

# **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE GLOBAL CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN WITH AN EYE ON PRAXIS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sustainable development as a global formulated concept can be traced back to the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and Thomas Paine, *Right of Men* published in 1792. These writers were concerned with giving everyone power over their lives and opportunities to live according to their own values and aspirations. In modern literature, the concept emerged in the 'Limits to Growth' of the early 1970s, with the concern that planetary resources cannot accommodate indefinitely the high rates of economic and particularly industrial growth of the times. The paper deviates from the current debate in which the International Union for the Conservation of Nature(IUCN) emerged as a strong advocate, by introducing the new millennium debate on determination of the domain of sustainable development in the fast globalizing world in which all key sectors of development need to cooperate with governments with the aim of solving myriads of complex global sustainable development problems at local, national , regional and international levels.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The paper conceptualises the origin, developments and advocacy to sustainable development in the global experience and practice. Firstly, the paper provides an analytical framework for its argument by outlining clear sustainable development parameters around trade and environment. Second, was the context of needs which gave rise to various thoughts and conceptions of generational developments around sustainable development and the positive changes thereof, especially the essential needs of the poor to which overriding priority is needed. The third was the introduction of the Earth Charter as the global conceptual domain for sustainable development. It also highlighted some elements of the ecological and economic crises that need to be addressed; it provides a brief history of how trade and environmental issues have been interpreted by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), culminating with the lunch of environmental negotiations in Doha.

The paper attempts to evaluate these prescribed negotiations against sustainable development imperatives and examines their implications for other international processes including the capacity of the environment to meet present and future needs. It highlights some strategic challenges being faced by the international community in efforts to achieving a sustainable future. Finally, it offers some suggestions as to how the international community especially the developing countries should continue to engage their counterparts in developed countries in using trade and environment negotiations to promote sustainable development. The paper acknowledges the need to move away from a mere global advocacy for sustainable development to a more tangible projects and programmes(praxis) that would ensure a better sustainable future for the earth and all its inhabitants.

The paper use development to mean that every one is able to have a better live now and in the future, which may include greater access to food, employment or creativity, health care, freedom of expression and living without fear. Sustainable is used to mean that

development can continue and will not be constrained by the earth's natural resources, conflicts or negative economic outlook. That one's efforts to development should not infringe on the rights or access of others to develop- the concept of "live and let others live". Therefore sustainable and development , the two key words that drive the discussions need to be seen within the aforementioned context, for better clarity and understanding of various ideas, sources and contributions found in the article.

## **FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS**

Towards the end of the last millennium until the present time, it has become a known fact that the earth's ecosystems are under enormous pressure and are starting to show significant signs of stress due to the pollution emissions world over. Though, traditional economic systems do not provide feedback on their environmental impacts where forests are cut down without regulation, pollution caused by cars, machineries, heavy trucks and other technological advancements, fish and other aquatic animals are harvested with no restriction and animals are hunted for game and human consumption. The free-for-all handling of the global ecosystem is in excess of the earth's ability to replenish its destruction, yet companies believe that these are major sources of job and wealth creation that will contribute to human growth and development. In most cases, production of goods goes hand in-hand with destruction of the earth's ecosystem without the knowledge of the producers. The major challenge is the way in which countries run their economies without expecting any external interventions in their domestic affairs, yet a destruction of one part of the earth's ecosystem has negative environmental consequences to other parts. These conceptions form the basis on which the issues of sustainable development are discussed in this paper.

## **ORIGIN AND GENERATIONAL DISCURSE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

A generation receives a natural and cultural legacy in trust from its ancestors, and is supposed to hold it in trust for future generations. This trust imposes upon each

generation the obligation to not only conserve and protect the environment and natural legacy, but also to enhance it so that the future generations can enjoy the fruits of such trust in a most appreciable manner (sustainable development). The roots and origin of the global advocacy for sustainable development can be categorised as classical and contemporary generations.

