

RESEARCH ARTICLE	Sustainable Development Dimensions and Indicators Between
	Reality and Challenges
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Abstract	

The topic of sustainable development in recent years has captured the world's attention, as one of the global indicators of human survival today. Thus, it has become an essential factor for achieving equality in the distribution of development revenues and wealth among successive generations. In view of the increasing interest in the topic of sustainable development and in order to achieve its goals and dimensions, international conferences and summits were held. In addition, international forums were also held to find solutions to the issues of environmental, economic and social development, and the promotion of justice and the establishment of rules for transparency and accountability in the systematic development programs.

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#### Introduction

There has been increasing discussion about the concept of sustainable development, considering it a fundamental pillar in shaping the public policy of the state. Sustainability is regarded as a rational and wise development model, as the world today has become aware that sustainable development is the most appropriate path to ensuring the foundations of life in both the present and the future.

The term "sustainable development" brings together two core elements: the first is development as a process of change, and the second is sustainability as a temporal dimension. Thus, the term emerged from the realization that growth alone is insufficient to improve the standard of living in a manner that guarantees fairness in distributing its benefits between the current and future generations. As a result, attention began to focus on the individual, who is considered the central objective of development as a whole.

To achieve this goal, along with other desired objectives, summits and international forums have been held, and numerous important documents have been issued, outlining plans and programs aimed at realizing sustainable development and its prospects.



Achieving the goals of sustainable development represents one of the most significant challenges facing countries today. From this arises the main research question of our study:

# What are the main challenges faced by countries in their pursuit of sustainable development?

This overarching question gives rise to several sub-questions:

- What is meant by the term "sustainable development"?
- What are its key components?
- What goals does it seek to achieve?
- What are its indicators?

The primary objective of this research paper is to provide a general introduction or conceptual framework for the term "sustainable development" by addressing the following elements:

- Definition and components of sustainable development
- Goals and dimensions of sustainable development
- Indicators and principles of sustainable development
- Challenges facing sustainable development

## First: Definition of Sustainable Development and Its Components

There have been numerous definitions of sustainable development, differing according to perspectives. Many books and articles have addressed this term with various, often competing and sometimes even contradictory definitions. However, the first, most important, and most widely cited definition is the one presented in the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. In its report entitled "Our Common Future", sustainable development was defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs <sup>1</sup>.

Legal scholar Edward Barbier defined it as "an activity that leads to the greatest possible increase in social welfare while preserving the available natural resources and causing minimal harm to the environment" <sup>2</sup>.

Sustainable development is understood to mean development whose continuity is ensured by the people or population. Meanwhile, "durable development" refers to development that continues spontaneously and without artificial effort. In many specialized Arab studies, both terms have been used interchangeably some referring to "sustainable development" and others to "durable development" as a translation of the English term sustainable development <sup>3</sup>.

According to the World Bank, sustainable development is "development that ensures intergenerational equity by providing the same developmental opportunities to future generations through maintaining or continuously increasing total capital over time" '.

The National Charter for Environment and Sustainable Development defines it as a type of development, the absence of which leads to increased risks of environmental degradation, imbalance in natural systems, depletion of resources, worsening health issues, intensified poverty, and a decline in quality of life. It does not dismiss the needs of economic development, but it requires improving living conditions for all within a framework of equality and social justice, without overexploitation of natural resources beyond the planet's capacity to sustain. This is to be achieved by promoting balanced patterns of production and consumption <sup>5</sup>.

The Fifth Environmental Action Programme of the European Union (Towards Sustainable Development 1993–2000) defines it as a policy or strategy aimed at ensuring the continuity of economic and social development over time, while respecting the environment and avoiding the depletion of natural resources necessary for human activity <sup>6</sup>.



The Algerian legislator defined it in Law No. 03/10<sup>7</sup> concerning environmental protection within the framework of sustainable development, specifically in Article 04, which states: "Sustainable development means reconciliation between sustainable social and economic development and environmental protection, that is, the inclusion of the environmental dimension within development to ensure the needs of both present and future generations are met."

Hence, we can conclude that sustainable development is a process that seeks to improve individuals' living standards through economic advancement, the development of human capacities, and attention to the environmental context. Otherwise, we risk destruction and depletion of natural resources. It is essential to focus on the optimal use of these resources and reduce environmental degradation caused by industrial, urban, and population-related challenges faced by the world today. The aim is to achieve sustainable development through rational consumption of natural resources, ensuring both continuity of the process and fairness in distribution.

