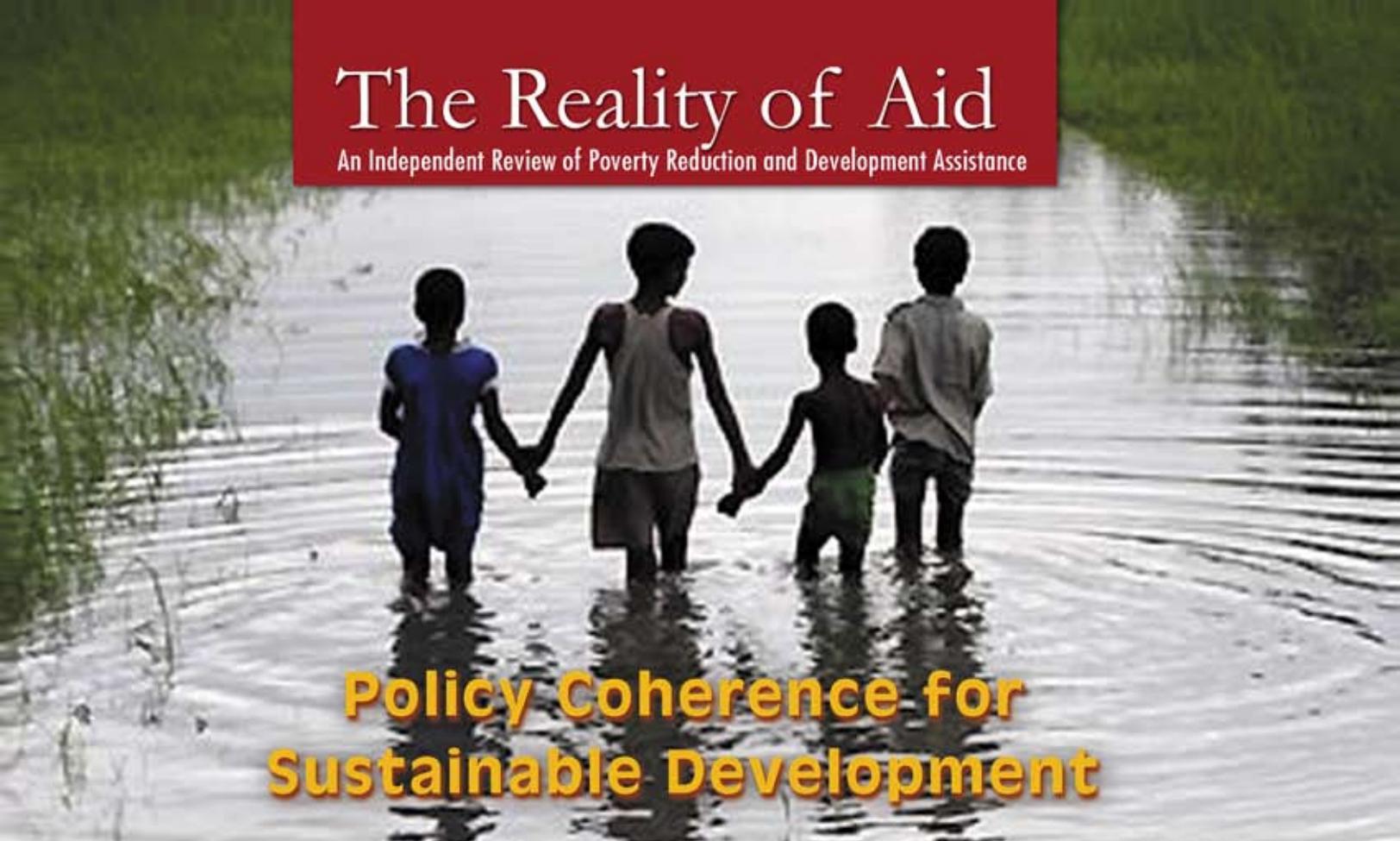


The Reality of Aid

An Independent Review of Poverty Reduction and Development Assistance



**Policy Coherence for
Sustainable Development**

RealityCheck

JUNE 2012



Issue prepared by
IBON International, Reality of Aid Network- Asia Pacific and
Arab NGO Network for Development

RealityCheck

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about this issue

As 2015 draws to a close, the whole international development community is in a rush to come up with a new framework and process that will set common objectives over the next years- a new development agenda that will truly bring about changes in peoples' lives. The United Nations' high level panel on global sustainability suggests global sustainable development goals to replace the MDGs.

As the whole international community rethinks development, moving away from the business-as-usual approach to end poverty and inequality, so is the opportune time to push for one of the potentially powerful instruments to fight poverty - policies that are comprehensive and coherent towards achieving sustainable development.

But while governments are required to implement policies that are consistent with the goal of promoting sustainable development, what is not highlighted is that policy incoherence stems from the implementation of neoliberal policies that are imposed on developing countries.

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Policy Coherence and Sustainable Development

Ava Danlog

The 2015 deadline is coming to a close but despite being modest targets, most of the Millennium Development Goals have not been met. Together with the incapacity to cope with the crises of finance, climate and food, this has revealed the flaws of the current development paradigm.¹

The whole international development community is in a rush to come up with a new framework and process that will set common

objectives over the next years— a new development agenda that will truly bring about positive change in peoples' lives.² The United Nations' (UN) high level panel on global sustainability proposes coming up with global sustainable development goals that will replace the MDGs.³ According to the UN, any development model or approach which fails to integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of development will not be sustainable in the long-term.⁴

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As the whole international community rethinks development, moving away from the business-as-usual approach to end poverty and inequality, it also becomes an opportune time to push for policies that are comprehensive and coherent towards achieving sustainable development.⁵

Sustainable development and the problem of policy incoherence

As defined by the Brundtland Commission, sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.⁶ Sustainable development means that economic, social,

illustrate how we have failed to make development more sustainable.

The problem of policy incoherence is said to be one of the many factors hindering efforts towards sustainable development. But while governments are required to implement policies that are consistent with the goal of promoting sustainable development, what is not highlighted is that policy incoherence stems from the implementation of neoliberal policies that are imposed on developing countries. Implementing neoliberal policies is usually the conditionalities attached to loans given by finance institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. These are same policies that have



and environmental dimensions are advancing in a balanced, well-rounded, and positively reinforcing manner. It means economic development is environmentally sustainable and leads to social equity.

The unprecedented wealth of a few amid widespread poverty and rising inequality coupled with environmental degradation

caused or contributed to poverty, inequality and environmental destruction. The call for sustainable development has been viewed as an attempt of neoliberalism to cover up its weaknesses as well as to maintain its legitimacy.

Indeed the prevailing neoliberal policies in economic, social and environmental dimensions follow a model of development

that is at odds with sustainable development. A study by the European NGO platform Concord discussed that European policies especially in trade and agriculture are harming developing countries, effectively undoing all of the potential achievements of its development aid.⁷ Despite voices and actors pushing for sustainable development, there is a stronger policy bias towards neoliberalism.

While the overarching factor of policy incoherence is the imposition of neoliberal policies in developing countries, there are other factors that contribute to the disconnect of sustainable development with policies.

One is that the current policy-making institutions are weak and fragmented for governance for sustainable development. The central government is the institution that should ensure that policies for development are coherent. Yet the economic, social and environmental decision-making and policy-setting are usually done in isolation from one another. There is a general weakness on the part of the central government to integrate these areas to form coherent policies.

For example, the Aquino administration in the Philippines has made climate change mitigation and adaptation as one of the focus areas. But at the same time, it also promotes programs that worsen the vulnerability of the country to the impact of climate change, such as allowing large-scale mining to drive growth.⁸

Second, decision-making and policies unduly emphasize the economic dimension over the social and environmental dimensions of development. There is greater emphasis on increasing incomes, consumption and GDP, while issues of distribution of wealth, equity, empowerment, and environmental well-being are neglected. Economic governance institutions such as the G20, IMF, World

Bank, World Trade Organization, and the national ministries of planning, finance and trade, are more influential and powerful in decision-making and agenda-setting in both national and international levels. Social and environmental governance institutions are weaker and hold less influence (e.g. the UN and multilateral environmental agreements internationally; ministries of agriculture, health, education, and environment nationally).

