

Awareness and Perception of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among Library Professionals in Assam: A Study

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Abstract

In 2015, the United Nations established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework, aiming to combat poverty, promote equality and justice, and achieve sustainable development worldwide by 2030. In order to emphasize the critical role that libraries play in sustainable development, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) adopted the UN Agenda 2030. This study aims to investigate the awareness and perspectives of library professionals in Assam regarding the UN's SDGs. A structured questionnaire was created with the study's aims in mind, and it was sent to Assamese library professionals both offline and online. A total 233 Library Professionals respond we have received. The study showed that the majority of participants were aware of the SDGs, and 44.54% of them strongly committed to advancing these goals through their library work. However, the study also found that a significant 89.7% of respondents reported a lack of collaboration with external organizations or stakeholders to advance the SDGs. The study examined the challenges faced by library professionals in Assam in promoting the SDGs and it found that lack of awareness among library staff and inadequate training as the primary obstacles.

Keywords: United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, IFLA, library professionals, Assam

1. Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity (UNDP, 2015). Sustainable development has been a developing concern for many years, with substantial momentum in September 2015. This was when the United Nations and world leaders officially introduced the SDGs. These are the 17 goals and 169 targets set to be met by 2030, often known as Agenda 2030. The 17 goals are: 'No Poverty', 'Zero Hunger', 'Good Health and Well-being', 'Quality Education', 'Gender Equality', 'Clean Water and Sanitation', 'Affordable and Clean Energy', 'Decent Work and Economic Growth', 'Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure', 'Reduced Inequality', 'Sustainable Cities and Communities', 'Responsible Consumption and Production', 'Climate Action', 'Life Below Water', 'Life on Land, Peace', The SDGs offer a comprehensive framework for solving global concerns and fostering



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sustainable development in numerous sectors. These goals address a wide range of interconnected concerns, including poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, and social equality. As the international community works to accomplish the SDGs by 2030, it is critical to analyze stakeholder awareness and perceptions of these goals in order to enable successful implementation and monitoring (UN, 2015).

Even though the SDGs have garnered significant interest and commitment from various stakeholders, including businesses, NGOs, and governments, it is still imperative to assess their awareness and perception across several professional areas. One such industry is that of library professionals, who play a critical role in information dissemination, education facilitation, and community development. The promotion of sustainable development goals is greatly aided by library professionals, who are vital to the distribution of knowledge, education, and community engagement (Smith, 2020). But little is known about how much they really know and comprehend about the SDGs, especially in certain regions or contexts such as Assam.

The state of Assam, which is in northeastern India, has a distinctive socioeconomic and environmental backdrop that affects how library professionals use and comprehend the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Comprehending the level of awareness and perception of the SDGs among library professionals holds special importance in the Assamese setting, where libraries function as essential centers for information sharing and community involvement. Libraries in Assam provide a variety of services to a wide range of people, including marginalized groups, researchers, and students. Furthermore, libraries frequently act as hubs for fostering literacy, cultural preservation, and sustainable development projects adapted to local needs and desires (Dutta, 2018). Despite the potential for libraries to promote the SDGs in Assam, there may be specific constraints and possibilities that define library professionals' awareness and engagement with these global goals. Limited resources, infrastructure issues, language obstacles, and cultural diversity may all have an impact on how well library workers understand and promote the SDGs in their communities (Goswami & Sarma, 2019).

2. Objectives

Research objectives of the current study are as follows:

1. To evaluate the level of awareness among library professionals in Assam about the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. To identify the sources from which library professionals in Assam acquire information about the SDGs.
3. To find out the attitudes and perceptions of library professionals in Assam towards the role of libraries in promoting and achieving the SDGs.
4. To analyze the challenges faced by library professionals in Assam in actively engaging with and promoting the SDGs within their institutions and communities.
5. To find out the strategies to enhance the integration of SDGs in future library operations and services.

