan for AJ&K is underway to design a mechanism to raise SDGs awareness at the district level. This includes appointing SDGs Ambassadors in local communities in each district to further localize the initiative and sensitize the masses in this regard.

3. Review of Legal/Regulatory Regime for SDGs

In order to successfully implement the 2030 Agenda in AJ&K, there is a need to integrate SDGs into the legal and regulatory frameworks including development plans, sectoral strategies and development budgets. To ensure institutionalization of SDGs, an integrated framework is required for engaging relevant departments in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. For this purpose and to initiate the process, all departments are currently amending their sectoral visions to accommodate the SDGs with a clear focus on ADP 2019-20 and onwards.

3.1 Integration of the Three Dimensions of Sustainable Development

Successful implementation of SDGs in AJ&K requires balancing the economic, social and environmental aspects of development alongside managing tradeoffs and potential conflicts that may arise in the planning process to ensure progress on all fronts. Policy coherence is essential for sustainable development; however, at present most sectoral/department policies and strategies in AJ&K are either at draft stages or pending approval. This provides AJ&K with an opportunity to incorporate SDGs goals and targets into its formal documents to ensure policy coherence at the State level, mainstream sustainable development into its narrative and ensure that all dimensions of sustainable development are incorporated in letter and spirit at all levels. Integration of SDGs into sectoral policies will make SDGs a priority of the Government and will integrate sustainable development into planning and development processes.

AJ&K understands that the interlinked and cross-cutting nature of SDGs also presents a planning and implementation challenge. Maintaining the delicate balance between the social, economic and environmental factors is crucial and requires constant communication and collaboration between various government departments. The hurdle is that traditionally in AJ&K line departments have operated vertically with limited horizontal interaction with their counterparts. Here, SDGs make an important contribution to AJ&K, as the Government now recognizes that to achieve sustainable development, departments can no longer work in silos; rather they require an integrated mechanism that allows for cross-departmental collaboration on various development issues, to ensure successful implementation and achievement of SDGs in AJ&K.

Furthermore, in combining the three dimensions of sustainable development, AJ&K needs to work significantly on integrating environmental issues with the development agenda. Geographically a mountainous and forested region, in recent years economic development and urbanization has become synonymous with massive deforestation, unsustainable urban planning and huge ecosystem losses across the State. Moreover, in AJ&K, the concept of sustainable use of natural resources and its importance in the long-term sustainable economic growth requires attention, especially in light of newly emerging environmental challenges. There is a need in AJ&K for massive awareness raising campaigns on issues of sustainability, environmental protection and green economic growth. SDGs targets and indicators provide AJ&K with a pathway to achieve sustainable development in manner that prioritizes the environment while meeting the socioeconomic needs of the region.

There are some successful examples of integration of the different dimensions of sustainable development in AJ&K. As expected, most of the development schemes focus on combining the social and economic aspects of development with limited attention to the environment. For example, work by the Social Welfare and Women Development (SW&WD) Departments directly focuses socioeconomic uplift of vulnerable groups including women, children, orphans and the disabled. The Women Development Department has established women economic empowerment centers in 3 districts of AJ&K that provide training and facilities to homebased working women. Over 1500 women have already received skills training which enhanced their incomes and have contributed to the socioeconomic uplift of AJ&K.

3.2 Incorporation of the SDGs into AJ&K Frameworks/By-Laws

In order to implement the 2030 Agenda successfully, AJ&K needs to integrate the SDGs into national plans, sector strategies and budgets. To this effect, Vision 2025 and GoAJ&K’s 12th Five-Year Plan have adopted the SDGs as the roadmap for development initiatives. These frameworks focus on optimal exploitation of the available natural resources and human capital for sustainable development. The focus of the Plan is on good governance, improved economic policies, an educated and skilled labour force, quality infrastructure and environmental protection. Since the introduction of SDGs into the development planning, GoAJ&K has shown a strong commitment to undertake multiple initiatives to ensure a sustainable model for development. For example, Pillar I of Vision 2025 focuses on ending discrimination against women and providing them with an enabling environment to make contributions to the socioeconomic growth of AJ&K. This aligns with Goal 5 of the SDGs that focuses on achieving gender equality and other international commitments such as Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration. Such linkages foster improved governance, coordination and implementation and help avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts. As per AJ&K’s development strategy, there will be continuous prioritization of SDGs in the subsequent Five-Year Development Plans until 2030.

Table 1: Laws, Policies and Actions Supporting SDGs in AJ&K

Goal 1	The Child Rights (Care and Protection) Act 2016
Goal 2	Intersectoral Nutrition Strategy for AJ&K (2016-2020)
Goal 3	AJ&K Health Emergency Services AJ&K Health Strategy (In Process)
Goal 4	AJ&K Cultural Academy Act 2016 AJ&K Education Policy (In Process)
Goal 5	Women Development Strategic Plan 2016-2020
Goal 6	Establishment of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Section in PP&H, P&DD 2018 WASH Policy (In Process)
Goal 7	AJ&K Power Policy 2016 (Adapted from Pakistan Power Policy 2015)
Goal 8	The AJ&K Cross-LoC Travel and Trade Authority Act 2016 AJ&K Tourism Policy 2018 (In Process) AJ&K Investment and Industry Policy 2018 (In Process)

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Goal 9	AJ&K Essential Articles (Control Act) 2016 Azad Jammu and Kashmir Public Procurement Regulatory Authority Act
Goal 10	AJ&K Employees Service Association (Registration and Regulation) Act 2016
Goal 11	AJ&K Rented Premises Buildings (Inspection and Security) Act 2016 AJ&K Prohibition of Wall-Chalking and Affixing Hoarding (Amended) Act 2016 AJ&K Sound Systems (Regulation and Control Act) 2016 AJ&K Vulnerable Establishments (Management and Security) Act 2016
Goal 12	The Marriages (Prohibition of Wasteful Expenses) (Amended) Act 2016
Goal 13	AJ&K Climate Change Policy 2017 Environmental Management Framework 2017
Goal 14	National Wildlife Policy (In Process)
Goal 15	AJ&K Forest Policy 2017 (In Process) Scientific Forest Management Plans (In Process)
Goal 16	The AJ&K Service Tribunal (Amendment) Act 2016 The AJ&K Legislative Assembly (Elections) (Amended) Act 2016 The AJ&K Electoral Role (Amended) Act 2016 AJ&K Arms and Ammunition Act 2016 AJ&K Subordinate Judiciary Service Tribunal Act 2016 AJ&K Legal Practitioners and Bar Counsels (Amended) Act 2016 AJ&K Task Force and International Treaty/Convention Implementation Cell on Human Rights 2018 Human Rights Directorate (In Process) Establishment of a Human Rights Cell at the Central Police Office, Muzaffarabad 2018
Goal 17	AJ&K Special Economic Zone Act 2016 AJ&K Interim Constitution (13 th Amendment) Act 2018

Certain policies, strategies and laws have already been promulgated in AJ&K that can support the implementation of SDGs in the State. Under the work of the Social Welfare Department, important legislation including the AJ&K Child Right Act and the Juvenile Justice Act have been introduced to provide legal cover to the most vulnerable groups in society. In addition, a Child Protection Act has been developed and is currently submitted for approval in the AJ&K Assembly. The Department is also implementing the National Action Plan (NAP) for child protection to ensure rights of children and plans to develop a Social Protection Policy for AJ&K to address the needs of the vulnerable. Other examples of legal frameworks include (i) the AJ&K Policy Framework for Empowerment of Women, (ii) Protection against Harassment of the Women at the Workplace, (iii) Domestic Violence (Protection and Prevention) Act and (iv) establishment of Women Parliamentarian caucus can help advance achievements under Goal 5. Moreover, there is also a (v) State Commission on the Status of Women Act, under which a Commission has been established at the State level and District Committees formed at the local level to ensure emancipation of women, equalization of opportunities and socioeconomic conditions across genders, and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

Furthermore, the Women Development Strategic Plan 2016-2020, by the Women Development Department AJ&K is focused on implementation of inheritance laws, child and forced marriages laws and legislation on women enterprise development. While there are no restrictions on women from participating or contesting elections in AJ&K, there are some cultural and traditional barriers that limit their entry and election. To counter this, AJ&K Legislative Assembly has reserved 5 seats for women, constituting approximately 10 percent of the 49 seats available in the AJ&K Legislative Assembly. Such mechanisms also ensure a more equal playing field for women. Moreover, an Amendment has been made to the Azad Penal Code (Section 498) that expressly prohibits the deprivation of women from inheriting property with violations punished by up to 10 years in prison, a fine of PKR 1.00 million or both.

Article (22) of the AJ&K Interim Constitution grants every subject the right to access information, and a bill to regulate the procedure is currently under process. Furthermore, to address SDG Targets 16.a and 16.b, the AJ&K Task Force and International Treaty/Convention Implementation Cell on Human Rights was established in AJ&K in October 2018; the establishment of a Human Rights Directorate is currently under consideration by the Law Department.