Policy coherence and aid

In development cooperation, the need for policy coherence to make aid effective has long been recognized. This is in response to the criticism that aid conditionalities continue to undermine policy coherence in aid-recipient countries. Additionally, the old developmental approach focused on investment and financial transfers to the South, which is based on the thinking that underdevelopment in poor countries is due to their lack of capital. The development community has come to recognize that aid alone is not the most important factor that would determine the impact of donor country's work on poverty reduction in developing countries.⁹ In fact it has recognized that what would shape the development prospects of developing countries are issues that go "beyond aid"--trade, migration, investment, environmental issues, security and technology.¹⁰

Interestingly, donors are increasingly accepting that "beyond aid" issues are important and thus also accept that policies that go beyond purely aid matters need to be coherent with longer-term development aims and goals. However, despite this, a report by the Secretary General to the UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) revealed that donor country development policies continue to focus mainly on official development assistance (ODA), and do not take into consideration the major impact of non-aid policies.¹¹

Although small relative to investment and financial flows, ODA contributes largely by funding projects that contribute to unsustainable development. Policy conditionalities that are attached to aid loans push for economic liberalization and privatization which undermine the right to development. Numerous studies have already been done to present the negative impact of ODA-funded projects to grassroots sectors and communities. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), for one, has been widely criticized by civil society in the region for harmful projects that undermine, for instance, the people's right to water. There have been many cases of displacement of indigenous peoples with the construction of mega dams, land grabbing of farm lands to give way to golf courses and resorts, and projects that destroy the livelihood, health, culture and the environment.

Policy coherence for sustainable development

Food security, energy, finance, climate and global recession are considered development challenges that are confronted by the world today. As these issues are interconnected, so should be the solutions to address these, including the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions in policy-making at the international, regional and national levels.¹²

Policy coherence for sustainable development simply means that governments must make sure that their policies are consistent with sustainable development goal and not undermined by other policies, including aid policies.¹³ Policy coherence is essential and is a key component of development effectiveness. This is based on the fundamental principles of human rights and sustainability beyond economic growth.¹⁴

Some efforts have been made towards policy coherence for sustainable development. The OECD, for example, developed a “checklist” that will supposedly guide policy-makers to improve policy coherence and integration towards the goal of sustainable development. Achieving policy coherence for sustainable development however would take more than a checklist for policy makers, given the major challenges.

Currently, there is no international mechanism to set norms and standards for development policy, as well as an international policy framework that will strengthen policy coherence. An oversight mechanism to check if governments are adhering to internationally-agreed development goals is also lacking.

But the major stumbling block to achieving policy coherence on sustainable development is the dominance of developed countries over the economic sovereignty of poor countries, which hinder the latter in defining and pursuing their own paths to development according to their needs and priorities.

Non-aid policies are determined by powerful actors according to their interests both nationally and internationally. The starting point of countries, in donor countries, will always be their own development.¹⁵ Developed countries dominate international trade and investment arrangements to the benefit of their multinational firms. Developing countries are encouraged to open their economies and produce for export markets that do little to build their productive capacities to meet their own needs. At the same time, developed countries maintain trade barriers and subsidize their exports to the rest of the world. Export agriculture benefits affluent consumers and compromise local food security. Intellectual property rights rules also limit access to



medicine and technologies, while allowing multinational firms to patent genetic resources from developing countries. Environmental regulations and institutions are kept weak so that firms can continue to pursue profit-based growth. Nationally, elite interests dominate governance and give undue priority to income growth and profits rather than equitable distribution.

The same problem exists when developed countries use aid policies as leverage to advance their political and economic interests.

Simply put, the problem of policy incoherence is rooted in the different perspectives and approaches to sustainable development. This is caused by the imbalance in power relations between developed and developing countries and between the elites and the marginalized within countries. These relations are maintained in order to uphold the interests of developed countries.

Achieving sustainable development goals thus entails a global transition that requires specific attention to the power imbalance between developed and developing countries in the global governance. There is likewise a need to address institutional challenges at the national level.¹⁶

Achieving policy coherence for sustainable development would thus require the following:

1. **A development model that is based on meeting rights and empowering the poor (development effectiveness) instead of the business-as-usual approach.** Placing human rights at the heart of development will go beyond economic growth, and will in fact, provide a framework that can respond to the economic, social and environmental crises; address the power imbalance between and within nations; and finally, ensure people-centered strategies and implementation at all levels.¹⁷ A rights-based approach will



provide tools for institutions and actors to bridge the gap across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It would follow that non-aid policies, such as that on international trade, investment, technology, climate change, and environmental relations among others, should be coherent in fulfilling rights and empowering people to claim their rights.

2. **Aid and development cooperation that is based on democratic ownership of development strategies.** Broad country ownership of development policies and programs should be strengthened.¹⁸ Mechanisms should be in place for oversight and for donors to increase coordination. The global governance architecture must be reformed at all

levels, including in financial markets, trade, foreign direct investment and debt. The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, to some extent, tries to address policy coherence in paragraph 9 which states sustainable development results as the end goal of development cooperation and the need to examine the coherence and interdependence of all public policies, but with a neoliberal focus by placing emphasis on maximizing opportunities presented by international investment and trade and in expanding domestic capital markets. There is a notable bias for private-sector-led growth and globalization but leaving out concrete responsibilities and commitments by the private sector in the global partnership.¹⁹

3. **International and national institutions that reflect the voices and needs of poor countries and poor people in decision-making and policy-setting-** Communities and civil society, along with other stakeholders should be genuine participants in the development process. Policy coherence can be better achieved if parliaments, civil society and grassroots are enabled to fully play their role in ensuring policy coherence.²⁰ For civil society organizations such as Better Aid, human rights, solidarity, gender and social equality, sustainability, sovereignty, responsibility and mutual accountability should be the guiding tenets of policy coherence. Inclusive policy dialogues should be in place wherein communities and civil society can fully and genuinely participate—from planning to implementation and oversight.

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RIO+20 Towards Genuine Sustainable Development

Farjana Akter and Nur Hassan

The conference Rio+20 in June has drawn global attention among governments, policy makers, civil society, media, and many other stakeholders.

Apart from the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Rio+20 Conference is the most important venue to articulate the future of development in terms of sustainable development goals. This is crucial indeed as there are only three years left for countries to meet their commitments under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

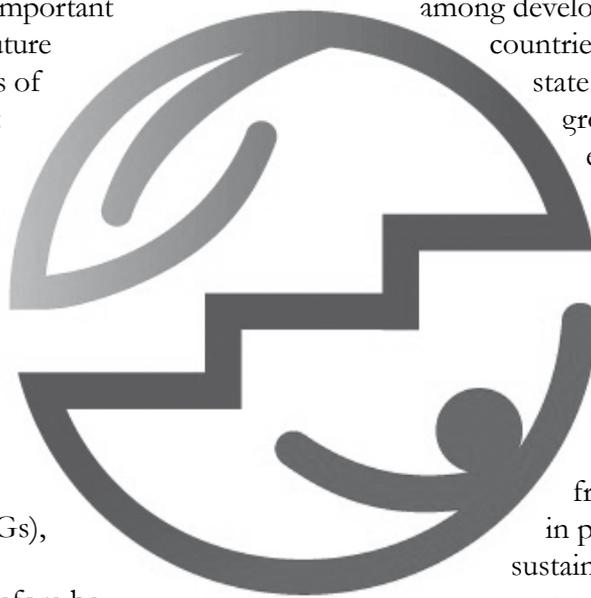
The sustainable development goals (SDGs), which lie at the core of development, must therefore be pursued especially amid the global crisis that has been aggravating poverty worldwide.

The Rio+20 has already widely engaged various stakeholders, including civil society. World leaders are preparing to meet and create a policy for promoting sustainable development. However, in Bangladesh, a lot

has yet to be done including encouraging the participation of the people and reflecting their desire in the national agenda that shall be brought at the summit.

