



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development means attaining a balance between environmental protection and human economic development and between the present and future needs. It means equity in development and sectoral actions across space and time. It requires an integration of economic, social and environmental approaches towards development. But what is most frequently quoted is that formulated by the Brundtland Commission in 1987. According to this definition, "sustainable development" is that pattern of development which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs." In addition to emphasizing the intergenerational (and intragenerational) equity, this broad definition also covered two other key concepts. The first is the concept of "needs", especially the needs of the world's poor which are seen to have overriding priority. The second concept is the idea of "limits" on the ability of the environment to meet the present and future needs. All these have some combination of development and environment as well as equity; however, there are differences on the emphasis placed on what is to be developed, what is to be sustained and how to link environment with development.

KEYWORDS: Sustainable Development, Human Development, Environmental Protection.

INTRODUCTION

The all-inclusiveness of the sustainability concept is both its strength and weakness. It is strength because it is elegant and accommodates all viewpoints in discussion about achieving sustainability. The concept's ability to be so inclusive lies in its inherent ambiguity that seeks to harmonize the real conflict between economy and environment and between the present and the future. The weakness, on the other hand, arises from the fact that there are obvious contradictions which create difficulties in operational zing of the concept. For instance, when the present generation has difficulties in addressing effectively the more urgent problems of intergenerational equity and unfairness, how can it address the problem of intergenerational justice and equity through its actions? Again, there are obvious difficulties in reconciling economic growth and sustainability with environmental and social integrity. In practice, efforts to enhance socio-environmental quality have been viewed as imposing additional costs thereby impeding economic growth.

“Sustainable development”, however, is a positive concept that calls for changes in the attitudes and values that are responsible for making the current trends unsustainable. In that sense it represents an ethical position designed for political or public action. In broad terms, sustainable development means economic and social development that endures over the long run. Increasingly, there should be focus on the multi-dimensional nature of the concept comprising the three pillars: economic, environmental and social. Striving for sustainable development will inevitably involve conflict among economic, environmental and social goals which have to be managed and balanced.

Sustainable development is a process of change rather than a fixed state of harmony. The concepts of interrelatedness, of a shared planet, of global citizenship, and of ‘spaceship earth’ cannot be restricted to environmental issues alone. They apply equally to the shared and inter-linked responsibilities of environmental protection and human development. History has led to vast inequalities, leaving almost three-fourths of the world's people living in less-developed countries and one-fifth below the poverty line. The long-term impact of past industrialization, exploitation and environmental damage cannot be wished away. It is only right that development in this new century be even more conscious of its long-term impact. The

problems are complex and the choices difficult. Our common future can only be achieved with a better understanding of our common concerns and shared responsibilities.

Following are some perspectives and approaches towards achieving a sustainable future:

ROLE OF ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

One of the greatest challenges that the world is facing today is climate change. Climate change is the variation in the earth's global climates over time. It involves changes in the variability or average state of the atmosphere over durations ranging from decades to millions of years. These changes can be caused by dynamic process on earth, external forces including variations in sunlight intensity and more recently by human activities. Human influences can be by increase in CO₂ levels due to combustion of fossil fuels, aerosols, cement manufacture etc. Other factors like ozone depletion, animal agriculture and deforestation also change climate. The effect of climate change can be found on among other things, on rising sea level that may accelerate coastal erosion, on increasing temperature, on increase in intensity of natural disaster, and very importantly on vector borne diseases. There has been an increasing trend in the annual mean temperature in India. In recent decades the east coast has been experiencing fewer rainy days while the northwest has been experiencing heavy summer monsoon. There have also been some extreme climatic events like heat wave, intense rain, floods and droughts in India.

Sustainable planning should aim at achieving social and environmental equity while improving the lives of the people. For that to happen we need to have a sustainable form as well as provision and proper management of the services. Thus, in order for a country to be sustainable it needs to produce and manage basic services like water, waste, energy, and transportation in a way that it conforms to the principles of sustainable development. So it requires sustainable management of basic services such as:-

Management of water supply:-

The effect of climate change on water supply will be negative in almost all the countries. Thus care should be taken that energy efficient alternative systems are innovated. As for efficient practices, water consumption can be limited by using raw water, recycled water for gardening and landscaping. In India

the water from Sewage Treatment Plants (STP) in factories are used for landscaping and gardening. However, in developing countries the main challenge is to provide clean drinking water to all the residents adopting sustainable water management practices. Rainwater harvesting has its possibilities for partially managing water supply. Conservation of old water bodies like lakes, ponds can be made for increased and sustainable water supply.

Management of waste:-

Waste management practices should be started from the production and distribution stages of economic activities through reuse and recycling. Reuse of things like metals, glass, paper, plastic, textiles, organic waste and water will reduce demand for energy, raw materials, fertilizers and fresh water sources. However, care should be taken that hazardous wastes do not go for recycling. Plastic should be used less. As such the department of environment of the government of India recommended that other 'best practices' in waste management should be adopted in a large scale. The practices include vermiculture, pelletisation, aerobic composting and so on.

Management of energy:-

Energy management practices should be encouraged in the planning of buildings and the city form. Buildings and city forms that are energy efficient and use sustainable energies like solar and wind energies should be considered.

