**A Practical Way to Achieve SDG Goals in Pakistan**

[Dr Shamraiz Ahmad](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/dr-shamraiz-ahmad/%22%20%5Co%20%22More%20Articles%20by%20Dr%20Shamraiz%20Ahmad)

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When the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were introduced in 2000 by United Nations, the 7th among the eight main points was purely related to ensuring environmental sustainability. Since then there has been a lot of hullabaloo about ways to achieve a sustainable environment. Following MDGs, there were Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) introduced in 2016 in a vow to transform the world into a better place having 17 main goals. Pakistan in this regard has unanimously approved SDGs in 2016 as the ‘National Development Agenda’. Ironically, Pakistan has shown a grim performance in achieving MDGs. Therefore, now for achieving SDGs, it is incumbent to set some realistic goals and adapt some efficient strategies. SDGs encompass the ‘schemes to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. In this regard, the 9th goal of SDGs states that by the year 2030 all the industries have to foster the process of using technology to achieve ‘sustainable industrialisation’. The 11th goal focuses on making the cities sustainable as well as safe. The 12th goal of SDG is all about ensuring sustainable production and consumption patterns.

All of these goals can be achieved by adopting such methodologies in the industries that could assist in maintaining a sustainable environment and this should not be done in a separate process but as a part of the whole product lifecycle process. With the contemporary maxim of “doing more and better with less” in the industrial sector, methodologies like Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) have been the need of the hour. LCA is involved in the entire life cycle of a product, so as a parallel process, it can certainly contribute to achieving not only required industrial standards but also international standards.

Even though we can find plenty of articles and discussions on the suggestions to achieve SDGs in Pakistan, we are still much far behind in applying them practically. There are two major reasons for this unfortunate situation in Pakistan. Firstly, achieving SDGs is perceived to be the responsibility of the government only, and secondly the available literature provides little guidance on using various tools that may help in achieving these goals in a practical way. To this end, life cycle assessment methodology is the answer, as it allows an effective comparison of products, processes and technologies with the help of which the decision-makers can easily decide about the one with the least impact on the environment. Conducting LCA studies in Pakistan’s industrial sectors could help to actually target various SDGs that are related to environment, production and consumption, employment creation and others.

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As LCA is there from the very first step of the lifespan of a product till the last, from raw material extraction to the step of manufacturing following the disposal or recycling stage, therefore it has a positive chronic impact by mitigating the environmental hazards attached with product production. As defined and explained by the ISO, the major focus of LCA has always been on the fact that how a product, process, technology or service is playing its role in global warming, acidification, resource depletion and others. LCA uses tools like ‘Carbon Footprint Measurement’, by assisting in assessing the possible impact of utilization of water on the ecosystem and overall facilitates keeping a track of greenhouse gas emission. Moreover, the notion of ‘handprints’ to reduce or prevent the negative impacts while creating the positive impacts is another feather in the cap of LCA. By considering the aforementioned and many such methods and tools LCA provides it becomes incumbent to instill LCA methodology in the industries of Pakistan to categorically achieve SDGs goals effectively and efficiently. LCA has been following all the international standards and is a holistic approach in prominently reducing the environmental impacts of a product. Industries in Pakistan are in a dire need of a good data-intensive model that can help in pursuing the environmental-related goals in SDGs and LCA in this regard has all the key features of a good environmental management tool.

Pakistan ranks 129 on the SDG index as per the latest studies. We need to be on track and set some realistic strategies to achieve the 2030 agenda under SDGs for sustainable development. Pakistan is the 5th most vulnerable state to climate change, it is high time to practically adopt methodologies that would help control the variables that are provoking climate change and environmental hazards. Pakistan should set new revolutionary development agenda by keeping the stats of post-Covid setbacks in the industrial sectors. The policymakers need to redefine the strategies associated with achieving SDGs, and an array of thoughtful reforms is needed. There must be interaction among the various goals set under SDGs for instance goal 13 related to climate change is connecting with the 11th and 12th goal which is related to environmental sustainability. ‘Green Tax’ culture should be adopted by both the public and private sector of Pakistan so that methodologies like LCA can easily be implemented in all sectors of industries. The private sectors in this regard should not take the taxes as a loss of competitiveness. This would rather help the manufacturers in Pakistan to ensure environmental labeling of the consumer products. Environmental labeling may be used as a marketing tool for increasing sale both in national and export market. Thus, the industries in Pakistan must provide synergies among various activities to foster the process of adapting LCA as an essential part of the life span of a product being manufactured. In addition, performing and reporting more LCA studies would help develop life cycle inventory databases that are currently not available in Pakistan. The availability of such databases at national level for various industrial sectors can be used for various types of analyses and policy decisions.

In Pakistan, various stakeholders, such as industries, academic researchers and public institutions should play their active and coordinated role in making LCA an imperative part of the entire process and target the SDGs in a measurable way. There should be an active ‘Regulatory and Industry led Policy’ to normalize LCA as part of our industries. With the help of various institutions, like State Bank, Higher Education Commission, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Industries and Production, we may assist industries and academic researchers for systematic and practical implementation of LCA in industries. The academic institutions may provide the technical services, whereas the government institution may offer the financial support. In this regard, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics should bring a ‘regime of mandatory reporting’ for the industries where all the stats and data should be publically available on the life cycle environmental and sustainability impacts of their products, processes and technologies. The urgency for environment protection initiatives under SDGs requires adopting international standards such as LCA in our industries at a fast pace. Moreover, the tree plantation drive at the government level is an appreciable act, however this alone is not enough. The problem of environmental degradation is multifaceted that requires to be confronted by everyone, especially by our industries in order to manage it at the root cause level. In a nutshell, we can potentially control the environmental impacts by adopting LCA in the industries of Pakistan which will eventually contribute to achieving SDGs. There must be more practical examples of implementation of LCA in various industries of Pakistan to have fruitful results. The government of Pakistan, all the regulatory bodies, and the private sector should do a collective effort to bring forth LCA as a mandatory part of industries for the better future of our coming generation else they would not be able to meet their needs from the environment.

*The writer is an assistant professor at NUST*