

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a major approach that has dominated the development discourse in contemporary periods. This approach makes an attempt to combine growing concerns about a range of environmental issues with socio-economic issues. According to this paradigm, development cannot be simply growth and economy centric. But it has to bring a blend between growth, human development and environment. So it has to take into consideration environmental concerns to make development more yielding, lasting and effective.

1.5.1 Meaning and definition

Sustainable development has thus, the potential to address fundamental challenges for humanity, now and into the future. It tries to bring a synergy between humanity and environment. The approach insists environment is not external to humanity, but an integral part of it. So, development concerns should take into consideration environment issues. Thus as an approach of development it is environment centric in character.

Sustainable Development implies economic growth together with the protection of environmental quality, each reinforcing the other. Sustainable Development, thus, is maintaining a balance between the human need to improve lifestyles and feeling of well-being on one hand, and preserving natural resources and ecosystems, on which we and future generations depend.

The concept of sustainable development is the result of the growing awareness of the global links between mounting environmental problems, socio-economic issues to do with poverty and inequality and concerns about a healthy future for humanity. It strongly links environmental and socioeconomic issues. This process of bringing together environmental and socioeconomic questions was most famously expressed in the Brundtland Report's definition of sustainable development as meeting 'the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs'. This defines needs from a human standpoint; as Lee has argued, 'sustainable development is an unashamedly anthropocentric concept'. According to the

The World Conservation Union, 1991, sustainable development may also be defined as “improving the quality of life while living within the carrying capacity of ecosystems”.

Thus, Sustainable development does not focus solely on environmental issues. More broadly, it encompasses the three general policy areas namely economy, environment and society. The Swiss ‘Monitoring of Sustainable Development Project’ in 2001, proposed the following definition: ‘Sustainable development means ensuring dignified living conditions with regard to human rights by creating and maintaining the widest possible range of options for freely defining life plans. The principle of fairness among and between present and future generations should be taken into account in the use of environmental, economic and social resources.

According to Robert Prescott Allen, who has founded and chaired several influential IUCN-The World Conservation Union projects and has 18 years experience evaluating and advising development strategies on four continents, sustainability is just another way of saying “the good life” as a combination of (a) a high level of human well-being, and (b) the high level of ecosystem wellbeing that supports it.

1.5.2 Origin of the Concept

The first important use of the term was in 1980 in the World Conservation Strategy. The idea of sustainable development was very much imbedded long ago in Malthus theory of population growth in late 1700s. But the term started gaining coinage in early 1970s following a range of key publications drawing attention to man’s over exploitation of environment. The theme was in the name of development, man was becoming blind to environment. Few literary publications gave a boost to the world’s thinking on sustainable development. The key among them are: Rachel Carson’s the Silent Spring (1962), Paul Erich’s “How to be Survivor: A Plan to Save Spaceship Earth (1971), Club of Rome’s publication “ The Limits to growth”(1972), Barbara Ward and Rene Dubos’s Only One Earth(1972).

Faced with the over-exploitation of natural resources that accompanied economic and demographic growth, the think tank known as the Club of Rome, created in 1968, advocated zero growth. In 1971, this private international

association sounded an urgent alarm by publishing 'The Limits to Growth'. Broadly speaking, it presents current economic development as being incompatible with the long-term protection of the planet.

1.5.3. World Conventions on Sustainable Development

The theoretical framework for sustainable development evolved between 1972 and 1992 through a series of international conferences and initiatives. The UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, was the first major international gathering to discuss sustainability at the global scale. The conference created considerable momentum, and a series of recommendations led to the establishment of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) as well as the creation of numerous national environmental protection agencies at the national level.

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 gave birth to the first true notion of sustainable development, which was called 'eco development' in those days. In this conference personalities like Maurice Strong, Professor René Dubos, Barbara Ward and Ignacy Sachs cautioned about the integration of ecological concerns in economic planning. This resulted in the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The recommendations from Stockholm were further elaborated in the 1980 World Conservation Strategy—a collaboration between the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and UNEP—which aimed to advance sustainable development by identifying priority conservation issues and key policy options. In 1980, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) published its world conservation strategy. This document is one of the original sources of the expression 'sustainable development'.

In 1983, the UN convened the WCED, chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. Comprised of representatives from both developed and developing countries, the Commission was created to address growing concern over the "accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources and the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development." Four years later, the group produced the landmark

publication *Our Common Future* (or the Brundtland report) that provided a stark diagnosis of the state of the environment. The term 'sustainable development' remained virtually unnoticed until its revival in the Gro Harlem Brundtland report 'Our Common Future', published in 1987. The report popularized the most commonly used definition of sustainable development: "Development that meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Since then, the concept of sustainable development has been accepted all over the world.

- A desirable human condition: a society that people want to sustain because it meets their needs.
- An enduring ecosystem condition: an ecosystem that maintains its capacity to support human life and others.
- A balance between present and future generations; and within the present generation.

