

Sustainable Development – Initiatives for a Better World

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Abstract - The domestic and international environment has been impacted by innumerable changes and countries are striving hard to achieve economic success by the implementation of various initiatives that will have a long term sustainable impact for the future generations. The OECD policy brief states that the loss of key elements of the ecosystem can alter the balance between its components and lead to long term consequences countries are facing multi-pronged challenges in order to retain and sustain skills and talents. The importance of a support structure to achieve the millennium development goals is very important. This paper assesses the role of the sustainable initiatives across the world and especially of the Indian government in formulating the strategic policies for sustainable growth, as it is believed that unsustainable development results in social inequities. The government needs to contribute to the society through certain policies which require a grass root level implementation.

Key words - Economy, Environment, Environment, OECD, Society, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Initiatives, Technology

“ If everyone used energy and resources the same way we do in the western world, we would need three more earths at least. And we have only one.”

- Mona Sahlin, Former Minister for Sustainable Development, Sweden, *Institutionalising Sustainable Development*

I. INTRODUCTION

Citizens of the emerging and transitional economies like India, which are undergoing rapid change have suddenly started getting access huge amounts of wealth, which in turn is resulting in an increased demand for energy and greater pollution problems. Citizens of various countries have been realizing the importance of reducing waste, renewing urban space, etc. at the local level and have set up several initiatives in this regard.

There has been significant progress made by nations in the last 20 years in incorporating sustainable development processes into their planning and also their policy framework. Government insistence in these countries resulted in the formation of proactive businesses, which started focusing on sustainable products and processes. This in no way resulted in reduced complexities of the process of converting the principles of sustainable development. Both institutions and people have been forced to review these processes by changing their habits.

The consumption practices of the growing affluent masses have been the cause for the extreme and negative environmental impact of climate change with devastating consequences. Even today, about half of the world population is said living with less than \$2.50 a day and lacks access to adequate clean water, sanitation, healthcare, education and such basic amenities, which is in direct contrast to the higher standards of living of the developed world.

OBJECTIVES

This study attempts to have an understanding of the role played by government and inter-governmental organisations in achieving the development goals set by the UN, the main objectives being;

1. To understand the concept and evolution of sustainable development/ growth as being increasingly relevant to humanity's future.
2. To assess the various sustainable initiatives in the world and in India.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on theoretical and observational research which involved the study of historical data from research papers, journals, reports and other secondary data sources.

II. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Development is the art or process of developing, growth and progress. Whereas, development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs is sustainable development. It has only been since the 1980s that the term sustainable has begun to gain wide acceptance, as a result of a UN – convened commission – the Brundtland Report that was proposed as “a global agenda for change”. This report ensured that fallacy of development and focused and the urgent need to rethink the way in which societies are living.

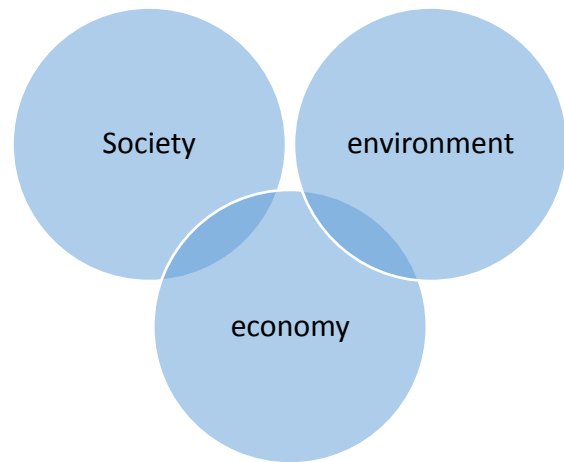
The world’s attention was focused by the World Commission on environment and development to the “the accelerating deterioration of economic and social development”. This resulted in the development of two ideas i.e. that the wellbeing of the environment is inextricably linked to that of the economies and of the people, and that sustainable development requires a global scale cooperation. It focused on the fact that development of this nature can only occur through the integrated efforts that span across borders and between generations. The potential impact of these efforts/decisions on the society, environment and economy on the future is massive.

By the early 21st century the term sustainable development has entered the public sphere, instead of being restricted to academic and policy debates. Sustainable development came to mean;

- Spreading the benefits of economic growth to all citizens turning brownfields into ecologically sound housing projects.
- Increasing educational opportunities for both girls and boys.
- Innovating industrial processes to be more energy efficient and less polluting.

The Three Pillars of Sustainable Development

Social wellbeing is directly linked to the economic wellbeing of a society, which in turn depends on a healthy environment/biosphere. The Society, the Economy and the Environment are the three pillars of sustainable development. A society needs to tackle issues of unrest, poverty and disease in order to develop in the long-term.



It may, therefore, be said that sustainable development as a conceptual framework needs to find a way to change the predominant world view to one that is holistic and balanced. It is the process that applies the principles of integration to all the three pillars to all decisions (across space and time).

III. SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES

The human society has been facing innumerable challenges due to the interdependence of the natural, economic and social systems and extraordinary solutions are needed to address these. In recognition of this fact the UN has recognized the need for a multi-pronged approach.

