

NAVIGATION TOWARDS GENUINE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR NILE RIVER

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ABSTRACT

Despite excess of conventions, legislation, strategies, policies and action plans that address issues of the Nile environment degradation, there is still a wide area of vagueness. The special challenge facing Nile developing societies is that they are obliged to work out their future in conditions which subject them to the many negative influences operating under the standards of modernization, or progress. This paper presents a basis for action in many priority areas and defines a number of policies related to environmental and development planning that should be undertaken by the decision-makers, planners and developers with the cooperation and assistance of the international community. The paper contains a synopsis of actions and policies to achieve integrated sustainable development that should be implemented over the short, medium and long terms.

INTRODUCTION

At its inception following World War II, development planning accorded hardly any attention to social issues, despite its claimed objectives of benefiting populations in Third World countries. 'Development' then basically aimed at boosting economic growth and transforming the 'traditional' economies into 'modern' (western-like) economies. Local cultures and forms of social organisation were generally conceived as liabilities or obstacles on the way towards development - the sooner dismantled the better. Planning was undertaken by economists and technocrats. Conspicuous was the marginalisation of social anthropologists, who by profession were most equipped to analyse and identify pertinent social issues. Major factor to that effect was the conception, particularly by African leaders, of anthropology as 'handmaiden of colonialism' - a discipline that availed knowledge on social structures and institutions to pacify local populations.

Following decades of development planning and practice, the limitations of conventional development concepts and approaches started to transpire, particularly in Africa. The focus on the 'modern sector' destabilised rural populations and induced rapid urban growth and rampant urban unemployment. Development involved modest

expansion in social services (particularly in education and health-care), but the majority of the population seemed to have achieved little, if any, improvements in its living (or dying) conditions and standards. In many instances, development projects begot more harm than benefit. This was particularly true for women whose interests were commonly ignored or even undermined. Governments and donors alike thus started to place emphasis on social impact assessments to contain probable 'collateral social damage', and also began to accommodate 'women components' in projects. Thereafter donors treated social and environmental viability and integration of women as conditionality for assistance.

Adoption of impact assessments heralded the integration of social issues in development planning, albeit in a passive or reactive manner. But these assessments do not address issues other than the consequences of technical interventions. Beyond their mandate are provisions to avert the failure of development projects to achieve the anticipated 'trickle down effect', which continued to concede to its reverse: widening inequalities and deepening poverty. In the face of the entrenched commitment to 'modernisation' in development planning, consultants undertaking social impact assessments more often than not tended to legitimise and validate project concepts and plans.

Development was largely financed through borrowing, which within two decades amounted to a formidable debt problem. Virtually all African countries had to adopt macro-economic structural adjustment policies and resort to debt rescheduling. Structural adjustment curbed public spending on social services, shifting the larger costs of education and health-care to the population. In the meantime, human deprivation and suffering in many African countries began to assume catastrophic proportions, not least due to environmental degradation, political instability and civil wars. Growing sectors of the population thus came to endure rising poverty trends, chronic famine conditions, and mass displacement within, and refugee influxes across, their home countries.

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. The Concept of Human Development

The failures of development generated intense debates and controversies within the discipline of development studies, particularly over the pretensions of scientific objectivity in conventional development models. Gradually scholars and practitioners began to recognise that the technical components of development are not neutral, but have distinctive social content and implications. Their questioning of "development for whom??" served to expose, and challenge, the implicit '*genderised* social prioritisation' that by and large marginalised women and made the rich richer and the poor poorer. In the process they initiated a growing global movement calling for alternative development planning frameworks. Aided by case studies from development anthropology, they corroborated how negligence of socio-cultural

realities contributed to project failure, and, conversely, how local institutions would promote success where consciously incorporated in project planning. In their view, the objective of poverty reduction required abandonment of top-down planning in favour of more participatory gender-sensitive frameworks that would empower communities to identify their problems, needs and priorities, and to actively partake in devising and implementing solutions.

