

# THE ROLE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN COUNTRY POLICY

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The 1987 Brundtland Report defined sustainable development as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Bartelmus, 2012). At the heart of this concept is the belief that over the long term, social, economic and environmental objectives should be complementary and interdependent in the development process. In 1992, the Rio Summit established sustainable development as the guiding vision for development in both industrialized and developing countries, and for international development co-operation (Chung, 2009).

Sustainable development is not just about the environment. It entails balancing the economic, social and environmental objectives of society; the three dimensions of sustainable development integrating them wherever possible, through mutually supportive policies and practices, and making trade-offs where it is not possible (Donovan, 2009).

This includes, in particular, taking into account the impact of present decisions on the options of future generations (Jacob, 2009). The pursuit of sustainable development thus requires policy changes in many sectors and ensuring coherence between them (McMaster and Pollard, 2011). However, sustainable development has often been interpreted narrowly as an environmental issue without implications for more than a small group of society (Boulanger, 2008). In many countries, the responsibility for sustainable development issues has been given to environmental ministries and departments — often amongst the weakest and least influential in government. This has hindered the necessary process of cross-sectoral policy integration (Grobe, 2011).

Thus, while sustainable development is a universal challenge, practical responses can only be defined nationally and locally (World development report, 2011). Approaches to sustainable development reflect the diversity of the social, economic and environmental challenges faced by developing countries (Grobe, 2011). This is why there are many interpretations of sustainable development, deriving from different values and interests in different societies (Donovan, 2009).

Achieving sustainable development will require deep structural changes and new ways of working in all areas of economic, social and political life (Jacob, 2009). This will include promoting pro-poor economic growth and reforming fiscal policies which negatively affect the poor or promote environmental damage (Grobe, 2011). In the longer term, countries will have to ensure that their net wealth (including natural, manmade and human capital) remains constant or increases (World development report, 2011). This will require ensuring that market prices reflect the full social and environmental costs of production and consumption (Boulanger, 2008).

Issues of inequity and inequality of access to assets and resources need to be confronted. For example, it may be necessary to reform land tenure policies so as to increase access to disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Equally, it may be important to strengthen social capital and formal safety nets to cope with both external and domestic shocks (Grobe, 2011).

Sustainable development has important political, institutional and capacity implications. At the national and local level, it requires cross-sectoral and participatory institutions and integrating mechanisms which can engage governments, civil society and the private sector in developing shared visions, planning and decision-making (Boulanger, 2008).

Governments, corporations and development co-operation agencies will also need to be more open and accountable for their actions (Jacob, 2009). Innovation and investment in actions which promote sustainable development should be encouraged (Boulanger, 2008). More generally, economic planning and policy-making will have to become more participatory, prudent and transparent, as well as more long-term-oriented, so as to respect the interests of future generations (Grobe, 2011). Sustainable development is measured using the following attributes.

## **Availability**

Availability means the ability of the services to be readily available or access to available resources like lean and safe water, education, and food (Todaro, 2010). This attribute answers sustainable development in the economic aspect (Grobe, 2011). Development is deemed sustainable if people have access to clean and safe water and other basic necessities, their ability to access resources that can meet their needs without compromising the ability of the future generation to access these is always evidence of sustainable development (Boulanger, 2008).

**Stability**

This answers the sustainable development questions on the environment whereby environmentalists maintain that for development to be accepted as sustainable, meeting the needs of the current generation should not interfere with the steady progress of environmental factors like rainfall distribution and growth of features like forests as well as existence of natural water bodies (Grobe, 2011). This is the ground zero for both environmentalists and development practitioners as they all agree that development in whatever aspect should aim at improving the standards of the environment if it is to be agreed as sustainable (World development report, 2011).

**Freedom**

Freedom means having the power or right to speak or think as one wants. It's the power of self-determination attribute to the will, the quality of being independent of fate or necessity (Todaro, 2010). This focuses on the social aspect of development whereby the development of a society/ community should not interfere with the social freedoms of people (Grobe, 2011). People should live freely without anyone interfering with their social freedoms in terms of what they do and how they do it, in fact, they should feel that development is done for them. This means that development should only be considered sustainable if it respects and responds to people's social freedoms (Donovan, 2009).

**Quality**

In manufacturing, a measure of excellence is brought about by strict and consistent commitment to certain standards that achieve uniformity of a product in order to satisfy specific customer or user (Grobe, 2011). Sustainable development is based on having quality resources which means that for it to be effective, there must be quality resources and needs (Donovan, 2009). Jacob, (2009) suggests that quality leads to a perceived sustainable development improvement of the people.

Drawing on Mbaku& Smith, (2012), on the relationship between Governance, Capacity development and Sustainable, it can be noted that good governance, in all its facets, has been demonstrated to be positively correlated with the achievement of better growth rates, particularly through the building of institutions in support of markets. Recent empirical analysis suggests a positive correlation between democratic governance and the levels of income, investment, human capital, economic liberalization, and distributive income growth in society (Brinkerhoff & Derick, 2008).

Indeed, some analysts, such as Alfred Zack-Williams, have successfully argued that good governance, particularly its aspects of democratic consolidation, is a sine qua non for development. Consequently, the new maxim for Africa in the twenty-first century should be "no democracy, no development" (Mbaku& Smith, 2012). Similarly, United Nations (U.N.) Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said that "good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development" (Ranz, 2009). Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said that "good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development" (Ranz, 2009).

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