To achieve Goal 16, on the instigation of AJ&K SDGs Support Unit, AJ&K Police has also recently established a Human Rights Cell at the Central Police Office in Muzaffarabad. This is unprecedented in AJ&K history and was introduced following an understanding of the 2030 Agenda by the Police Department. The Human Rights Cell is headed by Superintendent Police and includes three other members. The aim of the Human Rights cell is to develop, coordinate and support the implementation of human rights capacity development projects that will provide technical assistance on human rights compliance by AJ&K Police officials. The Cell will also conduct substantive research and analysis of human rights issues/events and assess their impact on the human rights situation in context of AJ&K Police. Moreover, it will collect and analyze human rights data and indicators in assigned areas of AJ&K including gender-specific data and indicators. The Human Rights Cell will ensure human rights issues, including their gender equality dimensions, considerations are integrated into police training programmes.

To take urgent action to combat **climate change** and its impacts under Goal 13, AJ&K Climate Change Center has been established at P&DD, a Climate Change Policy has been developed and approved and mainstreaming of environment considerations in development projects is also being considered. GoAJ&K is also working under the guidelines of IUCN for environmental protection. To further efforts on the environment, the Forest Department was recently reorganized to improve its alignment with the 2030 Agenda. The Department has prepared a Forest Policy and is developing Scientific Forest Management Plans for rehabilitation of forests in AJ&K. Green felling has been banned in AJ&K for an additional ten years till 2027, a measure that will further improve the conditions of existing forests in the State.

Work is also being done in AJ&K on addressing SDG 2 targets through the ‘Intersectoral Nutrition Strategy for AJ&K (2016-2020)’. The Strategy has been developed to address malnutrition challenges of the State. It focuses on collective multisectoral actions of nutrition-specific and sensitive sectors by creating an enabling environment, improving coordination, focusing on

capacity development, increasing field-based actions, research and development as well as data reporting for effective planning. Currently the priority actions involve finalization of legislation for breast milk and child nutrition protection, finalization of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) processes, Agriculture and Livestock policies, development of essential service packages inclusive of nutrition services at primary health level, introduction of a regulatory framework for livestock medicines by improving coordination between Livestock and Health Department, nutrition sensitive curriculum development at schools by adapting provincial best practices, control on the sale of discretionary foods in schools, WASH coordination at the State level, establishment of Food Control Authority in AJ&K, institutionalization of School Health Program and improvement of WASH facilities at schools. GoAJ&K also plans to use the system to leverage coordination between concerned departments to improve the situation on the ground within the available resources.

AJ&K does not have a separate implementation plan for the SDGs, as Goals are expected to be achieved through the respective sectoral development strategies and implementation plans. Therefore, GoAJ&K has realigned its allocations under the Annual Development Programme (ADP) to achieve the Goals and Targets set under the SDGs. All proposals for development budgets are being appraised with a view that such projects have clear milestones for achieving sustainable development in AJ&K. The various sectors are ensuring that projects having socioeconomic potential are identified in future to reduce poverty in the area. It is important to note that the third dimension of environmental impact needs more consideration, and this has been ensured through promulgation of certain legislations, as discussed above. Such steps will ensure the holistic operation of all three dimensions of sustainable development in AJ&K.

Since the implementation of the SDGs in 2016, P&DD, GoAJ&K has been regularly analyzing its annual development allocations in the context of SDGs and ADPs of financial years 2017-18 and 2018-19 have already been examined. The exercise is useful in gauging the alignment of the development budget with SDGs, for identifying existing gaps in development planning and providing recommendations for course correction. For the year 2018-19, it was observed that AJ&K has allocated a significant portion of its development budget for infrastructure. A breakdown at the Goals and Targets level further revealed that development planning along Goal 12 – Responsible Production and Consumption – needs more attention in AJ&K. It was also seen that greater awareness about SDG components such as respect for diversity, global citizenship, increased female participation in public places and improved use of technology required further attention along with targeted interventions. Such an exercise is extremely useful in course correction and findings from the report will be used to further improve development allocations for the next financial years.

3.3 'Leave No One Behind'

'Leave no one behind' is an important commitment in the SDGs Agenda and GoAJ&K recognizes the importance of ending extreme poverty, addressing discrimination and making fast progress for those furthest behind on the development trajectory. AJ&K Interim Constitution 1974 provides that all State subjects are equal before the law and are entitled equal protection of law. It grants

fundamental rights to all citizens without any discrimination including the right to acquire, hold and dispose property. Given the socioeconomic, cultural and geographic landscape of AJ&K, vulnerable groups include women/widows, children/orphans, rural populations in difficult terrains, the poor, the elderly, persons with disabilities, the unemployed, refugees and minorities.

GoAJ&K aims to apply the ‘leave no one behind’ principle to meet the long-term sustainable development efforts in the State, to ensure participation and involvement of relevant stakeholder groups. From the Government’s perspective, Social Welfare and Women Development Department is responsible for representing the needs of vulnerable groups by providing socioeconomic support. Social Welfare Department routinely provides disability certificates to individuals allowing them to access facilities, benefits and concessions available through GoAJ&K. Moreover, the Department also sets an example of how public-private partnerships can be utilized to reach the furthest behind. The Azad Kashmir Association for the Blind (AKAB) operates a school where visually impaired students are enrolled from across Kashmir. As the rental space became too small for the enrolled students, GoAJ&K allotted 10 kanals of land for the construction of a purpose-built school and hostel; an allocation of another 50 kanals of land is currently in process to expand the facilities. The Government also provides PKR 6 million annually to AKAB to further the field of special education in AJ&K.

For holistic development in AJ&K, greater effort is required to bring vulnerable groups into the development process including greater political will and administrative action. Consultations and partnerships between the government, private sector, civil society and representatives of vulnerable groups is essential to take comprehensive action on the matter, ensure successful implementation of programmes and eventual empowerment of such individuals. Although a few projects have already been initiated to support such vulnerable groups, efforts need to be doubled in forthcoming years to bring about visible change.

SDGs targets and indicators have provided AJ&K an important opportunity to assess its existing information availability on vulnerable communities. The disaggregation of indicators can help in identifying the impact SDGs-based policies will have on various segments of the population. At present, GoAJ&K does not collect data on vulnerable populations – therefore, there is limited understanding of the ground realities of such groups. However, AJ&K plans to incorporate disaggregated data into its institutional reporting to probe the major contributing factors that leave people behind and the policy measures required to overcome them.

Establishing inclusive policies is a key starting point in this regard, and AJ&K’s legal laws and frameworks already provide space for inclusive practices. A lot of work is being done by various GoAJ&K departments to include vulnerable groups in mainstream development processes especially through employment generation and financial inclusion policies. Bank of AJ&K is providing skilled **women** interest-free loans for developing enterprises. Through this scheme, 50 percent of applicants have started their own businesses and improved their income and living standards. It is worth mentioning here that in AJ&K people have equitable access to social services such as health and education; this is why **enrollment of girls and boys is almost equal** and in most areas of the state a higher proportion of girls have received higher education.

4. Institutional Mechanisms to Achieve SDGs

Strong institutional mechanisms and framework will play a vital role in the implementation of SDGs. AJ&K has learnt from the MDGs era when there were limited institutional structures in place to coordinate planning and provide policy coherence. The Government of AJ&K with the technical support of Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has established the SDGs Support Unit at Planning & Development Department under supervision of the Chief Economist and overall policy guidance of the Additional Chief Secretary (Development). GoAJ&K has started the process of SDGs integration, including establishing SDGs baseline data and setting performance targets, mapping the Annual Development Programmes and Plans with SDGs, identifying gaps in development and analyzing sectoral strategies in context of SDGs.

The function of the SDGs Support Unit is to help align all policies and actions with SDGs, to coordinate and track efforts throughout the State and map them into an annual review report. The Unit performs three main functions:

1. Liaison and coordination with line departments and other stakeholders in AJ&K as well as the Federal counterparts;
2. Generation of a credible database for monitoring and evaluation of goals and targets adopted as AJ&K SDGs; and
3. Policy research on issues of sustainable development.

4.1 Stakeholder Participation

Stakeholder engagement is an important aspect of SDGs implementation as it can increase awareness about issues at the grassroot level, improve the quality of decision-making and generate public acceptance on implementation of SDGs. Civil society and other stakeholders have a key role in holding governments accountable for their actions and commitments. Participatory mechanisms should be put in place in AJ&K, including direct engagement of key stakeholders with the Government on key policies and activities.

From its inception, SDGs Support Unit has established four thematic working groups for implementation of SDGs in AJ&K. SDGs focal persons from line departments, representatives from academia, civil society organizations, media, private businesses, youth, persons with disabilities, and other relevant stakeholders are a part of these thematic working groups. There has been a concentrated effort by the Government of AJ&K to involve all relevant stakeholders in consultations so that all hurdles can be removed through regular meetings of relevant officials. This will help ensure the effective delivery of SDGs in AJ&K.

