

Chapter 12

How Can We Achieve Sustainability?

Lessons from Developed Countries

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ABSTRACT

The importance of adopting sustainable development is facing many challenges that affect political decisions and social changes. Many countries are facing the conflict between the development of businesses and economic growth and saving the environment. Unfortunately, sometimes people choose to neglect the environment and consequently harm themselves in an indirect way. Some countries take certain measures to fight pollution and global warming and to achieve sustainable development. Such measures can be seen in their policies. For example, Switzerland, Sweden, and Japan have imposed environmental policies that target better resource management. This chapter discusses the cases of the successful resource management systems making them a role model for other countries to target achieving sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Imagining a perfect economy with incessant growth, healthy rate of inflation and a surplus in the balance of payments, every factor that advocates a healthy economy, the question here is: could this perfect economy survive an environmental disaster? Certainly the answer is “no”.

There are many environmental issues that can destroy economies and efforts to sustain development no matter how great the economy is. One of the crucially important objectives for achieving the fundamental development is the resource management and sustainable waste by which this objective plays a vital role in reaching sustainable economic development and the urban

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development. The waste management sector tends to serve many different purposes such as: providing enormous working vacancies for low skilled labors, improving the health conditions and hygiene in the urban areas, reducing the emissions derived from the greenhouse effects; by adopting an effective and efficient waste and resource management avoiding the presence of the harmful greenhouse emissions.

The improvement of waste source management systems and policies tends to hold many potential methods for achieving ecological, economical, and social development. So, the crucial importance for achieving a sustainable waste and resource management is presented as follows: Protecting the environment and adopting an efficient system that can regulate the sustainable and efficient use of the natural resources. Improving the health conditions, the income and the quality of life for the people especially the poor people, in addition to reducing the carbon dioxide emissions derived from the greenhouse effect and cleaning the climate.

The adequate waste and resource management system to be applied, there has to be a full scan carried out by specialists and expertise from the environmental ministry to allocate the various forms of wastes that could be easily managed and recycled; in other words we can say that these various forms of waste are the main components that can either create an efficient or an inefficient system. These wastes could be rubbish, used raw materials by factories and plants, animal and human wastes, and plastic and rubber bottles. This paper will discuss in depth the policies adopted to achieve sustainability in developed countries.

BACKGROUND

Discovering whether the wellbeing of future generations is lower than the current requires better allocation of resources over time. And to determine the preferences of the future genera-

tions and all of these are impossible. But in 1977, John Hartwick demonstrated that a constant level of consumption could be maintained perpetually from an environmental endowment if all the scarcity rent derived from resources extracted from the endowment were invested in the capital. This level of investment would be sufficient to assure that the values of total capital stock don't decline.

Environmental sustainability requires maintaining certain physical flows of certain individual resources. This can't be achieved without implementing the environmental policy, because not all efficient allocations are sustainable and not all sustainable allocations are efficient. Then, policy changes can produce win-win situations because it helps in correcting the inefficiency and increase the net benefits.

In 1980, Allen R. defines sustainability as "Sustainable utilization is a simple idea: we should utilize species and ecosystems at levels and in ways that allow them to go on renewing themselves for all practical purposes indefinitely." This means that is important to guarantee that people protect those parts of the biosphere and adapt the rest only in ways that it can sustain.

Sustainable development was put on political agendas in 1987 by Our Common Future, often referred to as The Brundtland Report after the chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) which wrote it.

'Environment and development are not separate challenges: they are inexorably linked. Development cannot subsist on a deteriorating environmental base; the environment cannot be protected when growth leaves out of account the costs of environmental protection.' (p. 37)

The report defines sustainable development as development that seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future (p. 43). The report states that: 'Far from requiring the cessation of economic growth, it [sustainable development] recognizes that the problems of poverty and underdevelopment cannot be solved unless we have a

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