

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENT INTO THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and discussions on the development agenda after 2015 (post MDGs) have begun. It is time to try to integrate or merge environment issues into development, since Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a new concept proposed in Rio+20, were brought into the scene of discussion on development agenda through the Open Working Group (OWG) discussions.

Development, health and environment issues must be addressed simultaneously in an integrated manner at all levels within one framework of development, because there is a lot of common space between the issues. Following are the main points of recommendations, presented and discussed by panelists and commentators at the Symposium entitled “Development agenda after 2015 in relation to Development, Global Health and Environment Issues,” organized on 2 November 2013, at The 28th Japan Association for International Health Congress held at Meio University in Okinawa (organizer: Prof. Kiyoko IKEGAMI, Nihon University).

Panelists:

Dr. Emi INAOKA (MOFA)

- Health is crucial for sustainable development and determinants of health extend across multiple sectors. The framework for sustainable development must maximize healthy wellbeing through pro-health policies in all sectors, creating enabling social conditions;
- Improved health will help in achieving other development goals such as poverty reduction, gender empowerment, universal education and is linked to the environment, agriculture and food systems, water and energy security, urban development, trade, communication, and human migration;
- All countries should pursue universal health coverage to ensure that all people receive quality comprehensive primary health services without suffering financial hardship; and,
- In discussing the post 2015 development agenda, decision-making should be inclusive, partnerships for synergy should be developed, and monitoring systems including measurements and indicators should be set. A mechanism for good governance and accountability is also necessary.

Prof. Kunitoshi SAKURAI (Okinawa University)

Background:

UNICEF estimates that 6.9 million children die every year before their fifth birthday. It is said that approximately 80% of these deaths are caused by the lack of safe drinking water and sanitation. Water and sanitation is a problem of human rights, health and development.

Framework:

- For improvement of sanitation and hygiene, views of both genders are important. Lack of hygiene and sanitation services in schools and health facilities will severely impede opportunities for education of girls and the sound development of their communities;
- Support from donors should be provided in a very thoughtful manner so that the support would not be perceived as intrusive help imposing donors’ views and donor-profits. In this respect, application of appropriate technology is fundamental;
- Goals and targets for intentional reduction of ecological footprint of donor countries should be included in the framework of SDGs; and,
- For achievement of SDGs, awareness-raising both in developed and developing countries is indispensable. Promotion of ESD based on good practices for lifestyle change should also be included in the framework of SDGs;

Methodology:

- For integrated development of water and sanitation in developing countries, better inter-ministerial /

inter-sectoral coordination within donor countries is crucial. For example, in Japan, the Ministry of Welfare and Labor (drinking water supply), the Ministry of Construction (water resource development, sewerage system development) and the Ministry of Environment (water quality control) have to work together under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to carry out efficient and effective cooperation with developing countries for the promotion of water and sanitation service; such coordination seems to be poorly carried out in Japan;

- Taking into account the similarities in historical, cultural, social, natural and economic backgrounds, south-south cooperation (exchange of good practices and failures) should be given high priority and be supported by the north (triangular cooperation). Sanitation and hygiene needs to pay special attention to cultural and social backgrounds; mere technological approaches may have very little chance to succeed; and,
- Forging a firm footing in one's own area through planned reduction of ecological footprint, people from the north should cooperate with people in the south that face similar problems (e.g., SIDS), promoting triangular cooperation; such win-win solutions are needed for the success of SDGs. J-PRISM (Japanese Technical Cooperation Project for Promotion of Regional Initiative on Solid Waste Management in 11 Pacific Island Countries) may be an example of such an approach.

Prof. Masahiro SATO (Kyoto University)

- Local level: Minimize new installations of large-scale irrigation systems that would destroy ecosystems and ecosystem services. Improve local resiliency of the least developed countries by promoting small-scale agricultural practices utilizing “green water” technologies such as water harvesting; and,
- Global level: Invent a new international scheme, “Virtual Basin,” to share disastrous water change risks that cannot be absorbed at local level. “Virtual Basin” is an imaginary network of water resources and its associated rules, which integrate various forms of water on the planet in order to facilitate joint water use on a planetary level.