SDGs Support Unit, P&DD regularly holds dialogues or informal consultations with stakeholders to seek input on development issues and feedback on SDGs targets and indicators in AJ&K. Membership of the thematic working groups have already been established and broad participation ensures that voices of civil society, private sector, interest groups and other stakeholders are heard. Furthermore, P&DD, GoAJ&K also considers any pertinent existing research and outputs relevant

to the SDGs in its policy making processes and increasingly, there is a push towards evidence-based decision-making as well.

Figure 1: Stakeholder Engagement for SDGs Implementation in AJ&K



For the effective implementation of SDGs in all 10 districts of AJ&K, local planning, knowledge, collective action and service delivery will be instrumental. This is because district governments and local communities better understand the local development needs and can better respond to the regional challenges. There are plans to establish thematic working groups sub-committees in each district by nominating district government officers and additional stakeholders as deemed relevant. State Steering committee for SDGs under the Chairmanship of the Additional Chief Secretary (Dev), GoAJ&K is also being established - members would include all relevant Secretaries and other concerned stakeholders.

GoAJ&K is committed to strengthening the existing means and finding innovative ways to increase the civic, public and private partnership and build ownership on SDGs. New modes for participation, to reach the marginalized and the poor, will be considered as part of AJ&K SDGs implementation.

4.2 Ownership of SDGs

The scope of the 2030 Agenda is wide-ranging, inter-linked and comprehensive. The GoAJ&K needs to strengthen links both horizontally amongst sectors and vertically amongst levels of government departments to achieve the SDGs. One of the reasons why AJ&K could not reap the benefits from the MDGs was the absence of horizontal and vertical linkages between the different tiers of government and line departments. To ensure horizontal coordination in AJ&K, integrated,

interdepartmental coordination and multisectoral involvement for implementation of SDGs with a clear awareness strategy is essential.

AJ&K is trying to ensure strong institutional linkages and participation of all relevant stakeholders for SDGs. However, coordination is likely to be a pressing challenge both within and across departments in AJ&K. For example, responsibilities for education are divided under schools and higher education – both deal with similar matters for different stages of education and likely to have some overlapping policies and procedures. In order to effectively implement SDGs, GoAJ&K has assigned certain SDGs targets and indicators to each department, giving them the responsibility on data collection, planning and implementation relating to those indicators. Focal persons from relevant line departments report on their respective indicators, with cross-cutting targets and indicators also accounted for in this process. For example, disaster-related indicators fall under the purview of both Board of Revenue and State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA); however, upon discussion with both parties it was agreed that Board of Revenue would supply the relevant information to SDMA which would be the final reporting authority on disaster-related indicators in AJ&K. Through such informal mechanisms are useful in streamlining processes and encourage cooperation between departments.

Furthermore, the Government of AJ&K has included the SDGs in Pakistan's Vision 2025. The SDGs targets in different fields have been set under international frameworks, and the relevant ministries and line departments have been appraised about their tasks in this connection. Health, education, power, water supply and sanitation, roads and building infrastructure, tourism, poverty alleviation, agriculture and livestock, forest, fisheries and wildlife, gender equality, environment, climate change and social protection are some of the most significant SDG areas in AJ&K and concerted efforts are being made to achieve the targets. The leadership of the Ministry of Planning & Development is playing an instrumental role in the implementation for SDGs Agenda in AJ&K.

Given the wider scope of the SDGs and the increased number of targets and indicators, there is dire need for active participation of all key government agencies. A centralized coordination and reporting mechanism is required to ensure cohesive planning, budgeting, financing, data collection and innovation. SDGs will require across the board reforms in AJ&K to set up effective and accountable institutions for both constitutional and administrative functions. There will also be a need to facilitate mutually reinforcing policies across government departments and agencies.

4.3 Institutional Mechanisms

In AJ&K, the interaction amongst different line departments has been strengthened through a set of comprehensive hierarchical arrangements. All line departments (development) and institutions have been entrusted with the preparation of projects, programmes and five-year plans. Depending on the overall capital cost of financing a project, these institutions have different level of approvals. The details of these institutions are discussed below:

- 1. Planning and Development Department AJ&K** coordinates the planning and implementation activities. It is responsible for advising the Government on development projects, priorities and strategies, and it sets the general principles and guidelines for the

preparation of projects, schemes and programmes with respect to State's objectives, targets and strategies. It invites line departments and other agencies to submit development projects and schemes in its annual development and five-year plans. The Department also maintains liaison with the national planning agencies. It is headed by the Additional Chief Secretary development who is assisted by staff from various fields.

2. **Departmental Planning Cells** exist in each line department and are responsible for preparation of schemes for development projects. Their functions include drafting and consolidation of project documents and drafting or collection of progress reports for review meetings organized by P&DD.
3. **Azad Kashmir Development Working Party (AKDWP)** scrutinizes various projects for inclusion in the Annual Development Plans and Five-Year Plans. It is competent to approve projects costing up to PKR 400 million. Projects exceeding this limit are submitted to Azad Kashmir Cabinet Development Committee (AKCDC) which can approve projects up to PKR 1000 million. Projects exceeding this limit are submitted to Central Development Working Party (CDWP) which has the authority to approve projects up to PKR 3000 million. Projects costing beyond PKR 3000 million are considered and approved by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC). Moreover, any project with a foreign-funded component is directed towards ECNEC for approval regardless of its monetary value.

5. Financing to Achieve the SDGs

The GoAJ&K is heavily dependent on the Government of Pakistan for budget financing. The budget for AJ&K for the current financial year 2018-19 is PKR 108.200 billion of which the recurrent budget is PKR 82.700 billion (76 percent) and the development budget is 25.500 PKR (24 percent).

Financing in AJ&K relies of a mixture of federal, local and income taxes, income from Kashmir Council, AJ&K Departments and Mangla dam water usage charges as well as grant-in-aid by the Federal Government for revenue deficit. Table 1 below presents this breakdown in more detail.

Table 2: Statement of Receipts GoAJ&K, 2017-18⁷

	Income (in million PKR)	Percentage
AJ&K Taxes	5,013.243	6.9%
Income from AJ&K Departments	17,216.896	23.7%
Income from Kashmir Council	12,425.501	17.1%
Federal Taxes Share	26,000.000	35.9%
Federal Grant in Aid for Revenue Deficit	13,147.138	18.1%
Water Usage Charges Mangla Dam	701.327	1.0%
Income Tax	3,017.869	4.2%
Grand Total	72508.731	100%

There was a significant increase in the development budget of AJ&K in the fiscal year 2017-18 to PKR 23.28 billion from PKR 12 billion in 2016-17. The reason for this increase was to improve the socioeconomic situation in AJ&K. The development allocation was again increased by 16 percent for the year 2018-19 bringing the annual development budget to PKR 25.5 billion. This rise in the development budget is expected to go a long way to addressing the sustainable development needs of the State and bridge some of the financing gaps for achieving the 2030 Agenda in AJ&K. A complete breakdown of sector-wise allocation of the development budget 2018-19 is presented in Table 2.

In the financial year 2018-19, contributions from Official Development Assistance (ODA) stood at 1475 million PKR or 5.78 percent of the development budget. Most development assistance in AJ&K focuses on education, hydropower and environment sectors and is distributed through a combination of grants and loans. Major development partners include the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank, Saudi Fund for Development, Turkish Exim Bank and Chinese Exim Bank.

⁷ Statement of Receipts of Azad Government of the State of Jammu & Kashmir for the Month of June (Supplementary), 2018, Finance Department GoAJ&K.

Table 3: Sector-wise Allocation of Development Budget for Year 2018-19⁸

Sector	Allocation (in million PKR)	Percentage
Communication & Works	10,383	40.72
Power	3,520	13.80
Physical Planning & Housing	2,225	8.73
Local Government & Rural Development	2,005	7.86
Education	1,950	7.65
Foreign Funded Projects	1,475	5.78
Health	719	2.82
Forestry/Fisheries	550	2.16
Industries/Labour	534	2.09
Agriculture	500	1.96
Tourism	250	0.98
Information Technology	235	0.92
Rehabilitation	230	0.92
Development Authorities	202	0.79
Research & Development	202	0.79
Sports, Youth & Culture	200	0.78
Civil Defense and Disaster Management	100	0.39
Social Welfare & Women Development	100	0.39
Environment	60	0.24
Information and Media Development	40	0.16
Transport	20	0.08

An unofficial yet crucial source of financing for AJ&K is remittances. It is estimated that the total volume of remittance for AJ&K in 2017-18 was USD 270.8 million⁹. Remittances serve to supplement the income of citizens of AJ&K, create opportunities for investment and entrepreneurship and improve the socioeconomic conditions of people. SDGs provide a platform for GoAJ&K to develop a strategic direction for the use of private funding.