The Brundtland report provided the momentum for the landmark 1992 Rio Summit that laid the foundations for the global institutionalization of sustainable development. Marking the twentieth anniversary of the Stockholm Conference, the Earth Summit adopted the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, a global plan of action for sustainable development.

Three seminal instruments of environmental governance were established at the Rio Summit: the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the non-legally binding Statement of Forest Principles. Following a recommendation in Agenda 21, the UN General Assembly officially created the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) later that year.

Since that time a number of important international conferences on sustainable development have been held—including the 1997 Earth Summit+5 in New York and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. The negotiations at the WSSD in 2002 demonstrated a major shift in the perception of sustainable development—away from environmental issues toward social and economic development. This shift was driven by the

needs of the developing countries and strongly influenced by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2007, chapter 12.1.1) pointed out the interactive relationship between climate change and sustainable development, and that the two can be mutually reinforcing.

1.5.4. Objectives of sustainable Development

Sustainable Development refers to the challenges of reducing global inequity and poverty, and promoting well-being, while reducing threats to the earth's systems from industrial production and consumption. Effective environmental care and management in relation to climate stability, other species and natural resources are the chief objectives of sustainable development. Three main objectives of sustainable development are:

- **It should be socially desirable:** It means development should fulfill people's cultural, material and spiritual needs in equitable ways.
- **It should be economically viable:** It implies the costs of development should not exceed the output.
- **It should be ecologically sustainable:** It connotes maintaining long term viability for supporting the eco system.

1.5.5. Requirements of sustainable Development

Sustainable development implies the fulfillment of several conditions. These conditions are: preserving the overall balance, respect for the environment, and preventing the exhaustion of natural resources. Reduced production of waste and the rationalization of production and energy consumption must also be implemented. Sustainable development is presented as a more or less clean break from other modes of development, which have led and are still leading to worrying social and ecological damage. In order to be sustainable, development must combine three main elements: fairness, protection of the environment, and economic efficiency. A sustainable development project must be based on a better-developed mode of consultation between the community and the members it comprises. The success of such a policy also

depends on consumers accepting certain constraints and citizens observing certain requirements with regard to transparency and participation.

The concept of sustainable development is based on a set of requirements.

- It must allow the basic needs of present and future generations to be fulfilled with regard to demographic constraints, such as: access to water, education, health, employment, and the fight against hunger or malnutrition.
- Another requirement of this type of development is to improve quality of life, which involves easier access to medical care, social services, culture, and therefore also social well-being.
- In addition, respect for rights and freedoms and the promotion of new forms of renewable energy such as wind, solar, and geothermal power, are important requirements of sustainable development.
- Sustainable development is required to allow the planet's resources and condition to be protected for future generations and natural assets to be shared.
- The concept of sustainable development also involves narrowing the gaps between rich and poor countries, insofar as these gaps, if maintained or accentuated, could be the cause of violent conflict, which by its very nature leads to regression rather than development.

1.5.6. Dimensions of Sustainable Development

The second half of the 1980s witnessed the development of three dimensions of sustainable development with the publication of the Brundtland Report (1987). The report enshrined them as the strategies to be adopted by local, national and global strategies for development. The Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, 1992 established them as the three pillars of sustainable development. This is one of the most well-known models created using the three dimensions -Economy, Environment and Society. The diagram shows three interlocking circles with the triangle of environmental (conservation), economic (growth), and social (equity) dimensions. Sustainable Development is modelled on these three pillars. This model is called 'three pillars' or 'three

circles model'. It is based considering the society, but does not explicitly take into account 'human quality of life'.

However, the UNESCO raised its voice that these are not the three key issues that paralyse the world today. It claimed that it is culture which to a great extent also determine and detect what people do. Local cultures which are a rich source of knowledge and creativity are in a process of extinction. It too is facing a challenge. So, it has to be included as a dimension of sustainable development. Accordingly, in November,2010 culture was included as the fourth dimension of sustainable development in World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders in the Third World Congress of UCLG, held in Mexico City. Today there are four dimensions to sustainable development. They are: society, environment, culture and economy – which are intertwined.

Dimensions of Social Sustainability

- inclusion**
- Environmental**
- balance**
- Economic**
- growth**

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen gives the following dimensions for social sustainability:

•	<p>Equity - The community is to provide equitable opportunities and outcomes for all its members, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable members of the community.</p> <p>Diversity - The community is to promotes and encourage diversity.</p> <p>Interconnected/Social cohesions - The community is to provide processes, systems and structures that promote connectedness within</p>
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and outside the community at the formal, informal and institutional level.

• **Quality of life** - The community is to ensure that basic needs are met and is to foster a good quality of life for all members at the individual, group and community level (e.g. health, housing, education, employment, safety)

•	Democracy and governance - The community is to provide democratic
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	processes and open and accountable governance structures. Maturity - The individuals are to accept the responsibility of consistent
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growth and improvement through broader social attributes (e.g. communication styles, behavioural patterns, indirect education and philosophical explorations)

Economic sustainability includes:

- **Growth**- It refers to an increase conventional gross national product (GNP).
- **Efficiency**- It is reflected more efficient production and consumption of (mainly marketed) goods and services.
- **Stability**- It refers to the stability of prices and employment.

