

ENRICHING THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) THROUGH OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, SAFETY, AND LABOUR STANDARDS: A PATHWAY TO DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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BEST CITATION – SUBASHRIE B, ENRICHING THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) THROUGH OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, SAFETY, AND LABOUR STANDARDS: A PATHWAY TO DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH, *INDIAN JOURNAL OF LEGAL REVIEW (IJLR)*, 5 (1) OF 2025, PG. 706-715, APIS – 3920 – 0001 & ISSN – 2583-2344

ABSTRACT:

The concept of sustainable development has marked a footprint in the national development of the country in various fields. The phrase “sustainable development” itself connotes to development pertaining all fields. The SDG goals aim for the development in all fields through the 17 goals. The SDG goal particular in relevance to Occupational Safety and Health, labour standards has been interconnected, related to each other paving way for the economic development. The concept of Sustainable development is helpful in achieving a target without compromising the needs of the future generations. The caryatids are also the backbone i.e, the economic, social and environment. The Labour rights, standards, occupational health and safety is linked to the capability(capacity) of workers to work. Further the factors such as workers participation in management, non-discrimination, worker freedom all these factors enhance the economic development which further accelerates the SDGs. The maxim “Sublata causa, tollitur effectus” meaning the cause being removed, the effect ceases likewise the causing necessity factors of labour should be regularly enhanced to achieve more productivity. By strengthening OHS measures and labour standards, industries can not only improve worker well-being but also contribute to a more sustainable and equitable global economy. The emphasizes is that urgent need for multi-stakeholder collaboration in creating safe, fair, and sustainable workplaces that drive long-term economic prosperity while safeguarding human and environmental health.

INTRODUCTION

“Growth is inevitable and desirable, but destruction of community is not. The question is not whether your part of the world is going to change. The question is how.”

–Edward T. McMahon¹²³⁰

The maxim “arbor dum crescit; lignum cum crescere Nescit” meaning a tree while it grows, wood when it cannot grow” likewise the adequacy of resources is ensured for sustainable development. The national policy is framed on the basis of goals of SDG. The best

way to achievement of SDG in-relation to occupational safety, labour standards is through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 16 peaceful and inclusive societies, ensuring access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. highlight the importance of creating safe, fair, and sustainable workplaces. This research paper explores the crucial role of OHS and labour standards in advancing sustainable development, examining existing policies, industry best practices, and regulatory challenges. By identifying gaps and proposing

¹²³⁰

<https://www.google.co.in/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Ficcwbo.org%2Fnews-publications%2F> last accessed on 22/02/2025

strategic solutions, this research aims to highlight how businesses, policymakers, and governments can work together to promote decent work, economic growth, and long-term sustainability.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To study about the evolution of Sustainable Development Goals.
2. To study about the SDG goals in relevance with labour standards and Occupational Safety.
3. To examine the concepts of national and International Indicators for Sustainable Development.
4. To interpret the ILO Conventions and statutory framework in relation to Sustainable Development Goals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. Sustainable Development Goals an Indian Perspective by Somath Hazra¹²³¹ discusses the various areas where sustainable progress is made such as health progress, Gender equality and areas of strategies needs to be implemented.
2. Development and Sustainability India in a Global Perspective by Sarmila Banerjee¹²³² discusses the global integration in the perspective of labour markets
3. Law and Sustainability Reshaping the Socio-Economic Order through Economic and Technological Innovation by Koen Byttebier¹²³³ discusses the strategic thinking and global sustainability management process.
4. Introduction to global sustainable management by Colin Combe¹²³⁴ discusses the theories associated with global sustainable management theory.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do labour standards influence occupational health and safety in the context of sustainable development?
- 2) What policies can improve workplace safety while promoting sustainable business practices?
- 3) How do businesses balance economic growth, environmental responsibility, and worker rights?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The researcher has adopted the Doctrinal method. Data for doctrinal research was gathered from a variety of primary and secondary sources. Statutes passed by legislatures, judicial decisions, executive orders, and rules and regulations of various administrative bodies are among the primary sources. Books, law journals, periodicals, articles and research papers, newspaper, websites and so on are examples of secondary sources.