3. Methodology

For this work, the survey research method was employed since its nature justifies it, as it allowed the researcher to connect with the study population in their different locations. A questionnaire technique is

employed to obtain data. A structured questionnaire was created with the study's aims in mind, and it was sent to Assamese library professionals both offline and online. Questionnaire was disseminated across the various Assamese library professional groups on social media sites such as Facebook and WhatsApp. Also disseminated were questionnaires sent out individually by email. Professionals working in libraries were given offline questionnaires on the surrounding area of Guwahati city. A total of 233 Library Professionals responded to this distribution. After the data were gathered, they were tabulated and statistical techniques were used for analysis. Therefore, the only source of data used in this study's conclusions is the information provided in the questionnaire that respondents returned.

4. Literature Review

Mathiasson and Jochumsen (2022) conduct a review of 102 scholarly works concerning libraries and sustainability, arguing that libraries and librarians should take the lead in tackling global sustainability issues. Awodoyin and Ojo (2021) surveyed 60 librarians in Ogun state, Nigeria, about their awareness of and attitudes toward the SDGs. The report emphasizes the necessity of conferences and workshops for librarians to gain a better understanding of the SDGs. Further research reveals that 12 out of 17 SDGs are well known, with librarians admitting their potential for human growth. They advocated for SDG corners in libraries but highlighted corruption as a hindrance to participation. Missingham (2021) studied how library evaluation now includes the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), acknowledging libraries' global role. The research focuses on Australian academic libraries' impact on four SDGs, highlighting their influence beyond institutions. Noh (2021) examines the knowledge of South Korean librarians on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN and the assistance measures offered by IFLA. Results show that public librarians are not well-informed about the SDGs, but they strongly agree with IFLA's support initiatives. The promotion of IFLA's SDG strategies may improve librarian engagement. Benson et al. (2019) study how libraries in developing countries might help accomplish the SDGs through specialized services. It suggests that libraries can advance the SDGs by repositioning and forming partnerships to provide focused information services. Hijji and Alhinaai (2003) emphasized libraries' contributions to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Oman Libraries and Information Association supported IFLA's efforts through workshops that raised SDG awareness and implementation.

5. Analysis And Interpretation of the Data

A structured questionnaire was thoroughly designed and distributed to Library Professionals working in various colleges and universities across Assam. This distribution resulted in replies from 233 Library Professionals.

5.1 Demographic characteristics

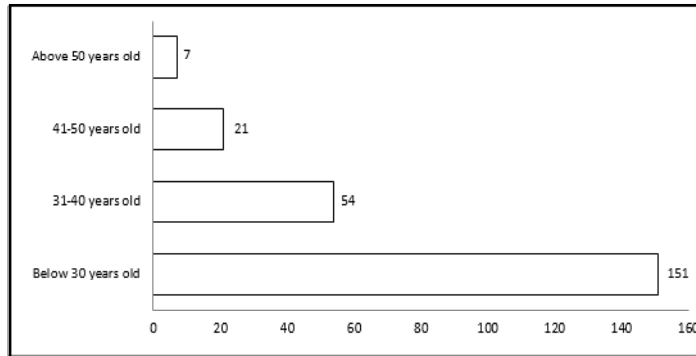
Table 1 demonstrates that 128 (55%) of the 233 respondents identify as male, while the remainder 105 (45%) identify as female. Gender distribution analysis is critical, particularly for studies such as assessing SDG awareness and perception among library professionals in Assam, as it enables a comprehensive understanding of varied viewpoints and potential inconsistencies.

Table-1

Gender	No of Respondent	Percentage (%)
Male	128	55 %
Female	105	45 %

(n=233)

On the other hand, Figure 1 illustrates the age breakdown of respondents, highlighting that the majority (64.8%) are below 30 years old. Additionally, 54 respondents (23.17%) fall within the 31-40 age bracket. Furthermore, 21 respondents (9.01%) are aged between 41 and 50 years, and finally, only 7 respondents (3%) are 50 years old or older.