Every generation was faced with a common challenge of providing a better living and prosperous environment for humankind at their time without compromising the future of the generations yet unborn.

### **The Classical generation**

The human attitude towards nature, and how nature is treated, depend largely upon certain values, norms, and beliefs, which was acquired over the past centuries. The factors that influence human view of nature can be grouped into four major divisions namely (Dwivedi, 1988:9);

- a desire to dominate and control nature;
- acquisitive materialism
- a blind faith in science and technology and
- an unconstrained growth ethic in a limited world.

The influence of fostering such attitude to nature may be attributed to these values and attitudes as well as institutions of public governance such as laws, regulations, political processes and ideologies, market forces, scientific and cultural professional bodies. One of the paradoxes of the environmental protection for sustainable development is that, it seeks solutions to problems from the very same institutions that are part of the problems. For example, scientists, engineers, lawyers and politicians favour pro-development lobby by advocating for global technological solutions to problems without compromising their profits on professional fees. Each profession has come out with its solution towards sustainable development problems, there is no doubt that much good has come from the determined and rigorous pursuits of such efforts by the professionals, yet the anticipated goals and objectives of sustainable development efforts are not being realized.

### **The IUCN generation**

In the contemporary generation, the implementation of the global sustainable development programmes was under the leadership of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, but the (IUCN) could not take the project off the ground for reasons ranging from lack of resources in the organization to lack of political will of the global leadership and governments (Dwivedi and Khator, 2007:1030).

The present global sustainable development project concerns the administrative activities with the governing and the administrative requirements that could give effect to government policies. Governments' leadership with the support of the international development agencies will continue to dominate advocacy efforts for a more friendly sustainable development for many years in the new millennium hence the need to advocate for a disciplinary conceptual domain in the sustainable development terrain. The contemporary global sustainable development debate has developed to such an extent that the area of study of the discipline needs to be reconsidered. It has to be established whether nature conservationists and other environmental activist could indeed claim to have an exclusive domain and whether the interventions of governments and public sector practitioners could be recognized without any difficulty. It seems as though scholars of Sustainable Development may reconsider the area of study and launch stronger discussions with related disciplines in an effort to enhance the knowledge base of sustainable development and to change the way it is viewed by the society.

### **The contemporary generation**

Since the publication of the Bruland report, a lively debate on aspects of sustainable development has emerged among researchers and policy makers. Beyond the emphasis on environmental sustainability, sustainable development is now fully accepted as multi-dimensional: encompassing economic, social, political, cultural and environmental dimensions. Perhaps the best example is Agenda 21, which was adopted in Rio Summit.

The Agenda 21 blueprint for sustainable development emphasized the social and economic dimensions of poverty, consumption patterns, population growth, health and human settlement, the need for conservation, and proper management of all natural resources. It stressed, in addition to governments, the active participation of major groups such as women, children and youth, civil society organizations and business. It also addressed the necessary means of implementation (U.N, 1992:15). Since the Rio Summit, a series of major UN conferences have resulted in the further elaboration of the different aspects of sustainable development<sup>i</sup>. The debate is how can the people inhabiting this planet preserve, protect, and sustain the environment while maintaining the benefits thus accrued and yet lay a foundation for an appropriate relationship with nature?

For such a debate to become effective and provide workable paradigm, it must be based on a holistic approach for adequate comprehension, study, research and solution of environmental problems. The approach must be made of the following; value and beliefs based on religion and culture; scientific and technological capabilities, and limits to such innovations; pursuit of perpetual happiness and managerial progress; and governing institutions which influence the cultural and socio-economic behaviour. These and other strategies have been used by the international community through the United Nations and other development agencies as attempts to fashion out some reasonable amount of outcome-based sustainable development programme for all. In all these efforts, the future remains doubtful until the world has a reasonable amount of hopeful solutions to secure a balance between the sustainability of global industrial and economic growth and the protection and preservation of those natural resources which make the progress possible.

