

Sustainable Development and Global Environmental Politics

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Introduction

The objective of this paper is to review the current scenario of sustainable development and The international politics around sustainable development. Here is growing interest in sustainability and sustainable development in the academic and policy literature. These two concepts have dominated the international development policy arena for over two decades now.

Sustainable development has a very broad meaning depending on the dimensions being considered. Sustainable development has received much attention from policy makers and academics for four main reasons. Firstly, sustainable development is considered to be the end-goal of the United Nation's plan for the planet, and many countries have agreed to achieve the sustainable development goal. Secondly, sustainable development helps to promote a sustainable planet for every generation. Thirdly, sustainable development is considered to be an all-embracing development goal because the aim of all other development goals is to achieve a level of development that is sustainable. Finally, sustainable development is expected to bring lasting socio-economic benefits to all people and the environment.

Defining sustainable development

The first definition of sustainable development surfaced in a 1987 United Nations report titled 'Our Common Future' which is now generally referred to as the 'Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development 1987. It defined sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations 1987). Also, the National Sustainable Development Strategy defines sustainable development as a targeted, long-term, comprehensive and synergic process that (i) affects the conditions and all aspects of life at all levels, (ii) satisfies the biological, material, spiritual and social needs and interests of people, (iii) eliminates or significantly reduces interference that endangers, damages or destroys conditions and forms of life, (iv) does not burden the country, (v) preserves resources, and (vi) protects cultural and natural heritage. In the academic literature, sustainable development is defined as the process of improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems (see Willers 1994). Pearce, Atkinson, and Dubourg (1994) define sustainable development in terms of a per capita consumption path that is constant or rising over time.

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Key Milestones and Treaties

There have been several key milestones and treaties in the pursuit of sustainable development, addressing issues related to the environment, economy, and social equity. Here are some of the significant ones:

1. Stockholm Declaration (1972)

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm marked the beginning of global environmental governance.

Emphasized the need for a common outlook and common principles to inspire and guide the peoples of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment.

2. Brundtland Report - "Our Common Future" (1987)

The report from the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) introduced the concept of sustainable development.

Defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

3. Rio Earth Summit (1992)

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro produced Agenda 21, a comprehensive blueprint for sustainable development.

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development were key outcomes.

4. Kyoto Protocol (1997)

An international treaty aimed at addressing climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Set legally binding targets for developed countries to reduce their emissions.

5. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000-2015)

Eight international development goals established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations.

Included goals related to poverty, hunger, gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability.

6. Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015)

Adopted by all United Nations Member States, the SDGs are a set of 17 goals addressing various aspects of sustainable development.

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Focus on poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice.

7.Paris Agreement (2015)

An international treaty within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that aims to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Focuses on efforts to strengthen the global response to climate change, including efforts to enhance adaptation and support for developing countries.

8.Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015)

An outcome of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

Addresses financing for sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of domestic resource mobilization, private investment, and international cooperation.

9.Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (2010)

An international agreement under the Convention on Biological Diversity that aims to promote the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources.

These milestones and treaties represent global efforts to promote sustainable development by addressing environmental, social, and economic challenges. Ongoing efforts and new agreements continue to shape the path towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

Need and Importance of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is essential due to the escalating pressure on natural resources and the environment. The ever-increasing population, urbanization, industrialization, and globalization have put immense pressure on the natural resources, leading to their depletion. The depletion of natural resources, including land, water, forests, and minerals, has resulted in environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, and climate change.

Sustainable development is necessary to ensure that we conserve our natural resources, maintain ecological balance, and mitigate the impact of climate change. The depletion of natural resources is a global problem that requires global solutions.

Sustainable development is crucial because it is essential for the long-term prosperity of businesses and economies. Sustainable business practices can increase efficiency, reduce costs, and improve

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customer loyalty. In contrast, sustainable economic development can create new jobs and promote innovation.

Objectives of Sustainable Development

The objectives of sustainable development are focused on addressing the environmental, economic, and social challenges facing the world today. These objectives provide a framework for promoting sustainable economic growth and ensuring that the needs of future generations are met.