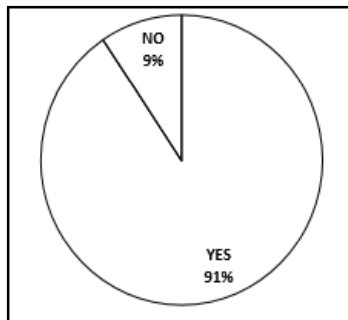


(n=233)

Figure 1: Age distribution of respondents

5.2 Familiarity with the Sustainable Development Goals

Figure 2 illustrates respondents' familiarity with the SDGs. A substantial majority (90.6%) demonstrate awareness of the SDGs, highlighting their significance in the professional landscape. Conversely, 9.4% of respondents lack familiarity, indicating a need for awareness-raising initiatives.



(n=233)

Figure 2: Familiarity with SDG

5.3 Level of familiarity with SDGs

The data presented in Table 2 indicates the extent of respondent familiarity with the SDGs. A significant proportion of respondents reported being “Quite familiar” with several goals, such as “Quality Education” (46.78%), “Gender Equality” (39.91%), “No Poverty” (39.91%), “Zero Hunger” (42.49%), and “Affordable and Clean Energy” (42.06%). Conversely, a notable number of respondents indicated being “Unfamiliar” with certain SDGs, such as “Life Below Water” (9.01%), “Life on Land” (5.15%), “Responsible Consumption and Production” (6%), “Sustainable Cities and Communities” (4.72%), among others. Additionally, respondents expressed being “Very familiar” with goals like “Quality Education”, “Gender Equality”, “No Poverty”, and “Zero Hunger”.

Table-2

SDG Goals	Completely Unfamiliar	Not Very Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Quite Familiar	Very Familiar
No Poverty	6	9	73	93	52
Zero Hunger	5	11	71	99	47
Good Health and Well-being	9	11	95	79	39
Quality Education	3	10	46	109	65
Gender Equality	5	12	68	93	55
Clean Water and Sanitation	7	14	84	77	51
Affordable and Clean Energy	13	19	64	98	39
Decent Work and Economic Growth	9	23	97	65	39
Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	5	17	88	76	47
Reduced Inequality	9	19	94	66	45
Sustainable Cities and Communities	11	26	81	79	36
Responsible Consumption and Production	14	21	99	70	29
Climate Action	4	17	86	75	51
Life Below Water	21	33	97	57	25
Life on Land	12	24	102	59	36
Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	7	17	99	69	41
Partnerships for the Goals	9	23	91	77	33

Note: multiple options are permitted (n=233)

5.4 Most progress SDGs

Table 3 displays the opinions of the respondents on the SDGs that their libraries have made the most progress in addressing. According to the respondents, the majority of libraries have made substantial

progress towards SDGs such as “Quality Education” (81.11%) and “Gender Equality” (56.65%). Furthermore, several libraries have addressed goals such as “No Poverty” (18.88%), “Zero Hunger” (18.88%), “Good Health and Well-being” (36.91%), “Reduced Inequality” (37.77%), and “Climate Action” (25.32%). However, only a tiny proportion of libraries have concentrated on SDGs such as “Life Below Water” (6.44%) and “Life on Land” (8.15%).