## **THE EARTH CHARTER AS A GLOBAL CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN**

In May 1995, an international workshop on the Earth Charter was held with participants from thirty nations and over seventy different organizations (Rockefeller 1997:71). The workshop drafted a Charter with six principles which include: right to food security and clean and safe air, water and soil; reinforcement of the right to public participation in

government decision making; eradication of poverty; affirmation of gender equality as a prerequisite to sustainable development; securing of rights to sexual and reproductive health; and global sharing of environmental costs (McChesney & Mueller, 1997:14). In 2000, the Earth Commission established the Earth charter which was endorsed by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), consists of the following sixteen policy principles and four major thematic areas with a view to assisting the world in solving the challenges of sustainable development (<http://www.earthcharter.org>):

**Respect and Care for the Community of Life:**

- (a) respect Earth and life in all its diversity
- (b) care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love;
- (c) build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful;  
and
- (d) secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.

**Ecological Integrity:**

- (a) protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life;
- (b) prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach;
- (c) adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being; and
- (d) advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.

**Social and Economic Justice**

- (a) eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperatives;

- (b) ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner;
- (c) affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisite to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunity; and
- (d) Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.

### **Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace**

- (a) strengthen democratic institutions at all levels and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice;
- (b) integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life;
- (c) treat all living beings with respect and consideration; and
- (d) promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence and peace.

The charter and its sixteen embedded principles seem to be set apart from many other international agreements as a result of its recognition of the urgent need for successful achievement of the goals of sustainable development which requires not only international commitment and legal regulations, but also basic changes in attitudes, values, and behaviour of people (Taylor, 1999:193). The charter inferred that the earth be considered as the people's habitat with some reasonable amount of community of life in which the community of life and its resilience as well as the well-being of humanity depend upon preserving a healthy biosphere with all its ecological systems, a rich variety of plants and animals, fertile soils, pure water, and clean air (<http://www.earthcharter.org>). All efforts in building a sustainable future would be under threat if peoples and governments alike do not exhort one another to develop a partnership aimed at bringing a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human right, economic justice, and culture of peace (<http://www.earthcharter.org>). There is an urgent



and continuous need for all stakeholders of sustainable development to develop programmes with time-bound activities aimed at re-assuring the international community of a brighter future by declaring their responsibilities to one another in greater community of life and to future generations.

### **Policy Implications of the Earth Charter: A Critique**

As the United Nations Development Programme points out, the Earth Charter is not intended to be a policy document, but can be used as a guide for a more sustainable way of life. The charter is aimed at speaking to the primary stakeholders of sustainable development (UNDP, 2003:16), (i.e. the citizens around the world) as opposed to governments as the classical attempts to preserve ecological integrity as it has been for a long time. Policies can only be implemented properly if there is a reasonable amount of organized citizenry, rules and methods that is applied to administer the intended objectives. Therefore, proper organization of citizens in every nation state remains a huge challenge to the international community hence the only organized strata of the society are the community base (CBO's), and the non-governmental organization (NGO's) representing the faith and development institutions.

More often than not, these organizations do not have opportunity to make inputs into government's development agenda. This singular policy flaw compromises the primary targets of the Earth Charter objectives on the citizens, against government institutions that seem to be better organized.

Despite a widespread support of NGO's and other popular organizations around the principles of the Earth Charter, it also drew some criticism. Apart from the fact that it was not a binding agreement on any nation state, the legal status on its principles has been put under the public condemnation since inception (Bosselman, 2004:71). A similar criticism was that, there exist many international agreements and laws such as Stockholm's Commitment, the Rio Commitment, and the World Charter for Nature, that present similar ethical consideration, and therefore the Earth Charter may not present anything new (Mackey, 2004:83). Going by the idea of the Earth Charter not presenting something

new, the fact remains that appropriate implementation of the principles of the Earth Charter may be more effective if nation states embrace those ethical and attitudinal changes promoted by the Charter. In continuous efforts to seeking solutions to myriads of challenges around sustainable development, some policy alternatives were identified as follows (Mackey, 2004:89):

- increased protection of ecological systems through the creation of protected areas;
- an abatement of anthropogenic activities resulting in climate change; and
- the maintenance of natural resources, especially those in developing countries.