POVERTY ERADICATION AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Poverty and a degraded environment are closely inter-related, especially where people depend for their livelihoods primarily on the natural resource base of their immediate environment. Restoring natural systems and improving natural resource management practices at the grassroots level are central to a strategy to eliminate poverty. The survival needs of the poor force them to continue to degrade an already degraded environment. Removal of poverty is therefore a prerequisite for the protection of the environment. Market forces also lead to the elimination of crops that have traditionally been integral to the diet of the poor, thereby threatening food security and nutritional status. While conventional economic development leads to the elimination of several traditional occupations, the process of sustainable development, guided by the need to protect and conserve the environment, leads to the creation of new jobs and of opportunities for the reorientation of traditional skills to new

occupations. Ensuring the security of their livelihoods is an imperative for sustainable development.

CONVERSION OF UNSUSTAINABLE PATTERNS OF CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

With increasing purchasing power, wasteful consumption linked to market driven consumerism is stressing the resource base of developing countries further. It is important to counter this through education and public awareness. In several areas, desirable limits and standards for consumption need to be established and applied through appropriate mechanisms including education, incentives and legislation. Several traditional practices that are sustainable and environment friendly continue to be a regular part of the lives of people in developing countries. These need to be encouraged rather than replaced by more 'modern' but unsustainable practices and technologies.

MANAGING THE NATURAL RESOURCE BASE OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

To ensure the sustainability of the natural resource base, the recognition of all stakeholders in it and their roles in its Protection and management is essential. There is need to establish well-defined and enforceable rights (including customary rights) and security of tenure, and to ensure equal access to land, water and other natural and biological resources.

Biomass is, and will continue for a long time to be, a major source of fuel and energy, especially for the rural poor. Recognizing this fact, appropriate mechanisms must be evolved to make such consumption of biomass sustainable, through both resource management and the promotion of efficient and minimally polluting technologies, and technologies which will progressively reduce the pressures on biomass, which cause environmental degradation.

HUMAN HEALTH

Human health in its broadest sense of physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing is to a great extent dependent on the access of the citizen to a healthy environment. For a healthy, productive and fulfilling life every individual should have the physical and economic access to a balanced diet, safe drinking water, clean air, sanitation, environmental hygiene, primary health care and education. Access to safe drinking water and a healthy environment should be a fundamental right of every citizen.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Population:-

There is need for a better and more widespread

Understanding that the number of children desired by any couple depends on a large and complexly interrelated number of socio-economic and cultural factors, and that any policy action seeking to control population must seriously take all these variables into account.

An important part of empowering women in matters pertaining to population is to explicitly recognize and respect their rights over their bodies and their reproductive behavior. This recognition must permeate society in general, and religious, judicial and law-enforcement institutions in particular, through continual campaigning and dialogue. The pursuit of population control must not be allowed to compromise human rights and basic democratic principles.

Reduction in Inequality:-

Management of basic services in the cities should reduce inequality in services between rich and poor. The concept of commercial viability should not hold for social services always.

Education:-

Basic education which promotes functional literacy, livelihood skills, understanding of the immediate environment and values of responsible citizenship is a precondition for sustainable development. Such education must be available to every child as a fundamental right, without discrimination on the basis of economic class, geographical location or cultural identity. Adequate resources and support for education for sustainable development are essential. An understanding must be promoted among key decision makers of the potential of education to promote sustainability, reduce poverty, train people for sustainable livelihoods and catalyze necessary public support for sustainable development initiatives. The empowerment of women and girls must be supported by actions to improve their access to basic and higher education, training and capacity building.

Finance:-

Conditions attached to financial assistance need to be rigorously scrutinized, and the assistance accepted only if the conditionality is acceptable. Financial support for sustainable development programmers must not be negatively influenced by political considerations external to the objectives of the assistance.

Trade:-

Imperatives of trade, and the concerns related to environment, equity and social justice however need to be dealt with independently. Environmental and social clauses which are implicitly or explicitly part of international agreements must not be used selectively to erect trade barriers against developing countries.

Technology:-

Developing countries need not follow the conventional path to development with regard to technologies but must use to their advantage the cutting edge technology options now available to 'leapfrog', and put the tools of modern technology to use. Mechanisms must be put in place to make available to developing countries the latest technologies at reasonable cost.

Development is not a product but it is a process. Environment deals with the interrelationship between environment and economic development. Environmental strategy is about protecting and enhancing our natural resources. India's natural resource is composed of many elements, like air, climate, water, land, soil and minerals, and plant and animal. These elements support the social, economic, and cultural well-being action. The environmental strategy is based on the premise of sustainable development, which is meeting the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs. In short, sustainable development consists of economic, environmental and social development. According to this, ensuring environmental sustainability means taking steps, which include a) integration of the principles of sustainable development in the policies and programmes of the country, b) reversal of loss of environmental resources, c) reduction of the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water, d) improving the lives of slum dwellers e) providing better education, f) better carrier planning for youth.

There is both a need and a scope for regional and global cooperation in sustainable development. Efforts must be made, especially by developing countries, to work towards synergizing experiences and raising shared regional concerns as a strong united front in international forums. Mechanisms must be put in place to facilitate such international exchange of domestic and global experiences in sustainable development.

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