From the previously mentioned definitions of sustainable development, it can be observed that it possesses a number of characteristics, namely:

- 1. **Sustainable development is continuous, both in the present and in the future.** It meets the needs and aspirations of current and future generations. The state seeks to achieve development across all sectors to meet the growing needs of society, relying on projects, methods, and mechanisms to ensure the needs of future generations.
- 2. **Sustainable development is a global concept**, established through political, economic, and cultural studies that contributed to the integration of the concept of sustainable development.
- 3. Sustainable development involves environmental, social, and economic dimensions that are intertwined within an interactive framework characterized by regulation, organization, and rationalization. It is long-term in nature and requires a focus on human development and the use of environmental technologies. It is a form of economic development that does not contradict environmental and social development. Moreover, it is a political system that ensures active citizen participation in decision-making.
- 4. **It is comprehensive development and a shared responsibility across all sectors of the state**, falling on the state at all levels to participate in the decision-making process.
- 5. **It is balanced development**, based on the coordination between resource-use policies and investment priorities in a way that ensures harmony within the environmental system, preserves it, and achieves the desired developmental goals.

# Second - Elements of Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development is based on a number of core elements, which can be summarized as follows \*:

- Participation: By its very nature, development aims to serve the interests of both the individual and society. Therefore, development cannot be discussed without the participation of individuals in all its aspects, utilizing all their available capacities.
- Good Governance: Interest in good governance arises from the increasing focus on sustainable development. Sustainable development cannot be achieved in the absence of good governance. The United Nations has established a development program that outlines the components of good governance, which include:
  - Accountability: This refers to the fact that decision-makers in government, the private sector, and civil society are accountable to the public. It also implies the ability to hold officials responsible for their management of public resources in order to protect the public interest °.
  - Rule of Law: This means the supremacy of the law over everyone, respect for the principle of separation of
    powers, the independence of the judiciary, regulation of relations between institutions and the state, and respect
    for human rights, among others.



- Participation: This refers to individuals' right to express their opinions and take part in decision-making, either directly or through their elected representatives. Such participation increases their sense of belonging and enables them to play an active role in the development process <sup>10</sup>.
- Transparency: This involves the free flow of information, ease of access to accurate and reliable data, and achieving goals and implementing plans as intended. Transparency strengthens trust between rulers and the ruled and combats corruption.
- Responsiveness: This is the ability of institutions and processes to deliver services to beneficiaries and clients without discrimination or exclusion.
- Effectiveness and Efficiency: This refers to the optimal use of available resources to ensure a swift and effective response to public demands.
- O **Strategic Vision:** This relates to the extent to which leaders possess a clear, long-term strategic vision for achieving good governance and transforming local resources into development programs to meet the needs of the local population ".
- Equity and Justice: This refers to equal opportunities among individuals to improve their conditions and advance
  their status, in accordance with national and international charters, and to achieve social justice, which is the
  foundation of justice itself.

# Third: Goals and Principles of Sustainable Development

#### 1. Goals of Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development seeks to achieve a set of goals, including:

- Ensuring an adequate supply of water and improving its efficiency in agricultural, industrial, urban, and rural development. Social sustainability aims to secure sufficient access to water for domestic use and agriculture, while environmental sustainability focuses on the protection of water resources <sup>12</sup>.
- Continuously and appropriately adapting to the changing needs and priorities of society by aligning them with its capabilities, allowing for a balance through which economic development can be activated and environmental problems controlled and resolved effectively <sup>13</sup>.
- Promoting environmental awareness by fostering a sense of environmental responsibility and encouraging participation in the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of sustainable development programs and projects. This requires changes in the behavior of citizens, companies, governments, and international institutions in confronting risks that threaten humanity ".
- Linking modern technology to the goals of society by raising awareness of the importance of modern
  environmental technologies and how to utilize them to improve quality of life and properly manage
  environmental risks resulting from their misuse.
- Achieving rational use and management of resources, as sustainable development views natural resources as
  finite, thus requiring their use without depletion or destruction and ensuring their efficient and wise deployment.
- Achieving a better quality of life for the population, which can only be realized through planning processes and
  the implementation of developmental policies focused on areas of growth and how to attain economic, social,
  and psychological development in an acceptable and democratic manner.

