Good Governance --- A Key to Sustainable Development

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Abstract:
It is apparent now that current development challenges are more complex than they were two decades ago. Since 1992, the number of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) has grown significantly, and there are now many hundreds of binding and non-binding global agreements on environmental issues, as well as a wide range of other agreements that address social and economic aspects of development. Despite the growing number of institutions and processes addressing sustainable development, environmental problems have intensified globally. The continued degradation of the global environment has not been caused solely by governance weaknesses, but rather by a multitude of drivers, including prevailing economic models and patterns of consumption and production. This is mainly due to the fact that international environmental governance lacks co-ordination and is perceived to be at odds with other areas of global governance, notably economic and development governance.

For development to be sustainable - economically, socially and environmentally – and equitable, a new approach is needed that addresses the political, as well as the technical, aspects of development solutions. Improved governance across many dimensions is a key part of this new approach. Governance is broader than institutions and includes relations between state and people. It provides the mechanisms through which collaboration can be generated across sectors. It also addresses some of the fundamental obstacles to sustainable development including exclusion and inequality.

Given the centrality of governance to people's vision of today's development framework, the core focus is to provide evidence of the link between governance and development. The quality of governance has a profound effect on sustainable development. Deficits in the controls on power and the exercise of authority lie at the core of development challenges, including weak state capacity, social and political violence, and conflict over natural resources, stresses on citizen security, and environmental sustainability. The quality of governance plays a defining role in supporting the pillars of sustainable development. The present development framework, therefore, needs to identify and address the multiple drivers of exclusion and inequality within political, economic and social systems, and support the means to foster inclusiveness and equality.

Keywords: Multilateral Environmental Agreements, Sustainable Development, Governance.

"Good governance at the local, national and international levels is perhaps the single most important factor in promoting development and advancing the cause of peace",

(Kofi Annan, Former Secretary General of the UN)

Introduction:
On 24th December 2009 the UN General Assembly agreed to host a UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in Rio De Janeiro in 2012. The Conference is also commonly referred to as 'Rio+20' or 'Earth Summit 2012', after the UN Conference on Environment and Development, or 'Rio Earth Summit' that took place in 1992. The Conference addressed three objectives and two themes. One of those themes is the 'institutional framework for sustainable development'. The 'institutional framework' refers to the governance of sustainable development globally, regionally, nationally and locally - the role of institutions, processes, structures, guiding principles, integration, coordination and

communication in providing an enabling framework for implementing commitments to sustainable development. Governance has always been recognized to be a critical tool for advancing sustainable development at all levels.

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For development to be sustainable - economically, socially and environmentally – and equitable, a new approach is needed that addresses the political, as well as the technical, aspects of development solutions. Improved governance across many dimensions is a key part of this new approach. Governance is broader than institutions and includes relations between state and people. It provides the mechanisms through which collaboration can be generated across sectors. It also addresses some of the fundamental obstacles to sustainable development including exclusion and inequality.

Defining Governance and Sustainable Development:

Governance: Even though no unit or institution can claim ownership of the 'ultimate definition' of governance, several efforts have been made to define the concept. UN writes in one of their observations that:

"*The term governance refers to the process or method by which society is governed, or the 'condition of ordered rule'. It reflects the structures and processes of regionalization and decentralization, which have tended to build on previously informal interactions between government and other actors.*"

Sustainable Development: Some 27 years ago, in 1987, the UN placed a new concept formally on the international agenda called sustainable development. Significant milestone in the conceptualisation of sustainable development was the 1987 Brundtland Report (Our Common Future) which was published by Gro Harlem Brundtland, the then Prime Minister of Norway. This gave the most definitive and well used explanation of sustainable development, as:

"*..development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*"

This Brundtland report was unique in addressing the need for economic development, without depleting natural resources or harming the environment. The conceptualization of sustainable development that has emerged is one of development that integrates three pillars: economic development; social development; and environmental protection. Progress across all three pillars in a consolidated manner is seen as critical the achievement of truly sustainable development.

Synthesis of Governance and Sustainable Development:

'Democracy, good governance and the rule of law at the national and international levels, as well as an enabling environment, are essential for sustainable development including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger.'   (UN General Assembly resolution 66/288).

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International Journal in Management and Social Science

http://www.ijmr.net.in email id- irjmss@gmail.com   Page 217

Given the centrality of governance to people's vision of today's development framework, the core focus is to provide evidence of the link between governance and development. The quality of governance has a profound effect on sustainable development. Deficits in the controls on power and the exercise of authority lie at the core of development challenges, including weak state capacity, social and political violence, and conflict over natural resources, stresses on citizen security, and environmental sustainability. The quality of governance plays a defining role in supporting the pillars of sustainable development that is based on:

(1) Inclusive social development;
(2) Inclusive economic development;
(3) Environmental sustainability; and
(4) Peace and security.