Towards the Rio+20, a ‘Zero Draft’ was circulated and has become a heated issue among developed and developing countries. Nation-states, non-state actors and different groups including environmental, social and human rights groups, women’s rights groups and other CSOs are raising their concerns about the draft. Chief of them is the concept of “green economy”, the framework of the Rio+20 in poverty eradication and sustainable development. The green economy concept has been criticized for its overemphasis on economic benefits as well as its opposition to trade barriers.

It has been said that agriculture as the base of economic growth is the center of sustainable development. But while the upcoming summit centers on the agriculture sector for more food





production and job creation, its framework is the investment in “green jobs” and “green industry”. The summit believes that through “green activities”, economic growth that creates both social and environmental benefits will be achieved. However, under the proposed aid-funded “green technology-transfer project”, developing countries are in danger of being further burdened by more debt in the long run.

The Rio+20 Conference is significant for Bangladesh as the country is set to finalize its new agricultural policy. But like most international negotiations, the summit is being dominated by developed countries. Bangladesh should therefore negotiate strongly to ensure the promotion of its political, social, environmental and economic interests. This is especially urgent since climate change has made the country’s agriculture more vulnerable, affecting most of the subsistence farmers.

A concern, however, is that the aim of Bangladesh’s new agriculture policy is still the promotion of large-scale farming and contract growing. Bangladesh should take into account the importance of small growers and protect their livelihood instead of further commodifying agriculture.

Unfortunately, the draft ‘National Agriculture Policy 2010’, which will replace the current agriculture policy adopted in 1999, has been designed using the same flawed framework. While Bangladesh’s agriculture is presently facing crucial issues, these are being addressed using the similar programs and policies that have created problems for the sector in the first place.

Thus, it is important for Bangladesh to first settle what ‘sustainable development’ in agriculture really means. Agricultural development is being equated with market, aid, and the Green Revolution and has involved

the displacement of agrarian communities by an urban-industrial society, which worsened poverty and inequality in the country and most Third World countries. The current direction of Bangladesh's agriculture is pursuing the same path.

This destructive course for the agricultural sector has been taken by the country since the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in the 1980s funded and guided by World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Among other impacts, this led to substantial reduction in government subsidy for agriculture. It also liberalized the importation of agricultural inputs and goods.

The main objective of National Agriculture Policy 2010 is *"creating an enabling environment for sustainable growth of agriculture for reducing poverty and ensuring food security through increased crop production and employment opportunity."* But if the policy is studied closely, it will be clearly seen that a considerable number of the proposed plans actually conflicts with genuine sustainable agriculture.

For example section 2.3 (ii) intends to promote hybrid crops, which is contradictory to the main spirit of the plan's objective, i.e. sustainable growth of agriculture and food security. Believing that hybrid crops might endanger food security in the long run, scholars encourage the use of mother seed for cultivation and consider it essential for agricultural sustainability.

Section 1.5, meanwhile, states that *"In order to achieve the GDP growth rate of 7% per year, agriculture must grow by at least 4-4.5% per year."* (PRSP, 2005) But on the other hand, Section 1.3 states, *"It is estimated that the*

agricultural land is declining by 1% per year and the land quality is deteriorating owing to degradation of soil fertility (e.g. nutrient imbalance), soil erosion and soil salinity." Further, Section 7.1 states *"Imbalanced use of chemical fertilizers is causing land degradation, excessive mining of plant nutrients resulting in the decline of soil fertility on the one hand and reduction in the potential yield on the other."* These are certainly opposing information.

A decrease of 1% in agriculture land, imbalanced use of chemical fertilizers and excessive mining all seriously threaten agricultural production. Thus, the agricultural growth target of 4.4-5% is unrealistic given that the increase in agricultural productivity (for crops, horticulture, livestock, fisheries and forestry) will be sought using questionable agricultural technology and intensifying the export-orientation of the sector through a supply chain that links farmers to consumers in markets overseas.

There are some inconsistencies too in the draft policy. In Section 2 (iii), for instance, we find, *"Experts, scientists and trained personnel are available for agricultural research and development"* while Section 2.3 (1) says, *"Modern technological know-how is available for dissemination."* But Section 2 (ix) appears to contradict these with the statement *"Technologies to cope with unfavorable environment are insufficient."* Therefore, it is important to more clearly determine the strengths, weakness and opportunities available for the plan to be effective.

In this draft policy paper, soil nutrition has been mentioned with proper importance [i.e. in 7.3.2 which states, *"Awareness will be built to follow suitable cropping patterns to maintain natural balance of soil nutrients."*] There is indeed a need for a

massive program to bring back cultivable lands to their natural fertile condition. But while government recognizes the need to promote the use of natural fertilizers, the plan also calls for the use of chemical fertilizer, harmful pesticides and preservatives in many ways.

During the summit, poor countries like Bangladesh should strongly assert their right to development. They must clearly send the message that capitalist mode of production, over production and the neo-liberal economic order have only worsened the harsh effects of climate change, which the West tries to conceal by promoting the so-called “green economy” and reduction of carbon emission.

Developing countries have the right to determine how they plan to achieve their own industrial growth. For Bangladesh and its numerous poor people, this will be achieved not through the ‘green economy’ scheme but through promotion of an agricultural system that upholds biodiversity and creates employment. Meanwhile, donors

that wish to help should respect and fulfill their commitments under the Paris Declaration and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation to create real and effective partnership with developing countries.

To conclude, there should be a clear definition of sustainable development goals and its visions, as well as on the nexus between environment and poverty. Also, it is important to assert the link between human rights and the SDGs, in particular, the rights of farmers.

How the Rio +20 will define the post-MDGs setting should be done in a transparent and accountable way, encouraging the widest participation of citizens and all stakeholders. This will help in finding solutions to current challenges. Finally, a mechanism that shall ensure the implementation of commitments must be established with the UN playing an important role in translating the commitments into concrete actions and coherent policies at the country level.

'Green Economy' To Solve Problems of the World Economy?

'It's like repainting a building on the verge of collapse'

Habib Maalouf

The "green economy" concept will not likely contribute to solving the global economic, environmental and social problems, after the concepts of "development" and "sustainable development", the themes of the first Rio Earth Summit in 1992, failed to address these same issues.

The "green economy" concept was coined by the United Nations Environment Programme in 2008 and adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2009 in its resolution to hold the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development or the "Rio+20" Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The "green economy" is the theme of the upcoming conference.

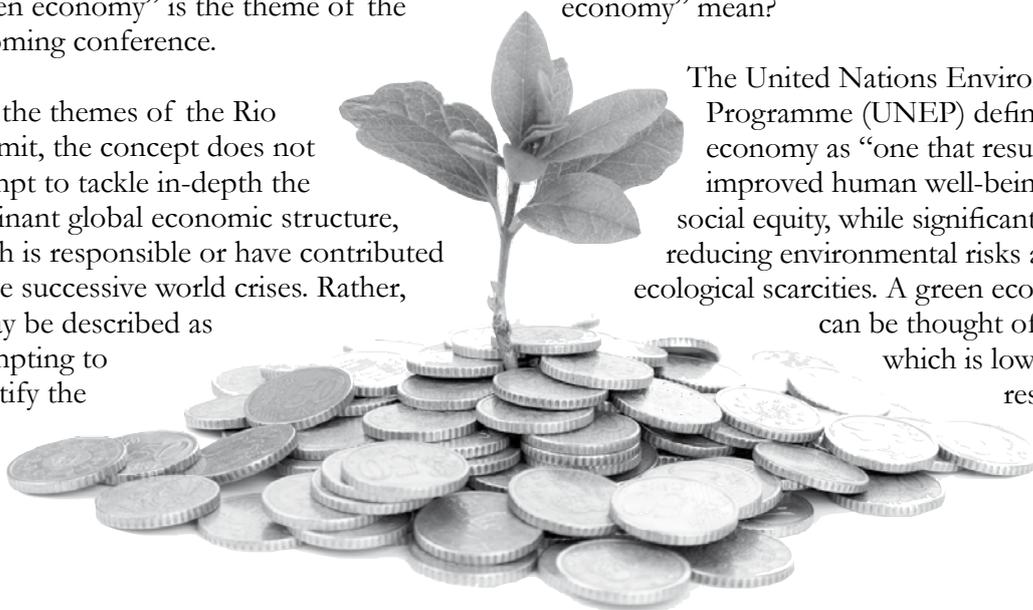
Like the themes of the Rio Summit, the concept does not attempt to tackle in-depth the dominant global economic structure, which is responsible or have contributed to the successive world crises. Rather, it may be described as attempting to beautify the

global economy by changing its color. Like a large building on the verge of collapse, we hurry to repaint its color instead of strengthening its foundation.