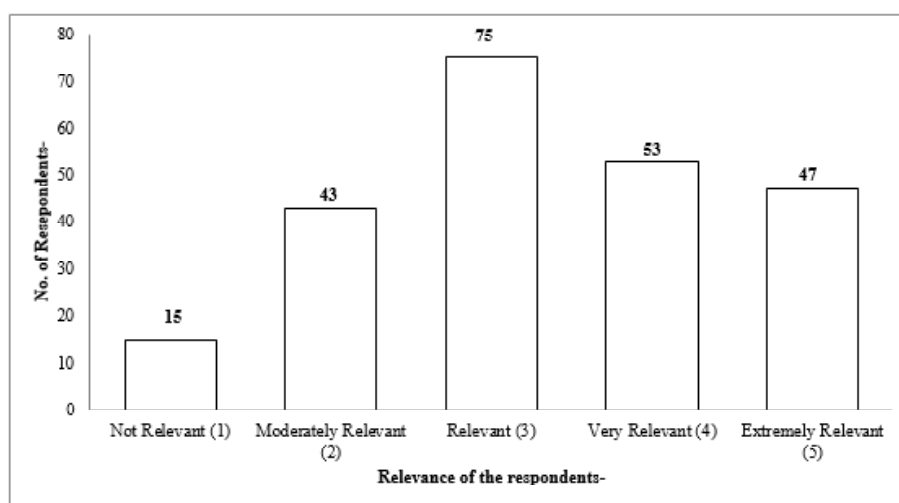
Table-3

Goals	No of respondents
No Poverty	44
Zero Hunger	44
Good Health and Well-being	86
Quality Education	189
Gender Equality	132
Clean Water and Sanitation	56
Affordable and Clean Energy	51
Decent Work and Economic Growth	49
Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	47
Reduced Inequality	88
Sustainable Cities and Communities	47
Responsible Consumption and Production	34
Climate Action	59
Life Below Water	15
Life on Land	19
Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	64
Partnerships for the Goals	47

Note: multiple options are permitted (n=233)

5.5 Relevance, Perspectives and Significance of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Perspectives and Significance of SDGs shed light on respondents’ differing perspectives and perceived importance of global sustainability goals. Figure 3 depicts the assessment of SDGs among library professionals in Assam. 75 (32.19%) of respondents believe SDGs are “relevant” to library work, while 53 (22.75%) think they are “very relevant” and 47 (20.17%) think they are “extremely relevant.” In contrast, 15 (6.44%) respondents believe the SDGs are “not relevant” to library operations, while 43 (18.45%) think they are “moderately relevant”.



(n=233)

Figure 3: Relevance of SDGs

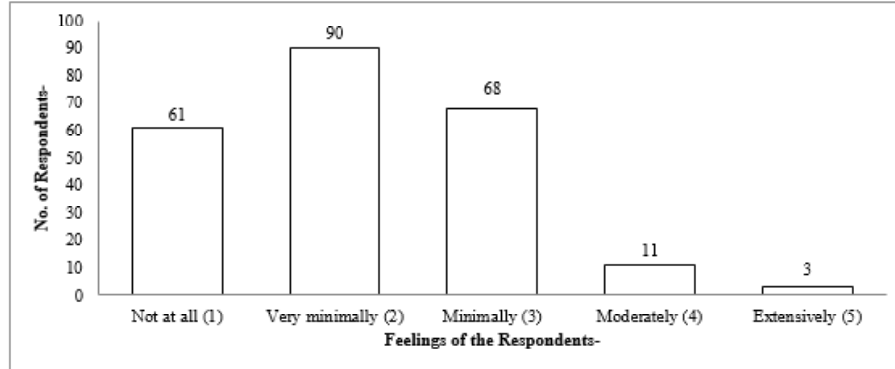
On the contrary, Table 4 presents the perceived importance of library professionals possessing knowledge about the SDGs. The majority of respondents (35.19%) consider it “Important” for a library professional to be knowledgeable about the SDGs, while a minimal percentage (0.43%) deem it “Not Important”. Furthermore, 12 (5.15%) respondents regard it as “Moderately Important”, 63 (27.03%) view it as “Very Important”, and 75 (32.18%) emphasize it as “Extremely Important”.

Table-4

Response	No. of Respondents-	Percentage
Not important (1)	1	0.43
Moderately Important (2)	12	5.15
Important (3)	82	35.19
Very Important (4)	63	27.03
Extremely Important (5)	75	32.18

(n=233)

Figure 4 depicts respondents’ perceptions on SDG integration into library services and programs. It is clear that the majority of respondents (38.63%) believe their library’s integration with SDGs is ‘Very Minimal’. Furthermore, 26.18% of respondents believe their library is ‘not at all’ incorporating SDGs into its services. Furthermore, 29.18% assess the integration as ‘Minimal’, 4.72% as ‘Moderate’, and 1.29% as ‘Extensive’.