Poverty Alleviation

One of the main objectives of sustainable development is poverty alleviation, aimed at reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty. Sustainable economic growth is necessary for poverty alleviation, as it creates income generation and employment opportunities. However, it's essential to ensure that economic growth is inclusive and benefits all members of society, particularly those living in poverty. This can be achieved through policies and programs that promote education and skills development, social protection programs, and targeted support for vulnerable populations.

Social Equity

Social equity is another crucial objective of sustainable development. This involves reducing inequality and ensuring that all members of society have access to essential services such as health care and education. Reducing inequality and addressing the root causes of poverty and social exclusion are necessary to achieve social equity. This can be achieved through various policy interventions, such as targeted social programs, progressive taxation, and affirmative action.

One of the key areas where social equity is significant is access to essential services such as health care and education. There are substantial disparities in access to these services in many countries, with marginalized communities often facing significant barriers to accessing quality care and education.

Environmental Protection

Environmental protection is a crucial objective of sustainable development. It seeks to ensure that natural resources are used in a way that keeps them healthy for future generations. This includes reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving biodiversity, and managing natural resources to maintain productivity.

To achieve environmental protection, it is vital to adopt policies and practices that minimize the harmful effects of human activities on the environment. This can be achieved by decreasing greenhouse gas emissions by shifting to sustainable and renewable energy sources, promoting energy efficiency, and implementing sustainable transportation practices.

Conserving biodiversity is another critical aspect of environmental protection. This can involve protecting endangered species, preserving natural habitats, and promoting sustainable land use

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practices. Effective natural resource management is also essential to ensure the long-term productivity and sustainability of critical resources such as water, forests, and fisheries.

Preserving the environment is vital to ensure our planet's survival and future generations' well-being. We can leave a healthy and thriving planet for future generations by adopting sustainable practices and policies.

Economic Development

Economic development is also an essential objective of sustainable development. It aims to promote economic growth that is inclusive and sustainable. To achieve economic development, it is necessary to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth that benefits all members of society. This can involve creating jobs, fostering entrepreneurship, and investing in infrastructure and innovation. It also requires promoting fair trade and addressing economic inequality to ensure that economic benefits are distributed equitably.

Sustainable economic development also requires responsible resource management, including the efficient use of natural resources and reduced waste and pollution. This can involve adopting sustainable production and consumption practices, promoting circular economy models, and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

Economic development is critical for sustainable development, providing the resources and opportunities necessary to address social and environmental challenges. By pursuing inclusive and sustainable economic growth, we can create a thriving economy that benefits everyone while protecting the planet for future generations.

Goals of Sustainable Development

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. These goals are interconnected and are designed to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental.

Here are the most important goals of Sustainable Development:

- **Eliminating Poverty:** This goal aims at eradicating extreme poverty from across the world and reducing it by at least half the proportion of men, women, and children.
- **Zero hunger:** The aim is to create a world free of hunger and prevent diseases and deaths caused by malnutrition.
- **Good health and well-being:** This objective in sustainable living promotes efficient healthcare, a healthy lifestyle, and preventive measures for everyone.
- **Quality education:** To ensure that students have access to free primary and secondary education and affordable higher and technical education.

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- **Gender Equality:** The aim is to give equal political, economic, and social equality for women thereby creating more opportunities.
- **Clean water and sanitation:** To provide clean water to populations across the globe so that they can have better sanitary conditions.
- **Affordable and clean energy:** It helps in energy efficiency and increases in the use of renewables for climate change mitigation and disaster risk reduction.
- **Decent Work and Economic Growth:** According to the national circumstances sustain per capita economic growth. Least Developed Countries should have at least 7% gross domestic product growth per annum.
- **Industry, innovation and infrastructure:** Developing reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure to support economic development and social well-being.
- **Reduce inequality:** The aim is to reduce inequalities so that everyone gets an equal chance and collectively achieves sustainable development goals.
- **Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Ensuring everyone has access to affordable housing conditions and transportation. The aim is to allow sustainable human settlement planning across the world.
- **Sustainable consumption and production:** It involves decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation, promoting sustainable lifestyles, and increasing resource efficiency.
- **Climate change:** The aim is to combat climate change and its impacts on saving lives. The aim is to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 43% by 2030 and net zero by 2050.
- **Life Below Water:** The aim is to create an understanding of the oceans and the resources that it offers. It also focuses on learning methodologies to keep our seas clean.
- **Life on land:** The aim is to protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, combat desertification and reverse land degradation. It is important to take care of the ecosystem since these provide raw materials and ecosystem services.
- **Peace, justice and strong institutions:** Since conflict, weak institutions, and limited access pose a threat to sustainable development. It is, therefore, important to promote peace and facilitate inclusive societies.
- **Partnerships for the goals:** Government, society, private sectors, UN, and civil society must act as global partners to achieve each goal of sustainable development.