Perhaps a good thing about this concept is that it reopened the door for a deeper discussion on how to get out of the economic and environmental crises facing the planet. But why do we say that the "green economy" concept will not likely contribute to solving these crises?

To answer this question, we must first start from the definition. What does "green economy" mean?

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) defines green economy as "one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. A green economy can be thought of as one which is low carbon, resource



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efficient and socially inclusive". In a green economy, "growth in income and employment is driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution. These investments need to be catalyzed and supported by targeted public expenditure, policy reforms and regulation changes. This development path should maintain, enhance and, where necessary, rebuild natural capital as a critical economic asset and source of public benefits, especially for poor people whose livelihoods and security depend strongly on nature".

UNEP further clarified that "green economy" does not replace the goal of "sustainable development", adding that achieving sustainability is based on economic reform. Sustainability remains a vital goal and "greening" the economy contributes to reaching this goal, the UN body claimed.

The UNEP also suggested that the idea of "green economy" came in response to the "brown economy" model which depends on fossil fuels. Support for this type of brown fuel, which exceeded US\$650 billion in 2008, is a major impediment to renewable energy and green economy. Merely replacing or converting part of this support can solve the problem, it added.

In shifting to the "green economy", UNEP suggests finding what it calls "enabling conditions", i.e. financial support, incentives, legal, market and trade structures, and aid that currently tend towards "brown economy". Examples of enabling conditions at the national level include financial policy changes, reducing harmful support to the environment and directing investments towards green

sectors through the promotion of greater international cooperation.

Again, the UN body affirmed that "greening" the economy does not hinder investments. All that is required is transferring investments to new sectors, it said.

Indeed the green economy concept is inseparable from social issues like energy and food security, water management, expansion and growth of cities, waste management, genetic modifications, trade issues, weakness of states, growing role of the private sector, weaknesses within the UN mechanism, climate

change, issues of market economy, etc. Does the green economy concept reflect all these challenges and integrate them into a comprehensive and integrated vision that will address these issues?

Historical background

The "green economy" concept emerged in 2008 as a UNEP initiative "to enable sustainable development and eradicate poverty", but the roots of this concept did not start with this initiative. The first "greening" attempt began in the mid-twentieth century, when it turned out that the progress of science and technology had left a substantial and serious negative impact. Thus, some philosophers began to talk about the importance of "greening" sciences.

The idea of "greening science" was conceived with the progress of ecology that showed the inadequacy of traditional sciences in explaining



unnatural environmental phenomena caused by modern human civilization. It is based on the premise that the study of the ecology (i.e. ecosystems) cannot be covered by natural sciences alone, as it includes studying living organisms and their physical surroundings. In order to understand the ecology, other scientific branches or disciplines should also be used—this became known as “disciplinary pluralism” or “transdisciplinarity”.

It is true that the idea of “greening science” and the plurality of disciplines have contributed in discovering and diagnosing various emerging environmental problems. However, these were still insufficient in addressing the core of the environmental problems because of the disregard for the philosophical side of sciences or what is called “humanities”. Humans are the ones who develop and ruin, and we need to understand why the effects were ignored or how some were evaluated and others neglected others, whether consciously or not. Are the natural-human disasters we witness today the result of the advancement of science and the decline of philosophy and of critical thought?

Neither the “green economy” concept nor its proponents is able to discuss these issues from this philosophy, and until then the approach to finding solutions will remain superficial instead of being able to address the root of the problems.

The real economy

The problem, however, does not seem to lie completely in the so-called color of the economy. The problem is in the concept of the economy itself. The global economy needs a deep review after all the failed attempts to improve it. Perhaps the problem has already begun to change the identity and nature of the economy. The word ‘economy’ itself originated

from the Greek word *oikonomia* derived from *oikos* which means ‘house’ and *nomos* which means ‘science’. Hence the first definition of *oikonomia* was “science of administration of a house”. Since the Earth is our common house, *oikonomia* means the administration of nature and its resources.

The word ‘ecology’ is derived from the same root word (*oikos*) as well. If economy (*oikonomia*) is the science of managing Earth and its resources, then ecology is the science dealing with the natural resources and the complex natural systems. Economics should therefore be based on knowledge of ecology (natural science), while its laws should revolve around the laws of nature and not the opposite. This is unlike the dominant economic concept that is currently based on rules and requirements of the market and not on the capabilities and possibilities of nature.

Thus, the approach that reflects both the problem and solution is to move towards “environmental economics” or eco-economy to save the planet. We have to return to the original meaning of economy which means investing within the rules of nature and not within the rules of the market, as is the case now. It also means prudence, as against increasing production and consumption based on rates of profits.

But proponents of the “green economy” are apparently not keen in veering away from an economy based on investment and competition. In fact, the requirements of the “green economy” are merely shifting the type of investments and the use of fossil fuels to an economy based on renewable energies. However, the rules of the market can only follow the cheapest sources of energy on the basis that cheaper energy means cheaper production cost and higher possibilities making profit. So far, it is the so-

called brown fossil energy that is the cheapest source. The use of new and costly energies and technologies is inconsistent with the aim of maximizing profits, in addition to the expected resistance from monopolies in the traditional energy sectors. Another obstacle is the existing state policies that are in conflict with recommendations from the UN but are nonetheless enforced.

The transition to an economy that follows the rule of nature requires more than what the “green economy” concept proposes. It necessitates a revolutionary change in the core of the concepts, beyond merely “greening” the economy. Right now, it seems that the proponents of the “green economy” only implicitly want a share of this market. But bringing in new technology without changing the rules of the game will definitely not save the planet nor bring about sustainable development.

‘Well-being’ or sufficiency?

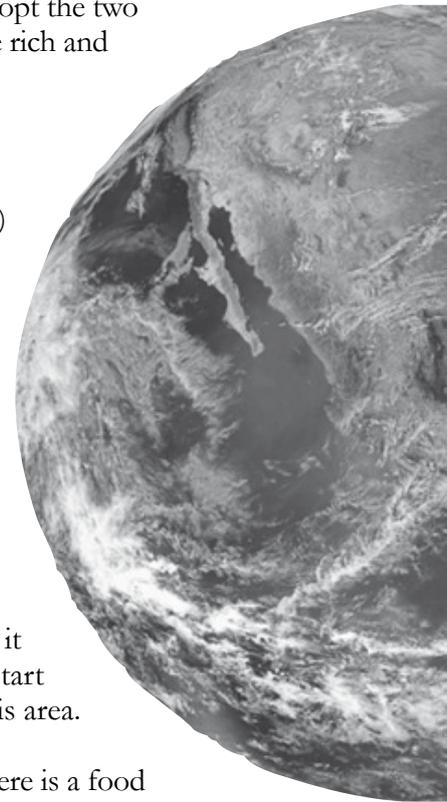
The concept of sustainability is still undoubtedly a valid goal. Nevertheless, we have to be aware that renewable energies, which provide more sustainable energy, will actually provide less energy. Thus, there is a need to reduce the type of production and consumption that provide the ‘well-being’ or comfort of a few, but will ensure that the largest number of people will benefit. Trying to integrate equality into the well-being of a few is not feasible. If “equality” means aspiring for the same well-being that developed countries have set for themselves (i.e. the Western model of development) and if all the estimated seven billion people on Earth adopt the principles of liberalism and individualism (for instance, each individual has his or her own car, etc) then we will need three planets like Earth to catch up with these needs.