BACKGROUND:

ETHMOLOGY:

The term "sustainable" is connotes from the Latin word *sustinere* which denotes to "to hold up". The modern concept of sustainability developed from 18th century from the German term *Nachhaltigkeit* denoting "sustained yield". The term *Nachhaltigkeit* was first used in the context of forestry by Hans Carl von Carlowitz in 1713. He emphasised for managing forests without depleting the future resources¹²³⁵.

In 20th century the concept of sustainable development arose through the Brundtland Report in 1987 thus enhancing a notable approach. In Brundtland Report sustainable development has been defined as evolution of growth fulfilling the present needs without compromising the future needs¹²³⁶.

¹²³¹ Anindya Bhukta Editors, Springer

¹²³² Anjan Chakrabarti Editors, Springer

¹²³³ Kim van der borgh Editors, Springer

¹²³⁴ Sage publishers

¹²³⁵ https://www.oed.com/dictionary/sustainable_adj last accessed 22/02/2025

¹²³⁶ Sumudu A. Atapattu, Carmen G. Gonzalez and Sara L. Seck, The Cambridge Handbook of Environmental Justice and Sustainable Development, Pg 45

EVOLUTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

GOALS:

The 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals observed three dimensions for SDG they are economic, social and environment which was incorporated by United Nations Organization General Assembly in the year 2015. There is total of 17 Sustainable Development Goals¹²³⁷.

The main aim of sustainable development goals is to eliminate poverty, prevention of Earth and to enhance harmony and healthy well-being of all persons.

The Millennium Development Goals(MDG)

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) was established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations held in 2000. There is eight international development goals established as the “Millennium Development Goals”. This Millenium Development Goals is observed to be achieved by 2015 and provided an overarching framework for economic development including poverty reduction, improved health and education outcomes and other priority areas across the developing countries¹²³⁸.

Development and Sustainable Development Goals

The concept of human development is categorized into three main aspects they are long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living. This three concept of human development has a link with sustainable development goals. The Sustainable development goal 3-good health, Sustainable development goal 4 quality education, Sustainable development goal 5 gender equality, Sustainable development goal 8-decent work and Sustainable development goal 10 reduced inequality¹²³⁹.

The idea of Nobel laureate Amartya Sen in his book “Development as Freedom, development

is a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy”. Thereby Amartya Sen emphasized the attainment of human development is only possible when there is guarantee of freedom from hunger and ill-health on the one hand and gender and income equality and access to quality education this results in overall sustainable development¹²⁴⁰.

¹²³⁷ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> last accessed on 22/04/2025

¹²³⁸ Mohan Munasinghe, Sustainable Development in practice Sustainomics Methodology and Applications, Cambridge University Press, pg 425

¹²³⁹ Koen Bystebier, Law and Sustainability, Springer pg 85

¹²⁴⁰ Sarmila Banerjee, Development and Sustainability India in a global perspective, Springer, pg 13

HIGHLIGHTS OF MDG AND SDG¹²⁴¹

BASIS OF DISTINCTION	MDG	SDG
Extent	Poverty is addressed in many dimensions	Foster SDG development by nurturing economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection
Applicability	The application of MDG is low-income countries and developing countries	Applicable to all countries
Stakeholders involved	Government and relevant International Organizations	Government, relevant International Organizations, Civil Society and Private Sector
Framework	Total eight goals and 21 targets	Total 17 goals and 169 targets
Measurement indicators involved	60 indicators	232 indicators

GRASP - EDUCATE - EVOLVE

¹²⁴¹ Mohan Munasinghe, Sustainable Development in practice Sustainomics Methodology and Applications, Cambridge University Press, pg 429

Decent Work

The Sustainable Development Goal 8 corresponds to “Decent Work and Economic Growth”

The main objective behind the Sustainable Development Goal 8 is enhancing fair wages, prevention of forced labour, and nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship and increasing employment opportunities¹²⁴².