According to Norton (2000:1030), the Earth Charter provides the political framework needed to develop environmental protection strategies on various scales: local, regional, national and international. Similarly, it may also be argued that the Charter provides hope for the world in preserving nature for future generations. Following the provisions of the political framework which authorise political leaders and governments to accede (or not) to the implementation of the principles of the Charter, countries such as the Republic of China and other G77 countries argued that the charter should pertain differently to developed and developing countries.

According to Timmerman (1992:155), developed countries should be obliged to address their unsustainable pattern of production and consumption, whereas developing countries should receive financial support to assist in their compliance with the principles of the Charter. These and other policy implications to the implementation of the Charter could be viewed by developed countries as an organized gimmick by the developing ones to divert their financial aid to projects and programmes other than the traditional national and regional development agendas. Already, there is a growing concern that the acceptance of the implementation of the Earth Charter principles without countries commitments and attitudinal changes will be a fruitless venture, and if the commitment begins to take place, implementation may not occur evenly around the world. The challenge here may be the inability of the developing countries to fund the implementation of the Earth Charter principles, and therefore may want some financial assistance from the developed countries before embarking on such projects, whereas

development aid of this nature may not be a priority in developed countries. Which ever view each group holds on the implementation of sustainable development projects and programmes, they both form the inhabitants of the planet-earth. Therefore, there is a need for collaboration between the developed and developing countries on projects implementation with regards to sustainable development with a view to reaching an understanding on the impending danger facing the world in an unsustainable development environment.

## **TRADE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS**

There are mechanisms within the WTO to deal with environment and development issues. They are dealt with separately through the Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) and the Trade and Development Committee. These committees do not have a negotiation mandate. They seek to clarify and make recommendations on various aspects of trade, environment and sustainable development (Crompton , 2001:16).One of the important structures of the WTO, is the Dispute Settlement Body, which has the sole mandate to establish panels to resolve disputes, which normally comprise three members who are senior officials or experts in trade law(FGD 1998:6).

This structure has been criticized by various NGOs and groups of developing countries and governments for conducting their affairs in an undemocratic and untransparent manner. The unilateral authority of the WTO in enforcing dispute settlement has been one reason why certain groups have demanded the inclusion of labour and environment clause within the WTO arrangement.

The WTO is not generally seen as a neutral forum. It is considered by many researchers and diplomats as one of the global institutions with a high ideological bias. WTO was established on trade liberalism which is promoted by economically empowered countries of the world .the USA, Canada, European Union and Japan. Thus the nature of trade liberalization is highly uneven. It is not free trade, but selective free trade. The developed countries take advantage of the vulnerability of the developing ones to maintain strong protection on key sectors of their products where developing countries may have some comparative advantage (Goldsmith, 1996:172). WTO is not an organization that aims at

promoting human development or greater wealth creation for poor people and has no mechanisms to evaluate whether or not the world's economy is operating within the earth's ability to regenerate itself. More often than not, it reflects the national economic policy of most countries-which the environment can be cleaned up once sufficient wealth, has been created.

## **TRADE**

Trade policies in most countries are biased on an assumption that there is a direct, casual relationship between trade liberalisation, economic growth, development and sustainable development. The conceptual and operational understanding of sustainable development seems to remain weak in national economies and in international economic institutions. Both national and international trade policies were not conceived within the framework of sustainable development (Goldsmith, 1996:508).The nature of the relationship between these components is complex in achieving high levels of trade liberalisation, economic growth and development - it does not explore in details whether or not development is sustainable. Similarly, economic growth and trade liberalisation do not adequately explain sustainable development, and therefore there is a need to question the link between trade liberalisation and economic growth (Halle, 2001:16).