AJ&K has not yet conducted a financial gap analysis to explore the level of funding required to achieve the SDG targets. Given the recent increase in development funding, GoAJ&K's focus is on improving the alignment of the existing budget towards critical sectors in the short-term, with a view to improve funding streams for SDGs in the medium-term. Historically, development programmes for the Government have remained focused on improving social services and service delivery with health, education, electricity/power, water supply, roads and communication departments receiving priority. SDGs targets and indicators make the process of streamlining and addressing governance gaps a lot easier. GoAJ&K plans to use the SDGs to identify policy gaps and direct funding towards the most critical sectors on a priority basis.

Furthermore, implementation of SDGs necessitates capacity development of government line departments towards result-based management. At present, the long-term strategic planning and policy making in AJ&K uses qualitative rather than quantitative targets. SDGs provide an

⁸ Annual Development Programme 2018-19, P&DD GoAJ&K.

⁹ AJ&K Baseline data by State Bank of Pakistan - Muzaffarabad, October 2018.

opportunity to amalgamate the two, to create a comprehensive system for policy and governance. In this regard, planning cells of government line departments as well as the P&DD sections can enhance their skills related to (i) evidence-based policy making, (ii) resource efficiency in planning including value-for-money and (iii) generation of quality data to ensure credible cost-benefit analysis of proposed and/or approved projects.

GoAJ&K recently established AJ&K Bureau of Statistics (AJ&KBoS) to have a central authority on data collection and reporting. As a result, AJ&K publishes an annual statistical yearbook with a comprehensive list of indicators as well as a summarized booklet “AJ&K at a Glance”. However, efforts still need to be made in (i) establishing mechanisms for institutionalized reporting, (ii) setting-up appropriate methodological frameworks, (iii) developing guidelines on data authenticity and credibility as well as (iv) creating relevance for the data generated to policy and planning. In this regard, SDGs provide an important rubric for quality data gathering of relevant indicators necessary for good governance.

6. Key Initiatives on SDGs

6.1 Major Initiatives Undertaken in AJ&K

A number of steps have been undertaken to kickstart SDGs implementation in AJ&K. Some of the major initiatives have been listed below:

1. **Mapping of the Annual Development Programmes with SDGs:** ADP is an organized list and allocation of projects for a year and includes all types of Government-funded and Foreign Aid Projects (ongoing and new). In the mapping exercises carried out by P&DD, the on-going and newly included schemes in ADP are individually mapped against the 17 SDGs, 169 targets and 244 indicators; for simplification and ease of analysis each consolidated project is aligned with only one SDG. These exercises allow GoAJ&K to assess its level of engagement with SDGs, visualize the amount of funding being directed towards specific goals and gauge the targets left unaddressed for a given financial year. The mapping reports then allow the GoAJ&K to redress its steps for the following year and improve the alignment of its development allocation with SDGs.
2. **Establishing 4 Thematic Working Groups for SDGs:** GoAJ&K is determined that all policies, development and strategies are aligned with the SDGs. Keeping in view the gigantic task, an effective coordination mechanism was needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Different line departments have nominated their SDGs focal persons and P&DD has established four thematic working groups for SDGs comprising of government officials and representatives from academia, civil society, media, NGOs, disabled, youth, private sector etc. These working groups meet periodically for stocktaking of progress on SDGs in AJ&K.
3. **SDGs Baseline Data Gathering and Target Setting:** Following the implementation of SDGs in AJ&K, GoAJ&K has taken the initiative for establishing SDGs baseline and performance target setting. A series of consultative sessions were held with relevant line departments to discuss and gather data on SDGs indicators. A data gap analysis of SDGs indicators shows that of the 177 indicators directly relevant to AJ&K, data is currently available for 104 indicators, whereas a further 73 indicators can be collected by improving administrative reporting of line departments and conducting required surveys for data generation. This is an important contribution of the SDGs agenda to AJ&K – this is the first time that a State level exercise for collecting baseline data has been initiated. All the departments have started understanding the indicators pertaining to them and the role they can play in developing policies/strategies. The Departments are now realizing the importance of SDGs and have started designing interventions to achieve the relevant SDGs targets and indicators. The 2030 Agenda has allowed GoAJ&K to conduct a review on the availability and authenticity of existing data and highlight areas for further improvement.

4. **Research Studies for Mainstreaming SDGs:** SDGs Support Unit is conducting analysis and studies of different sectoral plans, policies and strategies to align them with SDGs. The results are used to inform policy makers and planners of the ground realities of AJ&K and the effort required in different sectors to achieve SDGs. For example, the SDGs Unit recently conducted localized research into Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6, to gauge the current standing of AJ&K on respective indicators, highlight areas for improvement and provide broad policy options that can be used by the relevant Sections at P&DD to develop requisite strategies.
5. **Development of AJ&K SDGs District Localization Plan:** SDGs Support Unit is currently in the process of developing an SDGs district localization plan by integrating priorities, SDGs baselines and the short, medium and long-term targets for SDGs implementation in AJ&K. The goal is produce an initial draft on the situational analysis of each district of AJ&K in context with SDGs. This will include an assessment of the capacities (or lack thereof) to undertake planning and resource allocation, pursue decisions at local level and identify capacity development priorities. Such a plan will further help in the decentralization of SDGs implementation in AJ&K.
6. **Partnership with AJ&KBoS:** SDGs Support Unit is planning to support AJ&KBoS in capacity building of sectoral institutions including the statistical cells in the Government departments for data collection, reporting and analysis. The Unit is already working in close collaboration with AJ&KBoS on the review, approval and implementation processes of relevant surveys undertaken in AJ&K to ensure inclusion of SDGs indicators in such projects.

6.2 Case Studies from AJ&K: Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

1. In AJ&K, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) funded Community Development Programme (CDP) of GoAJ&K provided support to Mr. Shakeel, an **unemployed** community activist and his family. They owned 8 kanals of agricultural land in a village near District Bagh and were using traditional agricultural techniques to grow wheat. With the help of officials from CDP, Shakeel and his brothers planted onions on a cost-sharing basis and were provided technical support as well. At the end of the year, he produced 6000 kg of onion. During the next season, Shakeel and his brothers only took seedlings from CDP; they produced over 4800 kg of onion, 1200 kg of garlic and are currently producing and marketing cucumber as well. Through their own hard work and support from CDP, GoAJ&K, Shakeel and his brothers are now gainfully employed with a monthly income of PKR 40,000.

Goal 1: Mr. Shakeel earns PKR 40,000 following technical and financial support from IFAD's Community Development Programme.

2. AJ&K is also successfully working towards **establishing research and evidence-based interventions** in its planning and development processes to achieve SDGs. For example, to control foot and mouth diseases (FMD), the Livestock Department GoAJ&K conducted a pilot study in selected villages of AJ&K. 50 percent villages were selected as treatment group and remaining 50 percent of the villages were selected as control group. Animals in treatment groups were vaccinated with imported Russian FMD vaccines whereas animals in control group were not vaccinated at all. In the study period, it was revealed that none of the vaccinated animals contracted diseases whereas many animals among the control groups were affected. This pilot project provides evidence that if animals are vaccinated with quality vaccines, then farmers' investment can be saved.

Goal 2: Socioeconomic changes due to introduction of vaccination in livestock.
3. In order to **increase food production and improve income for farmers**, the Livestock Department has also successfully implemented a breed improvement programme. Under this programme, low producer cows (producing less than 4 kg of milk) were inseminated with improved semen; the progeny produced in this way has a potential of producing 15 to 20 kg milk per day. Thousands of cows and buffalos are inseminated in this way every year successfully. Such processes not only increase the production of milk in AJ&K but also enable farmers to greatly increase their income and consumption.

Goal 2: Socioeconomic changes due to artificial insemination techniques in livestock.
4. Initiatives are also being taken to **increase agribusiness and promote sustainable agricultural practices** by the Agriculture Department in AJ&K. Local honey bee, *apis mellifera*, which is prevalent in the State has been well-managed and made productive for the local community, particularly districts Bagh, Haveli and Hattian Bala through effective trainings and technical guidance. These communities are well-trained in managing *apis mellifera* - more than 700 community members were trained and now they are producing more than 2000 kg of local honey every season. In a similar vein, to create a conducive environment for agribusiness in the State, 727 farmers have been facilitated with loans from Bank of AJ&K and the Department has paid PKR 39.472 million as mark-up.

Goal 2: Socioeconomic changes due to community-based training in agriculture.
5. AJ&K has taken major steps to improve citizen access to **curative and emergency care services**. Under the programme paramedics and nurses were given training from a leading national hospital and 980 additional doctors, nurses and support staff were recruited by Health department, GoAJ&K in last one year. The health budget was increased as was financing for doorstep services; this included a list of 130 medicines to be given to the

Goal 3: Improvement in healthcare facilities due to multiple initiatives undertaken by GoAJ&K.

public free of cost. Moreover, improved access to healthcare has also been supplemented by the Prime Minister National Health Insurance Programme, introduced in districts Muzaffarabad and Kotli which constitute 35 percent of population of AJ&K. Under this scheme utilization rates of insurance in AJ&K have been a lot higher than the national averages. As these steps are designed to deal with aspects related to curative care, they will help reduce the economic shock that comes with accessing healthcare and this will in turn also help in reducing poverty (SDG 1) in AJ&K.