There are twelve targets that needs to be achieved with “Decent Work”. The highlights of the targets include:

- i) The Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances.
- ii) The innovation in technology accompanied with high value addition and labour intensive
- iii) Upgrade the youth education, profession and skill enhancement.
- iv) Ensuring the concept of equal pay for equal work through full employment
- v) Enhancement of global youth employment strategy

Goal 8 and India

In India many programs has been introduced to achieve Goal 8¹²⁴³ they are:

1. Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (Self-Reliant India Mission) – Strengthens domestic manufacturing & economic resilience.
2. Make in India – Boosts industrial growth & job creation.
3. Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme – Encourages manufacturing.
4. Code on Wages, 2019 – Ensures fair wages & equal pay.
5. PM Vishwakarma Yojana – Supports artisans & traditional workers.

CHALLENGES OF SDG 8

The existence of income inequality, and prevalence of wage gaps poses a challenge of attainment of SDG 8. Labour rights violation and exploitation. Therefore the hindrance of SDG 8 poses a threat to achieve decent work agenda¹²⁴⁴.

SDG 3- GOOD HEALTH AND WELL BEING

In the century of rapid digital development and living standards the concept of good health plays a pivotal role. Lord William Beveridge definition of Social Security in his book “Social Services and Allied Services” has quoted the that social security is prevention from five giant ignorance, want, disease, squalor and idleness. The main goal of SDG 3 is universal health coverage and provide safe and accessible medicines to all. There is a objectives of 13 targets in pursuance to SDG 3. The main highlights of the target are by 2030 reduction in maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births. The main target of to bring a cease of certain type of epidemic diseases they are AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and to fight against hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases. The prevention of mental health and well-being plays a pivotal role in the present era.

CHALLENGES OF SDG 3

The inequalities prevailing in access to healthcare facilities and medicines. Rise of pandemic and antimicrobial disease.

INDIA IN THE PROGRESS OF SDG 3

SDG 16

The SDG 16 connotes the principle of peace, justice and strong institutions.

The highlights of the SDG 16 targets are categorized into twelve targets. They are:

- i) Enhance decision-making involving representative, responsive and inclusive

¹²⁴² Mohan Munasinghe, Sustainable Development in practice Sustainomics Methodology and Applications, Cambridge University Press, pg 437

¹²⁴³ Koen Bittelbier, Law and Sustainability, Springer pg 70

¹²⁴⁴ Mohan Munasinghe, Sustainable Development in practice Sustainomics Methodology and Applications, Cambridge University Press, pg 433

ii) Protection of children from trafficking, violence and exploitation

iii) Promote the concept of rule of law and ensure equal access to all¹²⁴⁵.

Challenges of SDG 16

The challenges for the implementation of SDG 16 is that human rights violations leading resulting in discrimination and hindrance in Social Justice. Disturbance of peace by the prevalence of armed conflict, civil wars and terrorism.

STRATEGY PROCESS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG:

Strategy process are categorized into three aspects they are:

- i) Strategy formulation
- ii) Strategy implementation
- iii) Strategy evaluation

for the achievement of strategies in pursuance with SDG goals achievement requires the stakeholder consultation

CONNECTION OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY WITH SUSTAINABILITY

Occupational Health and Safety plays a pivotal role in achieving the sustainable development goals. The SDG Goal 3, SDG 8 and SDG 16 deals with the occupation safety¹²⁴⁶.

ILO CONVENTION ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IN REFERENCE WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The ILO Convention No. 155 in pursuance with Occupational Health and Safety was adopted at the sixty seventh session of ILO.

Main objectives of this Convention was to develop a comprehensive approach to the national governance of Occupational Safety and Health aspect. This Convention emphasis the need for framing national level policy for Occupational Safety and Health. The guidelines,

steps required at the national level has been laid under this convention¹²⁴⁷.

This Convention consists of total of 30 Articles. India has not ratified Convention no.155

The promotional framework for Occupational Health and Safety Convention 187 of 2006

The Convention No.187 was adopted on Ninety-fifth Session on 31 May 2006.

The main objective of this Convention is that promoting a national health preventive safety and health culture subsequently resulting in attainment of safety and health culture at work place.

This Convention consists of total of 14 Articles. India has not ratified Convention no. 187.