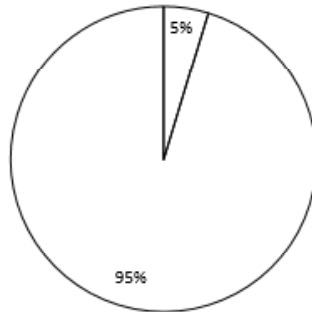


(n=233)

Figure-4: Integration of SDGs in Library

5.6 Availability of Resources

Figure 5 depicts the availability of resources and support for incorporating SDGs into library activities. Among the 233 responses, the vast majority, 95.3%, stated that their libraries lack the resources and support for this integration, with only 4.7%, or 11 people, responding affirmatively. This disparity reveals a major gap in the resources available for SDG integration within library settings.

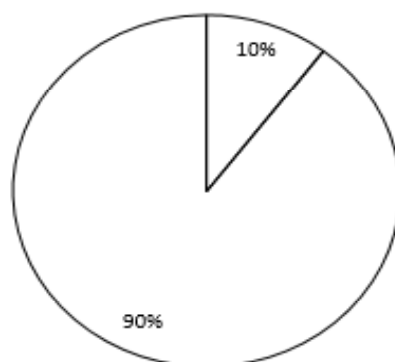


(n=233)

Figure-5: Availability of Resources

5.7 Collaboration to promote SDGs

Figure 6 depicts the extent to which external organizations or stakeholders collaborate to advance SDGs through library activities. Among the 233 respondents, the majority, 89.7%, acknowledged a lack of collaboration in this respect, whereas just 10.3%, or 24 people, reported participating in collaborative efforts. This research highlights the possibility for more collaboration to improve the efficacy of SDG promotion within library activities.



(n=233)

Figure-6: Collaboration to promote SDGs**5.8 Personal commitment to promote SDG**

Table 5 displays the respondents' personal commitment to promoting and advancing the SDGs through their work in libraries. The findings suggest that 104 respondents (44.54%) are very devoted to promoting SDGs through their work in libraries. It's concerning to learn that 11 of the respondents expressed they don't want to promote SDGs.

Table-5

Response	No. of the Respondents	Percentage
Not committed	11	4.72
Slightly committed	16	6.87
Neutral	49	21.03
Moderately committed	53	22.75
Strongly committed	104	44.54

(n=233)

5.9 Challenges

Table 6 outlines key challenges faced by libraries in promoting SDGs. Among respondents, the top challenges include "Lack of awareness about SDGs among library staff" (169 respondents), followed by "Limited training opportunities" (151 respondents). Other notable challenges include insufficient resources (143 respondents), difficulty integrating SDGs into existing services (130 respondents), and inadequate support from library administration (119 respondents). Some respondents also noted additional challenges under "Other". The multiple selections allowed highlight the complexity of obstacles faced in SDG promotion.

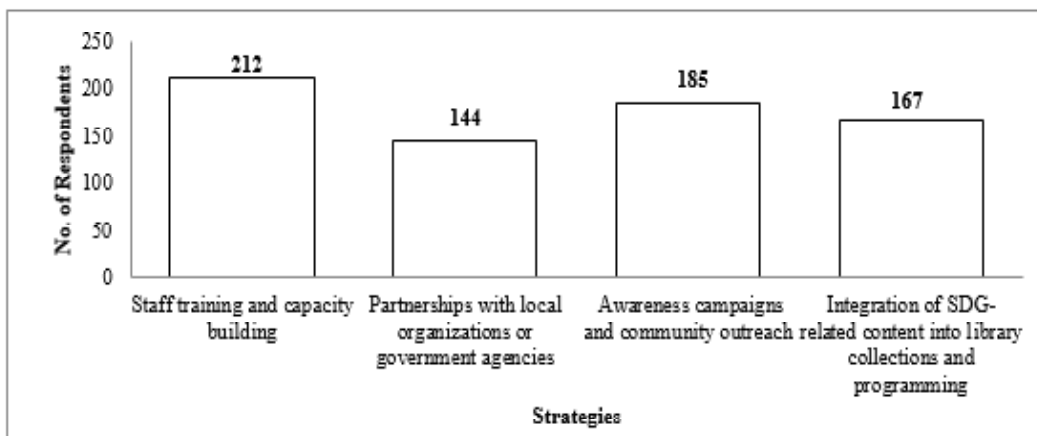
Table-6

Challenges	No. of Respondents	percentage
Lack of awareness about SDGs among library staff	169	72.53
Limited resources (budget, staff time) to dedicate to SDG initiatives	143	61.38
Difficulty in integrating SDGs with existing library services	130	55.79
Lack of support from library administration	119	51.07
Unclear connection between SDGs and the role of libraries	80	34.33
Lack of training and exercise.	151	64.80
Others	11	4.72

