



SOFIMUN
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"Search Of Future Ideas, Models Us Now"

COMMITTEE:
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT

CHAIRPERSON:
SALLY MEOUCHE & BOYAN STANOEV

TOPIC: (B)
SUSTAINABILITY AND THE CHALLENGES
OF POVERTY ERADICATION

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CSD)



The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was established by the UN General Assembly in December 1992 to ensure effective follow-up of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit.

The Commission is responsible for reviewing progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; as well as providing policy guidance to follow up the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) at the local, national, regional and international levels. The JPOI reaffirmed that the CSD is the high-level forum for sustainable development within the United Nations system.

The CSD meets annually in New York, in two-year cycles, with each cycle focusing on clusters of specific thematic and cross-sectoral issues, outlined in its new multi-year programme of work (2003-2017) (E/CN.17/2003/6).

The CSD has opened its sessions to broad participation from both governmental and non-governmental actors, and it supports a number of innovative activities, such as the Partnerships Fair, the Learning Centre and a series of panels, roundtables and side events. The High-level segment features dialogue among Ministers, and Ministers also hold a special dialogue session with Major Groups.

As a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), CSD has 53 member States (about one third of the members are elected on a yearly basis). Each session of the CSD elects a Bureau, comprised of a Chair and four vice-Chairs.

More at: http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/csd/csd_aboutcd.shtml



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Topic B: Sustainability and the challenges of poverty eradication - SUMMARY

The eradication of poverty is one of the greatest global challenges the world faces today. The enormity and intricacy of the poverty problem could endanger the social fabric, undermine economic development, the environment, and threaten political stability in many countries. Poverty is interlinked with the environment through four core dimensions;

Dimension	Poverty - sustainability
1. Livelihoods	Ecosystems provide goods and services (e.g. firewood)
2. Resilience to environmental risks	People living in poverty are more vulnerable to natural disasters caused by climate change
3. Health	People living in poverty are often exposed to poor environmental conditions, which can be a hazard to human health (e.g. no clean drinking water / air pollution /chemicals etc.)
4. Economic development	The environment contributes directly and indirectly to economic development and employment levels in sectors like agriculture, forestry, energy, fisheries, and tourism

Poverty eradication is termed as "an indispensable requirement for sustainable development" in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPI). The SOFIMUN 2010 Commission on Sustainable Development will have to address the four interrelated dimensions of sustainability and poverty eradication, review the progress, and offer policy recommendations. Providing added value in the sustainability angle of the complex issue of poverty eradication, the CSD will also need to work for better intra-organization synchronization within the ECOSOC and the UN and for intensified cooperation with relevant international organizations and NGOs.

1. INTRODUCTION



Poverty is defined as "a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information."¹ Poverty is a serious global challenge whose origin can be traced to the onset of the human race. Despite the rising global gross domestic product levels, poverty has remained as an issue of considerable scope such that no state is immune (see map below). Almost half the world — over three billion people — live on less

¹ www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/.../ydiDavidGordon_poverty.pdf



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than \$2.50 a day. At least 80% of humanity lives under \$10 a day. About 72 million children of primary school age in the developing world were not in school in 2005. According to UNICEF, 24,000 children die each day due to poverty.²

Additionally, the rising population levels along with the overall increase in per-capita ecological footprint have had an adverse impact on the environment. The inadequate measures aimed at mitigating these two problems have focused primarily on dealing with either poverty or environment alone instead of realizing the interconnectedness of these two and devising sustainable approaches to poverty eradication.

Furthermore, it is important that different actors involved in addressing the issue divide the labor and combine efforts according to their comparative advantage in order to achieve more comprehensive and lasting results.

