

Main barriers
sustainable
development
developing countries
initiatives overcome
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Any country whose standard of living is at a low level is referred to as a developing country. Development level varies from country to country thus cannot be generalized in meaning. Using numerical categorization, Countries with low and middle income have been categorized as 'developing' by the World Bank. Dividing economies with the 2008 Gross National Income per capita (GNI), developing countries were identified by GNI per capital below \$11 905. Countries having progressive economies but which have not attained a particular standard to be referred to as developed country are categorized as Newly Industrialized Country (NIC). Such countries are said to have rapid growth in their economy but have still not reached the standard of the First World, these are highly developed countries (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developed_country)

Almost all countries of the third world can be categorized as developing, they including all African countries excluding South Africa, all countries in the Middle East excluding Turkey, all Asian countries excluding China, Japan, Singapore, Russia, Taiwan India, Myanmar and South Korea, some countries in Eastern Europe, Southern American countries excluding Brazil and the Caribbean excluding Jamaica and Cuba.

File: World Bank income groups. svg

Fig1: Countries based on World Bank income groupings for 2006 (calculated by GNI per capita, Atlas method).

High income

Upper-middle income

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Lower-middle income

Low income

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developing_country

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development as defined in 1987 in a report by Brundtland is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.” (Hecht, 1999)

“ Sustainable development as an aspiration is global; as an ongoing process, it is local. A growing number of scientists and technologists share in the aspiration and experiment with the local” (Mabogunje and Kates, 2004).

For sustainable development to be achieved, especially in developing countries, some stages have to be undergone; it is also necessary for essential building blocks to be implemented. The economic, social and environmental factors have to be considered in a transparent and open manner. “ In many developing countries, the fundamental building blocks, such as a free-market economy, transparency of government operations, public access to information, public involvement in decision making, and enforcement of environmental laws, are weak or absent. Although some developing countries are strengthening domestic policies and regulations and creating economic policy incentives for attracting environmentally sound investment, progress is slow and uneven.” (Hecht, 1999).

Barriers

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Developing countries have less sustainable livelihoods today than they had 25 years ago. The issue of sustainable development involves making sure that the ongoing development does not affect future generation.

Some of the following issues contribute to the low sustainability level in developing countries:

Extreme Poverty

Poverty is the most prominent barrier to development in developing countries. Almost all population found in these countries live in rural settlements and depend on agriculture as their main source of income. Poverty and the environment have a strong connection especially in countries with economies that depend on natural resources. For people in these countries to meet their needs, they engage in local activities such as tree cutting for fuel wood, wild life hunting (leading to extinction), extensive and excessive farming system and so on. These activities are carried out to meet the needs of today but the repercussions await the future generations.

Deforestation

Intense farming and deforestation in South America has left some areas with only 5% of natural vegetation. If this trend continues, there might be little or nothing left to pass to the future generations.

Africa had about 650 million hectares of woodlands and forests but between 1990 and year 2000, about 53 million hectares of forest was lost (Africare speech, 2008). In respect to the global forest loss, this was about 56% in that period. Deforestation has a resultant effect on protection of soils, the land is <https://assignbuster.com/main-barriers-sustainable-development-developing-countries-initiatives-overcome-economics-essay/>

more exposed to adverse conditions like erosion and evaporation, also quality of water is affected by deforestation. All these will invariably tell on the production and economy of countries involved.

Urban Development

Urban areas in developing countries are expected to be more populated majorly because of migration. However this comes with a great environmental challenge. A good number of urban dwellers either inhabit slum areas or carve a slum-niche for themselves simply because they do not have legal rights to own their properties. Slum conditions lack good, portable water, electricity and other basic amenities of life. The issue of waste disposal in slum areas is usually carelessly handled, this poses as a threat to health and safety of slum dwellers. It is not a surprise to use plastic bags as mobile toilets in some large slums like Kibera, Nairobi's largest slum.