Research reveals that globally, economic growth was considerably slower during the 1980-2000 which was described as the period of rapid globalization, compared to the period between 1660-1980(Weisbrot et al,2000:28),consequently, on the average, per capita output fell from an 83 per cent growth rate in the earlier period to only 33 per cent over the last two decades. It was also revealed that in Sub-Saharan Africa, GDP grew by 36 percent between 1960 and 1980, whereas it fell by 15 per cent between 1989 and 2000. Therefore, there seem to be no established link between economic growth, trade liberalization and sustainable development. Given the same liberal economic and trade-related policies at a given time, the three concepts seem to operate independently in a given economic system but may produce some inter-related results in GDP and other positive or negative economic imperatives.

## **Understanding the major clause in the Doha Round**

Despite strong opposition to the inclusion of negotiations on trade and environment, the WTO 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial held in Doha, Qatar from 19-14 November, 2001 stated in clause 31: “With a view to enhancing the mutual supportiveness of trade and environment, we agree to negotiations, without prejudging their outcome, on:

- The relationship between existing WTO rules and specific trade obligations set out in multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).The negotiations shall be limited in scope to the applicability of such existing WTO rules as among parties to the MEA in question. The negotiations shall not prejudice the WTO rights of any Member that is not a party to the MEA in question.
- Procedures for regular information exchange between MEA Secretariats and the relevant WTO committees, and the criteria for the granting of observer status;
- The reduction or, as appropriate elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to environmental goods and services.”Similarly, suggestions for pre-negotiations through the committee of Trade and Environment (CTE) “to give particular attentions to:
- The effects of environmental measures on market access, especially in relation to developing countries, in particular the least-developed among them, and those situations in which the elimination or reduction of trade restrictions and distortions would benefit trade, the environment and development;
- The relevant provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of intellectual Property Rights; and
- Labeling requirements for environmental purposes.”

Negotiations on fisheries subsidies were agreed to in a separate paragraph, which states “participants shall also aim to clarify and improve WTO disciplines on fisheries subsidies, taking into account the importance of this sector to developing countries”

Many authors, researchers and practitioners’ present the Doha Ministerial Declaration as a breakthrough for sustainable development especially the developing countries group

without considering the processes that led to the Doha declarations. The processes leading to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the International Conference on Fishing for Development have both articulated the need to implement the outcome of Doha (UN Monterrey Consensus, UN Chairman's paper). This is a potential problem given that even the environmental negotiations are unlikely to contribute to sustainable development. It is also an indication that political space is being taken from the United Nations and given to the World Trade Organization, with its exclusive membership and ideological and economic biases, to define critical elements of the present efforts to sustainable development.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Environmentalists have long argued that there are limits to growth. This has been observed in decreasing rates of growth over two decades. Yet the underlying assumption of the WTO is that growth will continue, wealth will increase and will eventually trickle down to poor people who are currently excluded from the economy, and to fixing up environmental damage caused in the pursuit of wealth. This is not the experience in the present circumstance. Rather, smaller growth rates inevitably lead to greater conflict between capital and labour (Lehulere, 2000:22). The high level of inequality among race, people and countries is a practical indication that a few rich ones that constitute the society's minority group are getting richer while the poor who are in majority are getting poorer, and environmental destruction continues unabated.

Within the WTO, different constituencies are taking up environmental issues differently. The following illustrates very broadly the different issues raised by various interest groups during the WTO third Ministerial meeting in Seattle in November 2000. These are the same issues that have been pushed over the past years and which were important in shaping the trade and environment negotiations launched in Doha, Qatar the WTO fourth Ministerial meeting in November 2001.