Thereby the two conventions i.e., Convention No. 155 and Convention No.187 enhances the concept of workplace freedom capability to work and prevention from various occupational, health and safety Conventions which in turn increase the potential of labour standards, labour market subsequently the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is enhanced. The concept of Sustainable Development is attained on two perspectives one way by enhancing the occupational health and safety on the other hand the sustainable progress for future generations. These Conventions enhance the principle of Co-operation between the workers, management and representatives¹²⁴⁸.

In addition to these Conventions Recommendation no.197 has emphasized for the management policy to be developed in pursuance with Occupational Health and Safety.

SDG INDIA INDEX

The Sustainable Development India Index is a tool developed by Niti Aayog to evaluate India's performance in SDG Goals achievement.

The procedure adopted to study the progress of Sustainable Development Goals by India has

¹²⁴⁵ Sarmila Banerjee, Development and Sustainability India in a global perspective, Springer, pg 20

¹²⁴⁶ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> last accessed on 22/02/2025

¹²⁴⁷ https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/?p=normlexpub:12100:0:0:12100:p12100_instrument_id:312332:0 last accessed on 22/02/2025

¹²⁴⁸ Ibid

been observed by categorization by the respective States and Union Territories using a set of indicators known as National Indicator Framework. Each SDG goal wise scores are given to the 16 SDG Goals while the 14th SDG requires the involvement of nine States as 14th SDG deals with the concept called “Life below water”

This SDG India Index enhances the concept of competitive and Cooperative Federalism.

The SDG evaluates the progress through 113 National Indicators aligned with National Indicator Framework¹²⁴⁹.

LABOUR RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

The Labour rights led to the development of sustainable development which in turn leads to economic development. The term “development” connotes with increased Gross Domestic Product(GDP) trade and economic growth. The Labour standards in the present scenario at a higher rate will increase the economic development thereby the concept of labour rights enhancement is done in the concept of welfare. The worker rights involving the worker’s participation in the decision making of organization, equal pay for equal work, adequate facilities of decent work place, benefits for the pension and leave benefits are guaranteed. The labour standards enhances the economic process of development.

There are number of theories which advocates human development through the concept sustainable development. Amartya Sen has connected the factor of freedom of human capacity to work increases only when there is less labour bondage, increase to seek employment, reduces child labour and increases the freedom of women to work outside the family.

The essential elements of sustainable development advocated by Professor Nussbaum must involving the following elements¹²⁵⁰:

- i) The safety at workplace must be at a level where there is a reasonable opportunity to live in normal retirement age.
- ii) To be free from work place injuries and diseases
- iii) Prevention and prohibition of workplace harassment, violence, sexual assaults.
- iv) Adequate vacations, breaks from work
- v) Prohibition on discrimination on the basis of race, religion, membership in trade unions
- vi) Freedom to join a trade union, change jobs and trade union

Professor Stiglitz concept of sustainable development:

The Professor Stiglitz has emphasized the concept of sustainable development as transformation to democracy both at micro and macro level. At micro level of development is possible only through increased involvement of workers in corporations.

Thereby the theory advocated by Amartya Sen and Professor Stiglitz mainly emphasis on increase in worker freedoms.

PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE JOBS¹²⁵¹

There are six principles in the guarantee of sustainable jobs they are:

i) Enhanced Working condition

The working conditions of the employee is enhanced which will increase productivity thereby development of social standards and labour standards.

ii) Advancement of Workplace Technology

Upgradation of workplace technology further enhances the competitive result.

¹²⁴⁹ Sarmila Banerjee, Development and Sustainability India in a global perspective, Springer, pg 13

¹²⁵⁰ Colin Combe, Introduction to Global Sustainable Management, Sage publications, pg 11

¹²⁵¹ Colin Combe, Introduction to Global Sustainable Management, Sage publications, pg 38

iii) Training and Skill Development

The education of training and skills development provided to workers will lead to reduction in workplace accidents and enhancing the sustainable jobs.

iv) Organizational values

Social lifestyle and culture should be identified in order to sausage the working environment.