## 2. Dimensions of Sustainable Development:

From the previously cited definitions of sustainable development, it is evident that it encompasses multiple, integrated, and interrelated dimensions. Addressing these dimensions effectively would result in tangible progress toward the



intended development. The Johannesburg Summit identified the three main pillars of sustainable development as follows:

- **Social Dimension:** This dimension focuses on the human being and the provision of basic needs such as housing, education, and healthcare, both now and in the future. It also emphasizes the achievement of justice and equality between current and future generations, and among nations <sup>15</sup>. The individual is considered the core and ultimate objective of development through combating poverty and providing social services, etc.
- Environmental Dimension: This emphasizes respecting environmental limits, as every ecosystem has thresholds that must not be exceeded in terms of consumption and exploitation. Crossing these boundaries leads to the deterioration of the ecosystem. Therefore, it is necessary to set limits on consumption, population growth, pollution, soil erosion, deforestation, and water depletion <sup>16</sup>.
- **Economic Dimension:** This refers to the economic impacts on the environment and how to improve industrial technologies. Key elements of this dimension include sustainable economic growth, capital efficiency, meeting basic needs, and social justice. It focuses on producing goods and services to continuously satisfy human needs and achieve well-being through the application of a sustainable economic system <sup>17</sup>.

# Third: Indicators and Principles of Sustainable Development

## 1. Indicators of Sustainable Development:

Despite the differences in perspectives regarding sustainable development and its indicators, there is general agreement on the following:

- **Social Indicators:** These include the provision of all socially relevant services such as healthcare, education, and culture, by emphasizing education, combating ignorance, eradicating illiteracy, improving educational levels, and achieving social justice and equality <sup>18</sup>.
- **Economic Indicators:** These include per capita GDP, exports and imports of goods and services, and indicators that measure changes in consumption patterns such as annual per capita energy consumption. Other indicators relate to resources and financial mechanisms, such as the current account balance as a percentage of GDP, and the total official development assistance provided or received <sup>19</sup>.
- Environmental Indicators: These measure the impact of economic growth on the environment. According to the European Environment Agency, these include: air pollution, climate change, damage to biodiversity, marine structure and coastal areas, ozone layer depletion, the spread of toxic compounds, waste, and water pollution <sup>20</sup>.

#### 2. Principles of Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development is an environmental doctrine based on a set of principles defined by the World Bank for Reconstruction and Development, including the following 21:

- Careful Prioritization: Due to the severity of environmental issues and the scarcity of financial resources, there is a need to set strict priorities and implement remedial measures in phases, especially for problems that require urgent intervention.
- Seizing Win-Win Opportunities: Some environmental gains involve costs and trade-offs, while others can be achieved as by-products of policies aimed at improving efficiency. Reducing subsidies for the use of natural resources is one of the clearest policies that generate net benefits for society <sup>22</sup>.
- Polluter Pays Principle: This principle was first introduced in 1972 as a recommendation by the OECD. It is
  considered one of the most important principles contributing significantly to sustainable development, as it
  relates to the economic aspect of polluting activities. It seeks to impose the social cost of pollution on the



polluters, compelling institutions to align their activities with sustainable development, which is now widely accepted by most, if not all, countries <sup>23</sup>.

- **Principle of Resilience:** This refers to the system's ability to adapt and maintain its structure and behavior in the face of external disturbances. If systems lose their resilience, they become more vulnerable to further threats.
- **Principle of Justice:** This refers to the degradation and depletion of the environmental resource base, which results in the inability to meet the needs of the poor. Sustainable development therefore requires helping these groups, as they have no alternative but to exploit and degrade their environment.
- Principle of Partnership and Participation: Sustainable development is a charter that recognizes the participation of stakeholders in collective decision-making, especially in planning, policy-making, and implementation. Since sustainable development begins at the local level, achieving it requires forms of decentralization by enabling local citizens to identify priorities, propose solutions, monitor development projects, and thus influence public opinion and drive positive change.
- Principle of Integration: When it comes to environmental protection, prevention is significantly cheaper and
  more effective than remediation. Most countries now aim to assess and mitigate potential environmental damage
  from new infrastructure investments. Environmental costs and benefits are now increasingly factored into
  strategies for energy and are being integrated into economic, financial, social, trade, and environmental policies<sup>21</sup>.
- **Precautionary Principle:** This principle was first formulated in 1992 in Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration. According to this principle, the state must take measures to prevent environmental degradation. The type of harm addressed here is one that scientific knowledge cannot yet confirm or predict in terms of occurrence, effects, or consequences. Thus, there is no definitive scientific knowledge regarding the nature of the harm <sup>25</sup>.