Sustainable agriculture that preserves soil fertility and water safety and provides subsistence for farmers, as well as protects the forests can be achieved by changing the nature of the dominant economic, social and political system. This will not happen if “green economy” continues to promote the concept of well-being, and not the concept of sufficiency, unless the intention is to adopt the two concepts: well-being for the rich and sufficiency for the poor.

More than half of the rich population (or aspiring to wealth and wealth building) now lives in cities, consumes more than 75% of global energy, causes more than 75% of global emissions, and wastes more than 30% of global food, based on a recent study by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). All of this is happening in the name of “well-being”, and it is thus only reasonable to start tackling the problem on this area.

For example, we say that there is a food crisis. But 1.3 billion tons of food or about one third of the global food production are wasted or thrown away annually due to the Western concept of ‘well-being’. FAO estimates food waste in the United States and European Union countries at 95-115 kg per person annually.

The issue of food is organically linked to the environment and resources, like fruit is linked to the sun, soil, water and air. Every waste in food is a waste in life; it causes waste in primary resources, particularly water, soil,



energy, labor and natural and material capital that belongs to all and not to a few, as the rules of the market economy presume. Again, it is only reasonable to start addressing the issue of demand to avoid such wastage.

But how can we “green” this type of overproduction in a market economy when it is unrestricted and is based on fierce competition and open markets? Who sets binding standards? Who monitors good compliance? These are valid concerns for the upcoming Rio+20 summit, especially after many failed attempts by global international conventions, particularly the famous Kyoto Protocol that aimed to reach binding agreements to mitigate global climate change.

Who provides support?

The need to “support” “green economy” is recognized, but the question of the source of this support is likewise a valid concern.

UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner in his introduction to the “Green Economy” report said this concept “does not favor a political perspective over another. It is relevant to all economies, be they State or more market-led”. However, it is not clear how market mechanisms can provide for this support and still remain “neutral”. On the other hand, the state or government support for specific economic or technical trends through taxpayers’ money, and through specific binding legal mechanisms adopted by parliaments, clearly favors its citizens.

There is no universal binding framework for such trends, and all international negotiations

that began worldwide since the first Rio Earth Summit in 1992, which acknowledged the need for “technology transfer” within the Framework Convention on Climate Change, could not develop a global mechanism for this trend during the last meeting in Durban in 2011. Frameworks set by the World Trade Organization and global laws formulated such as the Law on the Protection of Intellectual Property, formed an additional barrier to mainstreaming “the transfer of green technology” promoted by the “green economy”.

The so-called neutrality therefore is a fallacy. Green economy cannot be achieved without clear support from non-profit entities such as States and within an international framework such as the UN. But it is assumed that their role as regulators is restored, and that it is clear that they are entrusted with the resources, sustainability and safety of the planet.

Problems with market economy

Liberal thought has always boasted that market economy can provide well-being to people and can overcome all problems without the intervention of anyone, particularly state intervention. The market ideology has always considered that crises are natural and that the economy could benefit by turning these into new investment opportunities. But has the market economy able to solve the environmental problems caused by overproduction? Was it able to decrease the number of hungry people in the world and solve poverty?

When States are unable to secure safe drinking water, the solution of a market economy would be to privatize the sector and change water into a commodity that every consumer pays for. The market provides bottled water to every individual.

When green spaces in cities recede, the market opens its reserves for eco-tourism or plants trees and artificial gardens in shopping malls. This illusion hopes to psychologically compensate for what we have lost. When noise increases in cities, the market invents double glazing and insulated buildings. When pollution covers everything around us from air and food to tools made of various types of chemicals that cause fatal diseases, the market will try to come up with new medical innovations.

Are the “solutions” proposed by the market real solutions?

Regardless of whether someone can pay for these costly solutions, knowing that their price is supposed to increase with time and with the scarcity of resources, how long can we have pure mineral bottled water if air and soil are polluted everywhere? How long can we continue to find raw materials to produce more glass? How can we protect ourselves from urban air pollution? How can we protect ourselves from emerging diseases created by the market economy?

The system of market economy has historically concealed many problems and generated new energies, claiming that “nothing is lost and everything is transformed”. But every day, more species become extinct. No one can predict the result of this extinction on biodiversity and health, food and life. No one knows when the human race turn will come.

Uncomfortable ‘well-being’

Among the dominant ideas of this era is the word “well-being”. It is the magical word of neoliberal thought and its promises. It fascinated UN experts, so they kept it among the green economy promises. However, we do not know what well-being is and how it

is measured and monitored. The well-being concept is based on liberalizing individuals and markets and increasing production and consumption. It also emerged prominently with the industrial revolution and the entry of technology in the field of work, easing the hard work of humans and contributing to their “well-being”. Well-being originally meant that machines do our work so we can have enough rest. Now, convenience or accessing objects, goals and objectives without trouble is called “well-being”.

If we accept this statement still subject to in-depth discussions, the question remains: Has the advancement of technology and our transformation into a “consumer society” secured our well-being?

The modern concept of well-being is linked to the acquisition and consumption of goods, tools and machinery more than to any other natural factor. This concept manifests in the lifestyle of First World consumers today: well-being means living in fully-furnished and air-conditioned houses with access to hot and cold water, lighting, laundry, dishwashing, and cooking with the push of a button. It also means moving from one place to another in a private car and using various types of machines to connect, communicate, and acquire knowledge.

But criticizing the concept of well-being and its negative repercussions should not be based on criticizing advancements in technology. Perhaps the problem lies in our over-reliance on these technologies to the extent of turning humans into machines and disrupting their ability to evaluate, criticize and review? The price of this transition is very expensive and has begun to bring down all the gains made by these technological advancements. Instead, they have become instruments that control

the markets and people, and even human will, freedom of thinking, resourcefulness and sense of sufficiency and satisfaction.

The mass production of new technology involves additional risks that not only topple achievements of well-being, but the sustainability of life as well. This raises new concerns on the meaning and the need for a new environmental and humanitarian philosophy in its core, that which does not forward a sense of well-being and happiness by simply changing goods. In this sense, simple and uncomplicated green technology that depends on sun, air and water power to generate energy could be an important approach to change. This should be based on the philosophy of sufficiency which promotes more reasonable production, less consumption, and eventually, more content lives.

What about accumulated debts?

The system of market economy based on increased productivity and thereby increased consumption, invented many ways to encourage consumption through a “flexible” banking system. Modern humans can get salary loans to buy lots of things, and the payment is done in “easy installments”. But a human may spend his entire life working to repay his debts that steadily increase with the increase in his needs. In a time of rapidly increasing needs due to fast technical progress and the power of advertising, the consumer enters in an endless cycle of debt-driven consumption. What democracy or equality is the green economy talking about, when we leave our debts, emissions, accumulated waste and depleted or devastated resources to the future generations?

Philosophy of debt was not popular in our Arab popular heritage. Our ancestors considered taking loans as theft. According to

them, “you don’t get something for nothing”. The value of things, including the economy itself, was more real.

Countries also borrow loans in the context of the same principle. While individuals, institutions and countries are involved in an economic system based on debt, isn’t it time to ask when these debts are due and what cost should the entire world pay? What will come after the debts of Greece, for instance, are repaid? What about the huge debt of the United States? Aren’t we supposed to be studying the size of global thefts that occurred with the accumulation of all these debts and how to repay them?

How the green economy proposes to resolve the issue of debt and theft of resources is not defined. Will it merely increase global debt to finance the transition of countries to green economy?

There is no doubt that it is time to compare the modern economy of debt-driven consumption to a real economy that brings about sufficiency.

New job opportunities?

Green economy promises to provide new job opportunities through the adoption of new technology. The last report of the “General Authority for Sustainable Development” published in March 2012 talked about green economy securing jobs for 452,600 workers in 2010, with an increase of 4% from 2009. But the report does not explain how these jobs will be created or how they are identified as solely green. Are they new jobs? Did some workers change their jobs? Did others lose their jobs?

Reports talk about creating new jobs in the sectors of renewable energies, recycling and eco-tourism. According to the report, the

most dynamic sectors are those related to the management and treatment of waste that created 97,500 jobs, wastewater treatment that created 95,000 jobs, and renewable energies that created 62,500 jobs. The report also mentioned organic farming that created 22,500 jobs, with an increase of 22% from 2009.

