



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

United Nations Development Programme

CASE STUDIES OF
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE

TRIPLE WINS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT





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**United Nations Development Programme
June 2012**

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Foreword



Sustainable development is synonymous in the minds of many with the colour green—and for good reason. Twenty years ago at the first [Earth Summit](#) in Rio de Janeiro, leaders set out what today is conventional wisdom: human progress—both social and economic—cannot be divorced from environmental protection. Unless both are advanced together, both will flounder or fail.

Sustainable development is as much about health, education, and jobs, as it is about ecosystems. It is about ever widening inclusion and movement away from decisions that erode democratic space and do not address social inequality, intolerance, and violence. Sustainable development is about change that transforms impoverished peoples, communities, and countries into informed, educated, healthy and productive societies. It is about wealth creation that generates equality and opportunity; it is about consumption and production patterns that respect planetary boundaries; it is about increasing tolerance and respect for human rights.

Building on the human development legacy that originated with Amartya Sen and Mahbub UI Haq and was captured by the first [Human Development Report](#) in 1990, UNDP has long promoted alternative approaches to measuring human progress, including with the [Human Development Index](#). Today, we are building on this legacy by exploring how to adjust the index to reflect environmental sustainability, so that governments and citizens might better track real progress towards truly sustainable development. This must be our collective objective.

As countries prepare for the 'Rio+20' [United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development](#), UNDP is pleased to share this report. After suggesting what it takes to move towards sustainable development, the report sets out national examples of progress toward sustainable development, from developing countries like Nepal and Niger, as well as emerging economies like South Africa and Croatia. These examples show how social, environmental, and economic progress can be integrated to make a more sustainable future. They illustrate what the future of development programming should look like.

Instead of focusing on the tradeoffs between the three strands of development, this report highlights the range and significance of the complementarities between them. It describes 'triple win' development policies and programming that regenerate the global commons by integrating social development with economic growth and environmental sustainability.

UNDP invites policy-makers and practitioners preparing for 'Rio+20' to consider this report as a contribution to the debate on how to make sustainable development happen.

As is our underlying mission, UNDP will continue to support countries in translating the principles of sustainable development into practice in the 177 countries and territories in which we work—empowering lives and advancing resilient nations—and to share their experiences for the benefit of others.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Olav Kjørven', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Olav Kjørven

Director, UNDP Bureau for Development Policy
March 2012

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Introduction: the three strands of sustainable development

“We all aspire to reach better living conditions. Yet, this will not be possible by following the current growth model . . . We need a practical twenty-first century development model that connects the dots between the key issues of our time: poverty reduction; job generation; inequality; climate change; environmental stress; water, energy and food security.”

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

Development is not just about growth. Likewise, sustainability is not just about protecting the environment. Both development and sustainability are primarily about people living in peace with each other and in equilibrium with the planet. Their rights, opportunities, choices, dignity and values are (or should be) at the centre of everything.

Sustainable development is about meeting the needs of people today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Inter-generational equity—avoiding the unjustified transfer of development risks from present to future generations, without sacrificing reductions in poverty and inequality today at the altar of future environmental concerns—is implicit in this approach to development.

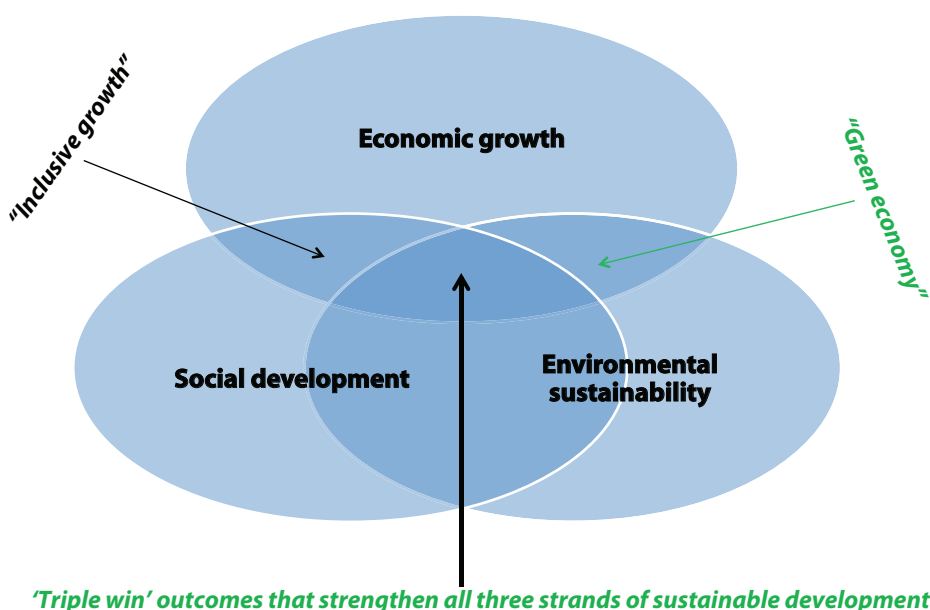
Current patterns of consumption and production risk breaching planetary boundaries. If the natural environment undergoes significant degradation, so too does the potential to improve people’s lives—both in this and subsequent generations. This is especially true for the world’s poorest—most of whom rely directly upon nature for their livelihoods, and whose prospects are therefore most directly affected by the threats to ecosystems.

Unless issues of equity and sustainability are properly addressed, current development trajectories could grind to a halt, or even go into reverse. Avoiding such outcomes will be the great challenge of the 21st century.

The report suggests six key principles that are needed to recalibrate the global development agenda. It then uses country case studies that describe policy measures, programmes, and efforts that can support a more robust and sustainable human development model. This method is used to illustrate examples of enlarging people’s freedoms and opportunities that can be achieved while safeguarding the natural environment for future generations. It also suggests that sustainable development requires that its economic, social, and environmental ‘pillars’ be thought of as synergistic and integrated ‘strands’ that lend themselves to inter-weaving and linkages.

This publication is devoted to development policy and practice as the art and craft of weaving these strands together, in order to make sustainable development real. It looks at the ‘how’ of sustainable development. It considers what can happen when **green growth**—the nexus of the ‘economic’ and ‘environmental’ strands of sustainable development—is combined with **inclusive growth**—the nexus of the ‘economic’ and ‘social’ strands (Figure 1). This report provides concrete examples of policies, programmes, and projects from different

Figure 1—Sustainable development and ‘triple wins’



countries and sectors that are restoring the global environmental commons while also providing employment, energy, and other basic services to vulnerable people, and building resilience in vulnerable communities, whose legitimate development aspirations must not go unmet. It is by expanding these programmes and policies that ‘triple wins’ can be achieved—and significant progress can be made in developing green economies, and more sustainable production and consumption patterns.

A four-step algorithm for pursuing or expanding triple-win programming is presented in Box 1 below. It emphasizes:

- 1) Identifying opportunities for triple-win programming, and specific activities that can be engaged to capture these opportunities;
- 2) Defining barriers to the effective implementation of these activities—and therefore efforts to remove these barriers;
- 3) Making broader policy environments more conducive for triple win activities; and
- 4) Selecting appropriate financing options.

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