#### Fourth: Obstacles to Sustainable Development

This research paper aims to identify the various challenges hindering the achievement of sustainable development in general, which include environmental, economic, social, and technological challenges:

- Environmental Pollution: The problem of pollution is significantly worsening, especially environmental pollution, which is closely linked to sustainable development. These two concepts are interdependent. Sustainable development aims to achieve two fundamental goals: the right to development and the right to environmental protection. Pollution is attributed to the high population growth, which the environment cannot bear, in addition to pollution from medical waste being burned improperly and unsafely, with 220,000 tons of hazardous decaying waste severely threatening public health <sup>26</sup>.
- **Poverty:** Poverty is the most significant challenge to the path of sustainable development in general and human development specifically. Statistics indicate that 1.2 billion people live in extreme poverty, and with the decline in aid and supplies directed to developing countries, these nations are unable to provide the minimum living standards required for their populations <sup>27</sup>.
- Illiteracy: Illiteracy represents a dire threat to societies. With limited resources and the prioritization of essential needs such as food, clothing, and shelter, what remains is assumed to be directed toward education with its real needs. Additionally, the failure of educational systems to keep up with the skills required by the global economy exacerbates this issue <sup>28</sup>.
- **Debt:** The specter of debt is a significant obstacle and a major challenge, threatening sustainable development and preventing its plans from being realized, leaving countries under its influence.
- Low Research and Development Indicators: Science and technology are the driving forces behind economic and social progress and are essential for economic, environmental, and social sustainability. The scientific and technological reality in Algeria is limited, as evidenced by the low ranks the country occupies among global nations in indicators like spending on scientific research and the number of inventions <sup>29</sup>.



- Demographic Growth: The phenomenon of population explosion is the main cause of environmental problems.
  The increasing population demands greater production to meet the unlimited needs of humans, which puts
  pressure on natural resources and leads to their depletion. This includes urban expansion at the expense of
  forests and agricultural lands, and anything that threatens the environment and disrupts its balance.
- Administrative Corruption: Administrative corruption is the most significant barrier to sustainable development
  in terms of governance. In the absence of true decentralization in decision-making, coupled with issues like
  bribery and bureaucracy, these factors hinder developmental projects, particularly complications in procedures
  and delays in issuing decisions and orders.
- **Unemployment Rate:** Unemployment is a prominent phenomenon in many countries, especially with population growth, the decline in participation in economic activities, and the lack of qualified personnel due to insufficient job opportunities to showcase their skills, often resulting in migration.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Sustainable development is considered an absolute necessity for countries due to its major role in their progress and economic advancement, all while protecting the environment and natural resources to safeguard the rights of future generations. Based on this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The concept of sustainable development is one of the most prominent development models, grounded in a set of principles, dimensions, and indicators. Thus, it is not merely a proposed concept, but rather a necessity imposed by social and economic conditions and factors.
- Sustainable development represents an inevitable link between the environment and the economic and social aspects on one hand, and on the other, it is an important tool that helps individuals confront the various challenges they face.
- 3. Sustainable development aims to achieve comprehensive and holistic growth by making optimal use of available resources for the present generation without compromising the rights of future generations to benefit from those same resources.
- 4. Sustainable development is a multidimensional process economic, social, and environmental—which serves as a reference for determining its measurement indicators, such as education, health, housing, per capita national income, and expenditure rates on research and development.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations can be proposed:

- 1. Combat environmental pollution in all its forms, which threaten natural resources, and intensify environmental awareness policies.
- 2. Focus on research and development, and adopt small and medium enterprises as a foundation for implementing sustainable development.
- 3. Achieve integration and encourage both domestic and foreign investment to establish genuine partnerships between industrialized and developing countries, and to create better opportunities for their products to compete in local and global markets.
- 4. Seek funding sources to achieve sustainable development in all countries, particularly developing ones, and ensure that international institutions and organizations, such as the World Bank for Reconstruction and Development, are committed to financing development in developing nations.
- 5. Develop developmental, health, and educational programs, as the state, local authorities, and organizations are responsible for protecting and caring for children and motherhood, and for establishing infrastructure and public facilities to support sustainable development programs.



- 6. Local communities should not rely heavily on external mechanisms to achieve sustainable development. Instead, they must:
  - Generate their own resources through collecting revenues from their assets;
  - Utilize facilities that provide income;
  - Attract private investors to invest in municipalities and provinces through support and facilitation measures.

## Conflict of interest

There is no any conflict of interest.

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