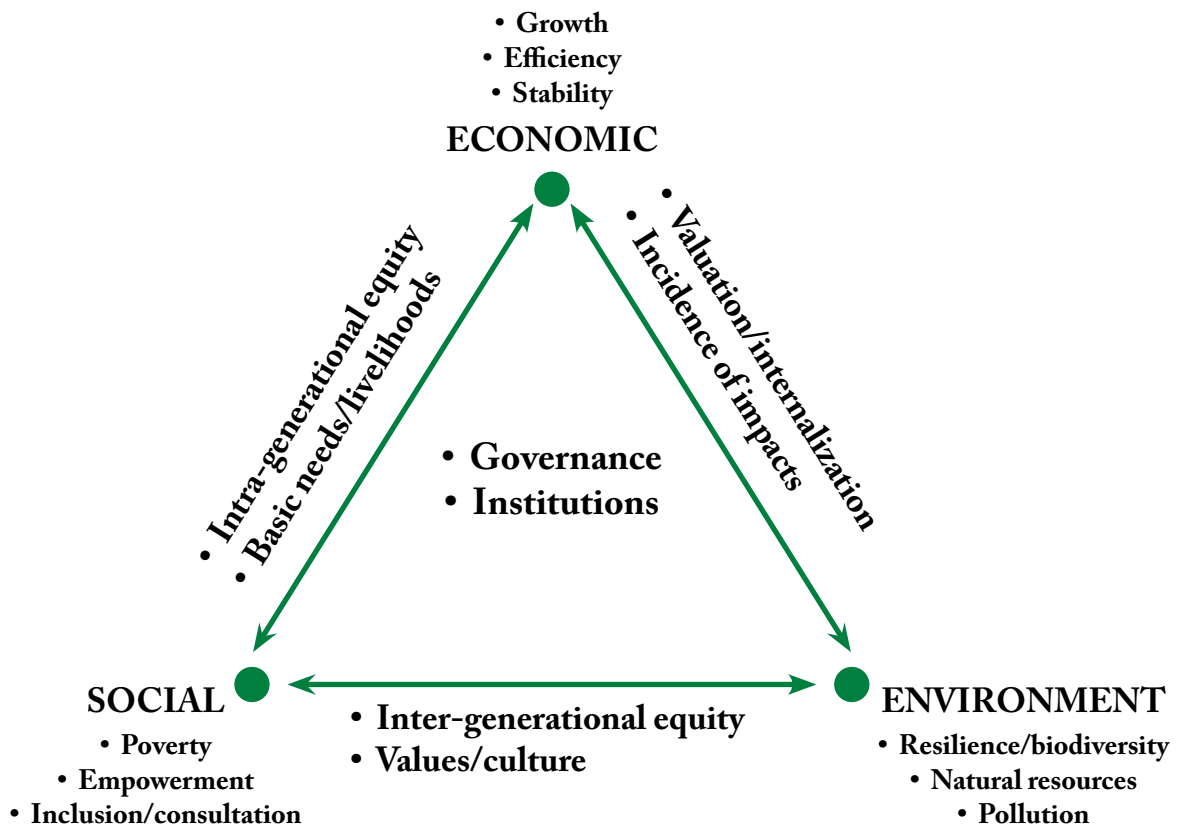


Harnessing the interlinkages



WSSD broadened and strengthened the general understanding of sustainable development, particularly, the important linkages between social and economic development, and environmental protection. The Summit recognized these three components of sustainable development, as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars, hence the emphasis placed on promoting their balanced integration. The interfaces between them are important (see figure below). According to Munashinge, (1996), the economic and social elements interact to give rise to issues such as intra-generational equity (income distribution) and targeted relief for the poor. The economic-environmental interface has yielded ideas on valuation and internalization of environmental impacts. Finally, the social-environmental linkage has led to renewed interest in areas like inter-generational equity (rights of future generations) and popular participation.