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Let's get to know Dhanora, India's first Smart Village: A Case Study of Sustainable Development In Rural India

Clean and big roads, pucca homes, broad streets, big trees for shade, proper school for the children, waste management, properly demarcated properties, potable water, regular electricity, in short, a model place of residence. A decade ago, this was not the case for Dhanora village in Dholpur district of Rajasthan.

Fast forward to 2016, Dhanora village got a new life when the *Eco Needs Foundation* adopted the village and kickstarted the *Smart Village* project. Under this project, various efforts were made towards sustainable development including sanitation, proper housing, road reconstructions, access to solar power and clean drinking water, tree plantation, water conservation, among others.

What is a smart village?

A village becomes a 'Smart Village' when its development fulfils all the requirements under the five basic categories: *Retrofitting*, *Redevelopment*, *Green fields*, *e-Pan (electronic planning)*, and *Livelihood*. The Eco Needs Foundation, with the help of the locals, and the state government of Rajasthan, made this a possibility for Dhanora village, starting first with improving the road conditions.

Because of the poor road condition (read 'very small') the village was almost unreachable and thus the neglect continued for a long time. Once the roads were fixed, the village had access to the rest of the country. With new roads came proper housing, redevelopment of community halls, recreational areas, and schools.

Under Greenfield projects, new areas in the village were developed for facilities like waste disposal, waste water management plants, tree plantation.

e-Pan brought the village closer to the rest of the world through internet connection, solar power that gave uninterrupted electricity to the village, schools with computers, and public libraries. All this made it possible for Dhanora village to open itself to the rest of the country and the world. Now, if you were to visit this village to see how a model smart village looks like, you would have access to a community centre from where you can get all the information. Reaching the village is not an issue now, and there'd be all the basic amenities one needs to experience a destination.

Challenges of Sustainable Development

There are barriers to combating the implementation of sustainable development. These barriers are, according to a UK essay and other materials:

Economic and Financial Barriers

Economists have noted that the dominant development model prioritises economic expansion over people's rights and welfare, as well as environmental processes and restrictions. This necessitates a paradigm shift from treating the environment as a component of the economy to treating the economy as

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a component of the environment; strategically, this means the economy must be changed to ensure that environmental services are preserved.

Innovation Barriers

There is a scarcity of innovation-oriented research in the educational sector. This indicates that there has to be a stronger link between research institutes and the economy, which would also help to solve the problem of knowledge transfer to real-world applications.

Social Barriers

The world's largest societal hurdles to attaining sustainable development are population increase and unsustainable consumption and production practices among the wealthy. Sustainability will not be possible without a fundamental shift in human behaviour. Other societal hurdles include the following:

The poor's marginalisation and entrenched disparities, there is a lack of understanding regarding sustainable development. Environmental challenges have fractured civil society among politicians and the general population. Inadequate interaction between the government and civil society. Incentives for the business sector to achieve sustainable development are insufficient.

Political Barriers

Inadequate economic, social, and environmental methodologies for policies, programmes, and projects are the main impediment to sustainable development implementation.

Poor monitoring and evaluation systems: A fundamental issue is a lack of specified targets (globally, nationally, and locally), measurement, and data to assess progress, resulting in a scarcity of information for decision-makers.

It is recommended that the monitoring and assessment of sustainable development strategies be strengthened to generate a dynamic improvement process that will improve their effectiveness. Governments should dig deeper and analyse the socioeconomic implications of development programmes rather than focusing solely on the result.

Institutional Barriers

Institutional hurdles, resulting from a lack of institutional expertise in operating all of the democratic system's mechanisms, have hampered long-term progress in many developing countries.

