

Building the Basic Foundations of Global Sustainability

(Note: This is the intent, plainly spoken, with no room for doubt.)

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"It is safe to say, given current world wide and local development efforts, including security efforts, that the search for true sustainability has now become a widespread goal, and therefore the identification of practical approaches to support its implementation and monitoring is right now a pressing need. This paper points out, based on a general overview of commonly mentioned sustainability/security concerns, the need to design a world system that allow us to move step by step toward global sustainability."

Being unsustainable is about insecurities. Hence, security/sustainability issues can be seen as having social, economic, and environmental components as described below.

Social concerns: Uneven social development or access to social services is a core sustainability issue within and between countries. Access to education appears to be the prominent issue in less developed countries while access to health care seems to be the relevant issue in developed countries. However, in all countries children development is increasingly being seen as the foundation to induce a more socially responsible future, a future based on individual/personal self-reliance. Hence, schools can be used as the front line to ensure kids learn to be responsible when taking care of themselves and their families and their communities. If this way is chosen, then social sustainability should start with the implementation/promotion of education and healthcare programs for all kids, a basic social need.

Economic concerns: Another major sustainability issue is access to economic opportunities as the formal private sector appears to have a permanent comparative advantage over the informal private sector. Hence, it seems that current private sector development initiatives must be geared to specifically support informal private sector development so as to expand the private sector blanket as wide as possible in all countries, as it is the informal private sector the one that contains without a doubt the widest segment of the poor population. If this way is chosen, then economic

sustainability should begin with the implementation of informal private sector development programs, a basic economic need.

Environmental concerns: Recently, the need to achieve environmental sustainability has reached deep into previously only economically oriented institutions like the World Bank, which appears now to be engaged in achieving various forms of economic sustainability all over the world. However, the need to adjust these development strategies to reflect social goals at the same time appears to be increasing in relevance as social security/poverty issues are recognized as relevant development barriers. Given the above, environmental sustainability requires the inclusion of socio-economic responsibility in its programs, a basic environmental security need.

The Power Of Financing

Addressing each of the security issues mentioned above, or any combinations of them, requires access to proper levels of financing/asset transfers in most cases, which brings to the picture the power of financing in shaping sustainability concerns. If financing is available only to the rich, then the expected outcome will be pro-rich growth. If financing is controlled by the private sector, then the expected outcome will be pro-private sector growth. These tendencies should be expected to hold or persist at the global level too. The discussion highlights two pressing current needs: a) the need to ensure that financing reaches the poor; and b) the need to ensure that the public sector has the proper level of control of local and global finance to ensure it can fulfill efficiently its local and global regulatory/market monitoring responsibilities.

The Need to Address All Security Issues Simultaneously

Widespread agreement in the notion that addressing only one security issue (e.g., environmental security) while leaving the others unattended (e.g., social security issue/poverty) is not a winning strategy, indicates that there is a growing need to deal with at least basic social, economic, and environmental security concerns simultaneously through proper levels of financing locally and globally. Yet an efficient global institutional capacity to ensure sustainability outcomes does not exist right now. The international institutional framework in existence (WTO, FAO, World Bank, UNDP, IMF, etc.) is not concerned or consistent with sustainability per se. In addition, there is not a formal systematic plan towards global security/sustainability.

Step By Step Approach Toward Global Sustainability

Given the urgent need to move forward in flexible and increasing, but responsible ways in at least meeting some basic needs, a four stage approach can be envisioned, probably through the United Nations.

The organizational development stage (short term): This stage towards sustainability should reflect the need for the creation of a publicly controlled financing system, The Global Public Development Fund (GPDF), to promote the tenet that the best interest of humanity should be the paramount goal of global development and to regulate and police privately controlled global financial systems/markets. The GPDF fund should have three systematically coordinated umbrella organizations/divisions: The Public World Poverty Fund (PWPF) to tackle social/poverty issues; The Public World Environmental Fund (PWENF) to deal with environmental/ecosystem degradation issues; and The Public World Economic Fund (PWEF) to take care of economic development issues. Such a public institutional world structure would be in a position to ensure that the current economic or eco-economic globalization process, apparently inconsistent with the public interest, reflects sustainability principles (a) through effective regulation and incentives geared to minimize negative local and global social, economic, and environmental externalities, and (b) through effective, responsible public action.

The implementation stage (medium term): The second stage toward sustainability should deal specifically with directing public and private global development funds to support and monitor basic foundations of sustainable living world wide such as: investing in the education and health of all children; investing in the development/promotion of the informal private sector; and investing in meeting the socio-economic stability of key environmental programs on deforested and forested areas. Here, an efficient public/private local and global partnership needs to be developed/encouraged to be able to transform traditional pro-unsustainable forces into advocates of sustainability.

The monitoring stage (medium to long-term): The third stage should be focused on the ongoing monitoring of the implementation stage with the goal of maximizing investment efficiencies in the delivery of the basic social, economic, and environmental programs selected and implemented.

The expansion stage (very long-term): Once the basic social, economic, and environmental investments are being effectively delivered, then investment should be orderly expanded gradually (little by little) to reach all social, economic, and environmental sectors worldwide.

The resolution of these security issues points to the need to ensure financing access to the poor and financing control to the public sector so as to ensure the existence of market inclusion and market efficiency worldwide. This security/sustainability arrangement could be handled through the United Nations and its success will need the promotion and development of an effective public/private sector pro-sustainability partnership.

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