The Seattle meeting was characterized by protests by environmental activists on the basis that WTO threatens wild life. Endangered species were most visible in that meeting in that the separation between the North and South representatives became clearer. While

the NGO's from the north promoted sustainable consumption, which stems from the understanding that the Southern consumptive lifestyles are one of the biggest threats to environmental integrity. It also acknowledges that people in the North consume much more (and hence impact much more) than people in the South. It may be argued that one of the reasons for advocating for reduction of consumption in the North, is to allow the South to consume more, resulting in a more equal per capita consumption that remains within the limits of the earth's ability to regenerate natural resources and absorb waste. Similarly, NGOs from the South carefully articulated some environmental concerns, they pushed for environmental justice, based on the understanding that environmental degradation is disproportionately borne by people who are poor and disempowered.

**Environmental Concerns and position in Seattle.**

	<b>PRIMARY CONCERNS</b>	<b>SECONDARY CONCERNS</b>	<b>OTHER CONCERNS</b>
Northern NGOs	Endangered species	Sustainable consumption	Fair trade; questioning trade expansion
Northern Governments	Environmental concerns equivalent to market protection	Multi-functionality of agriculture	Precautionary principle
Southern NGOs	No strong voice on environment	Component of sustainable development; vision on environmental justice	Questioning export-led growth
Southern Governments	No to environmental issues	Pro-active on TRIPS	Article xx(general exception)sufficient
South African Government	Premature to include environment	Broad development round	

The South African government has been a strong advocate of a broad development round. From an environmental perspective, this contains some flawed assumptions, namely that

- Growth is desirable and can mitigate hidden costs-such as toxic waste or over-fishing- and later;
- The South can achieve the same standard of living as the North (which unrealistically requires a sixteen-fold increase in resource use and pollution over the next five decades).

The Northern governments' interpretation of their environmental constituency is through a very protectionist approach. For example, the USA proposed to liberalize environmental services even though technology transfer obligations are not currently met under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, which are much more appropriate instruments to deal with genuine environmental concerns, but which the USA have generally not even rectified. Multifunctionality may easily be interpreted as a new way to protect European agriculture. Certain subsidies and support to agriculture will be justified on the basis that agriculture has multi functions, for example conserving the landscape. Southern governments are very cautious about bringing the environment into the WTO because it would be easy to use it to justify protectionist behavior. One exception was on TRIPS, where African countries are arguing for it to be amended, so that No life forms can be patented; and there is proper protection of indigenous knowledge.

### **Trade and Environmental concerns against sustainable development**

The inclusion of environment into the WTO would link it to the trade agreements so that if there is an environment infringement, the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism could be invoked. The challenge that has emerged from the aforementioned perspectives may include the following: firstly, an intuitive caution could be at play-where countries that are pushing for inclusion of environment may not have any experience or good record of the international acceptable level of environmental management and could at the same



time consuming more than their fair share of the world's resources. For example, the European Union is particularly strong in pressuring other countries to support its call to make the environmental services part of the WTO agreements. Similarly, the USA favours the liberalisation of environmental services even though it has not rectified any of the key multilateral environmental agreements. Secondly, bringing non-trade issues into the WTO would be to introduce them to a forum that is generally regarded as biased by the groups of developing countries; it brings these weak economies into a playing field which is dominated by the first world countries.

This would not only allow the global economic giants to dictate what constitutes a good environmental practice around the world, but would also give them powers to sanction any country who fails to comply.

Evaluation of trade and environment against the backdrop of sustainable development need to examine the negotiations and pre-negotiations agreed to in Doha which may provide some praxis towards achieving sustainable development. The four key aspects of sustainable development that need to be translated into practical realities (praxis) will include:

- the share of benefits of trade between countries so that terms of trade becomes equal;
- another would be to bring people and countries back into trade in order to build meaningful economies around the world;
- the next aspect may include incorporation of environmental considerations so that trade has a future; and
- finally, sustainable consumption should be vigorously encouraged aimed at orienting production to meet people's need.

If countries and regions take these key aspects of sustainable development very seriously by introducing them into their national economic plans and also use them as a platform for future negotiations on trade and environmental aspects of sustainable development, then, the praxis concept would have been a better way forward.