Powerful development actors from civil society and international organisations, spearheaded by UNDP, allied with the incipient movement and began canvassing the support of world governments. By 1989, Norway was already evaluating the degree to which its development assistance to Africa had integrated 'socio-cultural dimensions'. It placed particular emphasis on the relevance, effectiveness and socio-cultural acceptability of projects, and the extent to which projects incorporated provisions for community empowerment, gender-equity and environmental sustainability. In 1990, UNDP assumed *de facto* leadership of the movement by launching its annual series of Human Development Reports (HDR). It has since adopted, and progressively refined, the concept of human development (HD), which promoted a significant paradigmatic shift in the conception and practice of development. In sharp contrast to the earlier definitions that equated development with economic growth, the HD concept brought people and their conditions to the forefront:

People are the real wealth of a nation. The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This may appear to be a simple truth. But it is often forgotten in the immediate concern with the accumulation of commodities and financial wealth (UNDP, 1990:9).

The HD concept embraced by UNDP is not synonymous to that of 'human resource development'. It rather denotes the process of enlarging people's choices as well as the preconditions of that process: the building of human capabilities. The most basic capabilities are those of leading a long and healthy life, enjoying education, having access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living, and being able to participate effectively in the life of one's community. The concept does not belittle economic growth as target, but in addition qualifies development as being relevant to, and effective in improving the conditions of communities of ordinary men and women. It places particular emphasis on poverty reduction, social justice, community participation and empowerment as development objectives. According to the HDRs, income poverty is only one aspect of human poverty, which includes varied forms of deprivation: in health and survival, education, decent living (including income, improved water, sanitation and electric supply), and free and effective participation in public life.

Human Development Reports (global, regional and national alike) unequivocally underline the critical interdependencies between governance and human development or deprivation. They explain interdependence through the concept of human security, which has two components: freedom from fear, and freedom from want. Freedom from

fear is said to be tenable through sustained social peace and sound and responsive governance. The route to freedom from want is through human development. Though human development and human security are intimately related, they have different requirements:

Clearly there is an intimate relation of dependence between human security and human development. Absence of the former calls into question the ability to implement the latter, since it is virtually impossible for people to expand and realize choices in an environment of war, want, crime, rape, political repression, the absence of free expression, and fear. For this reason, progress in human security is decisive for achieving human development (Mozambique NHDR, 1998:31).

Certain of the political connotations and implications of the HD concept continue to entice reservations if not resentment by Third World governments. Nevertheless the HDR advocacy continues to achieve growing impact. This is probably due to the general appeal of the concept that addresses actual, real life, priorities of ordinary men and women in the Third World. However strong impact is at least partly augmented by the incorporation into the HDRs of derived indices and measurements by which individual countries are ranked. The three major indices are the Human Development Index, Human Poverty Index, and the Gender-Related Development Index. The HD concept, though not its jargon, also penetrated into the World Bank, which began to devote greater attention to issues of poverty reduction and community-driven development.

2. The Social and Millennium Summits

Growing support within the United Nations for alternative development culminated in the convention of the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, March 1995). The Summit, then the largest gathering ever of world leaders, reached consensus on the need to put people at the centre of development. It pledged to make the conquest of poverty, the goal of full employment and the fostering of social integration overriding objectives of development. It not only endorsed *social development* as component of sustainable development (together with economic growth and environmental sustainability), but also expressed commitment to a programme of action to achieve its objectives. The Social Summit has in effect initiated a new paradigm in human development: governments have become committed and accountable for social, not just economic development. World leaders stated in the Copenhagen Declaration that:

We gather here to commit ourselves, our Governments and our nations to enhancing social development throughout the world so that all men and women, especially those living in poverty, may exercise the rights, utilize the resources and share the responsibilities that enable them to lead satisfying lives and to contribute to the well-being of their families, their

communities and humankind. To support and promote these efforts must be the overriding goals of the international community, especially with respect to people suffering from poverty, unemployment and social exclusion (Article 9).

We gather here in Copenhagen in a Summit of hope, commitment and action. We gather with full awareness of the difficulty of the tasks that lie ahead but with a conviction that major progress can be achieved, must be achieved and will be achieved (Article 11).