Also, because of the nature of these areas, there is increase in miscreants among juveniles. This has a direct negative effect on young adults who are supposed to be leaders of tomorrow. This is where the effect of the environment on the social life of individuals comes in to play. Some shanty areas in Nigeria have in recent times produced the highest number of notorious young adults.

Urbanization in developing countries results in very large population inhabiting very small area, polluted water and air, poor public transport among other things. These environmental conditions lead to low standard of living in these areas.

In South America, urban population is found in settlements called squatter, Brazil having favelas while Venezuela has barrios. Caracas is known to have over 50% population living in squatters. These squatters are usually made from scrap and cardboard materials in areas that are prone to flooding or steep areas. After a while, the construction is upgraded with better materials but the settlements remain in an irregular network with small paths and streets, there is usually no plan for waste management, drainage or water supply.

The Asian continent among others is not left out in urbanization issues. Bangladesh, a country in Asia has had an increase in urban poverty in recent times. " In Dhaka city alone, from 1974 to 2005 slum population has jumped from 250, 000 to 2, 840, 000 during the span of little over 3 decades (Haider, 2008). During these decades, the number of slums also increased from 500 to 4, 300. While slum population has increased by more than 11 times the number of slums has increased 8. 6 times during this period. The causes for the increase of slum population are certainly complex. However, the major aspect is again related to the lack of well paying jobs in urban areas. There are also cases of downward mobility in urban areas of urban dwellers themselves. Although Bangladesh has been able to reduce urban poverty to some extent, there are pockets of chronic poverty in slums that seem very hard to overcome." (Haider, 2008).

http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol18no2/2809067_slum.jpg

Nairobi, Kenya: Sixty per cent of the city's people live in slum areas.

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Source: <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol18no2/182environ.htm>

Impact of Industrial Waste

The process of obtaining non-renewable materials from natural resources has an adverse effect on the environment. A good example is Nigeria, a developing country in West Africa. The Niger Delta environment has been polluted by oil spills and flares from gas for over half a century. A target was set forth to put a stop to flaring of gas but this seems to be unachievable with the trend of events.

Mine sites which are no longer in use in some parts of Africa contribute to the nuisance that the environment is becoming. In general, mineral and oil exploration contribute to water pollution (which also causes death of organisms in water), contaminated soil, e. tc. Developing countries will continue to have great challenge in attaining sustainable development if the current approach to extraction of resources is not addressed.

Effect of Climate Change on Environment

Africa as a continent has so many developing countries. Studies from the IPCC (Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change) show that this continent is more prone to the impact of climate change than any other part of the world. Some of the effects of climate change include less rainfall in areas already experiencing dryness like the southern and eastern parts, and increased drought in north central Africa. It is also predicted that by 2025 (Africare speech, 2008), western African countries will experience scarcity of

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water, such countries like Ghana, Burkina Faso, Benin Republic, Mauritania, Nigeria e. t. c.

While other issues are more pressing and getting better attention from African leaders (such issues as malaria, HIV AIDS, poverty, starvation e. t. c), to sustain the future generation, Africa has to be fully at alert and address the issue of climate change peculiar to its environment.

In other areas, climate change may cause flooding in contrast to its effect in these countries. In South America for instance, climate change has an effect on their environment which in essence has a multiplier effect on planning for growth.

La Plata River basin which is the fifth largest river in the world generates about 50% of South America's Gross National Product (GNP) and five countries share boundaries with this river- Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. The effect of climate change in this river basin has affected the economy and as a result its population. Flow in this region has been 30% greater since 1970 than in previous time. This is in contrast to the average rainfall before 1970 and below average rainfall afterwards in sub-Saharan Africa (Africare speech, 2008).

Corruption

Corruption is a major barrier to sustainable development in every country that it exists. It steals from today's children the resources they will need to survive tomorrow. There is a direct link between underdevelopment and corruption. The former encourages the latter. A good scenario is the public

service low income in developing countries, this stimulates trivial corruption. The level of education and enlightenment in these countries also put people in ignorance of their statutory rights, thereby giving room for corrupt individuals.