The present development framework, therefore, needs to identify and address the multiple drivers of exclusion and inequality within political, economic and social systems, and support the means to foster inclusiveness and equality.

Basis of good governance

- To ascertain whether governance is 'good', actors look at the mechanisms that promote it, the processes used, and the outcomes achieved.
- Mechanisms of good governance can include transparent, democratic institutions as well as efficient and effective public services.
- Governance processes refer to the quality of participation necessary "to ensure that political, social and economic priorities are based on a broad consensus in society and that the voices of the excluded, poorest and most vulnerable are heard in decision-making."
- The outcomes of good governance could be peaceful, stable and resilient societies, where services are delivered and reflect the needs of communities, including the voices of the most vulnerable and marginalized.
- Accountability is a key theme running through and underpinning many aspects of governance – both vertically, from government to people, and horizontally between parts of the state, such as the executive and the judiciary. Sustainable development will require that public officials account for actions taken in the public's name and with public resources.

Accepting divergence

Now it is almost a fact that the "one-size-fits-all" models of governance do not work and that there are diverging pathways towards more inclusive political and economic institutions. In addition to the quality of governance at national and sub-national levels, there is also now greater attention to global governance issues. The repercussions of the international financial crisis, the effects of climate change, the spill-over from intra-state conflict and impact of international crime, terrorism and illicit financial flows have raised attention to the importance of cross-border governance issues, in a world that is increasingly interconnected and more interdependent.

It is widely acknowledged that a single model of governance cannot and should not be imposed. Governance varies across contexts and cultures, and has evolved in response to a number of socio-cultural and economic factors. Whereas some countries have made great gains in health or education, but seen only modest growth in income, there are other countries that have failed to make progress in life expectancy despite strong economic performance. Recent events and the experience of many

countries that have faced internal conflict confirm that progress on human development indicators, without meaningful people's participation and equal opportunities for all, can lead to violent uprisings. The challenge in integrating governance into sustainable development framework is thus to translate multiple and diverse governance systems into concrete and measurable global development goals and targets.

Governance -Sustainable Development: Reality and Challenges:

In practice, improving governance requires action in a wide range of areas, not all of which can be addressed at once, and not all can be the subject of a global consensus. The evidence is discussed below.

Effective, responsive and accountable state institutions: State capacity, or the ability of states to form and implement policy across the whole of their territory, is an essential prerequisite for sustainable human development. Many studies have demonstrated the importance of state capacity. For example, there is a causal link between the quality of public administration and economic growth. Conversely, weak states are more prone to conflict and civil war. However, capacity for sustainable development is not just about efficient adminstration; it also requires states to be responsive to the needs and demands of people, and the separate needs and rights of women and men, as well as being capable of administering, coordinating and mobilising collaborative action to address an increasingly interconnected and complex development agenda. Multi-stakeholder engagement with institutions including parliaments, courts, auditor-generals, ombudsmen, anti-corruption agencies, human rights commissions, civil society, media, and representatives of women's groups, is required in order to help shape policy, ensure accountability and hold state institutions to account for their performance and the quality of services delivered.

Openness and transparency – public access to information: Openness and transparency are essential to achieve sustainable development. There is evidence that informed citizens and the private sector are better able to engage in developing policy; they are better collaborators and partners with government on service delivery, and also better able to hold governments to account, leading to improved development outcomes. Transparency in government behaviour sends strong signals to citizens and investors, and evidence shows that the more information a government releases, the greater the investment and subsequent affect on growth. There is also evidence that transparency in budget, expenditure and procurement processes lead to increases in service delivery. Transparency also has an intrinsic value that citizens have a right to know how revenue and resources are being used in their name.

Addressing corruption: There is a wealth of evidence that corruption is a major hindrance to sustainable development, with a disproportionate impact on the poor and marginalized populations. Corruption is bad for health and education outcomes, equity, rule of law, and foreign investment. It is also an international problem. Conversely, there is evidence that anti-corruption and wider transparency and accountability policies are associated with improved development outcomes such as education, health and water. Transparency International, for example, finds that good performance on anti-corruption initiatives and the rule of law is linked with higher youth literacy rates and lower maternal mortality rates.

