

# Human Action Proposals for Sustainable Development

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## Introduction

The historical context and processes colonial and postcolonial periods, underscore that the Africa challenge to human sustainable development is not only wide –world challenge but a serious intellectual and spiritual effort to bring about an historical alternative.

The dominant approaches to the main Africa realities in social, cultural, spiritual environment and political realities reveal unless an historical alternative is re-discovered and implemented, all action programmes are not at best palliative, temporary rain –relievers, and therefore only post powers the crunch. Africa, on the whole, is under going a process of human and ecological death.

The main challenges manifested through demographic poverty, hunger, violent conflicts and refugees crises, requires alternative vision, models, methodology and action program that address the root causes of the cases not the present preoccupation with the above manifestations. Even the best intentions and action – programmes intended for the poor turn against them because of the propensity of the system. A systemic approach that addresses the orientations and values, institutions, structures and leadership governance is urgent for human sustainable development in Africa to be implemented.

To make an action proposals for human sustainable development within the imperatives and dilemmas alluded above is a complex and difficult task. This article, in the main, intends to map out and delineate:

- The present global context, around the global forces of economic globalization, culture homogenization and environmental destruction, as the all encompassing world –wide challenge to human sustainable development.
- A vision and model of human sustainable development as rooted in an alternative global environmental order.
- A root causes - approach to human sustainable development in implementing any holistic action – proposal to bring about an historical alternative in Africa.
- A practical pilot initiatives that are spring from Southern Networks for Environmental and development (SONED-Africa) experience.

## Global Economic, Cultural and Environmental Forces

Delineating the present global forces that control the prevailing global order would help to understand and develop a comprehensive action proposal and a framework with transforming impact. There are three forces, on the whole, that pose a threat to the global human and environmental sustainable development, namely: economic globalization cultural homogenization and environmental destruction.

### *Economic globalization*

While for the last 50 years the world economy has grown more than hundred times the global ecological carrying capacity has been threatened more than all the centuries of human existence on earth.

While the transactional co-operations control the world economy, the governing structures are controlled by governments and the Bretton Woods institutions. Considering the international trade is 221 times determined by financial speculation not real good and services, which means international trade is based on derivatives of derivatives. Considering further the Wall Street, in New York, transacts through speculative transactions more than 1.3 trillion dollars a day, which is more than incomes of whole of the African continent.

The above considerations point to the root problem of global sustainable development. To sustain this kind world economic order, it is inevitable that carrying capacity, environmental space and ecological footprints have to be imported from distant elsewhere, primarily from the South. This condition of imbalanced and unsustainable world economy is exacerbated by the following factors, interalia;

- *The dominant trickle down model of development:* nothing is trickling down because there is no global distributive mechanism. Less than 200 transactional corporations control more than one third of the world economy.
- *Unbalanced international trade:* Africa continent is marginalized to dismal only less than one percent of the world international trade. This means that Africa can fall out of international trade with negligible impact while nearly 50 billion dollars flow to the South from the north in terms of aid, 500 billion dollars flow from South to North in terms of goods and services.
- *International debt crisis:* over burden by international debt, some of the African countries pay almost 100% of the gross national product to reservicing their international debt.
- *International finance governance:* There is 100 times more money than needed to run on health world economy. The International finance system is in chaos because of financial speculation.

On the whole, there are historical, institutional, structural and systemic imbalances and injustices underlying the present global economic order which is exacerbated by the present economic globalization process.

Thus the necessity of "new international environmental economic order" that has international currency based on environmental space, carrying capacity and ecological footprints is imperative. It has to be an economy that invests on the natural capital rather than extracting and exploiting the natural capital. It has to be sustained by the interest gained from the natural capital. It should be an economy that reflects bio-regional model of development and governance not imposed global uni-model of development promoted by the ruling economic globalization process.

Within this vision and model "developed world" is in serious dilemma either to continue using military muscle to secure the dwindling supply of good and services from the south, or rediscover alternative system for self-reliance or enter into mutual process of rediscovering sustainability processes, strategies and arrangements with the South. The third option is the only way forward. But can the North extricate itself from its historical imbalance?