## **THE PRAXIS APPROACH**

More often, the implementation of global initiative such as the sustainable development project is affected by the difference between research objectives and practitioner needs. A number of research studies suggest that research (learning) must be shaped around the needs of the user (learner), assuring that research (knowledge) will actually be used (Knowles, 1972:20, Freire, 1970:23). The linkage between what is being learned and how learned information is used by practice (praxis) is not always apparent to the learner nor explained by the educator. For “learning” about research to take place, it is best to have “intersubjective collaboration” between the researcher and the subjects who forms the focus of inquiry (Hamnet, 1984:26). Therefore, the praxis that would ensure better implementation of projects and programmes around sustainable development should involve those persons who are expected beneficiaries of a sustainable world. Those researchers and experts (those who do not take part for professional fee and consulting) should form part of the processes and engagements that would make sustainable development work for the people and not for profit.

Sustainable development is one of the most critical objectives to come out of Agenda 21. Yet it will not be achieved if trade liberalisation remains a good in itself. Clear national objectives need to be set for trade to reorientate it as a tool for sustainable development. This is likely to mean that there will be less trade and that economies will shift towards greater local production and consumption. I was pointed out earlier in this paper that trade model promoted by the WTO does not take environmental issues into consideration in a manner that would support sustainable development. The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) argues that setting clear goals for the WTO will provide the necessary framework for a shift towards sustainable development (IISD, 2001:12). This may be difficult to achieve under the current WTO arrangement. A fundamental change in the relationship between different international institutions would be required to make this work. The WTO needs to work under the revised and

democratised United Nations system where checks and balances are in place to ensure that all institutions work towards (and not against) the international declaration of human rights and myriads of other global agreements that have been signed to bring peace, stability, dignity and sustainable development to all people.

To further align the praxis concept with the implementation of projects and programmes towards achieving a more sustainable future, Braaten's (1992:81) research on Aristotle and Kant found that "both distinguished between theory and practice" (praxis, putting theory to use). Likewise, she found Hegel's view to be that "..... theory and practice are two interdependent moments of absolute truth" (Braaten, 1992:81), she notes, Marx { 's } resolution of theoretic antithesis is possible only in a practical way, only through the practical energy of man. Similarly, Kihl(1991:551) in her studies of planning processes, found Karl Marx to be an adherent of praxis, citing that to "Marx, accumulating knowledge is more than passive absorption of ideas, it is an active and interdependent process which links the human mind with the external world and is manifested in activities and practice,(Kihl,1991:269). Therefore, the implementation of the projects and programmes that would ensure sustainable development for the present and future generations need to carefully consider a more practical approach to implementing projects and programmes at local, national, regional and global levels.

Strengthening institutions and building human capacity is an essential elements to achieving sustainable development, not only in mainstreaming environmental issues into public governance, but also in raising awareness and appreciation of the value of natural resources for poverty alleviation and economic development. There is an urgent need for governments to develop environmental capacity enhancement programmes that are coherent and focused, adopt a continuing education approach and build on disparate capacity-building initiatives. Government departments and ministries charged with environmental management responsibilities should allocate a portion of their annual budget to environmental capacity-building interventions.

Another challenge to sustainable development is the failure of the global current accounting systems to assign value to the environmental goods and services provided by natural resources and systems. It is critical that the real value of environmental resources be reflected in the national accounting system and integrated into planning and decision-

making processes. Furthermore, a central cause of environmental degradation is that the costs of degradation have not been internalized. In addition, the cost of improving environments is often looked at in the short term and the long-term financial and welfare benefits are ignored. An important recommendation would involve shifting accounting procedures so that the real costs of degradation are included in expenditure decisions.

Participation of relevant stakeholders in resource management aimed at achieving sustainable development is more critical now than ever before. Present policies and legislation require more participatory approach to the management of natural resources. For these to become more effective, it is crucial that a strategy of decentralisation(to lower levels of governments) and devolution(to local level community-based institutions) be developed and implemented. To also create genuine co-management arrangements, government needs to play the role of facilitator and be willing to invest the necessary financial resources and technical assistance to initiate and sustain these processes. This needs to be accompanied by capacity-building programmes to ensure that local resource users participate in management decisions as equal partners.