Support Sustainable Development and Climate Action – UNO

The United Nations launched its sustainable development agenda in 2015, reflecting the growing understanding by Member States that a development model that is sustainable for this and future generations offers the best path forward for reducing poverty and improving the lives of people everywhere. At the same time, climate change began making a profound impact on the consciousness of

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humanity. With the polar ice caps melting, global sea levels rising and cataclysmic weather events increasing in ferocity, no country in the world is safe from the effects of climate change.

Building a more sustainable global economy will help reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. It is, therefore, critically important that the international community meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals – and also the targets for reducing emissions set in the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015.

Sustainable development and climate action are linked – and both are vital to the present and future well-being of humanity.

Climate change undermines nearly all Sustainable Development Goals

Geneva, 14 September 2023 – At the half-time point of the 2030 Agenda, the science is clear the planet is far off track from meeting its climate goals. This undermines global efforts to tackle hunger, poverty and ill-health, improve access to clean water and energy and many other aspects of sustainable development, according to a new multi-agency report coordinated by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

Only 15% of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are on track, says the United in Science report, which makes a systematic examination of the impact of climate change and extreme weather on the goals. It illustrates how weather, climate and water-related sciences can advance aims such as food and water security, clean energy, better health, sustainable oceans and resilient cities.

The Sustainable Development Goal 15 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is devoted to “*protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss*”.

Biodiversity is currently being lost at up to 1,000 times the natural rate. Some scientists are now referring to the crisis as the ‘Earth’s sixth mass extinction’, comparable to the last great extinction crisis 65 million years ago. These extinctions are irreversible and pose a serious threat to our health and wellbeing. Designation and management of protected areas is the cornerstone of biodiversity conservation. However, despite an increase in the total number of protected areas in the world, biodiversity continues to decline.

An integrated landscape approach to conservation planning plays a key role in ensuring suitable habitats for species. However, many protected areas are not functioning as effectively as originally intended, due in part to limited resources to maintain these areas and/or enforce relevant legal frameworks. In addition, current protected area networks may need to be re-aligned to account for climate change. Efforts to preserve biodiversity must take into account not only the physical environment, but also social and economic systems that are well connected to biodiversity and ecosystem services. For protected areas to contribute effectively to a secure future for biodiversity,

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there is a need for measures to enhance the representativeness of networks, and to improve management effectiveness.

UNESCO works on the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of its components through UNESCO designated sites, including [biosphere reserves](#), [World Heritage sites](#) and [UNESCO Global Geoparks](#).

Inclusive Development and Social Equity

Inclusive growth is economic growth that is distributed fairly across society and creates opportunities for all.

In many OECD countries, inequalities are at their highest levels in 30 years and are widening and further rising due to the COVID-19 crisis. ©Akhtar Soomro/Reuters The top 10% of income earners take home over ten times more pay than the bottom 10% Children whose parents did not complete secondary school have four times less chances of making it to university than children who have at least one parent with a university education..

Giving everyone a stake in growth, People would feel more motivated and involved if the benefits of economic growth were not allowed to flow into the pockets of a rich minority.

Making our tax systems fairer and more effective, ensuring people are able to earn the wages they need to thrive. Creating a business environment that attracts new firms and boosts communities.

We need to anticipate the radical changes induced by globalisation, digitalisation and demographic shifts. For example, how can we build the skills of tomorrow's workforce? How can we support risk-taking and entrepreneurship while safeguarding job quality, collective bargaining and social protection?

Human Rights and Sustainable Development Goals

About the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and human rights

Human rights are essential to achieving sustainable development that leaves no one behind and are central to all its three dimensions – social, environmental, and economic. This is reflected in the transformative ambition of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) (2030 Agenda), which seeks “to realize the human rights of all” and is firmly anchored in human rights principles and standards, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international human rights treaties.

The 2030 Agenda puts the principles of equality and non-discrimination at its heart, with a commitment to ‘leave no one behind’ and ‘reach those furthest behind first’ and two dedicated goals on combating discrimination and inequalities (SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 10 on inequalities within and between countries) as well as a cross-cutting commitment to data disaggregation.

