

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

New York 5 – 16 May 2008.

Cross-sectorial themes.

The aim of this session is to have a dialogue on social, economic and environmental dimension of the thematic issues, their characteristics,, and their implementation.

Identifying obstacles.

From the debate during this week, we have had a thorough exposition of the diagnosis of unsustainable development linking the thematic issues. These obstacles cannot easily be summarized, but let me try.

Agriculture has for years been put lower on the agenda from donor countries, and within

development portfolios of developing countries. Investment in agriculture and R&D in agriculture has also been decreasing over the years. It was mentioned by several speakers that there is especially a lack of research in dryland areas.

1. Yet, the interdependence between rural and urban sector has been made obvious. Development efforts cannot longer overlook the three important dimensions of rural development; care-taking of land and sustainable use, food production, and sound and sustainable livelihoods.
2. Most of the poor people in the world depend on the agricultural sector. Yet, the majority of the rural population live in the informal sector and do not have access to the Rule of Law. Secure tenure is a prerequisite for people to empower themselves and be integrated into markets, getting access to credit, and being able to obtain social and economic rights..
3. Land is under pressure everywhere, and their caretakers do not have the necessary tools to resist unsound development. Sustainable development, including adjustment to climate change, access to water and prevention of catastrophe such as drought, depend totally on an empowered population.

What are the lessons learnt?

First and foremost, reform must be bottom-up, and the interlinkage and cross-sectorial approach can only be successful if it is recognized, formulated, supported and made accountable at the local level.

This is a challenge both in partnerships and in government-to-government efforts. The role of grassroots organizations, civil society and communal and collective approaches to rights like property rights, access to services and to planning processes, must go hand in hand. Yet, capitals do not always recognize this. A strong message is needed to focus politically on the local level.

The third lesson is, that no empowerment or sustainable land use, inclusion in markets, or access to credit, is successful if it does not affect women's rights. This has been long overseen and must change. During this week, the focus on empowerment of women in the rural sector, has been manifested and is equally a strong message. In the dialogue forum we also learnt that labour rights in rural areas are long overseen and must be enforced to obtain sustainability.

What are the next steps?

Cross-cutting approaches need partnerships and bottom-up approaches. Partner countries as well as international institutions should seek partnerships with the organized poor, the women's organizations and orient themselves to enforce the local level. Partnerships with civil society is essential. The sound way of distributing both power and rights must be demand-driven.

Indigenous peoples hold a variety of knowledge on management of land and communal approaches to sustainable land use and administration of resources. They should be listened to.

Easy, cheap and accessible access to registration of property must be developed and supported. Gender-sensitive tools as to social and economic rights is not difficult if it is met by political will.

In the fight against poverty rural and urban sector must be seen as a whole. Migration, hunger, unsecure tenure and eviction as well as catastrophe prevention link those two, and the grey zones, in between, is the market both of hope and possibilities, but also of deep environmental degradation. Cross-sectorial should also be to link the informal and formal sector and find best practices between them.

The donor community should contribute to coherence and consistence through partnerships. Lessons can be learnt that are applicable to other communities, and both donors and the international partners can facilitate this expansion of a tool-box and best practices.

The cross-sectorial approach is inevitable. Without it, it will be like a puzzle where you always miss at least one element to see the full picture. The right-based approach, and to empower people to obtain their rights to be partners in sustainable development is our common task.