6. Local Government & Rural Development Department, GoAJ&K has devised a **mobile-application based system to monitor progress** of development programmes under the Prime Minister Community Infrastructure Development Programme (PMCIDP).

Goal 6: Better implementation of community infrastructure schemes due to a mobile-application based system.

PMCIDP aims to reduce poverty in AJ&K by providing basic facilities to people in rural and urban areas including access to water, sanitation, link roads, walkways, public washrooms as well as improved hospitals and educational institutions. It also allows local leaders including women to focus on key issues in their areas. So far 5,600 small schemes costing PKR 2303 million have been implemented successfully leading to socioeconomic uplift of the State and an additional PKR 1160 million has been earmarked for the programme in the current financial year 2018-19. The LG&RDD, GoAJ&K has generated WhatsApp groups and Android-based applications to monitor the programme in the ten districts of AJ&K. The groups include project leaders and other staff members who share progress on programmes - from work orders to the completion of schemes. Through technology, real-time locations, pictures and information are shared and updated, and the process is closely monitored by the LG&RD Secretary. This programme promises to revolutionize project implementation and monitoring at the grassroots level and would be a success story in the development sector of AJ&K.

7. Another successful community-based initiative in AJ&K relates to a **poor, rural community** located in the highest mountain ridge of District Haveli that requested the CDP, GoAJ&K to set-up a micro hydel power plant. After preparation of a technical proposal and feasibility study for establishing 20 KW micro

Goal 7: Community-based micro hydel power unit introduced in AJ&K brings socioeconomic and environmental changes.

hydel unit, the matter was referred to District Coordination Committee (DCC) and approval was granted for PKR 2,231,664 on an 80:20 cost-sharing basis between CDP and the community. The community constructed the micro hydel power unit in time and since inauguration, the unit has been owned, operated and run by the community on a sustainable basis. Approximately 130 households benefit from it and more than 1000 people are direct beneficiaries. Approximately, PKR 19,500 is generated as monthly revenue of which PKR 14,000 is paid to local skilled person for supervision and maintenance of the power plant. They are also responsible to maintaining water channels and transmission lines and ensuring an uninterrupted power supply. A further PKR 5500 is reserved for operational

and maintenance purposes. Major impacts of the project include provision of electricity in a difficult terrain, reduction in dependence on nearby forests and generation of economic activity in the village.

8. An emerging challenge for AJ&K has been **drinking water scarcity** following the construction of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydro Electric Project (NJHEP). While hydel power can be a clean, renewable source of energy, AJ&K is facing massive reduction in water flow to the Neelum River in its capital city of Muzaffarabad. Following the inauguration of the NJHEP in 2008, a 30 km long tunnel was constructed to divert a significant share of the river's water. Consequently, 400 natural springs in the area have dried up, the ecosystem is under threat and the region is facing water scarcity. Moreover, the increased load of sewage to the rivers will soon make the water unfit for drinking purposes and will severely affect the environment. The scenic beauty of the city will be drastically impacted as will the economy due to a possible decrease in tourism activities. Additionally, it is expected that following this reduction in water flow the microclimatic conditions in the environment of Neelum River will change significantly and the river will lose its ability to act as a heat sink in the summers. While water storage and clean energy production is important for future growth, significant reduction in current water availability is unsustainable and may trigger severe water crisis. The expansive construction of hydel power projects is impacting both the human population and the biodiversity in AJ&K. Hydropower projects should have ecofriendly designs, with limited footprints; where possible, past projects should be re-evaluated and/or modified to ensure sustainability. Mitigation and adaptation to climate change along with natural resource management are crucial components for sustainable development in AJ&K that require collaborated efforts across departments, an integrated approach to decision-making and a long-term view on the conservation and protection of the environment and its biodiversity.
- Goal 7: Mega hydel project introduced in AJ&K has detrimental impact.**
9. In order to encourage **self-employment and entrepreneurship**, the GoAJ&K through Azad Kashmir Small Industries Cooperation (AKSIC) in partnership with a private organization 'Akhuwat' launched an interest-free self-employment scheme in AJ&K. "The purpose of this magnanimous venture is to promote small scale industries, employment opportunities, poverty alleviation and socio-economic uplift in Azad Jammu & Kashmir through provision of credit. The maximum limit of loan is up to Rs. 75,000. The scheme aims to bridge the gap between the poor and the privileged while establishing an equilibrium of harmony and brotherhood in the society"¹⁰.
- Goal 8: Creating self-employment and business opportunities through PPP in AJ&K.**

¹⁰ Akhuwat in Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Akhuwat website, December 2018.

10. Under the Flood Emergency Reconstruction and Resilience Project (FERRP), an ADB funded project in AJ&K, **gender, environment and social issues were considered while constructing roads.** A “Road Grievance Committee” comprising of local communities was set-up, and people were asked how the project should be taken further – an unprecedented step in an infrastructure project. The locals became so involved in the process that they even monitored the project and the Communication and Works Department then reacted immediately to their reported events. The relationship between the two groups was very strong and ADB considered it a successful intervention. Such a mechanism is a successful model for AJ&K to follow, especially in road construction projects.
- Goal 9: Community involvement in infrastructure projects in AJ&K**
11. **Community participation** is an important tool in development activities in AJ&K, imparting quality in decision making and strengthening the authority of decisions through community support in the implementation process. AJ&K is aware of the benefits of community support and in line with its democratic tradition uses this instrument efficiently by always refining its legislation framework to expand public participation in decision making. A successful example of integration of three dimensions of sustainable development in AJ&K emerged through a collaboration between an environmental activist, a rural community and support from government line departments. The pilot village, located at the border of districts Muzaffarabad and Neelum, was purchasing all its food commodities from the market including poultry, vegetables, fruits and dairy. The villagers had cut down trees for constructing houses and the roads and pathways, severely damaged by the earthquake in 2005, had not been rebuilt. The activist introduced a village development plan where he engaged the youth in the community and sensitized them on issues such as environment protection, livelihood generation and sustainability. He also received technical support from Agriculture, Livestock, Forest, Education, Health, P&DD and other Government departments. The community did not receive any external financial support and focused on improving health, education, agriculture and livestock. The village started a reforestation process on the available land, began growing their own fruits, vegetables and crops and producing their own milk. Moreover, through community support they also rebuilt their roads and pathways. Medical camps were also arranged with the help of the Health Department and education of girls was spearheaded; alongside such measures, efforts were made to improve the environmental conditions and consequently, eco-tourism was also promoted in the area. Through such activities, the community and the government departments were linked together and today they are in close contact with each other. From that pilot village, the project interventions have been replicated in some other villages in AJ&K, resulting in numerous similar success stories throughout the State.
- Goal 11: Integrating three dimensions of sustainable development at the community level without external financial support.**

7. Challenges and Way Forward for SDGs

The AJ&K SDGs baseline data gathering exercise underscored the need for regular data collection, data reporting and its use in development planning. Data is currently available for 104 SDGs indicators and given the extensive list of surveys being undertaken in 2018-19, AJ&K is expected to have substantial new information on SDGs indicators next year.

Given the limited resources, the diverse set of challenges and an ambitious list of goals, implementation of SDGs require careful planning and execution. To this end, there is a need to prioritize the SDGs to ensure efficient and best possible use of resources. The process of prioritization of SDGs in AJ&K is currently under way and some criteria were developed at the Federal level in consultation with the province and area governments. It was concluded that SDGs will be prioritized at the target level and all components will be given equal weights. This method ensures equal representation of various views, allows for holistic planning and implementation, and eases the process of communication.

The table below summarizes the prioritization criteria selected along with relevant reasoning.

Table 4: Criteria for Prioritization of SDGs in AJ&K

Prioritization Criteria	Conceptualization
Width	The greater the number of people impacted by an SDG target, the greater priority that SDG target will receive.
Relevance	The more the number of districts impacted by any particular SDG target, the greater priority that SDG target will receive.
Urgency	If the historical rate of change is not sufficient to achieve the SDG target and additional efforts are required, then the SDG target is considered urgent and will receive greater priority.
Multiplier	The greater the number of SDG targets impacted by a single target, the more priority that SDG target will receive.

7.1 Goals and Targets

GoAJ&K is committed to implementing the SDGs Agenda; all levels of government and stakeholders are working together to achieve the goals and targets. This requires dedicated efforts to align policies, plans and programmes with SDGs. AJ&K appreciates that SDGs framework pays special attention to the most marginalized communities and in light of the principal to “leave no one behind” AJ&K wants to ensure that all policies and development plans are designed with this perspective.