The Earth Summit, Rio, 1992 - Agenda 21

The Earth Summit played a significant role in influencing all the subsequent UN conferences by examining the relationship between human rights, population, social development, women and human settlements, and also the need or sustainable development. The latter World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 1993 also consequently, emphasized on the people’s right to a healthy environment and the right to development. Representatives from 179 countries signed major agreements in order to initiate and implement the process of sustainable development in four domain;

- Social and economic dimension to combat poverty and to promote sustainable urban planning.
- Conservation and management of resources to address issues like safeguarding the Ocean’s fisheries and also combating deforestation.
- Strengthening the role of major groups at the local level, by focusing on local governments, NGOs and women.
- Develop means of implementation, especially to transfer environmentally sound technology.

Transforming the world with the Agenda for Sustainable Development – 2030

“The 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, provide a coherent, holistic

framework for addressing these challenges and their interconnections. (...) They require member states to address the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner. Their implementation must embody the principles of inclusiveness, integration and 'leaving no one behind'."

– **AntónioGuterres, United Nations Secretary-General**

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets were adopted on 25thSeptember, 2015 by Heads of State and Government at a special UN summit and came into effect on 1st January, 2016. The Agenda was formed to commit members to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by the year 2030 world-wide, and also to ensure the participation of all nations. The adoption of this Agenda was a landmark achievement, providing for a shared global vision towards sustainable development for all.

This Agenda recognized the fact that dependence on economic goals is insufficient for the continuous wellbeing of the earth. "These goals reflect our evolving understanding of the social, economic and environmental linkages that define our lives".It consists of 4 sections:

- A political Declaration
- A set of 17 sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets
- Means of Implementation



- A framework for follow up and review of the Agenda. In addition, the 2030 Agenda integrates in a balanced manner the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental.

IV. INDIA’S INITIATIVES

“Just as our vision behind Agenda 2030 is lofty, our goals are comprehensive. It gives priority to the problems that have endured through the past decades. And, it reflects our evolving understanding of the social, economic and

environmental linkages that define our lives... The sustainable development of one-sixth of humanity will be of great consequence to the world and our beautiful planet.”

– **Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India**

SDGs & National Action

The Indian government entrusted the task of coordinating the SDGs to the National Institution for Transforming India - **NITI Aayog**, which has identified the ministries for each target (lead and supporting ministries). The State governments have been identified as the crucial driving forces to achieve SDG progress by playing a pivotal role in implementing the programs of *Swacch Bharat, Make in India, Skill India and Digital India*. The Local governments have also been tasked with equally important role of monitoring 15 of the 17 SDGs directly relate to them. Keen attention is paid by visioning, planning, budgeting, monitoring systems.

National Research Development Corporation

The NRDC has been the torch bearer in the field of technology transfer and undertakes a number of activities in a structured manner in encouraging and advancing research, promotion of inventions and innovations, etc. they have been successfully exporting technologies and services. NRDC has been player in implementing various initiatives of the government towards fulfilling the SDGs and in bridging the gap between the level of development and industrial requirements. It is also playing a key role in skillfully managing and multiplying technological resources and in implementing, evaluating and scaling up social development projects.

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)

With the vision of ‘*Creating Innovative Solutions for a Sustainable Future*’, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) is a leading think tank that has been dedicated to conducting research for sustainable development of India and the Global South and it plays a crucial role to play in its implementation as well, in mobilizing society, helping in the organisation and capacity building of stakeholder groups, promoting action-research and field-level implementation, and facilitating knowledge management, and , dissemination of information. It is committed to making a mark as a research institute, whose policy and technology solutions transformed people's lives and the environment.TERI's key focus lies in promoting:Clean energy, Water management, Pollution management, Sustainable agriculture and Climate resilience.

Over the last two decades, TERI's research has consistently supported the Government of India in global climate policy negotiations. TERI is among the few institutions in India with climate modelling capability to forecast climate risks at

regional scales. Every year since 2001, TERI has been convening one of the largest international summits - the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit, now elevated to the World Sustainable Development Summit - to provide a common platform to leading thinkers of the world to share and reiterate key messages on sustainable development. It has been providing a diverse range of services and solutions. With human capital as its largest asset it works with nearly 1200 people comprising of scientists, sociologists, economists, and engineers to design holistic solutions.

TERI with its SDG and Policy coordination (SPC) hopes to achieve integration with the stakeholders, governments and NGOs in order to facilitate integrated and multi-disciplinary research on resources, energy and environment related SDGs.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Sustainable development is the key to balanced growth. Structural reform with transition planning is, therefore, needed at all levels in order to ease the transition, with political support and leadership. The sustainable Development issues depend to a large extent, on environmentally motivated initiatives. Governments have to play a stronger role in framing policy initiatives to offset the lags in implementing the policies, also develop initiatives that feature regional, sectoral and geographically motivated issues to promote economic development and job creation and also provide infrastructure to overcome market failures.

Significant change needs to occur in how people and governments perceive their roles, responsibilities and abilities in order to make sustainable development possible. The primary emphasis, however, needs to shift from increasing the material wealth to a more complex and interconnected model of the human development process. The end goal is to

identify and ix specific problems of resource depletion, health care, social exclusion, poverty, unemployment, etc.

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