Adapted from Munashinge, 1996

The above suggests a broad integrated conceptual approach in which the net benefits of economic activities are maximized, subject to maintaining the stock of productive assets over time, and providing a social safety net to meet the basic needs of the poor. It calls for appropriate institutional and strategic frameworks and supporting systems that foster an integrated approach. NEPAD and the Commission on Africa Report clearly articulate the interlinkages between Africa's many development challenges. The Africa Environment Outlook (2006) underscores the interdependency between environmental concerns and various facets of development, and calls for an interlinkages approach. And the various thematic reports of the UN Millennium Project, demonstrate the interlinkages between the different MDGs, and the need for adopting an integrated approach in pursuit of their attainment in an efficient and effective manner. Therefore, these global and regional-level responses, individually and collectively, provide opportunities for enhancing synergies and promoting interlinkages in addressing the region's development challenges.

7.1 Good governance- an important prerequisite to sustainable development

The Summit acknowledged that good governance within each country and at the international level is essential for sustainable development. And that peace, security, stability and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, as well as respect for cultural diversity, are essential for achieving sustainable development and ensuring that sustainable development benefits all. Against this backdrop, the Summit undertook to strengthen and improve governance at all levels and called for more effective democratic and accountable international and multilateral institutions. Moreover, NEPAD and the JPOI, recognize peace, security and good governance as important prerequisites to achieving sustainable development in the region. The Commission on Africa puts it aptly- "There can be no development without peace, but there can be no peace without development. Therefore, investing in development is investing in peace".

Conflict is one of Africa's classic vicious circles. Causes of conflict in Africa have already been discussed under chapter two. However, the youth conflict nexus is quite important and therefore needs highlighting. Young people constitute the majority of the African population and are perceived as the future of the continent and its best opportunity of finding sustainable solutions to its most critical problems. However, the worsening conditions for this vital section of the population, in particular, high unemployment combined with a high incidence of HIV/AIDS, and poor access to health and educational services, have become a potential source of threat to peace and stability in the region. Measures to address this challenge should include improving access to productive assets for youth, empowering them politically and economically, creating and expanding income-generating activities and involving them in community-based decision-making, so as to provide them with the opportunity to become active agents for building peace, preventing conflict and promoting a culture of peace (UN, 2005; UN, 2006).

The Commission on Africa Report notes that Africa's blessings proved also to be a curse. For the history of the past four decades reveals that countries with the most oil, diamonds and other high-value natural resources, are among those which have experienced the most war and armed conflict. These arise as a result of disputes involving the ownership, management and control of these resources. The illegal exploitation of natural resources in conflict-prone and conflict ridden countries is one of the contributory causes of conflict and of its recurrence, as experienced in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone and Liberia, where natural resources have provided major funding for the perpetuation of wars. For African countries emerging from conflict, a major challenge is to develop mechanisms to promote responsible, economically productive resource management and to ensure equitable distribution of wealth to all stakeholders. Inadequate global economic and financial regulations, high profit margins and weak administrative and technical capacity in a

number of African countries make managing the natural resource sector particularly difficult. The difficulty of integrating incompatible land tenure systems, for which the local communities have varying degrees of recognition and respect, remains a major challenge in some African countries (Commission on Africa, 2005; UN 2005; UN, 2006).

All this has had a knock-on effect. Investors, both domestic and foreign, see Africa as an undifferentiated whole – war in one country casts long shadows not just over neighboring states, but over the whole continent. As a result, Africa seems to many outsiders an unattractive place in which to invest or keep their money. And what money is made in Africa is encouraged to flow out. Around 40 percent of African savings are kept outside the continent, compared with just six percent for East Asia and three percent for South Asia. What is true of money is also true of people. Many educated Africans have over the years quit their homelands because they are frustrated at not being able to put their skills to good use. They can also earn more and have a better life elsewhere. Africa loses an average of 70,000 skilled personnel a year to developed countries in this brain drain (Commission on Africa, 2005). It is therefore by no coincidence that NEPAD has, as one of its foundations, the expansion of democratic frontiers and the deepening of the culture of human rights.