### *Cultural homogenization*

Inextricably interwoven with forces of economic globalization is the force of cultural homogenization that has controlling powers on cultural values, consumption patterns, choices and tastes. Cultural homogenization is comparable to global corporate ideological and cultural hegemony which is globally defining the very limits of common sense. The ruling corporate order is recruiting people globally into unsustainable lifestyles. This process destroys natural and cultural diversity since needs are universal but their satisfiers are cultural specific. For example, thirst is universal but the satisfier is cultural specific but Coca-Cola Company universalizes a coca-colas a universal satisfied through cultural homogenization. By powerful media advertisement it transfers the tastes from different cultural contexts.

This is the essence of universal model of development that has no bio-regional or cultural considerations. This underlies the process of unsustainable development that destroys the cultural sustainability, wisdom and knowledge accumulated over centuries by every bio-regional worldwide.

Resurrecting and empowering the bio-regional and cultural diversities, and resisting cultural homogenization is the first crucial worldwide challenge toward human sustainable development.

This means empowerment of every bio-region to build unique human and environmental sustainable development model that is natural and cultural

specific, and then networking bio-regional models for global carrying capacity and sustainability. How this should be implemented is the central concern for this discourse.

### ***Environmental Destruction***

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century western vision and model of civilization, inspired and controlled by Newtonian mechanical physics, is totally based on environmental destruction, exploitation, conquest, extraction, depletion of natural capital and functional integrity of the eco-system.

The prevailing economic order, based on neo-classical economics, has lost its root of real economics which is ecology. How to reintegrate economic with ecology is the central challenge of human sustainable development today. The present economic order does not take investing in the eco-system and natural capital as an economic consideration beyond profit maximization.

A new radical environmental economic order that bases all economic processes and considerations on the ecological carrying capacity, not just coping up programmes advocated by dominant blue-green environmental approach to environmental destruction is needed.

Deliberate effort to adopt Red-green radicals and holistic approach which embraces: the political, cultural and economic approach to environmental problems is needed for human sustainable development.

### **A Proposed Vision and Model For Human Sustainable Development**

It is imperative to rediscover alternative global Environmental order otherwise human sustainable development cannot be implemented within the present 19<sup>th</sup> Century Newtonian mechanical physics vision and model of development. The present neo-classical economic vision and model assumes environment is to be exploited, conquered and subdued. Therefore an alternative paradigm that promotes living in solidarity with people and environment is the main challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century human sustainable development.

Highlighting on some key elements that underpin the task of reconstructing an alternative vision and model for human sustainable development, the proposed vision and model framework should, on the whole, point to a reintegration process of:

• *Economics with Ecology*, underlying the present economic crises is the fact that economics has lost its foundational roots of ecology. All ancient

traditional economic processes were rooted in the functional integrity of the eco-system and living in the interest of the natural capital. Today economics is dominated by consumerist and profit maximization considerations and values.

- *Enterprise with community welfare*; the enterprise today has profit maximization as the most important consideration. Enterprise has lost the primary purpose of community welfare. Therefore human sustainable development is impossible within this orientation and values. Both the capitalist west and communist East are dominated by the concern of who owns and controls. Is it the individual or state? The values of commonweal are absent in the above two visions, therefore community welfare is virtually absent. Human sustainable development must make community welfare the focus for the enterprise.

- *Environment with Development*; comprehensive environmental approach should re-integrate sustainable development processes to be interwoven with development programmes. Decoupling environment from development has not only been the root cause of environmental destruction but also is the root cause of global poverty. This imbalance should be addressed by the alternative environmental order.

- *State with people*; so far, the state in both capitalist and communist world has controlled and subjugated the people. Alternative democratic state should be participatory and inclusive. It should be controlled by the people not control the people. People have lost democratic space and power to be only votes in the election box. Politics and democracy has been reduced to electioneering where people are reduced to aggregation of votes bank. There is an urgent need to empower civil society through a repoliticization process.

- *North with south*; the historical and structural imbalance between the North and the South should be corrected for human sustainable development. The North imports its carrying capacity from the South. Therefore alternative mutually sustainability strategies and arrangements need to be rediscovered and implemented.