Note: multiple options are permitted (n=233)

5.10 Strategies to enhance the integration of SDGs

Figure 7 depicts strategies to strengthen the integration of SDGs into library operations and services in the coming years. It is obvious that the vast majority (90.99%) of respondents consider “staff-training and capacity building” as the primary technique for improving SDG integration in their libraries. Furthermore, a significant percentage (79.39%) advocate for “awareness campaigns and community outreach,” while 71.67% favor “integration of SDG-related content into library collections and programming,” emphasizing the multidimensional approach required for effective implementation.



Note: multiple options are permitted (n=233)

Figure-7: Strategies to enhance the integration of SDGs

6. Findings and Suggestions

Based on the study mentioned above, we can conclude that a majority of the library professionals in Assam are quite familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals. Additional findings and suggestions are outlined below-

- ❖ Most libraries have made strides in SDGs like Quality Education (81.11%) and Gender Equality (56.65%), while fewer have prioritized goals such as Life Below Water (6.44%) and Life on Land (8.15%).
- ❖ Out of the respondents, 32.19% find SDGs relevant to library work, while 6.44% consider them not relevant to library operations.
- ❖ Most respondents (35.19%) view it as “Important” for a library professional to be knowledgeable about the SDGs, with only a minimal percentage (0.43%) considering it “Not Important”.
- ❖ Most respondents (38.63%) see their library’s integration with SDGs as ‘Very Minimal’, with 4.72% viewing it as ‘Moderate’, and 1.29% considering it ‘Extensive’
- ❖ 95.3% indicated their libraries lack sufficient resources and support for integration, with only 4.7% confirming otherwise
- ❖ The majority (89.7%) didn’t collaborate with external groups for SDG library efforts, while only 10.3% (24 people) did.
- ❖ 44.54% strongly committed to promoting SDGs through their library work. Surprisingly, 11 respondents expressed unwillingness to promote SDGs.
- ❖ The top challenge, selected by 169 respondents, is “Lack of awareness about SDGs among library staff.” Following closely, 151 respondents identified “Lack of training and exercises” as their main obstacle.
- ❖ Several suggestions have been proposed based on its findings. These suggestions are outlined below:
- ❖ The government should play a pivotal role by prioritizing awareness campaigns about SDGs among library professionals through workshops, seminars, and training programs,
- ❖ The Government should allocate funds and resources specifically aimed at promoting SDG integration within libraries, including grants for capacity-building initiatives and the acquisition of relevant materials.
- ❖ Libraries should prioritize initiatives focused on enhancing integration, leveraging partnerships with external groups for support and collaboration.

Conclusion

Libraries have played a major role in furthering the UNs Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by providing access to information that helps countries achieve these goals. If library professionals engage strategically and particularly construct activities around the SDGs, libraries can have a significant impact. It is crucial to address how library professionals view and are knowledgeable about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. The current study shows that there is still a knowledge and involvement gap in the sector even while library professionals of Assam have a solid awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. To address these challenges, concerted efforts are needed to raise awareness and provide training on SDGs, emphasizing their relevance to library work. The present study also revealed that respondents were “Quite familiar” with goals like Quality Education (46.78%), Gender Equality (39.91%), No Poverty (39.91%), Zero Hunger (42.49%), and Affordable/Clean Energy (42.06%). Majority of respondents committed to promoting SDGs through their library work and more than 90% respondents prioritize “Staff - training and capacity building” as the primary strategy for enhancing SDG integration within their libraries. It is anticipated that library professionals from Assam will acquire advocacy skills to demonstrate the role libraries can play by 2030 within the SDGs timeframe.

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