7.2 The MDGs, peace and security

The UN Millennium Task Force notes that the MDGs not only reflect economic targets, global justice and human rights- they also are vital to international and national security and stability. Poor and hungry societies are much more likely than high-income societies to fall into conflict over scarce, vital and natural resources. Many world leaders in recent years have rightly stressed the powerful relationship between poverty reduction and global security. While violent conflicts surely result from a combination of factors, research suggests a strong causal impact of poverty and adverse income shocks on the onset of conflict. The risk of civil conflict declines steadily as national incomes increase. Negative economic growth shocks increase the risk of civil conflict dramatically. Achieving the MDGs should therefore be placed centrally in international efforts to end violent conflict, instability, and terrorism. Investing in development is especially important to reduce the probabilities of conflict, and development strategies should take into consideration their possible effects on reducing (or inadvertently increasing) the risks of conflict.

7.3 Interlinkages between the MDGs

Long-term poverty reduction requires sustained economic growth, which in turn depends on technological advancement and capital accumulation. The MDGs play two roles in the growth process. First, the Goals are ends in themselves, in that reduced hunger, gender equality, improved health and education, and broader access to safe water and sanitation, are direct goals of society. Second, the Goals are also “capital inputs” to economic growth and further development. A healthier worker is a more productive worker, as is a better-educated worker. Improved water and sanitation infrastructure raises output per capita through various channels, such as reduced illness. So, many of the Goals are a part of capital accumulation, defined broadly, as well as desirable in their own right.

Poverty and hunger

Hunger is both a cause and an effect of poverty. It holds back economic growth and limits progress in reducing poverty. The negative economic impact of hunger is dramatic, with annual losses of at least 6–10 percent in labor productivity and hence in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Poor and hungry people often face social and political exclusion. They have little access to education, health services, and safe drinking water.

Good health, coupled with safe water and good sanitation, is vital for maintaining adequate nutrition. Common infectious diseases and parasites prevent people from absorbing and utilizing food properly. The interaction works both ways: malnutrition and hunger are the number one risk factor for illness worldwide. For example, malnourishment weakens the immune system and strength of those affected by HIV/AIDS, making them succumb more quickly to the disease. Hungry people are highly vulnerable to crises and hazards because of their poverty. The crises may be caused by natural disasters, such as major droughts or floods, or by manmade disasters, such as war. The hazards include factors such as insecure rights to land and other natural resources, lack of improved agricultural technology, inability to store produce after harvest, environmental degradation, lack of income-earning opportunities, poor health, and so on. It is particularly important that hunger reduction should be a major part of poverty reduction strategies, since little progress in reducing poverty is likely, as long as large numbers of people suffer from malnutrition.

Education and gender

Access to basic education, in addition to being recognized as a human right, and a vital part of individuals' capacity to lead lives they value, is an important instrument with which people can improve their lives in other ways. Education enhances the capacity of poor people to participate in the political process and thus to organize for other social and political rights and to demand governments that are more representative and accountable. Better-educated people earn more, not only or primarily because they are better credentialed, but also because they are more productive. A workforce that is more skilled and has more knowledge also contributes to higher economic growth. Private returns to education are not confined to higher wages and incomes. Independent of their household income, mothers with primary education have better access to the information they need to help keep their children healthy. Education, particularly girls' education, has social returns to society at large as well, since society captures some of the benefits of improved health, lower fertility, and the at-home education that educated mothers transfer to their children. Women with limited education become mothers at a young age and are unable to space their births appropriately, and lack awareness of good nutrition and child nurturing practices. They have a high risk of giving birth to babies with low birth weights, perpetuating a vicious circle of malnourishment down the generations. More education, particularly of women, is strongly associated with better family health and improved capacity to plan and time births. Education that is broadly shared ensures that growth itself will be broadly shared. Education that reaches the poor, women, and marginalized ethnic groups, brings private benefits to them, as well as benefits to society as whole by reducing inequality, diminishing discrimination, and creating more cohesion in the long run.

