

Sustainability and Its Responsibility

Tri Lisiani Prihatinah¹

¹Faculty of Law, Jenderal Soedirman University, Purwokerto, Indonesia
 Email: tri.prihatinsh@unsoed.ac.id¹

Abstract--A food security becomes an important issue in Indonesia as it does not only relate to the survival of individual but it is also an important way to combat poverty. This could be analyzed from sustainability point of view, which is important to integrate the concept of sustainability transferred into food security. This paper examines the concepts of sustainability and the dilemma embedded with its concept either from development issue, Indonesian national as well as from international law instruments. By using normative juridical method, it is concluded that the failure of understanding the concept results more blurred the implementation of sustainability. Therefore to achieve sustainability it becomes one need of interdisciplinary approach, which is currently not being fostered by some responsible institutions for food security

Keywords : *Sustainability; Implementation; Food Security*

I. INTRODUCTION

For human being, developments usually result in ambivalent impacts, i.e. positive and negative ones. It impacts positively when development is being seen as a tool for better living standard for human being. On the other hand, it destroys human being when the development is functioned for the development itself. In this last impact, the development therefore results in jeopardize human rights. This article explores the issues of human rights to combat poverty as result from development. Special attention focuses on describing sustainable development and its critique. It is followed by the discussion of human rights, poverty and States' responsibilities.

II. PROBLEM

This paper has a question about how to raise awareness on sustainable development in order to reduce egoism towards chauvinism of scientist?. Therefore, interdisciplinary approach will be an essential process to achieve sustainable development.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The main resource of this paper is taken from literature review about the understanding of sustainability concept and its relation to development. This concept results dilemma against measurements of sustainability, individual freedom,

human satisfaction and public justice. This paper uses normative juridical method and starts with a description on sustainability concept. It is followed by State responsibility towards the implementation of basic needs. This paper is closed by exploring interconnection between human rights and poverty.

IV. DISCUSSION

Sustainable development and its critique

During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a worldwide concern over the degradation of fundamental environmental qualities. The sustainability concept began in 1987 with the work of the Brundtland Commission, which was formed by the United Nations. The commission's report warned about the reality of the reduction in the earth's capacity to sustain life because of overwhelming growth in world population. It called for major initiatives to reverse environmental decline by recognizing the interconnectedness between environmental conservation, economic prosperity, and social equity – the essence of Sustainable Development' [1].

Sustainable Development is a two-word phrase with a thousand meanings. By 1992, there were over seventy definitions of sustainable development in print [2]. Sustainable implies '...forever, perpetuity, constant rebirth and renewal, an inexhaustible system' [3]. Porter in 2001 connotes development as a 'change, growth, expansion, production, movement'. Both words speak of time, evolutionary processes and constructive adaptation. However, each word modifies the other. According to Porter, development, to be sustainable, must incorporate renewal that ensures the continuity of matter, resources, populations, cultures. Sustainability, to incorporate development must allow change and adaptation to new conditions.

Those two phrases – development and sustainability – 'have the two ideas together speak of balancing economic and social forces against the environmental imperatives of resource conservation and renewal for the world of tomorrow' [4]. To achieve this balance is not an easy effort. The linkage between the works of humankind and the surrounding environment was articulated in early 1864. At those time George Perkins Marsh observed, 'Man everywhere is a disturbing agent. Wherever he plants his foot, the *harmonies* of nature are turned to discords' [5]. To practice this

sustainability in order to achieve harmonies either in everyday life or transferring into public policies, Davison proposed his interpretation of sustainability saying that:

‘Sustainability is nothing less, in late modernity, than the craft of moral life. As I see it, this recovery requires three steps. First is the step of recovering in everyday practice an awareness of the ways that our practices are deformed by the structural bifurcation of means and ends. Second is the step of recovering in moral discourse the world-disclosures force of practical epistemologies capable of shaping this awareness into public declarations of the sources of our moral orientation and disorientation, the sources of our moral enervation and sustenance. Third is the step of recovering the possibilities that exist in everyday practices for sustaining what it is that seems most commandingly good in and about our shared world’ [6].