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National Policies and Political Will

Good governance is the process by which public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and guarantee the realization of human rights in a manner free of abuse and corruption, and with due regard for the rule of law. Corruption undermines institutions and processes, the rule of law and ultimately the State itself.

Corruption is an obstacle to the realization of all human rights. Civil, political, economic, social, and cultural, as well as the right to development. Corruption has a destructive effect on State institutions and on the capacity of States to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, particularly of those persons and groups in situations of vulnerability and marginalization. Corruption and associated illicit financial flows pose a major challenge to many societies as they divert public revenues and cripple public budgets that should provide healthcare, housing, education, and other essential services. It undermines States' ability to meet their pre-existing legal obligations to maximize all available resources to progressively realize Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCRs). By eroding the tax base, and discouraging public and private investment, corruption and associated illicit financial flows strip societies of vital and scarce resources, which are indispensable for the structural transformation, economic growth, and sustainable development of all countries.² Corruption heavily erodes public confidence in state institutions, the Rule of Law, as well as States efforts to uphold human rights.

Role of Non-Governmental Organizations and Activism

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in global development efforts. These organizations, often driven by a strong sense of social responsibility and commitment to positive change, have a significant impact on shaping a better world.

NGOs are a driving force for positive change in the world. By focusing on grassroots engagement, advocacy, capacity building, filling gaps in services, innovation, collaboration, and accountability, NGOs can make significant contributions to sustainable development. Their dedication to empowering communities and fostering positive change is essential for building a better and more equitable future for all. In a world faced with complex and interconnected challenges, NGOs serve as a beacon of hope and progress.

The International Politics of Sustainable Development

The international politics of sustainable development involve the intersection of global political, economic, social, and environmental factors to address the challenges of achieving sustainable development worldwide. Sustainable development aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Here are some key aspects of the international politics of sustainable development:

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1.Global Governance and Cooperation

Sustainable development requires international cooperation and coordinated efforts. Global governance structures, such as the United Nations (UN), play a crucial role in facilitating collaboration among nations to address common challenges related to sustainability.

2.International Agreements and Treaties

Multilateral agreements and treaties are essential tools for promoting sustainable development. Examples include the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Convention on Biological Diversity. These agreements provide a framework for countries to work together on shared environmental and development goals.

3.Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

Addressing climate change is a central aspect of sustainable development. Countries engage in international negotiations and commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, transition to renewable energy sources, and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

4.Resource Management

Sustainable development involves the responsible management of natural resources. International efforts focus on promoting sustainable practices in areas such as forestry, fisheries, and agriculture to ensure that resources are used efficiently and do not lead to environmental degradation.

5.Global Economic Policies

Economic policies at the international level impact sustainable development. Issues such as trade, finance, and debt relief are interconnected with efforts to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, particularly in developing countries.

6.Human Rights and Social Equity

Social dimensions of sustainable development include addressing poverty, inequality, and promoting human rights. International actors work towards ensuring that development initiatives prioritize social equity and inclusivity.

7.Technology Transfer and Innovation

The transfer of sustainable technologies from developed to developing countries is crucial for global sustainability. International collaboration aims to bridge the technological gap and promote innovation for sustainable development.

8.Financing Sustainable Development

Adequate funding is essential for sustainable development projects. International financial institutions, donor countries, and public-private partnerships play a role in mobilizing resources to support sustainable initiatives, especially in developing nations.

9.Public Awareness and Education

Global initiatives promote public awareness and education on sustainable development. This includes efforts to inform and engage the public in sustainable practices and policy advocacy.

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10.Environmental Diplomacy

Countries engage in diplomatic efforts to address transboundary environmental issues. Cooperation on issues like air and water pollution, biodiversity conservation, and deforestation requires diplomatic negotiations and agreements.

The international politics of sustainable development involve navigating complex relationships and interests among nations to achieve a balance between economic growth, social progress, and environmental protection on a global scale. Cooperation, shared responsibility, and commitment are critical for making progress towards a more sustainable and resilient future.

Political impact of the Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to guide public policies and inspire societal actors to promote sustainable development world-wide. The core of this programme is 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 specific targets, most of them to be achieved by 2030. Although the SDGs are not the first effort to set global goals and they have been criticized earlier on but they are still by far the most comprehensive and detailed attempt by the United Nations to advance sustainable development. After eight years of implementation, the question arises whether these 17 SDGs have had any political impact within national and global governance to address pressing challenges such as poverty eradication, social justice and environmental protection.