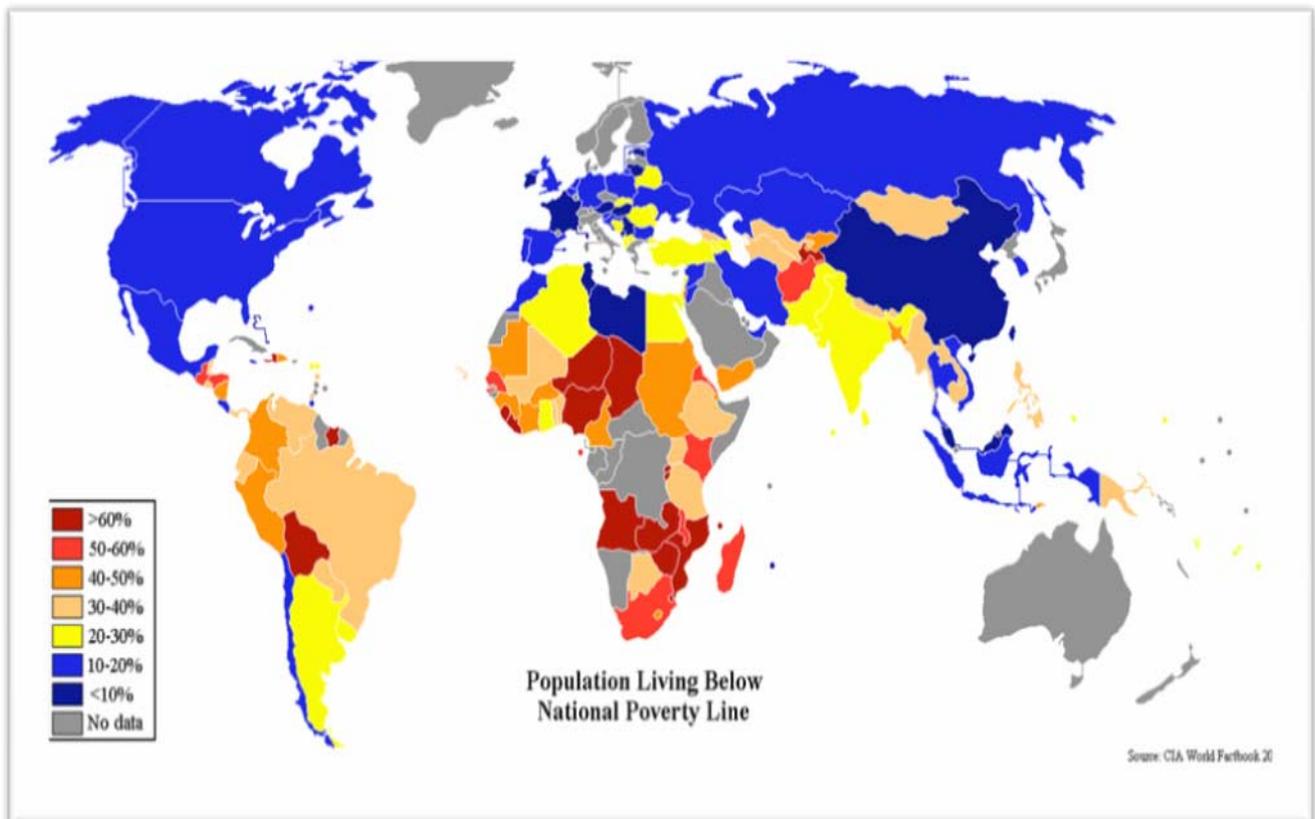


Figure 1. Population living below national poverty line³

² <http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>

³ CIA World Factbook



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2. DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUE

The sustainable approach to poverty eradication is an attempt to go beyond the conventional definition and approaches to poverty eradication. The latter had been shown to be too narrow as it focused simply on low income, social exclusion, vulnerability or other aspects of poverty without addressing the factors and processes which either constrain or enhance poor people's ability to make a living in an economical but also an ecological and sustainable manner.

Poverty and the environment are inter-linked through four main dimensions: livelihoods, resilience to environmental risks, health and economic development.