Health

Improved health has pervasive direct and indirect effects on raising both the level and the growth rate of income. Economic growth, in turn, is necessary to pull countries out of poverty traps, including the vicious circle of disease and deprivation that characterizes them. At the individual level, serious health conditions can push already poor people even deeper into poverty when disabling illness prevents workers from earning income or the out-of-pocket cost of obtaining healthcare has catastrophic impact. Reducing parasitic and infectious disease burden improves nutrition levels. Birth spacing protects maternal and child nutrition and health. Improved health enhances educational outcomes by improving cognitive abilities and attendance rates. AIDS prevention and treatment reduce the number of orphans, who are less likely to complete primary education. Reproductive health services reduce the withdrawal of girls from school related to sibling care burdens caused by unplanned pregnancies or due to adolescent pregnancy. Family planning services facilitate employment and social participation opportunities for women, strengthen partner relationships, and provide a greater sense of well-being. Access to emergency obstetric care in the event of pregnancy and delivery complications saves women's lives. Access to family planning services reduces total fertility rates to levels people desire, thus mitigating population pressures on the environment.

Box 1: Health, education and poverty

Africa's record on human development is poor compared to that of East and South Asia. The decades, in which Asia was investing, the 1970s and 1980s, were the years of crisis when African governments were slashing the budgets of both clinics and schools at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Evidence shows that IMF and World Bank economic policy in the 1980s and early 1990s took little account of how these policies would potentially impact on poor people in Africa. Many health and education systems began to break down. And all of this came just as AIDS began to take its deadly toll. All this illustrates another of the vicious circles so typical of poverty traps. Without functioning clinics and schools, a healthy and skilled workforce is harder to achieve; without such a workforce one of the key conditions for creating economic growth is removed; without economic growth there is no money to invest in clinics and schools. Africa's problem is that all these vicious circles interlock. That is why tackling them requires strong action in all these areas, at the same time.

Commission on Africa, 2005

Environmental sustainability

The pursuit of environmental sustainability is an essential part of the global effort to reduce poverty, because environmental degradation is inextricably and causally linked to problems of poverty, hunger, gender inequality, and health. Livelihood strategies and food security of the poor often depend directly on functioning ecosystems and the diversity of goods and ecological services they provide. Insecure rights of the poor to environmental resources, as well as inadequate access to environmental information, markets, and decision-making, limit their capacity to protect the environment and improve their livelihoods and well-being.

Time that women and children, especially girls spend on collecting water and fuelwood reduces their opportunity for income-generating activities and study time, respectively. Women's unequal rights and insecure access to land and other natural resources limit opportunities for accessing other productive assets. Environmental risk factors account for up to one-fifth of the total burden of disease in developing countries. Water and sanitation-related diseases and acute respiratory infections, primarily caused by indoor air pollution, are leading causes of mortality in children under the age of five. Indoor air pollution, and carrying heavy loads during late stages of pregnancy put women's health at risk before childbirth. Water is a factor of production in agriculture, industry, and other economic activities. Investments in water infrastructure and services are a catalyst for local and regional development. Improving the lives of slum dwellers helps combat HIV/AIDS, improve environmental sustainability, and address gender inequality.

Therefore, protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development and changing consumption and production patterns are fundamental requirements for poverty eradication. Achieving environmental sustainability requires carefully balancing human development activities, while maintaining a stable environment that predictably and regularly provides resources such as freshwater, food, clean air, wood, fisheries, and productive soils; and that protects people from floods, droughts, pest infestations, and disease. Since rich countries consume far more environmental resources and produce more waste than poor countries, many environmental problems (such as climate change, loss of species diversity, and management of global fisheries) must be solved through a global partnership between developed and developing countries.

