Institution Building for Achieving SDGs

What is the issue?

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- UN's "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs) has inspired many and there seems to be a global consensus on them beyond governments.
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- The efforts of various stakeholders need to be effectively coordinated for achieving better outcomes.
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Why do we need large scale coordination?

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- SDGs have been observed to prominently figure in "business conferences, civil society organizations and government reports".
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- The 17 SDGs fall into four groupings namely:\n
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  - **Human Development –** "Poverty, hunger, health, education, and gender equality".
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  - **Environment –** "Water, energy, climate action, life below water, and life on land".
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  - **Economy -** "Decent work, economic progress, reduced inequalities, responsible consumption and production, and industry innovation".
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  - **Structure Building -** "peace, justice and strong institutions" and "partnerships for growth".
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- Problems such as persistent poverty and inequality, poor health, and environmental degradation are systemic issues.
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- They have multiple interacting causes and can’t be solved by any one actor.
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- Hence, strong institutional partnership and cooperation as outlined in the last two SDGs are essential.
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What are the current management challenges?

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- Philanthropists and corporates (through CSR) are giving back to society in programmes aligned with the SDGs.
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- Once they start, they realize the need for partnering NGOs who have local knowledge and have established community and government relationships.
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- While all stakeholders recognize the need for effective partnerships, effective management practices remain elusive.
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- But governments and CSR initiatives tend to construct centralized, top-down programmes to achieve scale and efficiency simultaneously,
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- Hence, there is inherent strain in deploying best managment practices and the typical “command and control” dynamics continue to dominate.
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- This approach works with a “one size fits all” mindset and also hinders effective ground coordination due to the complicated command structure.
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- Also, the ultimate beneficiaries aren’t adequately represented in this module and “people-centric design” takes a backseat.
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How important is institution building in human progress?

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- SDGs are a realization that humanity cannot postpone much longer the development of new strategies for the management of the commons.
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- Humanity’s progress is a history of evolution of institutions that have enabled societies to achieve what they want.
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- Notably, the demand for increased sea trade saw the birth of new forms of business institutions such as the limited liability company in the 17th century.
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- Also, the idea of an equal society gave rise to elected parliaments world-over.
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- Hence, faster progress towards the SDGs will require new models of enterprises in which the people must have a much greater say in governance.
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What kind of institutional changes are needed?

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- The very conception of SDGs requires institutions that enable large-scale people participation, which is in line with the democratic norms.
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- According to SDGs, every individual has fundamental needs such as health and education, and political rights in the governance.
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- But expenses are incurred for ensuring that all get access to these services.
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- Hence, this calls for building economically sustainable business modules like Co-operatives and Social Entrepreneurship.
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Source: Livemint

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