Goal 1: No Poverty

Poverty and its associated impacts remain an issue and focus of the AJ&K government. The extreme poor, who are dependent, old, disabled or chronically sick suffer the most due to poverty. Poverty can also cause stunting and malnutrition in children and limit their access to education and proper health. Currently, 24.9% percent of people in AJ&K can be considered multidimensionally poor which is lower than the national average of 38.8%. GoAJ&K is committed to narrowing the rate of multidimensional poverty from 24.9% to 12.5% by 2030. Additionally, 74% of the households in AJ&K are reported to have access to basic services (housing, education, healthcare, social welfare, transport, electricity, energy, water and sanitation). However, the rising population is likely to make the goal of 100% access to basic services a challenge. AJ&K already has issues of high population density and this forces the poorest to live in the most insecure and vulnerable areas. The Government is working on plans and strategies to counter the negative impact of social and demographic changes as well as reduce the impact of climate shocks as this may increase suffering, vulnerability and exclusion of the poor. Access to adequate data on vulnerable groups continues to be a challenge but efforts are being made to improve the process.



Goal 2: Zero Hunger

This goal focuses on eradicating hunger and ensuring accessibility to safe and nutritious foods for all. In AJ&K a lot work has been done to reduce the incidence of poverty; however, despite such efforts food insecurity (57.1%), stunting (31.7%) and malnutrition (25.8%) remains high. Moreover, the rural population is finding it increasingly hard to make ends meet, forcing them to migrate to cities. Policies focusing on small-scale and subsistence farming can not only improve food security but can also help reduce the burden on urban infrastructure due to unplanned migrations. At present there is limited data on conditions of small-scale farmers and rural populations in AJ&K and further information is required in order to create coherent policy options. Furthermore, the rising inflation also impacts people's ability to access nutritious foods; the increase in wages has not kept pace with inflation hitting the urban poor and landless rural population the most. GoAJ&K has planned to undertake direct measures to enhance the access of those in extreme poverty to the food they need for an active life; this empowers them to break out of the hunger trap and allows them to participate fully in the development processes. Supplemental efforts to promote broad-based agricultural and rural development are also in process which will create opportunities for a sustainable exit from poverty.



Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing

While extensive work is being done on health in AJ&K, greater effort is required to improve health conditions. The population is facing increased risk of death from non-communicable diseases while mortality reduction from preventable diseases such as diarrhea have still not been successful. Though poverty-related and communicable diseases are preventable, they continue to remain among the top ten causes of mortality. Women of productive age continuously face pregnancy and childbirth complications that are a leading cause

of death and disability for certain age groups - only 58% of births are attended by a skilled professional in AJ&K. Moreover, the ratio of doctors and nurses to the population remains low – there are 0.265 physicians, 0.06 dentists and 0.9 hospital beds per 1000 people in AJ&K. Additionally, data on leading causes of mortality, deaths due to water or air pollution and poisoning remain unavailable. GoAJ&K has begun the process of implementing a CRVS system which will be helpful in meeting this data gap. The private sector should work also work on public health to develop cheaper and more targeted services. Efforts are already underway in some districts of AJ&K where public-private partnerships are being introduced for laboratory services.



Goal 4: Quality Education

Although GoAJ&K spends a relatively high proportion of its budget on education, there is still room for improvement in the sector. AJ&K has a high literacy rate of 76.6 percent; however, pre-primary education levels are low, age ranges for classes are disproportionate and there is no focus on early childhood development. Moreover, there are also issues of inclusiveness and access to education both in terms of school infrastructure and quality and relevance of syllabi. GoAJ&K recognizes the need for quality education, provision of WASH facilities in schools and the need for vocational education to generate a healthy, high quality and relevant workforce for AJ&K. Moreover, there is a need to regulate the private sector and set up a proper system of accreditation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels to control the quality and output of educational institutions. Quality education has direct and indirect linkages with many other SDG targets and can improve metrics such as life expectancy, infant and child mortality, poverty rates, disaster-related deaths and economic growth.



Goal 5: Gender Equality

The Gender Equality goal has five targets and achieving them will be an uphill task for AJ&K because of the cultural backdrop, social realities, citizens' outlook and the embedded value systems. Child and early marriages remain an issue, especially in southern parts of AJ&K - not only there is a need to create and enforce laws related to abolition of such practices but there is a simultaneous need to raise awareness amongst the public about why such traditions are harmful for the socioeconomics and psychology of a society. It remains a daunting task for the Government but achieving it will also help in reduction of discrimination towards women. While women in AJ&K are educated, they do not contribute to the economics of the society or the household. Their engagement in the economy would require substantial steps by the government and the relevant departments such as women development, labor and social welfare, who need to play a proactive role for realizing these targets.



Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Despite the abundance of fresh water resources, access to clean and safe drinking water remains a challenge for AJ&K. In addition, hygiene practices are poor and many schools lack access to proper WASH facilities. Data reveals that 45% of absences in schools were due to waterborne diseases with a higher rate of disease in houses with

open defecation¹¹. Access to improved water sources in AJK is 57% compared to the national average of 89% and if a water connection is not available at home the burden of water collection lies on women in 78% of the households¹². Since many drink from open water sources, there are concerns of water availability - in the winter, water is scarce and in the rainy season water quality is poor. There is a need for comprehensive sector-specific policies on water, sanitation and hygiene to cover gaps and issues. Recently GoAJ&K has introduced a dedicated WASH sector in its physical planning and health department. To achieve the universal coverage and maintenance, strong monitoring efforts are needed to improve the water supply services. The ministries of local government and rural development, as well as physical planning and housing are relevant for achieving these targets.



Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

GoAJ&K is committed to achieving the targets on access to clean and affordable energy, improving the share of renewable energy and enhancing energy efficiency. Owing to AJ&K's topography, the State has unmatched resources of water for hydropower generation and this provides efficient, affordable, safe, sustainable, cost-effective, reliable and clean energy. The Government of AJ&K's goal is to make Azad Kashmir self-sufficient in energy and over the last few decades, the development of hydropower resources has become a priority for the government. Azad Kashmir's river cascade is the 2nd largest after Indus with 9,255 MW of identified capacity. Currently, Azad Kashmir produces roughly 2,362 MW of electricity through hydropower including 1,100 MW at Mangla Dam and 969 MW through the NJHEP project. Other hydropower plants include a 147 MW plant at Patrind, 84 MW at Newbong, 30.4 MW at Jagran -1 and a 102 MW plant at Gulpur Project on River Poonch expected to be completed soon. In the category of large dams, work has started on two projects under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Karot (720 MW) and Kohala (1,124 MW). Other projects in the pipeline are at Azad Pattan and Mahal, with the projected capacity of 640 MW and 590 MW, respectively. AJ&K's total energy requirement for household, commercial and industrial usage is 400 MW; however, AJ&K makes a net contribution of 2,362 MW to Pakistan's national grid. As Azad Kashmir accelerates its economic growth, there will be increased demand for energy from consumers, households, commercial entities and industry. The Private Power Cell (PPC) of the government of AJ&K is the one window facilitator on behalf of the GoAJ&K and encourages the participation of private investors in hydel power generation. The endeavors of GoAJ&K for harnessing 9,225MW of electricity from its micro, small, medium and large hydropower projects is the way forward for a better, progressive economy of Azad Kashmir as these shall be instrumental in employment generation and socioeconomic uplift of remote areas. There is also potential for the development of alternate energy in Azad Kashmir, especially solar and wind. With the introduction of reverse metering, households can generate solar energy and transmit surpluses to the national grid playing an important role in the strengthening the energy sector.

¹¹ Water and Sanitation Sector Analysis of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Baseline Survey Report, 2016.

¹² Ibid.



Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Sustainable economic growth is an integral component for development. While AJ&K is blessed with many resources, these resources are not being utilized to their maximum potential. The State does not have an adequate understanding of the socioeconomic landscape and there is no data on the actual value and composition of GDP for AJ&K. Unemployment remains high at 11.2% and only 37% of the population regularly accesses financial services such as bank accounts. AJ&K needs to improve and redirect its data collection and research efforts to focus on issues of the economy and explore options for sustainable economic growth that capitalize on local resources and ensure equal employment opportunities for all groups. This also requires working with the education sector to ensure the right skills are being generated for the economy and the workforce is equipped to handle challenges emerging in the 21st century. The ministries of finance, planning, industries/labor and tourism and IT are relevant for realizing the targets under Goal 8.



Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Massive investment is required from both the public and the private sector to improve the infrastructure conditions in AJ&K. GoAJ&K is committed to improving the road infrastructure to better link different districts of AJ&K with each other and with Pakistan. Manufacturing sector in AJ&K is weak and is a source of employment for only 5.4% of the population. The GoAJ&K has adopted the industrial policy of Pakistan in which all types of industries are allowed except industries producing arms and ammunition, security printing and explosive and radioactive material. The largest number of industrial units in AJ&K belong to the poultry industry followed by woodwork and furniture, steel works, crush machines and the food and beverage industry. To accelerate progress on industrial development, the Department of Industries GoAJ&K has established industrial estates in various districts of AJ&K with provision of basic infrastructure such as roads, water supply, sewerage, telephones and electricity. GoAJ&K also offers five-year tax exemption to certain industries to incentivize investment in the region. While industries are important for economic growth, generation of new transport networks and setting up of new industries can have a detrimental impact on the environment of AJ&K. The relevant departments have to ensure that all three dimensions of sustainable development are adequately balanced in policy and planning.



Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

Reducing inequalities in AJ&K requires an overhaul of the domestic regulatory regimes including addressing the income discrimination prevalent in society. Regular data on income and inequalities is not collected in AJ&K, highlighting the need for improving inclusivity in policy, research and data gathering. Addressing income inequality is essential and will require creating access to productive and high-income employment opportunities, boosting productivity and incomes of farms, ensuring equity-based public spending on family planning, education, water supply, health and nutrition, minimizing the regional growth gap and accelerating the entrance of the poor to production means such as water, agriculture and

infrastructural development. The ministries of finance, law, justice and parliamentary affairs and planning are relevant for implementing these targets in AJ&K.



Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Implementation of targets related to sustainable cities and communities would be challenging in AJ&K because of the rapid and unplanned urbanization, overpopulation, and high population density especially in urban areas. High levels of urbanization have constrained resources and poor implementation of legal regimes has resulted in encroachment of public land creating further congestion in urban areas. Unchecked increase in vehicles has created congestion on roads, increased incidence of road traffic accidents and contributed to the environmental degradation of AJ&K. AJ&K needs to undertake massive reforms to create sustainable cities in AJ&K which includes introducing greater number of traffic police officials, clearing encroached lands to create green spaces, monitoring road traffic and working to reduce unplanned urbanization. The ministries of communication & works, physical planning & housing, LG&RDD, environment and forests, tourism and archeology and SDMA can play a crucial role in ensuring safe and sustainable communities in AJ&K.



Goal 12: Responsible Production and Consumption

AJ&K does not have any institutionalized processes that directly pertain to sustainable consumption and production of resources. There are no recycling or waste water management facilities, no data on the level of fossil fuel consumption and no checks on the rate of food waste at retail and consumer level or along the production and supply chain. GoAJ&K has recognized the gaps that exist along this goal and is planning to introduce recycling centers in AJ&K to ensure reduction, recycling and reuse of waste materials. In partnership with the academia, the Government is also looking to improve scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.



Goal 13: Climate Action

The adverse global climate change is responsible for creating acute environmental risks impacting human as well as on natural systems. Given its topography, AJ&K is severely at risk from climate change and people are likely to confront increasing costs including loss of security in terms of food, energy, water, livelihood, health, and habitat. Keeping these challenges in mind, a Climate Change Center (CCC) has been established at P&DD to help AJ&K mitigate and adapt to climate change. Major efforts are required by relevant government organizations for operation and implementation of schemes to reduce the impact of climate change. NGOs, CSOs and the media also have an important role to play in raising awareness amongst the public to create a desire for change at the grassroots level.



Goal 14: Life Below Water

Implementation of Goal 14 targets requires close coordination as well as efficient and effective management of water resources by relevant public entities. In an

effort to conserve water bodies and its species, GoAJ&K recently declared an entire stretch of the Poonch River as Mahseer National Park. The Poonch River has high fish diversity which is important for both conservation and economic reasons. Mahseer fish has undergone a dramatic decline in population in recent years and Poonch river has the largest stable population of Mahseer in the country. The river is also a breeding ground for other commercially important fish species of the Mangla reservoir.



Goal 15: Life on Land

AJ&K faces severe problems related to Goal 15. Erosion, loss of soil fertility and over-exploitation of forests are the most significant and known problems of the region. There has been massive deforestation in the State and reforestation efforts do not match the annual rate of deforestation. Moreover, the average survival rate of trees after five years is about 50 percent, indicating an even steeper rate of forest loss. Due to climate change, there has been changes in soil fertility, flooding and water patterns whereas deforestation has contributed to soil erosion and over grazing by animals. Overcoming such challenges is essential for sustainable development in AJ&K and requires heightened surveillance, effective monitoring and strong regulatory roles by government entities such as the Board of Revenue, agriculture, fisheries, livestock, environment and forest, and planning departments.



Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

While AJ&K has been blessed with a safe law and order situation, efforts need to be made to increase reporting and decrease incidence of abuse, flow of illegal financing, reducing access to firearms, ensuring strong institutions and legal mechanisms to fight against injustice, and reduction in bribery and corruption. Participatory decision-making is required at all levels and AJ&K needs to ensure freedom of access to information to generate awareness and public debate regarding such issues. Good governance and inclusive democratic practices as well as strengthening the role of constitutional bodies and democratic institutions will be essential to achieving these targets. The Prime Minister's Office, the ministries of law, justice, and parliamentary affairs, police, anticorruption and accountability bureau, political parties and the civil society in AJ&K are the fundamental entities to realize and achieve these targets.



Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals

Partnerships at the local and international level, between government and private sectors as well as multilateral and bilateral development partners is essential to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Partnerships could help with flow of knowledge, technology and financing and could be important for AJ&K if it wants to immerse itself in global value chains. The State needs to introduce financial technology, focus on capacity development, improve trading systems and establish a mechanism for strong data monitoring and accountability. The ministries of finance, planning and other concerned departments of GoAJ&K can collectively collaborate to create an environment for fostering such partnerships with national and international institutions.

7.2 Next Steps

In implementation of SDGs, one of the key steps undertaken by AJ&K has been ensuring that the framework fits into the State's development processes and this includes the alignment of 12th Five Year Plan with the 2030 Agenda. SDGs implementation remains an ongoing process and listed below are some of the steps GoAJ&K plans to undertake to ensure achievement of the SDGs.

1. **Awareness campaigns** will continue to remain an important mechanism to engage the wider audience on the core philosophies of the SDGs, including the general public and other stakeholders.
2. **Roadmap for localization** is currently under process and will be developed through a bottom-up approach to ensure equal opportunity of involvement of all stakeholders. The final implementation plan will be completed through consultation with local government institutions.
3. **Strengthening of institutional mechanisms** is a core feature of the SDG implementation and necessary to ensure the 'Whole of Society' approach in AJ&K. This requires a system for regular engagement with NGOs, CSOs, development partners, private businesses, marginalized segment of the society, professional groups, women network, farmers, media, youth, academia, and other stakeholders.
4. **Gap analysis of existing laws, rules, regulations and policies** is essential as it will help identify areas of improvement and bottlenecks that may create obstacles for SDGs implementation. Successful strategies would require the alignment of the legal framework with the SDGs.
5. **Engagement with federal and provincial counterparts** will be a crucial component to learn of best practices and discuss lessons from others' experiences. GoAJ&K plans to participate in all major initiatives designed to increase knowledge sharing between different federal, provincial and area governments.
6. **Evidence-based policy making** has become a gold standard for development work; GoAJ&K is working towards making evidence-based analysis, research and planning an integral component of its long-term strategic planning and policy making.
7. **Alignment of PC-Is** with SDGs is another avenue for SDGs implementation in AJ&K. This will require capacity building of planning cells of the line departments of GoAJ&K on result-based management for coherent planning and development strategies.
8. **Collaboration with Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA)** in AJ&K will be crucial for generating political will, ensuring improved governance mechanism and for bringing SDGs into the limelight. Engagement of MLAs will be important for introducing SDG-related legislation and will help in establishing a proper legal framework for SDGs.
9. **Development of knowledge sharing platforms** is critical for research, innovation and implementation of SDGs in AJ&K. Such platforms can act as a communication tool to highlight analytical insights, expert opinions, project updates and progress. The process

can be made more interactive and engaging through documentaries, blog/websites, e-newsletters, print articles, TV reports and giveaways.

10. Private sector engagement through forums, workshops and dialogue on SDGs will be required for advocacy on the 2030 Agenda and to build capacity in the private sector. Business need to be encouraged to align their practices with the SDGs as this can be helpful in initiating social impact financing for development initiatives.

11. Strengthening partnership between AJ&KBoS and other statistical institutions will go a long way to gathering regular, authentic and credible data on SDGs. It will also help ensure GoAJ&K's statistical capacity required for evidence-based decision making. AJ&KBoS in turn can help develop capacity of sectoral institutions, including the statistical cells in the line department of GoAJ&K for data collection, reporting and analysis.

12. International financial flows to AJ&K, whether official or private, are currently not institutionalized in a systematic manner. Understanding the financing needs and requirements necessitates that GoAJ&K undertake an analysis of the international financial flow to the State and develop foreign aid management system for SDGs in AJ&K.