On the basis of our common pursuit of social development, which aims at social justice, solidarity, harmony and equality within and among countries, with full respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as policy objectives, development priorities and religious and cultural diversity, and full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, we launch a global drive for social progress and development embodied in the following commitments:

- Create an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development.
- Eradicate absolute poverty by a target date to be set by each country.
- Support full employment as a basic policy goal.
- Promote social integration based on the enhancement and protection of all human rights.
- Achieve equality and equity between women and men.
- Attain universal and equitable access to education and primary health care.
- Accelerate the development of Africa and the least developed countries.
- Ensure that structural adjustment programmes include social development goals.
- Increase resources allocated to social development.
- Strengthen cooperation for social development through the UN.

3. Millennium Development Goals MDG'S

In June 2000, the Social Summit +5 convened at Geneva, and world leaders met to review achievements in social development. It transpired that no country had met the targets pledged in the Copenhagen Action Plan. Nevertheless member states reaffirmed their commitment to the Action Plan, which was thereby enshrined as a basic framework for social development. Geneva 2000 also placed emphasis on new concerns: enabling people, communities and civil society and empowering the poor to resist exploitation and meet their own goals for self-development. Reducing inequality

– including the growing "digital divide" and the reduction of debt and excessive debt-servicing were also prioritized.

Geneva 2000 was soon followed by the Millennium Summit. In September 2000, all 189 Member States of the United Nations (147 of them represented directly by their head of State or Government) adopted the UN Millennium Declaration that embodies a large number of specific commitments aimed at improving the lot of humanity in the new century. World leaders noted in the Declaration the gross inequalities in human development worldwide, and recognized “their collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level”. In addition to their support for freedom, democracy and human rights, they set eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to be achieved by 2015. The goals bind countries to do more and join forces in the fight against poverty and hunger, illiteracy and lack of education, gender inequality, child and maternal mortality, disease and environmental degradation. The eighth goal calls on rich countries to relieve debt, increase aid and give poor countries fair access to their markets and their technology. UNDP worked with other UN departments, funds and programmes, the World Bank, the IMF and OECD to identify over 40 quantifiable indicators to assess progress. Individual countries committed themselves to reporting on progress in achievement of the MDG targets.

The international community supports the global compact on MDGs by initiatives to help poor developing countries pursue the achievement of the goals. The HIPC Debt Initiative, proposed in 1996 by the World Bank and IMF and agreed by governments around the world, is perhaps the most important. It was the first comprehensive approach to reduce the external debt of the world's poorest, most heavily indebted countries, and represented an important step forward in placing debt relief within an overall framework of poverty reduction. Since 1999, under the enhanced HIPC Initiative, poor countries began to qualify for World Bank and IMF concessional lending and debt relief through submission of nationally-owned participatory poverty reduction strategies (PRS). Five principles are stipulated for the development and implementation of the strategies so that they become:

- Country-driven — involving broad-based participation by civil society and the private sector in all operational steps;
- Results-oriented — focusing on outcomes that would benefit the poor;
- Comprehensive in recognizing the multidimensional nature of poverty;
- Partnership-oriented — involving coordinated participation of development partners (bilateral, multilateral, and non-governmental);
- Based on a long-term perspective for poverty reduction.

The MDGs, with poverty-reduction at the forefront, have thus become overriding objectives in development planning at national, regional and global levels.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Social Summit has unequivocally endorsed social development as one component of three that define ‘sustainable development’, together with economic growth and environmental protection. Consensus has since prevailed in national and international forums that people, their problems, needs and aspirations should be at the centre of public policies and development strategies. But progress on the ground towards achieving the main goals of the Social Summit is at best slow and uneven. The people-centred approach to national and international public affairs has largely remained an abstract concept. In recognition of this, the UN Secretary General reported on June 2004 that achieving social development SD - Implementation, Policy, Operational & Practice are shown in Figure 1 - or the movement towards equitable societies with equal rights and equal opportunities, continues to be characterized by a gap between intentions and actions, between proclaimed objectives and the actual orientation of national and international policies. Among the many reasons for such a gap, three main issues emerge from an analysis of the work of the Commission [for Social Development] on the follow-up to the World Summit: social aspects of globalization; macroeconomic policies and social development goals; and capacity of national Governments to undertake social policies.