Global partnership for development (trade, science and technology)

Openness to trade is associated with higher incomes and better economic performance. Openness to trade gives firms and households' access to world markets for goods, services, and knowledge, thus lowering prices, increasing the quality and variety of consumption goods, and fostering specialization of economic activity in areas where countries have a comparative advantage. Trade generates more investment and fosters higher productivity of domestic industries as a result of competition and access to knowledge. Trade is important for

generating the positive externalities that are associated with learning through the diffusion and absorption of technology.

However, the quality of infrastructure, education and training, and the labor force, among other factors, will play an important role in determining the relative costs of production and the competitiveness of firms. Furthermore, trade performance and the gains from trade enjoyed by a country also depend on what trading partners do. Foreign market access restrictions may lower (raise) the prices of exports (imports) and have negative effects on the terms of trade, the incentives to investment, and the growth potential of developing countries. That is, international policy settings also matter. For developing countries to benefit from their comparative advantage (low labor costs, resource endowments) and expand their trade, the restrictions and barriers to their exports of goods and services must be removed, along with anticompetitive practices and distortions in key sectors such as agriculture and services.

A nation's ability to solve problems and initiate and sustain economic growth depends partly on its capabilities in science, technology, and innovation. For example, science, technology, and innovation reduce poverty by contributing to economic development. They alleviate hunger by improving nutrition, increasing yields of cash and subsistence crops, improving soil management, and creating efficient irrigation systems. ICTs can increase education by facilitating distance learning, providing remote access to educational resources, and enabling other solutions. Many technologies hold the promise of significantly improving the conditions of women in developing countries (by improving energy sources, agricultural technology, and access to water and sanitation, for example). Many health interventions, including the treatment and prevention of malaria, HIV/AIDS, drug-resistant tuberculosis, and vitamin and other micronutrient deficiencies, require new treatments and vaccines. The production of generic medicines holds the promise of improving poor people's access to essential medicines. Improved scientific as well as traditional or indigenous knowledge at the local level will be indispensable for monitoring and managing complex ecosystems, such as watersheds, forests, and seas, and for helping to predict (and thereby manage) the impact of climate change and the loss of biodiversity. Access to water and sanitation will require continuous improvement in low-cost technologies for water delivery and treatment, drip irrigation, and sanitation.

7.4 The need for a holistic and integrated approach

The foregoing clearly demonstrates the need for a holistic and integrated approach in addressing Africa's sustainable development challenges. The work of the UN Millennium task forces shows that no "silver bullet" exists to reach any individual target, let alone the ensemble of Goals. Required instead are integrated strategies for complementary and mutually reinforcing interventions. Similarly, the Africa Environment Outlook (2006) advocates for the adoption of an interlinkages approach to the challenges facing Africa. An interlinkages approach recognizes the complexities inherent in ecosystem dynamics and their interface with the equally complex social, economic and political dynamics inherent in human development and governance, particularly policies, laws and institutions. It stresses the importance of coordination of action across the relevant dimensions of sustainable development.

By adopting an interlinkages approach, policy may maximize the opportunities across a number of domains. When effective institutional systems are developed to implement an interlinkages approach, it can give policymakers the advantage of having a better grasp of the range of options available, the costs and benefits of their decisions, and how to determine the interagency links that are necessary to promote "joined-up policies". An interlinkages approach in the formulation of policy and the development of programmes can help to ensure that interventions are more relevant, robust and effective, and that these policies are based on principles that are cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary. It can also help to sharpen the focus of policy and action, while

at the same time ensuring that spatial and temporal factors across multiple sectors and ecosystems are fully considered. Interlinkages may help bring into focus certain issues, such as gender, that are often neglected.