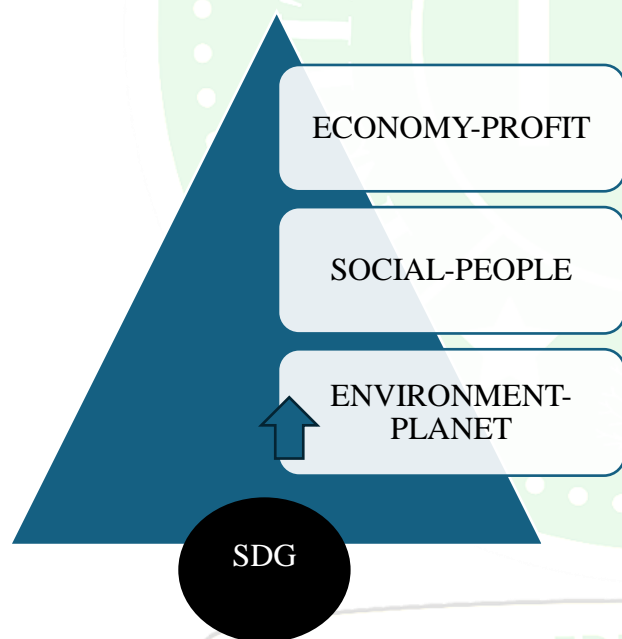
v) Decision making

The concerned decision-making stakeholders should take best strategic decisions concerning the health and welfare of the workers

vi) Management of Workplace

The adoption of proper management techniques to minimize the occupational risks and increasing job security.

PILLARS OF SUSTAINABILITY



CORRELATION OF OSH AND SUSTAINABILITY¹²⁵²

ACCOUNTABILITY	CONTRAPTION	INSTRUCTION
Economic	Efficient regulator Reduction of	Trainees adopted for using integrated

	cost Efficient procedure of supplier selection Minimizing losses	programs Standardized procedure for the employee work Minimizing the employee negligence
Social	Enhance relations among stakeholder Public Reputation enhancement The quality of work enhanced Minimizing overworking of employees	Accelerate Communication Maximize more communication techniques Increase in the participation of more candidates in the interview process
Environment	Prohibition of negative impacts on environment Development of the concept of reuse Introduction of novel concepts which subsequently helps to reduce the amount of gas generated	Participation worker in Corporate Social Responsibility Policies Incarnating health at work Management of stress at work

¹²⁵² Sarmila Banerjee, Development and Sustainability India in a global perspective, Springer, pg 103

LEGAL MEASURES FOR OSH IN CORRESPONDING WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

1) The Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020¹²⁵³

The Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code, 2020 (OSH Code) is a comprehensive law aimed at regulating workplace safety, health, and welfare standards for workers across various industries in India. It consolidates and replaces 13 existing labour laws related to occupational safety and working conditions, simplifying the regulatory framework.

RELATED GOAL : SDG 8 (Decent Work) by ensuring workplace safety and SDG 3 (Health) by preventing occupational diseases.

Application of the OSH Code, 2020

The OSH Code applies to:

Factories with 10+ workers (with power) or 20+ workers (without power).

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE OSH CODE, 2020

- I) Ensure safe and healthy working conditions for all workers.
- II) Provide uniform standards across industries.
- III) Reduce compliance burden by replacing multiple laws.
- IV) Improve welfare measures and social security provisions. Strengthen worker rights in hazardous occupations.
- V) Ensures workplace safety, health standards, and working conditions across industries.
- VI) Requires employers to provide a safe working environment, welfare facilities, and periodic health checks.
- VII) Mandates risk assessment and safety audits in hazardous industries.
- VIII) Provides special protections for contract workers and inter-state migrant workers.

2. The Factories Act, 1948

RELATED GOAL : SDG 3 (Health) and SDG 8 (Labour Rights and Safety)¹²⁵⁴.

- A foundational law ensuring safe working conditions in manufacturing units.
- **Provisions:**
 - Regulates work hours, health, hygiene, and safety standards.
 - Mandates proper ventilation, cleanliness, and drinking water.
 - Enforces the use of protective equipment in hazardous industries.
 - Holds employers liable for workplace injuries.