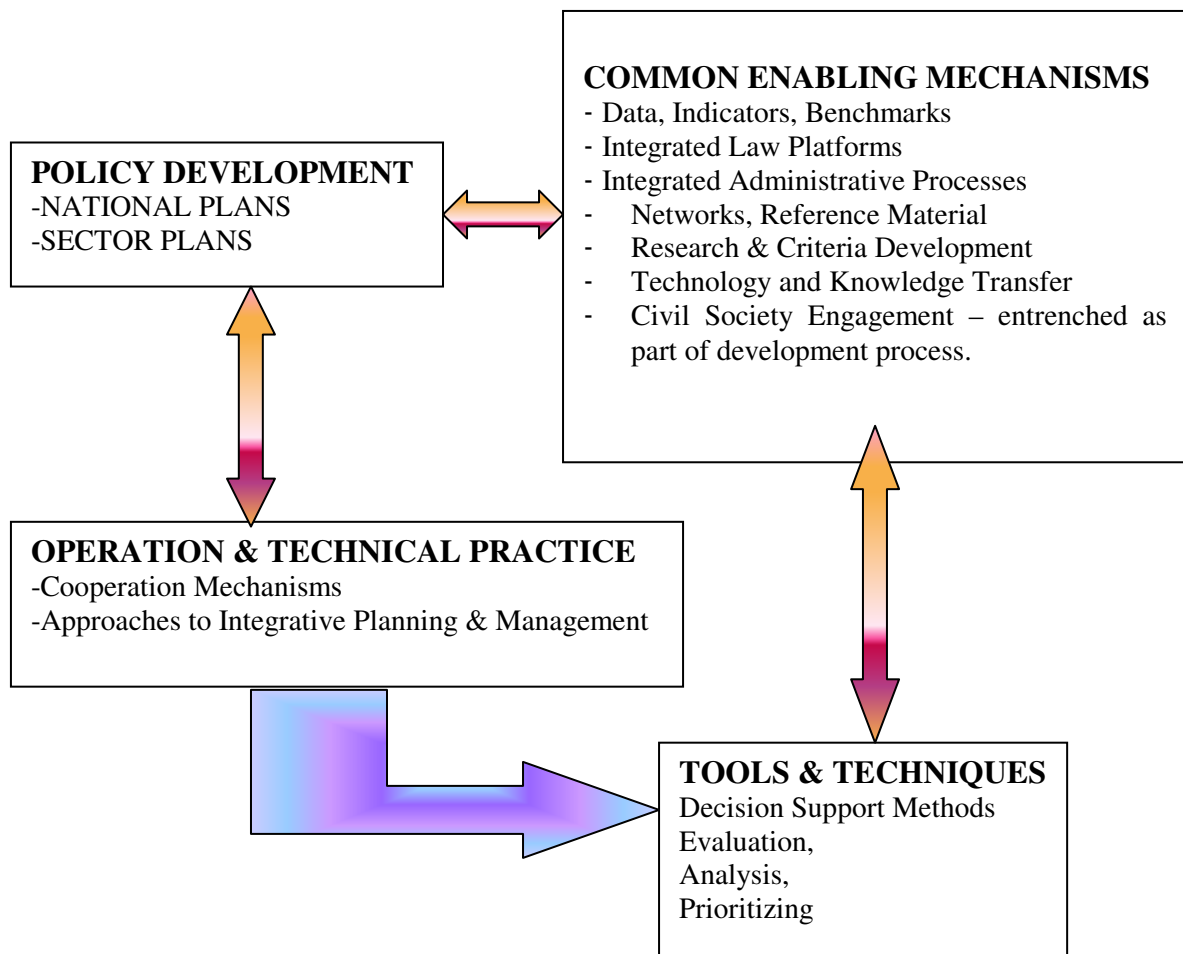


Figure 1 SD Implementation – Policy, Operational & Practice

1. Sustainable Development Objectives

Sustainable development is generally better understood in terms of its objectives than of its modality. This is partly due to the incorporation of the objectives into official rhetoric the world over. A number of international organisations, however, strive to expound and explain the modality. The World Bank has taken initiative in that direction, and defined the modality as the exercise of community control over decisions and resources directed at poverty reduction and development: ‘Community-Driven Development’ (CDD) or, in the case of Africa, ‘Community Action Programmes’ (CAP). Figure 2 shows SD segregation of decisions, administrative aggregation of delivery. According to the Bank, the aim of CDD is to promote security, opportunity and empowerment for all members of the community through:

- strengthening of accountable, inclusive community groups
- supporting broad based participation by poor people in strategies and decisions which affect them
- facilitating access to information and linkages to the market and
- improving governance, institutions and policies so that local and central governments and service providers, including NGOs and the private sector, become responsive to community initiative

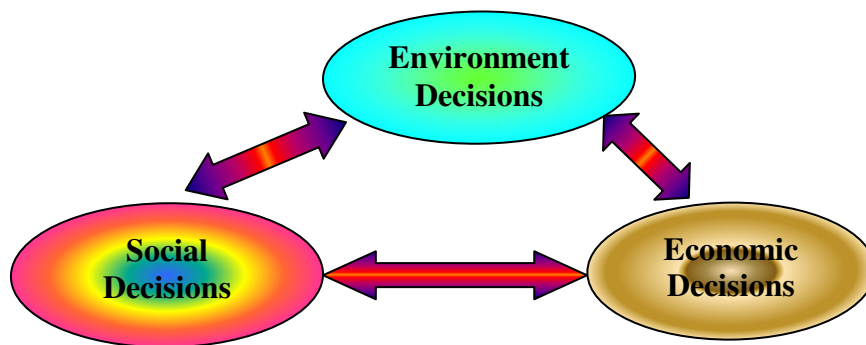


Figure 2 SD Segregation of decisions

Social development as modality is geared towards community empowerment, which means that the beneficiaries should be as much as possible involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of their development process. The successful adoption of the modality, however, invariably depends on meeting critical information on the community. The essential baseline information generally pertains to salient features of the social organization, socio-economic adaptations and socio-cultural premises of the community, and additional data may be required by the varying individual projects. Such information facilitates the identification of stakeholders, their categories and the

respective problems, needs and interests of each sub-category. It also avails insights into aspects of the local power structure, gender roles and relations, indigenous systems of technical and environmental knowledge, and deep-rooted premises sanctioning socio-cultural acceptability, preferences and the mechanisms for community mobilization for development-related collective action.

2. Misconception of Sustainable Development

Governments in developing countries have little if any leverage to steer globalisation as to benefit the poor, the unemployed and the excluded for whose cause they committed themselves. They thus depend on the will and willingness of the international community to rectify the adverse impact of globalisation processes. But even at home, and on measures that are almost entirely internal, the adoption of social development seems to be a formidable if not untenable task. Very little has been achieved in developing national capacity to undertake social policy or in integrating macroeconomic policies and social development goals. The difficulties are numerous, including subtle resistance by groups benefiting from the *status quo*, and lack of political will to go through with the required measures. The Division for Social Policy (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs) underlines the difficulties to promote a social development perspective and recommends that:

The first step towards providing a social perspective on development should therefore consist of making the point for such an approach: (i) producing the facts and contributing the analyses in support of a broader and comprehensive approach to social development; (ii) encouraging a large, three-track debate (policy makers, civil society, including the business sector and the academia) on the social dimension of development.

One major constraint is that planners and technocrats do not seem clear about the precise connotations, requirements and implications of what their governments committed themselves to at the Social Summit. Two general misconceptions of social development seem particularly relevant in explaining some aspects of the failings.

The first misconception rests with long standing preconception and practice that 'issues-social' pertain either to social sectors (health, education) or to specific social concerns (e.g. poverty reduction and gender-balance and equality). Parts of the text of the Social Summit indeed imply such a traditional view, as apparently do the MDGs in which the quantitative targets are clearly sectoral. This misconception, however, glosses over the prerequisites of the Copenhagen Plan of Action and the MDGs (justice, integration, participation and empowerment) that clearly corroborate the status of social development as perspective.

The second misconception contends that the new notion of social development is still at infancy and requires time before its adoption for operational purposes. Its source is an impression that while public and policy concerns have given rise to a growing

framework for economic and environmental governance, no such framework has yet been developed to address social issues. This impression, however, reveals a degree of unawareness of, or insensitivity to, the complexities involved in, and the requirements for, identification of social issues of relevance to development - issues that vary with socio-cultural context as well as with individual project. Social scientists, trained to address these complexities, would readily concede that at present there is no, and in the near future there most likely will not be, a comprehensive framework for integrating social issues comparable to those for economic and environmental governance. This is so because the former framework cannot credibly elaborate stipulations beyond the adoption of a social development perspective and the fulfilment of its informational requirements through methodologies of socio-cultural analysis. Current university curricula do not provide training in these methodologies to prospective planners and technocrats. It is in recognition of this that governments and international organisations started to pay attention to capacity building in social development so that planners and technocrats become sensitised and appreciative of the significance of social science input to their activities.