But new jobs will likely be at the expense of old jobs. Proponents of this concept ignored and failed to explain that new technology jobs will be created at the expense of old technology ones. That means providing new job opportunities for new people at the expense of turning a portion of the labor force in the old technology into unemployed workers.

This equation appears extremely vague and unconvincing when it promises to create new jobs without mentioning anything about workers in the old technologies. “Environmental Economics”, which we put forward in the second Johannesburg Earth Summit in 2002, stresses the need to reconsider the rules of labor itself, or the re-division of labor which seeks to ensure gainful employment and the well-being of all workers.

Green technology needs rare-earth

While the “green economy” concept is betting on “green technology” for its success, it should not be forgotten that “green technology” depends on “rare-earth”. The process of extracting and processing metals requires an extensive effort that poses a threat to environment, the health of workers, and the local communities. How can we promote an alternative and sustainable green technology if it is still dependent on the mining of non-renewable resources, and that ironically causes massive and dangerous environmental pollution and irreversible destruction?

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing arguments that we have presented, the following are some proposals:

- Reconsider the concept of the “green economy” and review the dominant market economy towards a shift to “eco-economy” i.e., to return to the original meaning of economy which gives emphasis to prudence.
- Apply the principle of equality on the basis of sufficiency for all and not on the basis of well-being for a few.
- Move away from the concept of ‘well-being’ that is unjust for the majority of people and nature, especially as it gives priority to the urban areas and advanced countries.
- Encourage decentralization of work, production, housing and technology, instead of centralization.
- Focus on small rather than large projects.
- Strengthen research that will advance appropriate technologies dependent on traditional energy sources (sun, air, and water).
- Focus on and support crafts that require minimal energy and that promote rural economy by counter-balancing rural migration
- Control population growth.
- Promote traditional farming and food instead of fast food.
- Reconsider the role of states and enforce more regulations on corporate work.
- Revise globalization, its function and its operational principals and move towards a more environmental and humanitarian framework
- Maintain the concept and goals of sustainability as a criterion.
- Lift restrictions on “technology transfer” and make it accessible to everyone.



Mining and Climate Change: The Philippine Government's Policy Incoherence

Arnold Padilla

The Aquino administration assures the public that it is proactively dealing with climate change but continues to promote programs like large-scale mining that aggravate the adverse impact of extreme weather events

What caused the massive flooding in the provinces of Central and Northern Luzon in the Philippines? Several of these provinces remain submerged more than a week after typhoons *Pedring* and *Quiel* hit the country

in September 2011. Elderly village folk in affected areas swear that they have not seen such flooding before, and what happened was abnormal. For this, the catch-all explanation of the Department of Science and Technology

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(DOST) is climate change. “What we consider as abnormal we should now consider as normal,” its undersecretary was quoted as saying.

But the national government assures the public that it is proactively dealing with the issue of climate change. In fact, President Benigno Aquino III has made Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation as one of the five Cabinet clusters that will implement his programs until 2016. In Aquino’s proposed 2012 budget, P36.2 billion is allocated for climate change adaptation and mitigation activities.

Priority area

Ironically, however, the Aquino administration also continues to promote programs that aggravate the vulnerability of the country to the adverse impact of climate change. One example is large-scale mining, which is among the priority areas of government’s Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2011-2016. While the PDP talks about linking the mining industry to the domestic production of manufactured goods and industrial products, its ultimate goal is to double the sector’s exports by 2016.

The importance that the administration gives to the mining industry as among the sectors with the “highest growth potentials and generate the most jobs” explains its strong reaction to the simultaneous attacks on three mining firms in Surigao de Norte in October 2011 by the New People’s Army

(NPA). The rebels cited the serious harm to the environment being inflicted by the large-scale mining operations in the province as one of the main reasons for staging the attacks.

Massive deforestation

Mining contributes to both the cause and effect of climate change. The Philippines is considered one of the most mineralized countries in the world (third in gold, fourth in copper, fifth in nickel) due to its location along a belt of volcanoes in the Pacific. According to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), an estimated “nine million hectares of the Philippine total land area of 30 million hectares are geologically prospective for metallic minerals”. But much of these areas lie underneath the country’s forests, which have to be cleared to extract the minerals, resulting in massive deforestation. It has been reported that the Philippines ranks number three in the world (behind Honduras and Nigeria) with the fastest deforestation rate. The Center for Environmental Concerns (CEC) Philippines, citing government data, said that the country’s forest cover is now only about 18% of the total land area.

Together with corporate logging, large-scale mining causes the significant deforestation in the country. The forest cover in the town of Claver in Surigao del Norte is just one in a long list of forests denuded by large-scale mining. This is where the target of the



minesandcommunities.org

recent NPA offensive, the Taganito Mining Corp. (TMC), Taganito HPAL Nickel Corp., and Platinum Group Metals Corp. (PGMC) are operating. Generated through Google Maps, a satellite image of Claver where TMC operates shows a vast portion of the mountains in reddish hue, indicating massive deforestation.

A documentary by local television network GMA's "Reporter's Notebook" also presented the extent of environmental damage, including deforestation, caused by the mining operations in Claver as well as in Surigao del Sur. The GMA documentary said that the massive mining in Claver has almost leveled the mountains with the extracted minerals being exported to Australia, China, and Japan for processing.

Aggravating climate change

The clearing of forests is one of the factors behind global climate change as forests store huge amounts of carbon. According to the Greenpeace, "when forests are logged or burnt, that carbon is released into the atmosphere, increasing the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases and accelerating the rate of climate change. So much carbon is released that they contribute up to one-fifth of global man-made emissions, more than the world's entire transport sector."

In the GMA documentary on mining in Claver, reporter Jiggy Manicad noted the thick blanket of dust from the mining areas. Environmental advocacy group World Rainforest Movement (WRM) pointed out that this dust does not only pollute the air and causes serious health problems but also triggers a release of gases and toxic vapor, including "sulphur dioxide – responsible for acid rain – is produced because of metal treatment, and carbon dioxide and

methane – two of the main greenhouse effect gases causing climate change – are also released, due to the burning of fossil fuels and the creation of artificial lakes for the hydroelectric dams, built to provide energy for the casting ovens and refineries."

Of course, the amount of GHG emissions of the Philippines, including from deforestation, is dwarfed by the emissions of the world's largest industrial countries. The US alone accounts for 25% of historical GHG emissions, according to the Friends of the Earth (FOE). Furthermore, much of the GHG emissions of poor countries actually come from the operation of First World companies plundering the natural resources of poor countries such as in the case of the Claver mines where Japanese giant mining company Sumitomo Metal Mining Co. has stakes in the TMC and Taganito HPAL Nickel Corp. Nonetheless, it does not downplay the incoherence in the Aquino administration's proclaimed environment-conscious medium-term plan and its avowed promotion of supposed "development" programs that worsen climate change such as large-scale mining.

Worsening impact

But for Third World countries like the Philippines, the bigger concern is how deforestation and other environmental problems caused by large-scale mining increase the vulnerability of communities to extreme weather events such as unusual volume of rainfall (like typhoon *Ondoy* in 2009, which according to local weather officials poured a month's volume of rain in barely six hours) due to climate change. Deforestation, for instance, aggravates flooding in rural and urban areas, which in the Philippines has become increasingly worse and more frequent. Forests play a crucial environmental role in

preventing floods. A report said, quoting the findings of a research conducted by the Charles Darwin University and the National University of Singapore, that “as little as 10% loss of forest cover leads to an increase of as much as 28% in flood risk.”

Another way that large-scale mining aggravates flooding is the siltation of rivers. One source of sediments are the tailings disposed by mining companies in rivers such as in the case of the Abra River that, according to the Cordillera People’s Alliance (CPA), has become heavily silted because of the tailings disposal of Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company. As a consequence, an estimated 465 hectares of riceland have been washed out. Experts have also attributed the heavy flooding in Central Luzon, aside from the ill-timed release of water from privatized dams, to the siltation of rivers due to denuded mountains in the region, which also hosts a number of mining operations.