Impact on global governance

First, regarding the global governance system, we find that the political impact of the SDGs has been mostly discursive, for example, through their adoption as a reference point in international policy pronouncements and in a changed discourse within global institutions. While the governance principles that underpin the SDGs such as universality, coherence, integration and 'leaving no one behind' have become part of mainstream discourses in multilateral institutions, actual reforms in the operations of these organizations since 2015 have been modest, and there is no strong evidence that the SDGs have had a transformative impact on the mandates, practices or resource allocation of international organizations and institutions within the United Nations system. The literature thus suggests a mismatch between the formal aspirations of the United Nations to promote the SDGs as central guidelines in global governance and their limited transformative impact.

Impact on domestic politics.

The SDGs must eventually be implemented in domestic political contexts through policies and programmes enacted by governments and public agencies with the support and engagement of non-state actors.

We find some evidence that state and non-state actors have started to implement the SDGs at the national and local levels. Many countries have begun to integrate SDGs into their administrative

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systems, and some governments have designated bodies or formed new units for goal implementation. Yet the performance of national governments varies, and most countries lag behind in implementing the SDGs. Observable institutional change often merely replicates existing priorities, trajectories and government agendas, and governments tend to selectively implement those SDGs that support policies they have already prioritized

Impact on domestic institutional integration and policy coherence.

The 17 SDGs and their 169 targets form a complex mesh of normative aspirations that seek to address all areas of human activity. Some studies suggest that synergies among SDGs can be achieved by designing policies in a holistic way. Others argue, however, that inherent trade-offs in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are too often neglected in academic research and require more attention. Overall, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are expected to provide guidance and resolve normative conflicts, institutional fragmentation and policy complexity.

Impact on inclusiveness.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs are meant to address inequalities within and among countries and to ensure that no one is left behind. Vulnerable groups and countries are extensively mentioned in the 2030 Agenda and in several SDGs and their targets. In addition, two SDGs are dedicated to the reduction of inequality within and between countries (Goal 10) and the promotion of equality for women and girls (Goal 5). However, evidence suggests a mismatch between rhetoric and action. On the one hand, vulnerable people and countries are often discursively prioritized in the implementation of the SDGs, as evidenced by the broad uptake of the principle of leaving no one behind in pronouncements by policymakers and civil society activists. On the other hand, the normative or institutional effects of such discursive prioritization remain limited.

Impact on ecological integrity at the planetary scale.

The SDGs pronounce their ambition to resolve the fundamental concerns of both people and the planet and to ensure life-sustaining conditions on Earth. However, there is widespread doubt that the SDGs can steer societies towards more ecological integrity at the planetary scale. There is also little evidence that any normative and institutional change in this direction has materialized because of the SDGs.

Sustainable Development and its Challenges in Developing Countries

One of the major challenges that different communities face when adopting sustainable development is the confusion of metric devising. Some terms like sustainability and efficiency should be clearly defined and explained in order to be able to set achievable and measurable targets that can be monitored. By monitoring their performance in sustainable development projects, nations can collect data that could be used in further research. which will, in return, enhance the performance and accelerate the procedure of reaching the SDGs. In developing nations, some terms might be

unfamiliar to the local communities due to the lack of awareness towards the topic of sustainability, but the communication and collection of information is also challenging due to the fragmentation or even lack of data.

Most developing countries suffer from low statistical abilities and cannot respond to the SDGs' growing demand for data. For example, in the Middle East, there is a regional

deficit in data related to the performance of the human resources department when it comes to the recruiting, retaining, and promoting processes, making it difficult to track the region's performance in achieving SDG number 5, which is gender equality.

Another challenge that many developing countries face when attempting to implement sustainable development is the absence of reliable infrastructure and even lack of policies that have to do with infrastructure.

