

1. Governance

Promotion of sustainability in the processes of production, distribution and consumption is a crucially important aspect of governance, internationally as well as nationally. Sustainable development encompasses many aspects of a society. These include, among others, laws, policies and mechanisms for their implementation, institutions, equity, gender sensitivity, national and international agreements and conventions, democratic processes, people's participation in decision-making down to the lowest levels, cultural diversity and ecological concerns. Governance relates to the structure and functioning of the governments and the institutional infrastructure and power structures in the civil society. Governance promoting and supporting sustainable development will have:

- Social and political leadership and a bureaucracy that are well-informed and concerned about sustainable development, prepare the people at large for sustainability imperatives, and keep the distant future in focus as much as the present;
- Institutions that are functioning democratically with transparency, accountability and synergy;
- Participation of stakeholders at different levels in decision-making and, where possible, in implementation;
- Focus turned on the basic development needs, - e.g., poverty eradication and protecting the environment.
- Laws and policies reflecting viable reconciliation of the country's development needs and conservation imperatives, geographical and cultural diversity, equity and gender concerns.

Learnings and Perspectives

- 'Polluter pays' principle is to be made more far-reaching by bringing under the definition of the word 'polluter', all those who are responsible for degrading land, forest, biodiversity and other important elements of the environment.
- Certain laws need to be revised to reflect changing realities. For example, the Forest Conservation Act and the Mining Act need to be recast in such a way that, in case of the former, both the interests of the poor and the need for conservation are addressed, while in case of the latter, the mined lands are regenerated, and royalties charged, to spur efficiency in the mining sector as a whole.
- Security, peace and stability are vital for sustainable development.

It is only in freedom that anything can flourish, not in suppression, in control and discipline; these only corrupt.

J. Krishnamurti

Sustainable Development: Learnings and Perspectives from India

Governments and civil society institutions should collaborate and actively work towards creating respect for the rule of law at all levels.

- While both the private and public sector have crucial roles in the economy, natural resources such as forests, fragile ecosystems and other types of biodiversity are unlikely to be conserved if left entirely to the market forces. Millions of poor Indians depend for their livelihood on these natural resources. The resources, therefore, require large-scale participation of the local people, and institutions for conservation-oriented and sustainable-use-friendly management.
- There must be strict enforcement of conservation-promoting laws without outside interference. Some of these laws and their implementation require public hearings, which must be carried out in meaningful ways.
- Mechanisms need be created to ensure accountability within the government and the civil society for conservation, environmental integrity and affirmative actions in favour of the poor.
- Ownership and rights issues are very important in case of certain natural resources. Thus, ownership, rights and management responsibilities with regard to forests and water, assume great importance from the point of view of their conservation, development and the livelihoods of the poor.



- The environment is indivisible, interconnected with social systems. Under such circumstances, effective governance is not possible, with exclusive departments and highly specialized institutions. There must be conscious and urgent efforts for close coordination among the departments, within an agreed-upon framework of sustainable development. Highly specialized government and non-government institutions should also look at issues from more than one perspective.

- It will be desirable to take management of natural resources down to the users' level. Panchayati Raj (local self government) Institutions should be given the responsibility

to manage natural resources. However, their capacity must be built to manage these resources sustainably before they assume these responsibilities.

- In an age of globalization, liberalization and privatization, the most vulnerable are the environmental resources, the poor and sovereignty. International treaties, conventions and mechanisms, should be evaluated on the basis of these three aspects, among others. Environmental and social issues must not be allowed to be related, especially as encumbrances, to international trade.

- Research and field-level experimentation for sustainability-enhancing technologies and practices should receive high priority and allocation of funds, especially in sectors such as energy, organic farming and biodiversity conservation. Traditional health practices and conserving the plants and other material used, should be encouraged and systematized.

- Sudden natural disasters and environmental disasters that occur as a culmination of various natural and human activity related processes require on-going study, planning and preparedness for impact minimization. Recurring droughts in drought-prone areas with consequent crop failures and severe water scarcity, cyclones in states like Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, floods in northern and north-eastern states are phenomena that cause enormous resource damage and human misery. Disaster management including preventive measures and preparedness at the community as well as government level must assume high priority for both state and central governments.
- The need for expanded policy and financial support for education for sustainability in both the formal education system at all levels and the non-formal education system, including NGO initiatives, cannot be stressed too much. Large-scale people's involvement in, and support for, measures that promote sustainability are not possible without proper understanding and concern for sustainability.
- Without decentralized planning, the issues of diversities in economic status, environmental conditions, resource endowments and cultural beliefs, customs and practices cannot be adequately addressed. Decentralized planning is also desirable in order to include divergent stakeholder groups' perspectives, knowledge bases and aspirations into planning. Such planning is especially called for in sectors such as water, biodiversity, common property resource development, health and education infrastructure.
- Transparency and right to information are closely related. In order to increase credibility of government departments and civil society institutions, both right to information and transparency should be institutionalized and legislated.
- Special measures in the form of legal provisions as well as programmes involving the local community, need to be taken in order to strictly protect very fragile ecosystems such as mountains, deserts and marine ecosystems, all of which are under great threat from conventional development demands and processes.
- Adequate legislation is urgently needed for ensuring bio-safety and against bio-piracy.

“In India, our strength is that we are democratic and open. People can raise their voices. Therefore, we need to strengthen grassroot democratic institutions, down to the village level. Today panchayats have the possibility to be part of planning.”

Madhav Gadgil
*Multi-stakeholder
Consultation*



Democracy must in essence, therefore, mean the art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of the people in the service of the common good of all.

Mahatma Gandhi