Policies that are comprehensive and adopt an interlinkages approach provide better opportunities for addressing multiple, related challenges and for developing effective solutions. The UN Millennium task force on investment noted that to achieve the MDGs, huge new investments and, in many cases, better policies and institutions are needed. The task force called for the development of MDG-based poverty reduction strategies, embedded in a 10-year MDG framework. The process of developing the MDG-based poverty reduction strategy should be open and consultative, including all key stakeholders. The strategy should take into account issues such as gender equality and must be created and implemented in an environmentally sustainable manner right from the start. The Commission on Africa also underlined the importance of gender equality and urged African governments to include environmental sustainability considerations in poverty reduction strategies.

Several Conferences and Summits have also called for the establishment of institutions and development of policies and strategies that are responsive to the requirements of sustainable development. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992, as well as WSSD recommended that governments should establish national coordinating institutions for sustainable development or similar entities, otherwise known as National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSDs). The Conference and Summit also called on countries to prepare and implement National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSDs). The JPOI states that where applicable, NSSDs could be formulated as poverty reduction strategies that integrate economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. Related to this is the call made by the World Summit on Development, for countries to adopt by 2006, and implement comprehensive national development strategies to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the MDGs.

Africa's response

ECA undertook a review of the establishment and functioning of NCSDs in Africa. The review entailed a questionnaire survey, which was completed by National Focal Points for Sustainable Development (NFPs) in ¹23 countries and a desk review, which provided information on ²14 additional countries. The review commenced in 2004 and culminated in the publication of a report in December 2005, entitled “National Councils for Sustainable Development: A Review of Institutions and their Functioning”. This section is informed by the said publication, and the ongoing study on National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSDs) provides updates on some issues. Actions taken and progress made in relation to poverty reduction and MDG-based strategies are highlighted in chapter two.

7.4.1 Concrete actions taken and progress made

Institutional framework

Most countries have established NCSDs. Of the 37 countries studied, only two (Zambia and Burundi) had not yet established such an entity. Among the survey countries, 36 percent had bodies that are multi-stakeholder entities with names mirroring NCSD or closely related. However, it was striking that none of these had a broad mandate with corresponding broad-based activities that addressed all three pillars of sustainable development. Further, among the 35 NCSDs, 43 percent were multi-stakeholder environment-related entities or single environment agencies, and 46 percent had environment-related mandates. Among the NCSDs of survey

1 Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe

2 Burkina Faso, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, Sao Tome and Principe, Tunisia, Uganda,

countries whose activities are specified, 71 percent executed environment- related activities. Notwithstanding, it was encouraging to note that among the 35 countries that had established NCSDs, eight (23 percent) had recognized that their bodies were not NCSDs in the strict sense; an additional two (6 percent) stated that their bodies were of an interim nature, and seven (20 percent) were in the process of establishing “proper” NCSDs.

A ³16-country analysis on NSSDs currently being conducted by the Commission has revealed that national focal points for sustainable development are gradually changing from Environment Ministries/ Agencies to Finance and Planning Ministries/Commissions. This is an important step forward considering that Finance and Planning Ministries/Commissions are responsible for coordinating development planning in countries. However, this change will only yield desired results, if appropriate coordination and integration mechanisms that address the three pillars of sustainable development in a balanced manner are put in place.

With regard to the location of the NCSDs within government administrative structure, the NCSD report states that all countries with bodies located under the Office of the President/Prime Minister considered that the high-level positioning ensures effective coordination of policies and plans. With respect to NCSDs located in ministries, it was suggested that such location ensures continuity and effective collaboration with other sectoral ministries. However, inter-ministerial rivalries presented a major threat to their effective functioning. Seventy-eight percent of NCSDs, chaired by the Prime Minister, President or Vice President, or located under their Offices, executed environment-related activities. This was also true for those NCSDs with broad mandates. Thus, the observation that the location of the body within government administrative structure is useful, but a weak indicator compared to the actual policy influence of the body, and invariably, the demonstrated political will is quite pertinent.

