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Sustainable Development & Environment Protection

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ABSTRACT

"I only feel angry when I see waste. When I see people throwing away things we could use."

- Mother Teresa.

These lines of Mother Teresa best describe the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development implies making optimum use of resources with ample left for future generation to use. It's a way of life that is required to be adopted by humans so that they do not destroy mother Earth completely in the name of development. No doubt that we are living in the era of globalization where it is important to keep pace with the fast pace of development but at the same time we should keep in mind that not all that is grown on Earth is renewable. Our Earth is full of resources (both renewable and non-renewable) but the pace of human excavation is much intense than the pace of regeneration. In such a scenario we have come to a situation that it becomes imperative for us to adopt measures conducive to the sustainable means of life. In doing so the efforts of every single individual matters how so small it is. It is important for the realisation of mankind that now it is high time that we should mend our ways, else the nature will take its revenge in the form of tsunamis, earthquakes, land rifts, avalanches, floods, and droughts and so on. As rightly said by Leo Tolstoy, 'One of the first conditions of happiness is that the link between man and nature shall not be broken.' If this link is broken and we start disrespecting Nature, we have to pay a very high price. In the present paper it is the sincere effort of the researcher to explain and highlight various National & International steps taken by World Civilization in protection of Environment and promotion of practice of sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Environment, Protection, Preservation and legislation.

I. INTRODUCTION

"A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people." — Franklin D. Roosevelt

The connection of man with nature is very old one. Nature has facilitated every need of

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mankind. Whether it was to satisfy his hunger with food, to console his thirst with water or to provide him soothing shelters of green trees. It has played a very crucial role in the development of human civilization. Mother Nature has been very kind to us in providing all the exigencies of life. Our planet Earth is filled with wonders of universe. It has hidden treasure for all of us to fulfil our needs in life. It is full of Natural Resources. Natural resources can be defined as the resources that exist (on the planet) independent of human actions. These are the resources that are found in the environment and are developed without the intervention of humans like air, sunlight, water, soil, stone, plants, animals and fossil fuels. well. Natural resources are used to make food, fuel and raw materials for the production of goods. All of the food that people eat comes from plants or animals. Natural resources such as coal, natural gas and oil provide heat, light and power. Natural resources also are the raw materials for making products that we use every day from our toothbrush and lunch box to our clothes, cars, televisions, computers and refrigerators.

Although there are various parameters of classifying natural resources such as biotic-abiotic, potential-actual-stock resources but the one which is of prime concern is the renewable and non-renewable resources. Renewable resources are those natural resources such as trees, water, sun and wind that can be replenished at about the same rate at which they are used. Renewable resources, however, can be depleted if not properly managed or conserved. Non-renewable resources are those natural resources that are depleted more quickly than they can regenerate. Fossil fuels like oil and natural gas were formed over millions of years. Once mined and used completely, non-renewable resources are gone forever.

Over the centuries Human had been insensitive to the way they are using these resources. Extracting, processing and using natural resources in an inappropriate manner can cause environmental problems such as: air, land and water pollution; disruption or destruction of ecosystems; and a decrease in biodiversity. Diminishing the Earth's biodiversity has a substantial human cost because wild species and natural ecosystems are important resources. John Paul II says that, "The Earth will not continue to offer its harvest, except with faithful stewardship. We cannot say we love the land and then take steps to destroy it for use by future generations."

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) warns that the current overexploitation of natural resources is generating an enormous deficit, as 20% more than can be regenerated is consumed each year and this percentage is growing steadily.

Thus, if we continue at this rate, we would need 2.5 planets to supply ourselves in 2050,

according to the WWF itself. In turn, this organization shows that the world's population of fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles declined by 58 % between 1970 and 2012 due to human activities and predicts that by 2020 this percentage will soar to 67%.

As a consequence of over exploitation of Natural Resources can be seen on environment, economic and health. For instance, the disappearance of habitats essential for flora and fauna and, therefore, the extinction of species. There are some 30 million different animal and plant species in the world, and of these, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) says that, currently, more than 31,000 species are threatened with extinction. 33% of the world's soils are moderately to highly degraded, according to a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). If the erosion of fertile soil continues at the same rate, agricultural commodity prices will inevitably soar. If we do not take care of the forests there will be fewer CO₂ sinks and therefore more air pollution. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nine out of ten people worldwide breathe air with high levels of pollutants and seven million people die each year air pollution.