The challenges facing sustainable development project will not easily go away if recognition of the relationship between people and their environment is not given the much needed attention. This will not only spur a person's right to choose and have control over local resources, but will also encourage governments to take responsibility to local development by avoiding placing more goods and services into the domain of the unregulated global economy.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is evidenced that the trade model that is being promoted by the WTO does not take environment into considerations in a way that will entrench the praxis approach to sustainable development. The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) argues that clear goals and objectives from WTO will provide an outcome-based road map for a paradigm shift in the global advocacy and practical implementation of the necessary projects and programmes in sustainable development.

It is worthy of note that developing countries are the least destructive of the global environment, but every part of the world is paying for its protection. This might become worse as more things such as traditional knowledge, indigenous culture, biodiversity and other related issues are becoming strong players in the global market system. Therefore, it is important to encourage developing countries and its developed counterparts to take a strong position against expanding the list of environmental services provided by the WTO. Resources such as clean air, forests, water, etc. should not be included in the list hence these resources benefit the poor and less privileged members of the public in developing countries.

A fundamental change in the relationship between different international institutions may be required. The revised and democratised United Nations systems need to absorb the WTO so as to enable its actions and operational processes fall within the international declaration of human rights and other global agreements( aimed at bringing peace, stability, dignity and sustainable development) that has been signed by the United Nations member countries.

If the global advocacy for sustainable development will yield its expected outcomes, there is a need to encourage the relationship between people and their environment. This may amount to encourage a person's right to choose and have control over local resources. However, commodification of resources may undermine this; hence local people will be competing with bigger interests for resource use and management. It is therefore, imperative, that governments all over the world do not give up their responsibility to local development by placing more goods and services into the domain of unregulated global economy.

Apart from carefully articulating a pragmatic move from a mere advocacy to conceptualising and establishing practical and tangible projects and programmes to mitigate ugly effects of the present unsuitable development situation around the world, the paper identifies a number of key challenges that need to be addressed in other to

ensure that sustainable development is achieved within the local, national, regional and global terrain.

At a more policy level, the Doha Declaration entrenched the WTO's commitment to export-led growth outside the framework of sustainable development. This takes political space away from the United Nations and has infiltrated important international processes with its unsustainable model of economic development. It is also important to note that rapid globalization goes fundamentally against sustainable development and people's values, therefore may continue to be opposed by people for reasons of economic, environment, social and human rights. Trade and Environment will continue to dominate the global agenda for many years to come. Another recommendation will be to secure agreements with a view to handling all environmental issues outside the WTO.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article did not deal with every familiar issue involved in sustainable development; rather it attempts to explore some key areas of trade and environment with a recommended praxis approach ( practical solutions ) as against slow pace of implementation of projects and programmes around sustainable development. Trade and environment are given serious considerations as two effective instruments that can make or mar development agenda of countries. These two instruments can be likened to a conduit of an electrical system that connects all the plugs and appliances of a building to a single switch. Apart from being considered as major factors in the present globalization process, trade and environment play some significant roles in determining the global sustainable development agenda. The praxis approach was recommended as a way forward if well applied, though not without its challenges.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup> The major UN conferences during the nineties include: the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (June 1992); the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, June 1993); the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, September 1994); the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, March 1995); the fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995); the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Istanbul June 1996); the UN GA Special Session on Small Island Developing States (New York, September 1999); the UN GA Special Session "World Summit for Sustainable Development and Beyond Achieving Social Development for All in a Globalised World" (Geneva, June 2000); The Millennium Summit (New York September 2000); the third UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (Brussels May 2001); the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related intolerance (Durban August-September 2001); The International Conference for financing for Development (Monterrey, March 2002); and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, August-September 2002).

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