More than half of the specified NCSDs in the study countries had been decentralized. This was closely linked to the local government decentralization process, which invariably, is linked to the democratization process in the region. Coordination between the bodies and their decentralized structures was mostly assured through various multi-stakeholder committees, which allowed for direct communication.

Representation, collaboration, coordination, integration and participation of major groups

Membership of government institutions to most NCSDs cut across all sectors. Representation from environment and natural resources, planning and finance-related government ministries and agencies, was quite satisfactory. However, representation from social sector related ministries and agencies needed improving. Major groups were represented in most NCSDs. However their representation was generally not broad and more needed to be done in terms of the representation of certain groups, particularly workers and trade unions, parliamentarians, indigenous people, farmers, women and youth groups.

There was generally a good level of collaboration in the execution of activities, and mechanisms for coordination had, to varying degrees, been established in a large majority of survey countries. Countries used coordination, participatory, consultative and sensitization mechanisms and approaches to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development into their work. Although none of the survey countries had a specific strategy for stakeholder participation, this had been institutionalized through incorporation in thematic, national and sectoral policies and strategies, and as a matter of standard practice.

3 Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique The Gambia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia.

Policies, strategies and plans

The NCSD study findings revealed that countries had adopted different combinations of policies, strategies and plans, to address sustainable development issues. Some countries had revised their policies to take into account principles of sustainability, participation, efficiency as well as integrative, and harmonized development. The 16-country NSSD study also revealed that 10 countries (Algeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, The Gambia, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia) were in the process of implementing their NSSDs. Of the remaining countries, the NSSD of one had been approved, but was yet to be implemented (Senegal). The NSSDs of Benin and Mozambique had been developed and were awaiting approval, while those of Morocco and South Africa were under development. Only Sierra Leone indicated that no action had been taken towards developing a NSSD.

The NSSD types being implemented were quite diverse. Two highlighted the environmental dimension (Algeria and Tunisia), two highlighted the economic dimension (Kenya and Mauritius) and three were poverty reduction strategies (Cameroon, Ghana and Uganda). The remaining three, were a national development plan (Zambia), a national long-term vision document (The Gambia) and a “NSSD” (Malawi). Among the NSSDs that were yet to be implemented, one highlighted the environmental dimension (Mozambique) and two were “NSSDs” (Benin and Senegal). Priorities addressed by the different NSSDs vary in comprehensiveness, but most covered the four dimensions of sustainable development. The manner and levels of integration and participation also varied.

Countries’ views on the 2005 World Summit national development strategy-related resolution

The NSSD study explored countries’ views and implementation of the 2005 World Summit Resolution on national development strategies. The majority of responding countries viewed the MDGs as integral to this resolution. Among the responding countries, all nine that were implementing their NSSDs were of the view that this resolution had been addressed through existing national planning frameworks, policies and strategies. Nonetheless, Kenya, Cameroon and Mauritius added that the requirements would be better articulated in ongoing or planned strategic processes. As regards supporting processes, Ghana regarded capacity building as an important requirement for successful implementation, while The Gambia called for meaningful partnership among all stakeholders.

Regarding the four countries that were yet to implement or were in the process of developing their NSSDs, Senegal was of the view that its NSSD, as well as other strategies and planning processes, together, meet the requirements of the resolution, while Benin alluded that the country’s many development strategies would suffice. However, Benin advanced that ensuring consistency of the different strategies and integrating them into a coherent national development strategy would be ideal. Meanwhile, Morocco and South Africa were of the view that their respective NSSDs under development would adequately satisfy the related requirements of the resolution. Sierra Leone’s view was that the country’s PRS has adequately responded to the requirements of the resolution.

Funding and implementation experiences

Funding is clearly a constraining factor to the effective functioning of NCSDs, and the implementation of the sustainable development agenda in Africa. The location of the NCSD under a high level office (Office of the President / Prime Minister) did not automatically guarantee adequate funding. Many development partners support sustainable development-related activities. Most countries had not established financing mechanisms to generate additional funds, but continued to depend on government budgetary allocations and donor funds.