Livelihoods: Ecosystems - a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their nonliving environment interacting as a functional unit - provide goods and services (e.g. food, clean water, energy and shelter) on which poor people rely disproportionately for their well-being and basic needs. They also depend on the environment to earn income in sectors such as agriculture, fishing, forestry and tourism, both in formal and informal markets.

Resilience to environmental risks: Poor people are more vulnerable to natural disasters (e.g. flooding, drought), the effects of climate change, and environmental shocks that threaten among others their livelihoods and undermine food security. Improving environmental management of for example watersheds and mangrove forests increases the resilience of poor people and their livelihoods to environmental risks.

Health: Environmental conditions account for a significant portion of health risks to poor people. On the other hand, good health conditions are beneficial in terms of resilience, livelihoods, productivity and economic development.

Economic development: The environment contributes directly and indirectly to the economic development and level of employment, in particular in developing countries, through sectors such as agriculture, energy, forestry, fisheries, and tourism.

Poverty and environment linkages are dynamic and context specific reflecting both geographic location, scale and the economic, social, and cultural characteristics of individuals, households, and social groups. By addressing the environmental issues it is possible for developing countries to ensure a sustainable path to poverty reduction and human development.





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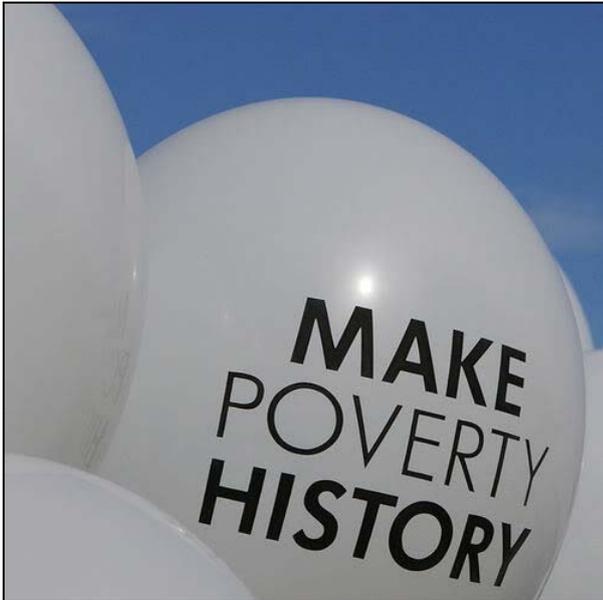
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3. ADDRESSING THE ISSUE



The sustainable livelihoods idea was first introduced by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development expanded the concept, advocating for the achievement of sustainable livelihoods as a broad goal for poverty eradication.

The core legal framework pertaining to sustainability and poverty eradication can be found in Agenda 21, especially in Chapter 3 entitled "combating poverty." This Chapter introduces the basis for action in enabling the poor to achieve sustainable livelihoods. It emphasizes that:

"while managing resources sustainably, an environmental policy that focuses on conservation of

resources must take into account those who depend on the resources for their livelihoods. Otherwise it could have an adverse impact both on poverty and on chances for long-term success in resource and environmental conservation."

Paragraph 3.2 points out that:

"an effective strategy for tackling the problems of poverty, development and environment simultaneously should begin by focusing on resources, production and people and should cover demographic issues, enhanced health care and education, the rights of women, the role of youth and of indigenous people and local communities and a democratic participation process in association with improved governance."

Paragraph 3.4 of Agenda 21 provides the long term objectives needed to enable sustainable livelihoods. These are:

- a. To provide all persons urgently with the opportunity to earn a sustainable livelihood;
- b. To implement policies and strategies that promote adequate levels of funding and focus on integrated human development policies, including income generation, increased local control of resources, local institution-strengthening and capacity-building and greater involvement of non-governmental organizations and local levels of government as delivery mechanisms;
- c. To develop for all poverty-stricken areas integrated strategies and programmes of sound and sustainable management of the environment, resource mobilization, poverty eradication and alleviation, employment and income generation;



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- d. To create a focus in national development plans and budgets on investment in human capital, with special policies and programmes directed at rural areas, the urban poor, women and children.