Environmental sustainability gives coverage to:

- The capacity to preserve over time the three basic functions of the environment: the resource supply function, the waste receiver function and that of direct usefulness of the environment. In other words, environmental sustainability means the capacity to increase and bring up the value of the environment and its peculiarities, while assuring the protection and the renewal of natural resources.
- Environmental sustainability involves making decisions and taking actions that are in the interests of protecting the natural world, with particular emphasis on preserving the capability of the environment to support human life.
- Environmental sustainability is the ability to maintain the qualities that are valued in the physical environment. It demands the maintenance of human life, the capabilities that the natural environment has to maintain the living conditions for people and other species (e.g. clean water and air, a suitable climate), the aspects of the environment that produce renewable resources such as water, timber, fish, solar energy, the functioning of society, despite non-renewable resource depletion, the quality of

life for all people, the liveability and beauty of the environment.

Cultural sustainability refers to the process of developing, renewing and maintaining human cultures that create positive, enduring relationships with other peoples and the natural world'. Amartya Sen explains, "Cultural matters are integral parts of the lives we lead. If development can be seen as enhancement of our living standards, then efforts geared to development can hardly ignore the world of culture".

Today, development means freedom, widening the choices, putting human beings -children, men and women-at the centre of the future.

1.5.7. Key Issues in Sustainable Development

The foregoing review of sustainable development concept, dimensions, reveal the key issues that arise repeatedly in debates about sustainability. These are:

- **Intergenerational Equity:** The most important concept in sustainable development is that each generation should have an equitable opportunity to meet its own needs. This is called inter generational equity – the principle that each generation should have a comparable ability or opportunity to make a living and to meet their needs.
- **Types of Capital and Assets:** Sustainable development programs often encompass a broad range of different types of capital and assets. Capital and assets are any store of value that can provide income, benefits, goods, services, or other things of value. They are typically categorized into three types:
 - **Manufactured and Financial Capital:** The most familiar type of capital is made by people and includes all financial assets and physical capital. It includes buildings, highways stock and bond investments, the Permanent Fund, and any other form of financial or physical asset that we as humans have created or manufactured.
 - **Human and Social Capital:** People and communities also have stores of value that can be passed from one generation to the next. People embody human capital in the form of knowledge, education, skills, training and other valuable abilities. Communities and societies are stores of social capital in the form of traditions, customs, identity, organizations, laws, and institutions that are passed on to future

generations as well.

➤ **Natural capital:** It includes all aspects of the natural environment that provide income, services, resources, or benefits. Natural capital includes raw resources such as oil, timber, and fish. It includes life support services such as climate regulation, nutrient cycling, waste treatment, soil formation and other ecological processes that keep us alive. Natural capital also encompasses hunting, subsistence, and outdoor recreation resources as well as aesthetic and cultural benefits derived from nature.

Concept of well being: Sustainable development concept expands the traditional understanding of well-being to include the social and environmental well-being of people. Sustainable development programs typically define progress and well-being in broad terms that include measures of the health of the environment, communities, and the people living there. They argue that people need access to a healthy natural environment to meet their need for life support services and to ensure their physical health and well-being. They emphasize the need to sustain natural assets to preserve life support services and the need to conserve natural resources that future generations will depend on for life.

They also emphasize the social well-being of communities, cultures, and individuals. To help ensure social well-being, current and future generations should have access to the wealth offered by communities, institutions, and traditions. Besides accumulating financial wealth, creating jobs, and building physical infrastructure, we also need to ensure that the social institutions and human capital that sustain our communities are also passed on to future generations.

1.5.8. Challenges to Sustainable Development

Sustainable development encounters many challenges today. The prominent among them are:

- The world's population is growing rapidly and most of this growth is taking place in cities. Cities are particularly vulnerable to environmental challenges due to their high population density.
- Population growth, poverty and degradation of natural resources often

fuel one another and pose a challenge to sustainable development.

➤ Increased demand and competition for scarce resources such as energy, water and food are putting upward pressure on resources and threatening sustainable development.

➤ Climate change and its potential impact also challenge sustainable development.

➤ Successive development and economic planning programmes have neither been thoroughly planned nor wholeheartedly implemented. Consequently, large segments of society remain economically deprived and socially marginalised. This has appeared as the greatest challenge to the notion of sustainable development.

➤ Globalization, removal of trade barriers, rapid and blind industrialization are negations to the concept of sustainable development.

➤ Growing consumerism is making people blind and they fail to foresee the needs of the future generation. Their present break less consumption leads to resource depletion and challenges sustainable development.

➤ Techno driven culture undermines the significance of culture and disregards environment safety. This has posed a great challenge to sustainable development.