Support to the institutionalization and development of NCSDs and NSSDs

Many agencies support Africa's efforts in the establishment of institutional and strategic frameworks for sustainable development. These include, United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the Earth Council, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Department For International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom (UK), Network for Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa (NESDA), and International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).

7.4.2 Challenges and constraints

Inadequate capacities (institutional, financial and/ or human resources) are major constraints, which have stalled progress and even eroded gains made, especially in countries where civil wars and political unrest persist. Factors that present the most threat to the implementation of the sustainable development agenda are conflicting or overlapping mandate/ legislation resulting in institutional rivalries and parallel processes. Others include Africa's marginalization in the globalization process, the unsustainable debt burden, population pressure and social inequalities.

A major challenge in Ethiopia was the slow integration of environmental concerns in development plans, while the lack of integration of the three pillars of sustainable development was a problem in South Africa. The lack of integration gives rise to parallel coordinating structures with clearly defined, but not necessarily converging strategic objectives. Lack of coordination, delayed in decentralization, and lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms caused major setbacks in Mauritania's implementation process.

African governments lack adequate capacity in integrating the principles of environmental economics, including valuation of environmental and natural resources accounting, use and application of economic instruments, into development planning processes.

Challenges surfacing from the ongoing 16-country NSSD study related to process and capacity issues, as well as meeting sectoral development priorities. In addition to these, monitoring, evaluation, prioritization of needs and donors honoring their commitments, as well as aligning their development assistance objectives to recipient country priorities, were major concerns expressed.

The table below provides a snapshot of these challenges.

Challenges

No	Country	Challenges									
		Ownership/ commitment	Governance/ participation	Integration/ coordination	Capacity			Sectoral development			
					Inst.	Tech.	Fin.	Social	Econ.	Env.	
1	Algeria								X	X	X
2	Benin			X					X		
3	Ghana	X	X	X	X	X					
4	Kenya		X		X	X	X				
5	Malawi			X			X				
6	Mauritius									X	
7	Morocco		X		X	X		X	X	X	
8	Senegal							X			X
9	Sierra Leone				X	X	X				
10	South Africa		X	X				X	X		
11	Zambia		X				X				

7.4.3 Lessons learned and the way forward

Given the shortcomings in the institutional frameworks for sustainable development, countries should be assisted to establish or strengthen (as appropriate) NCSDs that are responsive to the requirements of sustainable development. The name, mandate, location and organizational structures of newly established NCSDs should allow for horizontal and vertical linkages, and ensure that the three pillars of sustainable development are appropriately addressed. In restructuring and strengthening existing NCSDs, it should be ensured that structures and achievements are built upon and continuity assured.

The composition of NCSDs should be broad-based taking into account countries' respective sustainable development priorities and specificities. Trade unions, indigenous peoples, parliamentarians, farmers, women and youth groups should be better represented in NCSDs, and private sector representatives should be empowered to be more actively engaged in activities.

Countries are gradually developing policies, strategies and plans for sustainable development. However, the multiplicity of policies, strategies and plans should be carefully considered and rationalized in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to save on scarce resources. If existing strategies are found wanting, they should be strengthened taking into account sustainable development principles, country needs, priorities, specificities and lessons learned, rather than initiating completely new processes.

The design of policies and strategies should include investment plans that adequately address resource requirements. Countries should also be assisted to identify and establish/ strengthen innovative financing mechanisms to supplement government and donor funds. The scarcity of financial resources also calls for well-targeted spending and prudent management of resources. This should include prioritization of activities and joint implementation.

Monitoring and evaluation systems should also be built into strategy processing. These promote accountability and continuous learning and improvement. In this regard, countries should among other things, be assisted to develop appropriate indicators of sustainable.

Countries should be assisted to adopt or enhance the use and application of approaches and tools including models for policy analysis, integrated assessments and environmental/natural resource accounting with a view to achieving a balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development.

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