These elements should be reintegrated within the organizing principle and exchange system of ecological footprints, environmental space and carrying capacity. Three guiding cultural values to the alternative vision and model are:

Maintaining the functional integrity of the ecosystem, Eco-political philosophy and Bio-regional governance:

- Maintaining the functional integrity of the eco-system means; investing in the natural capital, and living on the interest of natural capital so that the

future generation are not compromised not to meet their needs sustainably.

- Eco-political philosophy means new values, orientations and knowledge order that should be based on eco-political philosophy. Universalizing knowledge should give way to multiversity knowledge order which is culturally and ecologically feasible.

- Bio-regional Governance; the only sustainable governance system which is cultural and ecologically feasible is a bio-regional governance system. Human sustainable development has to embrace and learn from all the ancient traditional cultures for long-term vision and model of development.

### **A Root- Causes- Approach to Human Sustainable Development**

Almost all action proposals prescribed from the North to Africa end up in being palliative, pain-reliever and at best addressing the manifestations. The propensity of the dominant system is such that even the good intentions for the poor turn against them, and at best are co-opted to integrate the dominant system even further. Thus there is an urgent need to rediscover a root - causes- approach to the plight of Africa. Four level root causes as embedded in the: Thinking system, institutional arrangements, structural establishment and leadership governance system have been given sharp focus:

#### *Thinking system*

The ruling thinking system underpinning the structures, institutions, values, orientations and knowledge order can only marginalize Africa even further or at best address only the manifestations thus postponing the crunch.

Human sustainable development can only be implemented through transformation of people's consciousness because people can only be liberated through their consciousness. It is important to acknowledge the pathology of the ruling thinking system within the four basic underpinnings:

- *Meaning and values:* Without transforming the basic meaning and values the knowledge creation process and order becomes just imparting information, technical know-how and technological skills mechanically. The fundamental questions raised at this level are: who determines what is counted as knowledge? How is what is counted as knowledge determined? How is what is counted as knowledge distributed?

- *Research and Development:* Determination of what is development and what constitutes research is not neutral but determined and prioritised by the rich and the powerful. So are the processes, methodologies and action-programmes. Thus the question of whose initiative and perspective is paramount

The methodology subsumed under participatory Action; Research (PAR) is an important alternative in research and development within the proposed vision and model of human sustainable development.

- *Universalization of knowledge and Science:* As alluded in the discourse of cultural homogenization the assumption of universal knowledge and science marginalizes the popular and bio-regional knowledge and science, whose knowledge is counted as knowledge is therefore highly political. Rediscovery of multiversity knowledge based on bio-regional natural and cultural feasibility is a serious challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century ruling knowledge order.

- *Knowledge creation systems:* Alternative bio-regional knowledge creation systems have to be recognized and affirmed as pre-requisite to cultural and bio-regional sustainable development and technology. Technological leap-frogging can only emerge from this process. Laboratory knowledge should be questioned as dead knowledge and give in to popular knowledge, based on the popular memory, history, culture and experience as the valid knowledge within any given bio-regional context.

#### ***Institutional Arrangements.***

Institutionalization of alternative visions, models, processes, methodologies and action-programmes is a serious challenge to human sustainable development. This will inevitably require re-institutionalization of all the ruling institutions to be revolved around eco-system regeneration, ecological security, eco-political philosophy and bio-regional governance.

#### ***Restructuring process:***

Structural changes are essential if thorough restructuring of the ruling system is to be implemented. Structures of center- periphery relationships should be changed to give in to the bottom -up development and hence human sustainable development. Structures control development system and act as hidden curriculum that control the thinking, institutional and governance system. Restructuring process has to begin with identifying the historical, economic, cultural and political ruling structures.

#### ***Governance System:***

Just, participatory and sustainable governance system can only emerge from bio-regional, decentralized system of governance, so is the true participatory democracy.

Within the ruling thinking institutions and structure democracy has come to mean electioneering which is nothing more than aggregation of votes bank

for the ruling elite and the controlling corporate order.