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International Journal in Management and Social Science

http://www.ijmr.net.in email id- irjmss@gmail.com   Page 219

Justice and the Rule of Law: The rule of law is a principle of governance and is critical for sustainable development. It has been shown that countries adhering to the rule of law have higher levels of growth and investment through the protection of property rights. In addition, it can promote equity, gender equality, and inclusion through, for example, the protection of legal identity and more equitable access to resources for both women and men. Effective rule of law frameworks, together with implementation, help prevent and mitigate violent crime, resolve grievances, and protect citizens; all key elements to contain violent conflict, thus checking the economic costs of lost production, due to high levels of crime and violence. It can also promote more sustainable and equitable management of natural resources through, for example, protecting the rights of indigenous peoples to land and other communal resources.

So, recommendations have focused on improving equitable access to justice to enable people, in particular the poor and marginalized groups, to claim rights and services, as well as to peacefully settle disputes. In view of the close linkages between rule of law and the aims of poverty eradication, enhancing food security and promoting sustainable cities, emphasis has been given to protecting property and land use rights. Targets in these areas might include: provision of free and universal legal identity, including universal birth registration; increasing the share of women, men and communities with secure rights to land, property or other assets; and ensuring independent, accessible and responsive justice institutions.

Participation in decision-making: Participation is both a right, and a means to more sustainable development. When communities are actively engaged in their own development processes, project outcomes will be better targeted to local needs and results will be more sustainable. Socio-economic well-being will be improved, and so too will the legitimacy of the development process itself. Participation in policy development and the design of development interventions by communities and the society at large, in any society or community, enhances trust between those who decide, those who implement the decisions, and the population at large. Furthermore, inclusive participation through consensus and dialogue facilitate and galvanize the development and implementation of policies and reforms, and are crucial for promoting equity and strengthening the cohesiveness of societies. Hence there is need for strong participatory monitoring mechanisms by non-state actors (e.g. communities, youth and women's networks, civil society networks, etc.) to hold government accountable.

Curbing violence and combating transnational organized crime: Globalisation has given rise to unprecedented growth in the volume of trade and movement of goods, persons and money across boundaries and borders. This has created considerable economic growth and prosperity, but all too often for the benefit of the few. Globalisation has also outpaced mechanisms for national, regional and global governance, giving rise to opportunities for transnational organised crime to thrive. Human trafficking has become a global business, disproportionally affecting women.

Illicit flows present enormous challenges for sustainable human development, as well as peace and personal safety, through exacerbating already profound issues like corruption, violence, poverty, exploitation and conflict. Tackling these issues will require simultaneous attention to the demand driving the illicit markets for drugs or human trafficking, which are complex development challenges in their own right – including requiring attention to forced labour, the commercial sex industry and the needs of drug users - as well as action against supply chains.

 Regional and international cooperation to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases have reinforced legal frameworks, particularly at regional and international levels. Far greater coherence is necessary of

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International Journal in Management and Social Science

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the service delivery bringing social, health and justice measures together. Criminal justice mechanisms should be strengthened in line with international human rights standards and principles as well introducing strategies and policies aimed at preventing crime, rehabilitating and supporting the recovery of addicts, and protecting victims.

Addressing governance priorities for sustainable development:
The nature of the goals for present day development agenda is not yet certain, but the range of governance related challenges are clear, as is the rationale for increased attention to governance. However, a shift to sustainable development will require a new and suggestive approach in a range of governance areas, namely:

Planning for the long-term: The core of sustainable development is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. There is thus a need to develop institutions that promote inter-generational equity. However, the governing institutions, and thus political incentives, in most states emphasis and encourage a short-term approach.

Integrating the different dimensions of sustainable development policy: Sustainable development requires finding synergies and coherence between what have been largely separate goals under the MDGs. However, planning institutions and processes in most countries still work along sectoral lines. Balancing the needs of environmental protection and development, in particular, has proved difficult.

Innovation and collaboration: It is widely argued that hierarchical, government-driven approaches to development are unsuitable for the complex, multi-sectoral challenges of sustainable development. The explosive growth in the use of ICTs, notably mobile phones, is also rapidly opening up new forms of engagement between citizen, state and the private sector and new forms of monitoring and evaluation. These developments put a high premium on the capacity of the public sector to innovate and collaborate with people and businesses - skills many government institutions often lack.

Governance is of high relevance to the present day development agenda: effective institutions and systems that are responsive to public needs deliver essential services and promote inclusive growth, while inclusive political processes ensure citizens can hold public officials to account. In addition, good governance promotes freedom from violence, fear and crime, and helps build peaceful and secure societies with the stability needed to attract and sustain development investments. A consensus is emerging to accept divergence in the way countries develop and improve their systems of governance, while reaffirming the global norms and standards by integrating governance into the development framework so as to achieve concrete, measurable and broadly acceptable global development goals and targets. It is evident now that governance is the key to sustainable development as it provides an holistic solutions to the challenges posed before us to ensure inclusive, continuous, equitable and environmental friendly development called as sustainable development.

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