3. The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 (ESI Act)

RELATED GOAL : SDG 3 (Universal Health Coverage) and SDG 8 (Worker Protection)¹²⁵⁵.

- Provides social security and health insurance to workers in case of sickness, maternity, disability, and work-related injuries.
- Covers employees in factories, shops, hotels, and other commercial establishments earning up to a prescribed limit.

4. The Mines Act, 1952

RELATED GOAL: SDG 8 by protecting workers in hazardous industries¹²⁵⁶.

- Ensures safety and welfare of mine workers.
- **Provisions:**
 - Mandatory safety equipment and ventilation.

¹²⁵³ Eighth edition, S C Srivastava, Industrial Relations and Labour Laws, Vikas publication, Pg 775

¹²⁵⁴ Eighth edition, S C Srivastava, Industrial Relations and Labour Laws, Vikas publication, Pg 711

¹²⁵⁵ 29th Edition, S.N. Misra, Labour & Industrial Laws, Central Law Publication, Pg 526

¹²⁵⁶ [The Mines Act 1952](#) accessed on 22/02/2025

- Limits working hours to prevent exhaustion-related accidents.
- Provides for medical care and compensation in case of injuries.

5. The Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, 1996

RELATED GOAL : SDG 8 (Safe and Fair Work Conditions)¹²⁵⁷.

- Protects construction workers, one of the most vulnerable groups.
- Establishes welfare boards to provide safety measures, social security, and accident compensation.

6. The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970

RELATED GOAL : SDG 16 (Justice and Labour Rights).

- Ensures fair wages, working conditions, and social security for contract workers.
- Mandates safety provisions and prohibits inhumane working conditions.

7. The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017

RELATED GOAL: SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work & Family Welfare)

- The maternity leave has been increased from 12 to 26 weeks for first two children.
- Mandates crèche facilities for working mothers.
- Increase in the women workforce¹²⁵⁸.

Challenges in Implementation

- **Enforcement Issues:** Many industries, especially informal sectors, fail to comply with OSH regulations.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Many workers are unaware of their rights and safety provisions.

- **Limited Inspections:** Labour inspectors are often understaffed and under-resourced.
- **Informal Sector Exclusion:** A large workforce in the unorganized sector lacks adequate OSH protection.

SOME OF THE POLICIES BY GOVERNMENT¹²⁵⁹

1. Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan (PMSYM) Scheme, 2019
2. SDG Alignment: SDG 8 (Social Protection), SDG 1 (Poverty Reduction)
3. Provides pension benefits to workers in the unorganized sector.
4. Targets construction workers, domestic workers, and street vendors.
5. Encourages financial inclusion by linking workers to banking and insurance services.

CONCLUSION

Achieving sustainable development requires a holistic approach that integrates occupational health, safety (OHS), and labour standards into economic and social policies. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), emphasize the need for safe, inclusive, and fair workplaces as a foundation for economic prosperity and social equity.

Ensuring strong labour protections and workplace safety not only safeguards worker's rights but also enhances productivity, reduces workplace-related diseases and accidents, and fosters sustainable industrial growth. India's labour reforms, OSH policies, and social security initiatives reflect significant strides toward aligning labour standards with global sustainability goals. However, challenges such as weak enforcement, informal sector vulnerabilities, and limited worker awareness must be addressed to maximize impact.

¹²⁵⁷ [THE BUILDING AND OTHER CONSTRUCTION WORKERS | Chief Labour Commissioner](#) accessed on 22/02/2025

¹²⁵⁸ Eighth edition, S C Srivastava, Industrial Relations and Labour Laws, Vikas publication, Pg 621

¹²⁵⁹ <https://labour.gov.in/> last accessed on 22/02/2025

Moving forward, strengthening policy enforcement, promoting workplace safety training, expanding coverage to informal and gig workers, and leveraging digital compliance mechanisms will be key to realizing sustainable, fair, and resilient labour markets. A collaborative approach involving governments, industries, and workers' organizations is essential to ensure that economic growth is not only profitable but also equitable and human-centric. By prioritizing safe working conditions and fair labour practices, we can build a more inclusive and sustainable future for all.

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