These nations are thus unable to accomplish the SDGs since they lack the developed infrastructure needed to support the use of internet, networking, computing, as well as

the database management system. In fact, the listed elements are highly important and much needed in scientific research, nature control, successful planning, as well as decision making. Furthermore, receiving mapping data to manage and monitor disasters is also challenging third world nations due to their high cost, absence of methods to observe the ground, or even natural reasons like the struggling to access mountainous regions. For example, in the Philippines, unreliable infrastructure is considered to be a major limitation to the nation's goal of expanding its economy and reducing poverty, SDGs number 8 and 1 respectively. Even though it has enough control of water and electricity, the country struggles from a poor business environment as well as poor planning and cooperating capabilities.

Another issue most developing countries face is the lack of access to enhanced cooking energy technologies, which has to do with each nation's socio-economic and technical limitations. **These barriers are restricting the improvement of the communities' quality of life and creating a vicious circle of poor economic development, causing low access to reliable energy services.** This circle could be broken by creating energy policies related to

income generation from efficient energy activities. If not, SDG number 7 (providing Affordable and Clean Energy) might never be achieved, leaving many communities across the world dependent on standard biomass energy. That is the case for the majority of the people living in Sub-Saharan Africa, where women spend up to four hours a day collecting firewood instead of investing their time in education or other economic activities (SDGs number 4 and 5, Quality Education and Gender Equality respectively).

Sustainable Development in Nepal – A Case Study of Sustainable Development and its Challenges

As a result of its unique geographical location and geopolitical situation, Nepal, as a developing

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country, has faced many environmental, social, and economic issues, such as the extreme levels of pollution in bodies of water as was in the case of the Bagmati river which, fortunately, after state and volunteer-run efforts is now cleaner than it has been in a long time. *Unfortunately*, that fate has not met many of the 600 rivers flowing through the Kathmandu valley, where the population of the country is the densest, and they remain polluted by industrial waste from nearby factories. Owing to funding from the international governments, Nepal has recently undergone a period of accelerated development and an introduction to a consumerist culture which in conjunction with the lack of awareness regarding environmental issues has led to an inefficient use of freshwater that is oh so abundant in Nepal.

Emerging Trends in Sustainable Development

An Ecosystem Service Approach

Ecosystem Services (ES) are the benefits nature provides to people. These can include essential services like access to clean drinking water and food production or other values like recreational opportunities and aesthetics.

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on sustainability and its importance in various industries. As consumers become more aware of environmental issues, companies have begun to take notice and incorporate sustainable practices into their business models. This shift towards sustainability has led to the emergence of various trends that are worth examining. In this article, we will critically evaluate the emerging trends in sustainability and their impact on businesses and the environment.

Sustainable Packaging

One of the most significant trends in sustainability is the shift toward sustainable packaging. With the rise of e-commerce and the increasing demand for convenience, packaging has become a significant concern for companies. Traditional packaging methods often involve single-use plastics that are not biodegradable, leading to significant waste and pollution. Sustainable packaging, on the other hand, utilizes eco-friendly materials and innovative designs that reduce waste and have a lower environmental impact. Companies that embrace sustainable packaging not only contribute to the preservation of the environment but also meet the growing demand for eco-friendly products, which can positively impact their brand image and reputation.

Renewable Energy

Another critical trend in sustainability is the transition toward renewable energy. As the world becomes more aware of the negative impacts of fossil fuels on the environment, there has been a significant shift towards renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower. This shift not only reduces the carbon footprint of companies but also helps them save on energy costs. By

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investing in renewable energy sources, companies can also demonstrate their commitment to sustainability and attract environmentally conscious consumers.

Circular Economy

The circular economy is another trend that has gained significant momentum in recent years. It refers to an economic model that is restorative and regenerative by design, aiming to keep products, components, and materials at their highest utility and value at all times. In contrast to the traditional linear model of “take-make-use-dispose,” a circular economy creates value by keeping materials in use for as long as possible, reducing waste, and creating a closed-loop system. This trend has significant implications for businesses, as it requires them to design more sustainable, durable, and repairable products.

Sustainable Agriculture

Sustainable agriculture is a trend that has been gaining traction in recent years, particularly in response to concerns over the environmental impact of traditional agricultural practices. Sustainable agriculture involves farming practices designed to preserve soil health, protect water quality, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This trend not only promotes environmental sustainability but also helps farmers increase crop yields and profitability over the long term.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is another critical trend that has emerged in recent years. It refers to the idea that companies have a responsibility to operate in a way that benefits society and the environment. CSR involves implementing policies and practices that have a positive impact on employees, customers, communities, and the environment. Companies that prioritize CSR not only contribute to the betterment of society but also strengthen their brand image and reputation.