Misconception of social development has constrained and compromised the broad and innovative perspective embraced by the Social and Millennium Summits. The global social development agenda has consequently remained essentially focused on poverty eradication, while social policy issues are approached from a micro-perspective on a purely sectoral basis. Nevertheless social development clearly goes way beyond the realm of the "social sectors". The Social Summit explicitly characterised it as "component", or *dimension*, of sustainable development. It is a *perspective* that seeks to address, and incorporate into 'development', the complexity of social dynamics (i.e. the interplay of social structures, processes and relationships vis-à-vis economic and cultural changes). The UN Commission for Social Development seeks to dispel the misconceptions. In preparing for its upcoming Forty-third Session (09-18 February, 2005), for example, it underlines "the need to integrate a social development perspective in the comprehensive review of the progress made in the fulfilment of all the commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration".

The connotations of social development are also wider than those of the concept of human development. Human development focuses on various elements of the well being of individuals - elements that the development process is to positively impact, while social development denotes the *objectives* as well as the *modalities* of the development process. Social development thus in addition furnishes a perspective or *methodology* for pursuing all phases of development (planning, implementation, monitoring and follow-up). It advocates a people-centred and empowering participatory development approach toward an inclusive, just and stable society. Its key instrument is social policy, while its pillars are analysis and promotion of social justice.

3. Sustainable Development and Nile Basin Initiative NBI

NBI has adopted sustainable development and poverty reduction as primary objectives. Poverty is indeed rampant in all three Eastern Nile countries (Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan), and Ethiopia and Sudan are among the poor heavily indebted countries. Ethiopia and Sudan are technically eligible, but though currently engaged in developing its strategy paper, its acceptance as beneficiary is understood to await the achievement of a political settlement to its civil war(s). Poverty reduction in the three countries thus constitutes a major social need and political necessity.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Poor heavily-indebted countries seeking benefit from the HIPC Initiative were the first to confront the challenge of adopting a social development perspective in preparing their PRSPs. In that process they benefited from training and capacity building promoted by UNDP, the World Bank and the IMF. Three features of PRSP, cardinal to the methodology of social development, have apparently proved too innovative or virtually incomprehensible for policymakers and officials to readily internalise:

- First, strategy development had to be participatory involving consultations with all stakeholders (including trade unions, the private sector, civil society organisations and community representatives). Governments were thereby led to dispense with the top-down planning that they formerly adopted as natural and undisputable right.
- Second, poverty was depicted by analysis as multidimensional in nature. This implied that the objective of poverty reduction could not be approached solely through economic and social sectors (e.g. employment, income-generation schemes, social safety-nets and expanding social services). Requisites for poverty reduction were also legislative, policy and institutional reforms - e.g. reform of legislation towards more equitable natural resource entitlements, shifting of policy emphasis away from modern farming to traditional agriculture, and the strengthening of government departments serving the poor and their production systems.
- Third, and probably most striking, is that PRSP was not to constitute 'yet another sectoral strategy' to be added to others, but a perspective to guide all planning in the country: at national, regional as well as sectoral levels.