People are marginalized and excluded in this system. There is an urgent need for repoliticization of the people as a challenge to sustainable human development

### **Soned -Africa Practical Pilot Initiatives Toward an Alternative Action Proposal**

SONED-Africa has identified and is working on three institutions as a vision of alternative institutional transformation process towards an historical alternative in Africa. At three levels:

- *Cultural level;* Green Africa multiversity (GAM), this institutional framework focuses on education and knowledge creation processes and programmes. Education for all (EFA) and third sector management Education (TSME ) are the integrated programmes on this level. In 1986 an alternative School, Muthara High School- Pan African Leadership Development Centre, was established as a pilot Community based School. It has been operational since. It focuses on cultural development, Community development, Academic development and physical development. In 1996 three interrelated Institutions, namely; Technology, Environment and Community development Institute (TECD Institute), Bio-diversity Institute (BDI), International Institute for sustainable development (IISD) were established as the core pilot Institution to implement Green Africa Multiversity (GAM).

- *Economic level;* Green Africa peoples Bank (GAPB) is the institutional framework meant to implement the economic programmes of the new environmental economic order. These embrace programmes of environmental resource development and ecological security, and collective self-reliance with a focus on food security and community peasant bank. In 1986 Muthara Community Peasant Bank (CPB) was established as a pilot project at this level.

- *Political Level;* Green African Party (GAP) aspires to build political institutional framework that implements the alternative vision and model at the above two levels. This is one of the official registered party in Kenya which had field a presidential candidate in 1997 elections.

Building institutional capacity at the three levels for any programme proposal is the main challenge for Africa. Mapping out the concrete practical implications for building institutional capacity is important to shed some light on SONED-Africa experience.



### ***Building Institutional Capacity (BIC)***

Building Institutional capacity has a wide range of interpretations, meanings, perspectives, purposes and implications. This means that the applicability of Institutional Capacity Building can never be universal but context specific. Our conceptual framework of Institutional Capacity Building is more of process orientation rather than definition.

Empowerment of three processes is central to Institutional Capacity Building in the African context:

First, development is seen from the Southern Perspective of the poor and the marginalized. Secondly, the conceptual framework is grounded on the development vision, model and strategy of bio-regional sustainable development. The functional integrity of the ecosystem is taken into consideration in every policy framework and implementation process. Therefore, ecological security in terms of environmental space, ecological footprints and carrying capacity is central consideration in exchange relationship and international trade, beyond monetary financial exchange relations. Thirdly, the implementation process and mechanism is emphatic on the Participatory Action-Research (PAR) methodology and popular grassroots community involvement in decision-making and policy formulation as planners and laborers. In this regard, BIC means grassroots communities should be facilitated to design and drive their own development process.

Thus the Building institutional Capacity in this respect is about empowering and enabling the above three development processes to be restructured, reorganized and re-institutionalized.

*Restructuring process;* This process emphasis is on the programme areas. Four programme areas have been mapped out as central: Human Resource development (HRD) Leadership Resource Development (LRD) Environmental Resource Development (ERD) Collective Self-Reliance Resource Development (CSRD). For each programme area, institutional capacity building and participatory Action-Research is inbuilt in terms of financial, methodology and personnel resources at three levels: Co-ordination and Administration, Participatory Action-Research, Popular Participatory Action-Research at Education For All (EFA) level, Leadership/managerial Participatory Action-Research at management education level, Specialized & think tank-Participatory

Action Policy Research, Communication and Networking (functional integration of all programmes)

*Re-organization process;* Building Institutional Capacity means the development of implementation mechanisms and capacities for each of the above programme areas. The thrust is educational and training programmes but in form of Participatory Action-Research orientation rather than knowing and imparting technical skills mechanically. Thus, the following are developed for each programme (see the annex for conceptual), Education For All (EFA) for Human Resource Development (HRD), Third Sector Management Education (TSME) for Leadership Resource Development (LRD), Ecological Security Programme (ESP) for Environmental Resource Development (ERD), Food Security Programme (FSP) and Community Peasant Banks (CPB/CB) for Collective Self-Reliance Resource Development (CSRD).

*Re-Institutionalization Process;* Building Institutional Capacity means creating and building community institutional centers for the implementation of 1 and 2. Establishment of institutional culture and centers of excellence is the only sure way of sustainability and inter-generational capacity building. The following institutions of excellence are envisaged: Education For All (EFA) Centres, Community Project Centres, Community Resource Centres, Co-ordination Institutes, Bio-regional Multiversity Networking Institutes.