The serious damage that we might cause to our Earth has lead the us to take the moderate step of sustainable development. Jane Goodall had rightly said, “You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of a difference you want to make.” The difference that we have to choose for is to have a sustainable way of life style.’

We often forget how much humans depend on nature. Even city-dwellers living in modern skyscrapers need air to breathe, water to drink, and food to eat, all of which are provided by nature. True, you can buy bottled water and ready-to-eat meals in supermarkets, but they were not produced there. Some fruits and vegetables, for example, only grow in tropical countries and cross the globe in refrigerated ship containers, to arrive just ripe to your local supermarket. All drinking water ultimately comes from a natural source, since we still do not have the technology to manufacture large amounts of water in the laboratory. The same applies to the air we breathe, which is purified and oxygenated by plants. So, when we speak about preserving nature, we are really also talking about preserving ourselves.

Sustainable development though is the product of late 19th Century but the concept was not unknown in past centuries. Although the terms ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable’ appeared for the first time in the Oxford English Dictionary during the second half of the 20th century the equivalent terms in French (durabilite’ and durable), German (Nachhaltigkeit, literally meaning ‘lastingness’, and nachhaltig) and Dutch (duurzaamheid and duurzaam) have been used for

centuries.¹ It was clear to the thinker's right from 5th Century BC that how growing demand for raw material may cause degradation of environment. Plato in the 5th century BC, Strabo and Columella in the 1st century BC and Pliny the Elder in the 1st century AD discussed different types of environmental degradation resulting from human activities such as farming, logging and mining.² These authors were not only aware of the evil consequences of environment degradation but they also suggested that by being more sensitive and caring to our environment we can fight this growing evil. So people were well aware of the impact of human activities on the Earth and they were also tracing the means that can be helpful in overcoming the problem.

The term 'sustainable development' first came to prominence in the 3 world conservation strategy (WCS) IN 1980. It achieved a new status with the publication of two significant reports by Brundtland on: North and south: a programme for survival and common crisis (1985). Our common future (1983) and has gained even greater attention since the United Nations Conference on Environment and development (UNCED) held in Rio de Jenerio in June 1992.

Sustainable development represents an opportunity to construct new approach, and the success of these efforts has powerful implications for issues of peace and security. The term 'Sustainable development' in place of 'development' is now being increasingly used these days. It has become a major topic of discussion among all social organizations, social scientists and leaders. The industrial-technological and economic development registered by the humankind during the past 100 years has not proved to be real development in so far as it has created imbalances in the environment as well as among nations.

The degradation of environment, resulting from excessive exploitation of the resources of our planet earth, has threatened to negate, and in fact has already adversely affected the development registered by various societies.

Sustainable development is now held to be an essential condition for securing stable, enduring, real and sustainable world peace, security and development.

What is Sustainable Development?

Environmental governance advocates sustainability as a supreme consideration in managing all human activities- political, social and economic. The concept of sustainability relies on sustainable development.

According to Brundtland Commission*

¹ (Van Zon 2002: 20, 21, 22).

² (see Pliny the Elder 1938: 293; Columella 1948: 3, 5; Strabo 1949: 353; Van Zon 2002: 1, 2, 27, 29).

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

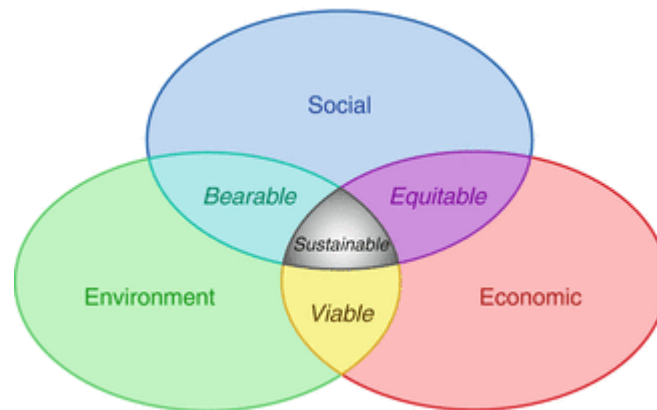


Fig: Relationship in sustainable development-environment, social and economic concerns

Development is about change, and sustainable development is about lasting change. The goal is to ensure a future for all; a world where all human beings on earth- in this and future generations- can live free from fear, hunger and poverty.