Sustainability has become an increasingly important issue in various industries, leading to the emergence of several trends worth examining. Sustainable packaging, renewable energy, the circular economy, sustainable agriculture, and corporate social responsibility are all critical trends that have significant implications for businesses and build a more sustainable future.

The Global Sustainable Development Report 2023

This year marks the halfway point of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were agreed in 2015, to be reached by 2030. As an independent group of scientists appointed by the UN to assess progress and recommend how to move forwards, we have a stark message: the world is not on track to achieve any of the 17 SDGs and cannot rely on change to happen organically.

At the current rate of progress, the world will not eradicate poverty, end hunger or provide quality education for all by 2030 to name just some, central, aspirations of the SDGs. Instead, by the end of

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this decade, our world will have 575 million people living in extreme poverty, 600 million people facing hunger, and 84 million children and young people out of school. Humanity will overshoot the Paris climate agreement's 1.5 °C 'safe' guardrail on average global temperature rise. And, at the current rate, it will take 300 years to attain gender equality.

Global leaders must act now to remove roadblocks and accelerate progress. This is the focus of our *Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR)*, launched this week, ahead of the SDG Summit in New York City under the auspices of the UN General Assembly. This independent scientific assessment, made every four years, involved global consultations to collect perspectives across regions and synthesize scientific evidence from across disciplines. It has been peer reviewed by 104 researchers with expertise in areas ranging from human well-being and economics to food, energy, cities and natural resources.

Of the 36 SDG targets reviewed in the *GSDR* to provide a snapshot of progress, only two were on track as of 2023, namely access to mobile networks and internet usage (see 'SDGs Midway Snapshot of Progress'). Fourteen showed 'fair' progress, with targets just in reach if efforts are stepped up. Twelve showed limited or no progress, including for poverty, safe drinking water and ecosystem conservation. And eight targets were assessed as still deteriorating: reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, fossil-fuel subsidies and numbers of unsentenced detainees; enhancing economic growth, vaccine coverage, sustainable fishing and food security; and preventing the extinction of species.

There have been some bright spots: growing public awareness, some government and corporate commitments to reaching the SDGs, and political discussions around them. But these have been too little concrete effect. So far, there have been no profound changes to institutions and legislation, and the landscape of investments and resources hasn't altered significantly. Even modest progress, such as a fall in child mortality and improvements in gender-equality targets, has been slowed or reversed in recent years.

Although global and regional crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have played a part in that, our analysis shows that the lack of headway is largely a direct result of inaction by governments. Insufficient financial resources and weak administrative capacities hamper progress in many countries. Ingrained habits and lifestyles promoted by sophisticated marketing campaigns make it hard to shift behaviours towards sustainable diets, transport and consumption patterns. Existing investments in capital, such as fossil-fuel infrastructure, have generated resistance from vested interests and made climate action politically sensitive.

Conclusion

We cannot expect developing countries to achieve sustainability as easily as developed countries. Rather, we should see sustainable development as a way to understand factors such as poverty and rapid urbanization which indicate whether economic development is possible or not. For that reason, when aiming to achieve the SDGs, organizations should be aware of the fact that factors like poverty

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and rapid urbanization are still very common in the developing and underdeveloped parts of the world. **One way to achieve sustainable development in these countries is by first setting policies to enhance the living conditions of the least fortunate for them to later be able to take care of their environment.** If such policies are not implemented in the near future, then not only will the efforts to achieve sustainability fail, but we might also expect poverty to increase in many parts of the world.

Moving the deadline back by a decade or two won't help on the current trajectory, model projections suggest that the world will not achieve any of the SDGs even by 2050. The response must be to double down and strengthen efforts. Achieving the SDGs requires much more than niche innovations; it will take wholesale systemic transformations in areas ranging from how water is managed to how food is grown. It's crucial that scientists support policymakers and others in rethinking institutions, systems and practices.

These are three priority areas: removing roadblocks to progress; identifying transformation pathways; and improving governance to achieve The Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

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