Ms. Ryoko NISHIDA (JOICFP)

In the process of post-MDGs deliberations in relation to the SDGs, it is recommended that the following points be taken into consideration:

- The targets of the current MDGs (especially the health related MDGs 4, 5 and 6) which may not be fully achieved by 2015, need to be further addressed, particularly taking note of the gaps existing within countries (e.g., between urban and rural areas and between the rich and the poor). At the same time, it would be necessary for us to address newly emerging issues such as non-communicable diseases from a long-term perspective, which are now bringing about additional burdens on health systems in developing countries;
- Multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration are indispensable, since health and its determinants are fully related with other areas/sectors, such as population (population growth and composition), environment (e.g., water, sanitation), education and economic development (including infrastructure development). In the post-MDGs agenda deliberations, setting up a multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration mechanism would be required, involving all possible stakeholders including NGOs and academic institutions at local and global levels;
- Concrete goals and targets need to be set for monitoring and evaluation of progress and achievements at local and global levels. NGOs and academic institutions could participate and contribute to the process of planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation as well as evidence-based advocacy towards policy and program development; and,
- In view of realizing human rights and equality, special attention needs to be paid to socially vulnerable groups such as children, women, the elderly and disabled. Gender considerations and women's empowerment continue to be an important agenda; at the same time, investment in youth should also be made, addressing the needs of young people, including adolescent health, especially taking into consideration the fact that many developing countries have a young population composition.

Commentators

Ms. Emi SHITARA (Independent Researcher)

- Define problems at the grass-roots level, develop holistic approaches by using the civil society, NGOs, and private-sector companies to implement the most cost-effective solutions;
- Build on the local capacity of people who are facing climate change and other vulnerabilities in regard to natural resources including water and air, not just through top-down aid but also by encouraging self-help efforts that help to maintain their dignity;
- Value the three basic pillars that were discussed at Rio+20 or the global trend on Triple Bottom Line, “Environment, Social, and Economic;” The new global policy should be designed with at least those three issues;
- Review local traditional wisdom which could still be useful for the future;
- Involve youth and children in the dialogue, as the next generation on Earth. Those under 30 years of age and those who grew up after the cold war have different ideas and opinions than those from the 1950s; and,
- Promote education for sustainable development among youth and children. If girls in developing countries have the right to education, they will have the ability to change their lives by themselves.

Dr. Prita CHATHOTH (International Development Consultant)

- Recognize environment as an integral part of development. Development that does not take into consideration environmental issues is not sustainable; approaching development in pure economic terms leads to environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources; thus, a well-thought out development agenda should include both environmental protection and long-term planning for a sustainable future;
- Policy-makers should address economic development, environmental management, and public health promotion in an integrated manner; sustainable development is not something one can plan or achieve in isolation without taking into consideration environment and health issues; these must be addressed together and across sectors;
- Understand the co-benefits of protecting the environment: a clean and healthy environment results in a healthier and happier population that is an integral part of sustainable development;
- Recognize that the earth’s environment does not have the capacity to sustain an ever-growing population which is on a path of reckless destruction of natural resources including water and clean air that are indispensable for human sustenance;
- Utilize natural resources in an optimal manner; we must also make optimal use of our human and other available resources for planning and implementing development programs that are sustainable;
- Make best and optimal use of technology and devise technological solutions that are cost-effective and environmentally sound; scaling up in technology is essential for achieving SDGs;
- Develop inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral approaches in development planning, both at national and international levels, with a clear understanding of the interconnectedness between development, environment and public health;
- Form partnerships with organizations and groups that promote sustainable development; scale up and leverage where possible; promote both south-south and north-south partnerships; also encourage public-private partnerships; share good practices and learn from others’ mistakes;
- Develop sustainable and implementable solutions by tapping into the knowledge and experience of all sectors of society; wherever possible, come up with local solutions because they are often more easy to implement; utilize the resources and knowledge of people at all levels, especially at the grassroots level, and follow a bottom-up or horizontal approach, not a top-down approach;

- Acknowledge the roles of both women and men in actions and decisions affecting their well-being and ensure their participation at all levels; leaving out women from important decisions affecting future generations equates to leaving out one half of the world; and,
- Encourage development of and participation in green economies; (as individuals, we should strive to leave a green footprint, not a carbon footprint).