

# Chapter 1

## Theories and Practices of Sustainable Development in Africa

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Sustainable development (SD) involves economic growth with non-declining inter-generational benefit by maintaining environmental balance overtime. However, the conceptual and practical complexity of traditional SD has challenged its implementation. Consequently, this chapter provides a modified approach to SD called Institutionalized Sustainable Development (ISD) model, which augments the institutional governance into the three pillars of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental aspects. It argues that SD can be achieved when capable institutions are established that can optimize resource use; integrate economic development, environment and social inclusion. The Sustainable development practice of Africa has been assessed and lessons are drawn for future development ends. The resource use, task, and goal prioritization are the main motivators of developing these models. Its application requires development of indigenous knowledge and local capacity, planned investment, good governance, research and innovation directed towards realization of inclusive sustainable development in Africa.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Welfare indicators are shifting emphasis from measuring economic state to measuring sustainable development. Although various definitions have emerged, sustainable development is a fluid concept to understand and apply in developing countries including Africa. Despite an enduring debate on its actual meaning, three common principles have been emphasized; the principle of social equity, principle of environmental protection, and principle of development through integrating the economic, social and environmental aspects. Sustainable development (SD) requires economic development without endangering biodiversity, without exploiting natural resources and without excessive environmental pollution. Despite the general acceptance of integrating the three pillars of development, social equity and

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environmental protection, the concept remains elusive. Since the Brundtland report of 1987 and the Rio Summit of 1992, governments have taken sustainable development as a desirable goal and developed metrics for SD, but its implementation has been difficult. Matthews and Hammill (2010) noted that the main problem has been “designing the move from theory to practice; therefore, persistent clench of technological, political and other constraints becomes easier.”

The world has experienced multiple development related shocks. While the technological innovation has improved quality of life in developed countries; on the other side it has lifted the transaction cost in developing countries. Similarly; jobless growth; political business cycle, democracy with minority right, green economy with environment pollution, court without justice; leadership without follower; legitimacy without public consent; growth without development; education without behavioral change; religion without principle; democratic election without secret ballot system; free press without airtime; privatization without deregulation; corruption with accountability; social security with mass murder; plan without implementation; reward without achievement; development without improved social welfare are some of the paradoxes that Africa is facing. The author assumes that the major reason for such discrepancy could be absence of strong institutions that can coordinate resources and shape behaviors towards common endeavor. On the other hand, there exists a conceptual challenge in understanding and using the interrelated terms of growth, development, and sustainable development.

To address such gaps, a modified framework for sustainable development known as Institutionalized Sustainable Development (ISD) model is developed and analyzed in this chapter. The model is designed based on two key assumptions. First, strong institutions (institutionalized governance) are mandatory for sustainable development, and second, sustainability requires harmonization of resources, sectors and contexts in development process. In sum, it explains about how the social, economic, environmental dimensions are interwoven through institutional system towards hitting sustainable development ends.

However, the discussion starts with the evolution and concepts of SD followed by the African experience and finally presents about our ISD model as contribution.

## **EVALUATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The origin of the concept of sustainable development can be categorized into four major international conferences: Stockholm United Nations Conference on Human Environment (1972), the UN World Commission on Environment and Development -Our Common Future (1987), Rio United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-UNCED (1992), and Rio Plus various conferences like UN Johannesburg Conference (2002).

The theoretical framework for sustainable development was emerged from 1972 to 1992 through series of international conferences. In 1972, the first major international conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm. This conference created considerable momentum and recommendations, which led to the establishment of the UN environment Program (UNEP) and numerous national environmental protection agencies at national level. The recommendations at Stockholm further elaborated in World Conservation Strategy (1980); which discusses about the collaboration between the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and UNEP; aimed to advance such development by identifying priority conservation agendas and key policy options.

In 1983, UN convened the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. The assembly comprised of representatives from

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