Another important framework is the 1997 Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. Specifically, paragraph 27 states that poverty eradication should be an overriding theme of sustainable development for the coming years. It is one of the fundamental goals of the international community and of the entire United Nations system, as reflected not only in Chapter 3 of Agenda 21, but also in commitment 2 of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development.

Poverty is addressed in Chapter II of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Priority actions include:

1. improving access to sustainable livelihoods, entrepreneurial opportunities and productive resources;
2. providing universal access to basic social services;
3. progressively developing social protection systems to support those who cannot support themselves;
4. empowering people living in poverty and their organizations;
5. addressing the disproportionate impact of poverty on women;
6. working with interested donors and recipients to allocate increased shares of ODA to poverty eradication; and
7. intensifying international cooperation for poverty eradication.



In the context of the multi-year programme of work adopted by the General Assembly for the Commission on Sustainable Development, poverty appears as an "overriding issue" on the agenda of the CSD each year. Illustrating that the sustainable livelihoods issue cuts across



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different UN bodies and beyond, is the Millennium Forum which took place in 2000, featuring about 1,350 representatives from over 1,000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They have adopted a "Declaration and Agenda for Action" spelling out a civil society vision for a United Nations of the 21st century. The Poverty Eradication Fund was one of several key proposals in the final Declaration. With some 1.3 billion people living in poverty worldwide, the NGOs argued that poverty is "the most widespread violation of human rights."



Other organizations have been active in working for sustainable livelihoods. The World Bank regards water as a priority in its development strategy, and devotes between 11% and 16% of total project financing each year to water programs. They justify this focus based on the fact that:

"Every year, 1.8 million people die from water-related sicknesses, floods, and famines. Some 2.5 billion people in rural communities and, increasingly, in urban slums, have no safe sanitation. Over 900 million people lack access to fresh water.

The Grameen Foundation, for example, helps the world's poorest, especially women, improve their lives and escape poverty through access to microfinance and technology. It provides micro-lenders in poor communities access to the capital they need to make micro-loans to women who are working to develop or expand a small business. In many of the poorest regions in the world, micro business creation is the only way for families to escape poverty and build a better future for their children.

The European Union has various initiatives pertaining to sustainable livelihoods like the "Energy Initiative for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development" in which the EU defines energy as a key component of any poverty eradication and sustainable development strategy. The EU provides collectively 700 million Euros each year to energy in developing countries. It aims at attracting more resources, raising political awareness, building energy partnerships and coordination with other international initiatives.

Clearly, there are many actors involved in addressing this complex global issue. It is necessary for the CSD to carefully assess the work of other powerful actors such as the rest of the ECOSOC and the UN, the World Bank, the EU, Grameen and other microcredit institutions, as well as major NGOs in the field. This way the CSD can better focus its efforts to bring added value, avoid redundancy and ideally lead synchronized efforts by sharing the responsibilities in a more comprehensive and ultimately more successful approach.



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4. QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

The Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA) address several critical aspects. These questions are also meant to guide research and preparation for conference:

- What are the lessons of the previous approaches in dealing with poverty and the environment?
- What are the aspects of the issue of sustainability and poverty eradication (are there parts of the link not being exploited) and what new tendencies are we witnessing?
- How can we be more effective in tackling both issues simultaneously?
- What is the proper mix of multilateral and unilateral efforts?
- What are the other UN agencies, other international organizations (World Bank, IMF, Grameen Bank, etc) and NGO doing in the field?
- How can the CSD better focus its efforts to bring added value, avoid redundancy and ideally synchronize efforts by sharing the responsibilities in a more comprehensive and ultimately more successful approach?