Not a recent concern

Contrary to the common notion, climate change is not a recent concern of the Philippine government. In fact, the Philippines was among the first to recognize, at least on paper, climate change as a phenomenon and the urgent need to address its causes and mitigate its impact. As early as 1991, President Aquino’s mother, the late President Cory Aquino has already created the Inter-Agency Committee on Climate Change (IACC) through Administrative Order (AO)

No. 220. The Philippines was also among the first to ratify the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which it did in 1994.

These initiatives, however, suffer from basic defects such as the promotion of market-based mechanisms to mitigate climate change. For instance, industrial countries were still able to buy cheap emission credits from poor countries, allowing them to evade their responsibility to cut down their own emissions, as well as having low emission reduction targets.

Worse, as a result of lobbying and pressure from First World corporations and financial institutions and their local agents, Third World countries like the Philippines continue to implement programs that allow corporate plunder of natural resources and enormous destruction of the environment. A year after ratifying the UN agreement on climate change, for instance, the Philippine Congress passed the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 or Republic Act (RA) 7942, which liberalized and consequently intensified large-scale mining in the country.

Two decades since the country officially acknowledged the challenge of climate change, there is no indication that the Philippine government is willing or capable of promoting development programs that are truly sustainable and responsive to the country’s environmental and social concerns and economic needs.

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Redirective Development and Rio+20: Progress of Bangladesh

M. Sohel Iqbal and Rezaul Karim Chowdhury¹

The Earth is simultaneously suffering from underdevelopment and from overdevelopment (Boutros Ghali, 1992). We are making the world difficult to live in, ignoring the future of our next generation. We think and do only the things that give us immediate benefits and results. We have become extremely greedy in consumption while careless in protecting the environment. These are the trends,

which do not fit with the term of sustainable development. Thus 20 years ago during the Earth Summit, world leaders gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to discuss this issue and plan the future for a sustainable way. Organized by the United Nations conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the summit was proof of the understanding of the leaders on how very fragile our earth is. Other important

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conferences were held to discuss the well-being of the people, such as the Population Summit in Cairo in 1994, the Beijing Women Conference in 1995, and the Millennium Summit in New York in 2000. However, the focus of this study is the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

Objectives and methodology

This paper aims to identify the progress of the commitments made at the Earth Summit in 1992. It also lists down and analyzes the major policies and reforms following the commitments, i.e. whether these were able to foster sustainable development or not. This study looked into the case of Bangladesh, classified by international development bodies as a Third World country and one of the most vulnerable to the impact of environmental damage. From December 2011 to March 2012, six divisional workshops were conducted in six (out of seven) administrative divisions of Bangladesh and one national dialogue at Dhaka (the capital of Bangladesh). These workshops were conducted to get the insights of the multi-stakeholders on policies related to the objectives of Rio+20 (See Table 1 for the details of participants). About 400 participants

from different sectors shared their insight on the upcoming conference. Organized by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable development (UNCSD), the Rio+20 summit will be held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to assess the Earth Summit 20 years ago and the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa 10 years ago.

This study also looked into several “hot spots” that are highly environmentally-vulnerable and conducted focused group discussions with the local people to record their experiences. The study also used existing literature as second source of data.

Conceptual framework

The world is currently abuzz with terms like climate change and sustainable development, and it is indeed an opportune time to come up with a new dimension of progress where environmental sustainability is priority. While giving importance to low carbon emission is commendable, industries should also focus on generating environment-friendly employment. In this paper, we have identified the concepts

Table 1: Information on the participants at divisional level

Sl.	Category	Chittagong	Rajshahi	Khulna	Sylhet	Barishal	Rangpur	Total
1	Policy makers (Member of Parliament)	1	1	4	1	1	-	8
2	Public officials	1	1	3	2	1	1	9
3	Academia	2	4	4	3	5	1	19
4	Local political leaders	2	2	4	3	2	2	15
5	CSO representative	11	10	11	12	13	12	69
6	Media	8	6	18	3	8	4	47
7	NGO	14	12	21	13	15	9	84
8	Students	5	14	1	2	6	3	31
9	Others (Business, general citizen etc.)	19	16	14	24	21	22	116
	Total	61	66	80	63	72	54	398

of ‘green economy’ and ‘sustainable development’ as “re-directive development”.

There is a need to revise our development strategy, plan and action to meet the goal of sustainable development, which is defined by the UN as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations. Moving towards re-directive development, the paper looked into the initiatives taken by Bangladesh and the major challenges that it faced.

This paper tries to answer three major questions: 1) What initiatives have been taken by the Bangladesh government to meet the commitments of Rio? 2) What were the major challenges that the government faced in implementing the newly-formulated policies? 3) What are the roles of civil society organizations (CSOs) in implementing the policies?

Other least developed countries or mid-level income countries may be able to gather lessons from the experience of Bangladesh in meeting the commitments of the Earth Summit.

The industry-based economies of developed countries have a high impact on the environment (See Table 2) though efforts have

been taken to minimize the damages. Excessive consumption is another factor that contributed to the greenhouse effect, thus the call to revise the lifestyle, especially of consumers in developed countries. While agro-based least developed countries (LDCs) are aspiring to develop an industry-based economy, we need to find a way out to keep the environment safe for future generations. The Earth has already been thrown to great risk, and there is an urgent need to move towards a new strategy of development.

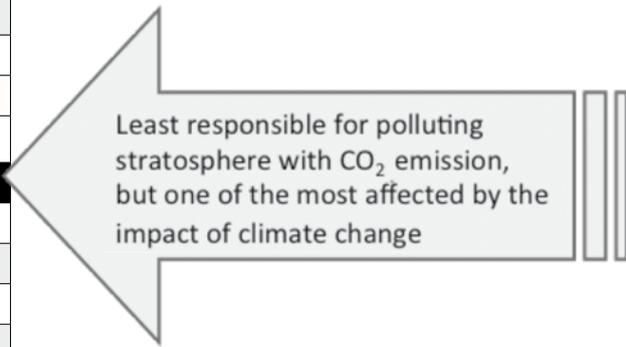
Challenges for Bangladesh

The rate of natural disasters has increased due to climate change and has greatly affected Bangladesh. About 60% of the country’s population depends on agriculture. The effects of climate change on the sector such as frequent flooding, gradually increasing soil salinity, changing pattern of rainfall, etc. have all resulted in declining production. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimated that by year 2050 the country’s rice production may decrease by 8%, while wheat production by 32% due to the impact of climate change.

It also estimated that rising sea level will turn 20 million people into climate migrants in the

Table 2: Comparative CO₂ emission (in billion MT) of developed countries and LDCs

Country	Year	
	1990	2009
USA	53.20	56.18
EU	52.44	41.82
Japan	11.96	11.37
Bangladesh		
China	-	40.57
Brazil	-	14.77
India	-	12.28
Nepal	-	.31
Maldives	-	0.0048



Least responsible for polluting stratosphere with CO₂ emission, but one of the most affected by the impact of climate change

Source: UNFCCC GHG Inventory 2009

Environmental policy ignored in implementation: Forest leased for shrimp cultivation

The *Cox'sbazar* district administration has recommended the lease of 2,114 acres of forest land. The Forest department has been pushing to cancel the recommendation, but the district administration has already sent the recommendations to the Land Ministry for final approval. The forest land will be used for shrimp cultivation, which will cause the destruction of the natural habitat as well as the land and livelihood of the people. Despite legal restrictions in the leasing of forest lands, the shrimp hatchery management and development committee of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) office has approved the lease of 1,114 acres of land.

The *Cox'sbazar* Forest department appealed to the DC office, saying that there is a clear and specific instruction not to approve the lease of the forest lands.

There is a specific law restricting the leasing of forest land, but the DC office is said to be attempting to hide this information and show that the forest land has a different classification. The local land officials are reportedly showing a lower quantity of land than the actual figure surveyed by the Forest department. For example, data provided by the Forest department near the *Moheshkhali gorakgha* area say that there are 150 acres of land. This is different from the report of the land office that the forest area is only 32 acres. Allegations are rife that land officials have forged the original map. Despite protests from residents, efforts are still being pushed to ensure the interests of a few and continue with the land lease.