Initiatives to Overcome Barriers

The discussion about initiatives to overcome barriers to sustainable development in developing countries will not be justified without mentioning the millennium development goals (MDGs). The MDGs were initiated in September 2000 during the United Nations Summit. These goals are eight in number and they break down into quantifiable targets that are 21 in number, they are also measured by 60 indicators. They include the following:

Extreme poverty and hunger eradication

Universal primary education for all

Encourage women empowerment and gender equality

Reduce death rate of children

Improve maternal health

Fight against diseases especially malaria and HIV/AIDS

Implement sustainable development

Develop a global partnership for development

These goals were created having developing countries in mind as the issues addressed are mostly concerned with them. However, the indicators for these goals show that they have not been effectively implemented locally and globally, they also show that the time frame given to them will not be realistic.

Over the years, developing countries have recognized the importance of environmental management and sustainability and there have been initiatives peculiar to each country and situation to enhance this.

Some of those initiatives include establishing Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). NGOs have gained reputation especially internationally as they are consulted on matters of planning and implementation of policies made at national and international levels.

Examples of such include Global Volunteer Network, Cross-Cultural Solutions, Conserve Africa, Africa Guide, Action for Agricultural Renewal in Maharashtra (AFARM), Conservation Council for South Australia to mention a few.

NGOs offer a clearer perspective and a wealth of experience in relevant areas such as human right defense, environmental protection, grassroots development, poverty alleviation, e. t. c. To thrive in their activities, these organizations should work alongside the government by participating in development, planning policies and decision making at the various levels of administration.

However, since they are voluntary, availability of funds for NGOs might pose a slight challenge and they sometimes have to depend on funds from large hearted individuals.

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Other initiatives include creating anticorruption agencies. Since corruption impedes development at all levels of government, countries have created such agencies to check corrupt practices, examples include Office of Anti-Corruption Commission – Bhutan (Asia), Independent Authority Against Corruption- Mongolia (Asia), Anti- Corruption Commission- Bangladesh (Asia), Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission -Kenya (Africa), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission – Nigeria (Africa), War Against Indiscipline and Corruption- Nigeria (Africa), Kick Against Indiscipline- Nigeria (Africa), e. t. c These are just a few as there have been numerous organizations at different levels of government that function in this regard. However, as many as these appear to be, the issue of corrupt practices still rear their head. When caught in the act and asked, culprits sometimes blame the economy and government but those are just the ones who are brought to book, top citizens who have connections in high places are usually seen as ‘ above the law’. This falls back to having good leadership in developing countries as well as citizens having the right attitude, without these, corruption will still find its way in these countries and the efforts of these organizations will not be justified.

For every country, the children are the future leaders; good education for them is a very important factor for development. Some efforts have been made by countries and their governments to develop the minds of youngsters educationally, there have been schemes to sponsor students abroad to acquire various skills and knowledge so as to implement and integrate these skills once back home. Recently, the Federal Government of Nigeria awarded 1, 087 undergraduate and postgraduate Nigerian students

scholarship to study locally. There have also been organizations (PTF- Petroleum Trust Fund) that sponsor student abroad for studies from Nigeria. Other scholarship boards in other countries include Integrated Community Development Fund (ICDF) in Bolivia, Banque Libano Francaise in Lebanon and a host of others in other countries. This initiative has a very slow but steady growth in various developing countries. Other countries simply affiliate themselves with foreign government and bodies to get necessary support.

Conclusion

Since each developing country has its own government and ruling council, initiatives for achieving sustainable development in these countries differ, this is also because apart from the challenges listed above, some countries have challenges that are peculiar in nature to their environment, society and economy. In this regard, these countries tend to lean towards initiatives which particularly address their peculiar problems.

Coming up with initiatives is one thing, implementing those initiative is another. In my belief, the latter is more important than the former. To achieve sustainable development, developing countries must make conscious efforts to implement the existing initiatives while looking to create new ones. Lastly, achieving sustainable development in developing countries takes a gradual (not magical) process; levels of achievements can only be measured with indicators periodically. It is up to every individual to contribute in little ways to achieve a nation and global sustainable environment for the future generation.