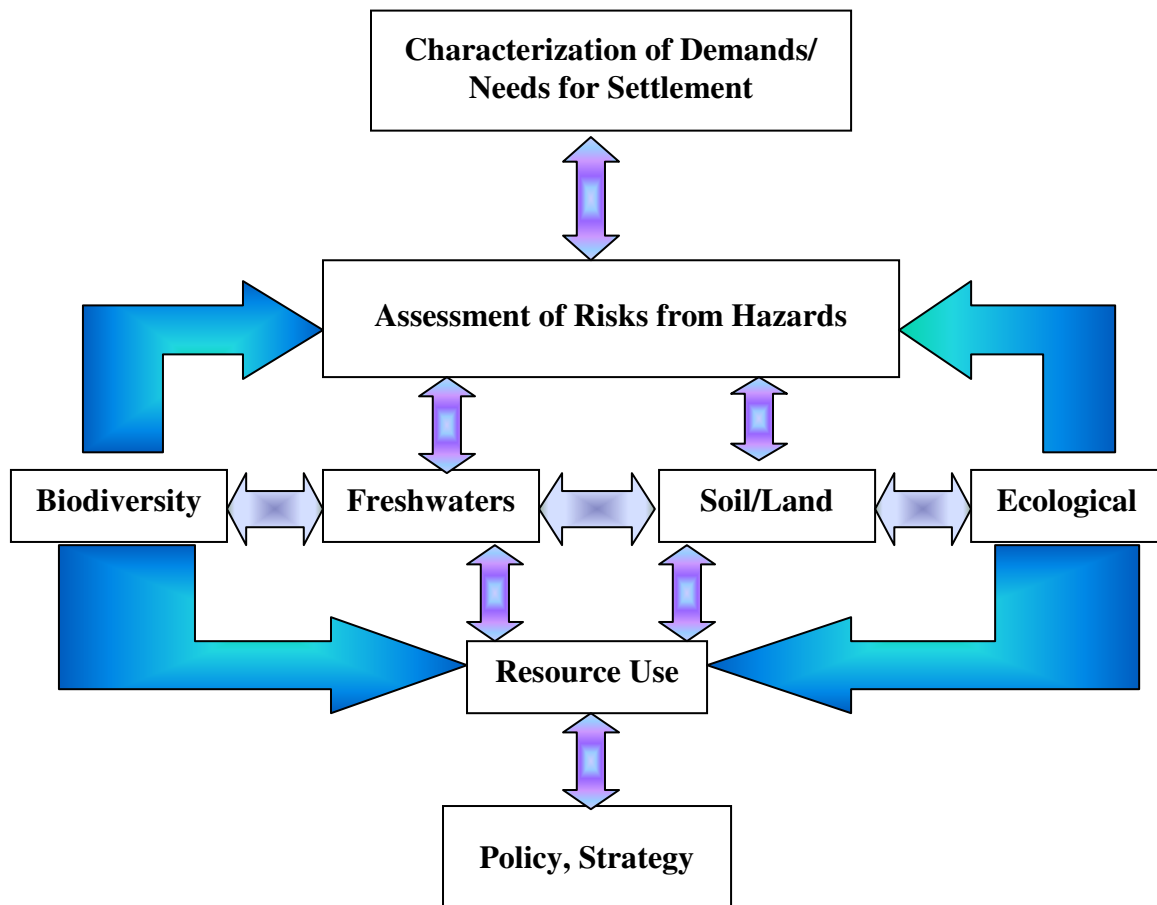


Figure 3 An Adaptive Planning Framework

It is rather early to evaluate progress in the implementation of national poverty reduction strategies. But all seem agreed that there persists considerable need in the implementing countries to build and enhance national capacity in social development to promote integration of the perspective in individual projects.

GENUINE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Genuine sustainable development can contribute to “ecological socialism” by developing life-styles, learning mechanisms and organizational forms that seem to point backwards rather than forwards in terms of economic growth and development.

Ecological socialism and ecological modernization are perceived by various stakeholders as *the* most “progressive” solution in the promotion of sustainable development. Obviously there are different techniques and perspectives in how to integrate economic growth and environmental concerns.