This type of leasing is harmful for the rural families and their livelihood and further increases the vulnerability of these areas.

Source: Prothom Alo, 6 May 2012

next 20 years. Bangladesh is one of the countries most prone to natural disasters, where people experience floods, cyclones, typhoons and drought. In fact, the IPCC identified Bangladesh as one of the worst victims of the impact of climate change. Climate change scenarios (e.g., sea level rise, increased air and sea surface temperatures, enhanced monsoon precipitation, reduced dry season precipitation, heat waves and increase in the intensity of tropical cyclones and storm surges, floods, and prolonged droughts etc.) significantly affected the country's development process. Bangladesh has already started to experience the impact through increased susceptibility to natural disasters (in terms of flood, drought, storm surge, and salinity ingress); coastal impact –water logging (e.g., *Aila* affected areas in Satkhira, Khulna and Bagerhat district); coastal impact – rough seas and cyclones (e.g., eroding coastal islands, 1.2 million hectares of arable land are affected by varying degree of soil salinity, tidal flooding during wet season, inundation and upward and lateral movement of saline ground water during dry season).

Capacity constraints in public administration, weakness in economic management, and corruption lie at the heart of the overall shortcomings of the country's governance. The lack of fundamental reforms of core institutions, improvement in public administration capacity and a strong anti-corruption strategy make it difficult to execute any plan towards sustainable development. Moreover, the government is encouraging the Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects in strategic economic areas, even allocating huge funds from the national budget for it, despite having unclear benefits for the economy. Urban growth is another major challenge for the country, especially since 27% of the total population is currently living in the urban areas.

Table 4: Action list of Bangladesh related to sustainable development

Political	Constitutional amendments, Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), National Action Program (NAP), National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), National Capacity Self Assessment (NCSA), Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP), 6 th Five Year Plan, National Steering Committee on Climate Change, National Environmental Policy, National Water Policy
Economical	Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF), Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF), World Bank Pilot Project on Climate Resilience (WBPPCR)
Sociological	Awareness of CSOs at local, national, regional and international level, 6 th Five Year Plan, Social Safety Net Program, the Comprehensive Disaster Management Program (CDMP)
Technological	Vision of Digital Bangladesh, 6 th Five year plan, Air quality management project (AQMP), Bangladesh Environment Management Project (BEMP), Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), establish the Bangladesh National Herbarium (BNH) under the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), the National Disaster Management Council (NDMC) headed by the Prime Minister

Preparedness of Bangladesh

The upcoming Rio+20 will focus on environmental concerns e.g. ensuring livelihood security (including food, water, energy and income security), combating environmental disasters, preventing industrial pollution, managing urbanization, conserving biodiversity. The preparedness of Bangladesh by looking into the political, economical, sociological, technological dimensions was observed. Below is a brief description of the two major documents of Bangladesh related to sustainable development: the government's 6th five-year plan and the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP).

In the political dimension, it can be noted that Bangladesh is the only country in the world so far that took steps in amending its Constitution to include mitigating the effects of climate change (article 18A).

Sixth Five-year Plan

Bangladesh finalized its sixth five-year plan, which laid down the country's roadmap to development. The plan attempted to redirect the country's scarce resources towards a growth path that is based on the philosophy of "inclusive growth". Removing income inequality and regional imbalances are part of the key objectives of the government that is reflected in the government's five-year plan. The document has been divided into three parts.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) was approved in 2009 as the blueprint for subsequent integration of climate change issues, i.e. adaptation, technology transfer, mitigation and development, and capacity building into the mainstream planning process. The BCCSAP is touted as the first step of

Part	Major contents
I	Strategic directions, policies and institutions for achieving the major targets for economic growth, employment, human development and poverty reduction, climate change issues, good governance
II	Sectoral strategies, plans, and programs including sectoral financing, ensure consistency with overall resource envelope
III	Statistical figures and economic models used to determine the several economic indicators of the economy

Major theme	Objectives
Food Security, Social Protection and Health	To ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable in society, including women and children, are protected from climate change and that all programs focus on the needs of this group for food security, safe housing, employment and access to basic services, including health.
Comprehensive Disaster Management	To further strengthen the country's already proven disaster management systems to deal with increasingly frequent and severe natural calamities.
Infrastructure	To ensure that existing assets (e.g. coastal and river embankments) are well maintained and fit-for-purpose and that urgently needed infrastructure (e.g. cyclone shelters and urban drainage) is put in place to deal with the possible effects of climate change.
Research and Knowledge Management	To predict the possible scale and timing of climate change impacts on different sectors of the economy and socioeconomic groups; to underpin future investment strategies; and to ensure that Bangladesh is networked into the latest global thinking on science, and best practices of climate change management.
Mitigation and Low Carbon Development	To evolve low carbon development options and implement these as the country's economy grows over the coming decades and the demand for energy increases.
Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening	To enhance the capacity of government ministries and agencies, civil society and private sector to meet the challenge of climate change and mainstream them as part of development actions.



the Bangladesh government to develop a sustainable development strategy centered on climate change. The action plan consists of six major themes and 44 programs.

Findings on the people's perception

Through the workshop in the six administrative divisions of Bangladesh, the study found the following insights of people from different sectors on attaining the goal of sustainable development. The insights include proposals that are not found in the government plans:

- Consider promoting particular livelihood plans for each agro-ecological zone of the country and the preparation of separate work plans to ensure positive results;
- Indigenous shrimp cultivation process should be promoted instead of the current process that government is promoting despite the potential long term damages on agricultural land. The current cultivation process should be legally banned. The government should also cancel any agreements with the World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) on climate finance;



- Stop using *Sundorban* for ‘carbon-business’ and ensure the rights of the local communities. Establish community and satellite clinics in every cyclone center all over the country;
- Build water treatment plant and reservoir for safe drinking water at coastal areas;
- Make a coherent national climate change policy. All the political parties should express their commitment separately to implement the climate change action plan. Accountable departments/divisions/agencies should be punished in case of any negligence in implementing the work plan;
- Transparency and accountability should be ensured on financing in any program/project of both public and private sector
- Government plans should include the welfare of forced migrants, or those displaced from their homes and livelihood due to the impact of environmental damage, e.g. river erosion);
- Prepare a central database of poor people who are affected by natural disasters and ensure their inclusion in government’s social safety net program.

Concluding remarks

Rio+20 is important for both mankind and the Earth as it reviews efforts and creates strategies towards attaining the goal of sustainable development. While the so-called greening of the economy is important to Bangladesh, there is a need to come up with regulations that will protect the economy from possible profit-making strategies in the name of green market technology and market strategy.

In the context of Bangladesh, prioritizing genuine poverty reduction and strengthening

the local government are necessary steps towards sustainable development. Without the strong support of the local government, it will be difficult to meet the requirements of sustainable development. Financial and technological support is also required, and one of the ways to address this is to call on developed countries to abide by their commitments in aiding developing countries that are vulnerable to climate change. Moreover, the population of Bangladesh is projected to increase to 200 million by the next 20 years. Priority should be given to addressing this population growth as against the country's goal of sustainable development.

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Reality Check

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The Reality Check is the official newsletter of the Reality of Aid. It is designed to highlight current issues in aid regime written from a regional perspective but with global significance, edited in rotation by the leading networks in the following regions:

The Reality of Aid Network exists to promote national and international policies that will contribute to a new and effective strategy for poverty eradication, built on solidarity and equity.

Established in 1993, The Reality of Aid is a collaborative, not-for-profit initiative, involving non-governmental organisations from North and South.

The Reality of Aid publishes regular and reliable reports on international development cooperation and the extent to which governments in the North and South, address the extreme inequalities of income and the structural, social and political injustices that entrench people in poverty.

The Reality of Aid International Coordinating Committee is chaired by Jorge Balbis of Asociación Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de Promoción al Desarrollo, AC (ALOP).

The International Coordinating Committee is comprised of coordinators of component regional networks (RoA Africa, RoA Asia/Pacific, and ALOP for Latin America), Canadian Council for International Cooperation, European Network on Debt and Development (EURODAD), and the Global Secretariat coordinator.

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