SDGs demand concerted and collective efforts from all relevant stakeholders as well as a strong political commitment at all levels. AJ&K is confident to set the example of a leading the implementation of SDGs and achieving the targets set under the 2030 Agenda.

8. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Mechanisms for SDGs

Timely availability of necessary statistics is an essential pre-requisite for quality planning to achieve sustainable development. In the last few years GoAJ&K has made concerted efforts to increase its statistical capacity including the establishment of a Bureau of Statistics at P&DD which has been functional since September 2016. Prior to this, AJ&K faced significant gaps in collection, compilation, processing and dissemination of credible and authentic statistical data.

Under the AJ&K Rules of Business, P&DD is responsible for conducting research and collecting and disseminating information on economic and social sector indicators. Prior to the formation of AJ&KBoS, the Government relied on institutional arrangements with federal and provincial statistical bureaus. However, recognizing the growing dependency on federal agencies and soaring restrictions on access to data generated along with the realization of lack of local capacity to produce and manage data, GoAJ&K developed its own Bureau of Statistics through a development scheme.

The objective of the AJ&KBoS is to produce accurate and quality information with reliable statistics for realistic, efficient and effective planning and operation, to accelerate the development process. AJ&KBoS is currently focused on secondary data reporting; however, with the implementation of SDGs and increased interest in data availability, the Bureau is also working on implementing household surveys such as MICS and Child Labour Survey through partnerships with international organizations. This will go a long way to generate capacity of AJ&KBoS to undertake surveys and analysis independently.

Data disaggregation in AJ&K currently focuses on standard urban/rural and male/female divides. There is limited collection of district-level data or socioeconomic statistics on vulnerable communities. With the implementation of SDGs and awareness regarding local baseline data generation and relevant disaggregation's, AJ&KBoS is planning to report on divisional and district level data as well as conduct extensive reporting on children.

Ownership of AJ&KBoS by line departments remains a challenge. A major reason for this has been lack of primary data collection by the Bureau, making it a receipt rather than generator of data. Moreover, data collected by departments is not always methodologically sound creating issues regarding authenticity and ownership of data published by AJ&KBoS. Regular trainings are being considered in the upcoming development plans to keep the statistical officers in the Bureau updated on latest techniques and survey mechanisms.




Given the importance of regular monitoring and reporting for SDGS, AJ&K SDGs Support Unit and AJ&KBoS are working closely to develop a harmonious institutional mechanism for data gathering relevant to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At present, AJ&KBoS publishes an annual statistical yearbook which contains an exhaustive list of indicators compiled from various line departments in AJ&K. However, the data is not being used by the relevant line departments as a routine procedure yet. The eventual goal is to make the publication relevant for policy makers, development planners and researchers in order to ensure holistic data use across sectors.







9. Conclusion






It is well recognized that SDGs are all interconnected within a system. Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires AJ&K to make substantial efforts to achieve all goals. As all goals and targets are interlinked and their relationship at times contradictory and/or mutually beneficial, strong policy and development planning is required to ensure holistic achievement across the board. This is especially true in cases where achieving one target or goal may hamper the progress for another. Additionally, attention also needs to be paid to how finances are allocated for achieving SDGs, as any allocation made to one target is resource taken away from another. Given the long-term agenda of sustainable development, all GoAJ&K line departments and institutions have been directed to incorporate the SDGs in their planning and implementation. The sustainable development goals reflect AJ&K's contemporary understanding that social, economic, and environmental issues cannot be easily segregated as they are intertwined at the global, national as well as at the household level. This interconnectedness in turn highlights the need for cooperation between multiple stakeholders from all walks of life including the Government, civil society, NGOs, international organizations, advocacy groups, academia, think tanks and the private sector. As AJ&K enters its third year of SDGs implementation, the goal remains to not only compete with other provinces and areas of Pakistan, but to lead the progress for the whole country.

GoAJ&K recognizes that achieving the sustainable development goals is not an easy task. Coordinated approaches and efforts, interconnected public-private schemes and combined role of private and public entrepreneurs, are all essential for the successful implementation of the SDG mandate. Cooperation at the political level and alignment between civil societies, NGOs and international organizations will ensure coherence in implementation and help avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts. Most importantly, SDGs are about inclusivity for everyone, and this means working towards achieving development for all regardless of cast, creed, religion and/or economic status. A truly inclusive development process will help AJ&K achieve the most from the sustainable development framework while confronting all the challenges and constraints the State faces. AJ&K is confident to set the example of a leading SDGs achiever.

Statistical Annex

	Goal	AJ&K Baseline
<p>1 NO POVERTY</p> 	<p>End Poverty in all its forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions. ii- Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- 24.9% ii- 74%
<p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p> 	<p>End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- Prevalence of undernourishment ii- Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience (FIES) iii- Prevalence of stunting (height for age <-2 standard deviation from the median of the World Health Organization (WHO) Child Growth Standards) among children under 5 years of age iv- 2.2.2 Prevalence of malnutrition (weight for height >+2 or <-2 standard deviation from the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards) among children under 5 years of age, by type (wasting and overweight) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- 29% ii- Food Insecure: 57.1% Moderate: 25.9% Severe: 31.7 iii- Wasting: 17.6% iv- Underweight: 25.8%
<p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p> 	<p>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- Infant Mortality Rate – per 1000 live births ii- Maternal Mortality Rate – per 100,000 live births iii- Life Expectancy at Birth iv- EPI Coverage v- Population per doctor vi- Population Growth Rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- 58 ii- 201 iii- 67.7 years iv- 65.8% v- 3,823 vi- 1.63%
<p>4 QUALITY EDUCATION</p> 	<p>Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- Overall Literacy Rate ii- Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex iii- Total net primary enrolment ratio iv- Total primary out of school children v- Proportion of schools with access to: (a) electricity; (b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes; (c) computers for pedagogical purposes; (d) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; (e) basic drinking water; (f) single sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic handwashing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- 76.6% ii- 33.3% iii- 81% iv- 39% v- Electricity Primary: 11%, Middle: 36%, High: 75%, Higher Sec.: 89% Drinking Water Primary: 21%, Middle: 46%, High: 63%, Higher Sec: 76% Sanitation Primary: 27%, Middle: 52% High: 51% Higher Sec: 59%
<p>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</p> 	<p>Ensure available and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services ii- Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services, including a hand-washing facility with soap and water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- Urban: 44.51% Rural: 57.21% ii- 45%

	iii- Proportion of wastewater safely treated	iii- 26%
<p>7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY</p> 	<p>Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all</p> <p>i- Proportion of population with access to electricity</p>	i- 96.8%
<p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p> 	<p>Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</p> <p>i- Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex ii- Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities iii- Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age iv- Number of commercial bank branches and automated teller machines (ATMs) per 100,000 adults</p>	<p>i- Total: 70.3% Male: 73.4% Female: 30.5% ii- Total: 11.2% Male: 9.4% Female: 30.5% iii- Total: 0.3% Male: 0.2% Female: 0.5% iv- Branches: 11, ATMs: 8</p>
<p>9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p> 	<p>Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</p> <p>i- Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment</p>	i- Total: 5.9%, Male: 6.1%, Female: 2.7%
<p>10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES</p> 	<p>Reduce inequality within and among countries</p> <p>i- Total resource flows for development, by recipient and donor countries and type of flow (e.g. ODA, FDI and other flows)</p>	i- ODA: PKR. 1475 million
<p>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p> 	<p>Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</p> <p>i- Number of deaths, missing persons and persons affected by disaster per 100,000 people</p>	i- Death: 238 Injured: 684, Houses Fully Damaged: 752 Houses Partly Damaged: 1540 Shops Damaged: 203 Cattle Heads: 79
<p>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</p> 	<p>Ensure sustainable consumption and production pattern</p> <p>i- Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development (including climate change education) are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment</p>	i- Implementation of Climate Change Policy in Progress, Awareness raised through workshops, seminars, school sessions, community sessions, pamphlets, broucher, website and through newspapers articles

 <p>13 CLIMATE ACTION</p>	<p>Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- Number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- In All 10 Districts (Whole AJ&K)
 <p>14 LIFE BELOW WATER</p>	<p>Conserve and sustainable use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- Progress by countries in the degree of application of a legal/ regulatory/ policy/ institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- In Progress
 <p>15 LIFE ON LAND</p>	<p>Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial, ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- Forest area as a proportion of total land area ii- Proportion of important sites for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity that are covered by protected areas, by ecosystem type iii- Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area iv- Coverage by protected areas of important sites for mountain biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- Cultivated: 13%; Total Forest Controlled area: 42.65% ii- 8.7% iii- 27.0% iv- 17.5%
 <p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p>	<p>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i- Primary government expenditures as a proportion of original approved budget, by sector (or by budget codes or similar) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. 100%
 <p>17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p>	<p>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Proportion of domestic budget funded by domestic taxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. 24%