The concept of sustainable development was introduced by the Brundtland report in 1987. It's concept of sustainable development became the foundation for the first Rio conference(the UN Conference on Development and the Environment), that was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Sustainable development is a process that aims or human well-being and economic development, whilst ensuring that ecological systems are in balance.

II. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nation Member States in 2005 as a universal call of action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

The 17 SDGs are integrated- i.e., they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes to others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.

The 17 goals are as follows:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Make cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Take urgent actions to combat climate change and its impacts
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

III. BACKGROUND OF SDGS

The Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) were declared at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent environment, political and economic challenges facing our world. The SDGs replace the Millennium Development Goals(MDGs), which started a global effort in 2000 to tackle the indignity of poverty. The MDGs established measurable, universally-agreed objectives for tackling extreme poverty and hunger, preventing deadly diseases, and expanding primary education to all children, among other development priorities.

Key MDG achievements:

- More than 1 billion people have been lifted out of extreme poverty.
- Child mortality dropped by more than half.
- The number of out of school children has dropped by more than half.
- HIV/AIDS infections fell by almost 40%.

SDGs reaffirm our international commitment to end poverty, permanently, everywhere. They involve us all to build a more sustainable, safer, more prosperous planet for humanity.

IV. ELEMENTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

Three core elements of sustainable development are economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. It is crucial to harmonize them. Sustainable economic growth, achieving sustainable livelihood, living in harmony with nature and appropriate technology are important for sustainable development.

- **Environmental Sustainability**

It prevents nature from being used as an inexhaustible source of resources and ensure its protection and rational use. The aspects such as environmental conservation, investment in renewable energy, saving water, supporting sustainable mobility and innovation in sustainable construction and architecture, contribute to achieving environmental sustainability on several fronts.

- **Social Sustainability**

It can foster gender equality, development of people, communities and cultures to help achieve a reasonable and fairly-distributed quality of life, healthcare and education across the globe.

- **Economic Sustainability**

It focuses on equal economic growth that generates wealth for all, without harming the environment. Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

V. ROLES OF GOVERNMENT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The role of government in society in general has expanded dramatically over the past century in comparison to pre-twentieth century functions, governments have taken a new and vast roles that typically comprise a modern state.

It is generally said that governments should act as a catalyst for change. They should champion and set the pace of transformation, establish conducive statutory frameworks to protect the environment, and make the resources available. Governments are also responsible for economic

prosperity, the general welfare of the population, and overall socio-economic development. The key role of governments' role as catalyst for socio-economic development is striking a healthy balance between environmental protection and economic growth. Without the protection of the environment, citizens of a country will not have a healthy and safe place in which to live and will not have access to clean water, air and soil. Growing population and rapid economic growth significantly increase the demands for natural resources and infrastructure. It has become crucial for the governments to find ways of managing these demands efficiently. Governments, furthermore must establish and adhere to international protocols, conventions, and treaties. In addition, governments should develop special support strategies and programmes to foster sustainable development.

VI. CONCLUSION

“We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

- Albert Einstein

To make the process of sustainable development feasible and operational, it is important to establish common focus that can integrate the outlook and efforts of various participants in development, worldwide. The developed countries need to change their production and consumption patterns, including by limiting the use of fossil fuels and plastics, and to encourage public and private investments that align with the SDGs.

Environment commons such as the atmosphere, rainforests and oceans must be safeguarded as crucial sources of ecosystem services and natural resources. All stakeholders must work together to conserve, restore and sustainably use natural resources. The food system must undergo widespread changes to the infrastructure, cultural and societal norms, and policies that are supporting the current, unsustainable, status quo. There is a need of deeper, faster and much ambitious response to unleash the social and economic transformation needed to achieve our 2030 goals. A far more optimistic future is still attainable only by drastically changing development policies, incentives and actions.