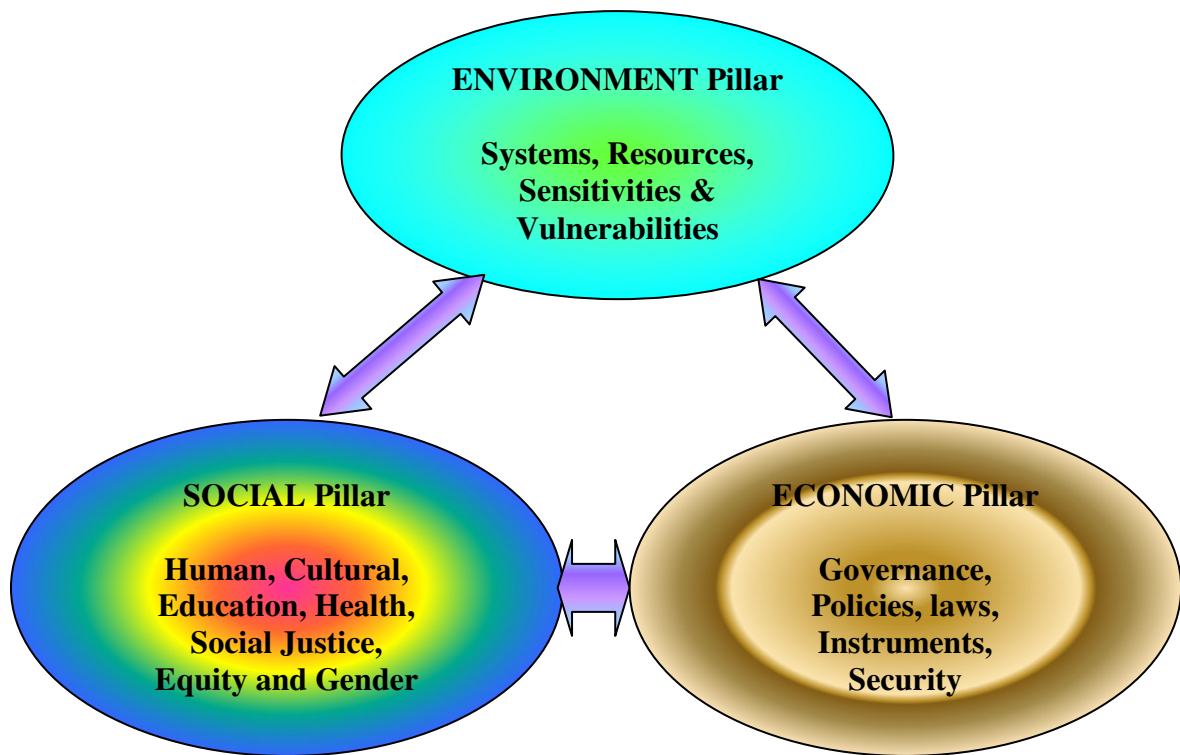


Figure 4 Genuine Sustainable Development

Some are primarily highlighting the actual goal of integration as related to economic patterns in more well-organized ways, while other are more concerned with environmental norms and limitation of growth patterns.

The variety of perspectives is important for assessing the overall costs and benefits of genuine sustainable development in a much broader normative context. Genuine sustainable development is shown in Figure 5. However, to assess the degree of policy integration towards genuine sustainable development, these varieties must be reconciled and integrated in such a way that substantive standards can be stipulated.

CONCLUSION

The general conclusion is that the degree of Genuine Sustainable Development is still very weak in Nile Basin Countries. There are, however, some green innovation policy initiatives taking place in Nile Basin Countries. The possibility of pursuing change in terms of strengthened public governance on green innovations without the formal structure of a strategic plan is of course possible. In conclusion, Nile Basin Countries are dealing with some complex problems regarding their economy and the environment. The nature of these problems, combined with many inherent characteristics of Nile Basin make Genuine Sustainable Development (GSD) a good

model to use in such cases. There are, however, a number of considerations which must be mentioned regarding GSD, and some questions which can only be answered as part of the evolution of this process. Furthermore, it is clear that the goal of sustainable development rests on a stronger normative mandate than innovation. Environmental protection requirements *must be integrated into* the definition and implementation of Community policies, and that this should be done in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development. First, it may be hard for collaboration to become a mainstream approach because there are no guidelines or formulae for implementation. It is a unique process that must be tailored to each situation. In addition, many of the factors described in this paper are intangible. It is hard to know if a community possesses them, and if not how they can be "created." There is also much emphasis today on performance measures, criteria for success, and other ways to justify the use of a certain methodology. It is hard at this point to quantify the successes associated with GSD and therefore may be hard to justify expending the resources. In addition, there are some situations in which Genuine Sustainable Development simply will not work. If there are legal or regulatory issues at stake, collaboration is not an appropriate alternative. In addition, if there are a large number of stakeholders or large number of competing interests, it may be very difficult to reach some common ground.

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