One commentator has suggested that sustainable development is a ‘fashionable phrase that everyone pays homage to but nobody cares to define’ [7]. In fact, people define sustainable development to suit their own need. In this case therefore, the notion of balancing those three elements of economy, social and environment becomes problematic especially between people, groups or countries with different cultures and stages of economic development [8].

The most widely recognized and accepted definition of Sustainable Development is the one provided by the World Commission on Environment and Development, i.e. ‘**development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs**’ [9]. To meet these needs, the concept of Sustainable Development highlights the links between economic, ecological and social aspects. Hence, for example, for the process of funding sustainable products it would be wise not to regard these issues as three separate spheres, but rather to consider the links between them [10].

In reality, the interconnection between those three elements of sustainable development leads to the argument that economic growth is still in command and controls the development agenda. According to Harcourt, ‘... in the development, economic growth is at the centre of development discourse’. Harcourt stresses that, ‘... even though many commentators point out development is far more than economic growth and extends to social, political, cultural, environmental and gender concerns, economic growth remains firmly entrenched as the state goal of development from which modern critiques of development begin’ [11]. This argument is also supported by Zalaquette

(1994) who says that development has been believed to have the following meaning among others as:

- a. growth, of GNP or per capita income, growth with distribution,
- b. self-reliance,
- c. the satisfaction of basic needs, and
- d. the respect and fulfillment of all human rights.

Although sustainable development means more than economic development (see point d), points a, b and c reflect more the economic significance.

As a comparison, the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy also stresses economic prosperity as vital for sustainability:

‘There is no doubt that *any approach to the future which does not address the needs of the economy will not contribute to sustainability*, for example the **State should avoid future debt and business needs to minimize sovereign risk**. If financial sustainability is emerging in business as the best way to ensure that long-term debt and sovereignty risk are minimized’ [12].

Although the Western Australian State Government has made an effort for integration between economy, environment and society, all parties have been encouraged to solve the economic development as a core approach to support environment and social development. This can be found in the speech of Geoff Gallop, Premier of Western Australia, ‘individuals, businesses and governments everywhere are searching for new approach to economic development that contribute to environment and society now without degrading them over the longer term. Western Australia shares this aspiration ...’ [13]. It is clear that ‘economic development’ is a primary development, while environment and social development can only be developed with the support from economic development. This is even truer in the context of developing nations.

Zalaquette’s interpretation of sustainable development criticizes the definition by the World Commission on Environment and Development. According to Zalaquette (1984), due to global poverty the concept can be seen to ignore the ‘essential needs of the world’s poor’ in order to secure the future generation in one region on the expense of other regions. An emphasis on indicators of social wellbeing suggests that:

‘...our sustainability criterion ought to **prohibit not only current development which was the expense of the future, but also increases in wellbeing for the better off in society**

which came at the expense of those who were worse off [14].

This suggestion leads to dilemmas between individual freedom and ethic, as well as between human satisfaction and justice. This is because individual freedom is often not a violation of the law, even though it is a violation of ethics.

Human rights, poverty and States' responsibilities

The core of the international law of human rights is to be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948, and the two Covenants adopted (also by United Nations) in 1966 [15]. They are Covenant on 'Economic, Social and Cultural Right' and Covenant on 'Political Rights' [16]. I focus on the first covenant especially in relation to adequate food as an exercising right to be free from poverty. Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights proclaimed the right to adequate food as well as the right to be free from poverty. This article states as follows [17]:

"The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on consent".

From the second statement of Article 11 above "...State Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right...", it is clear that the state is required to create conditions under which its citizens can fulfill the needs including the right to work, food, education, health and so on. Although the obligations of the individual under this system of human rights law are explicitly expressed only once i.e. in Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, restrictions on an individual's freedom does not impose on the freedom of others [18]. As can be read from Article 11, the primary responsibility for respect, protection, fulfillment and promote of human rights rests with the State. However the international community also has obligations to facilitate the realization of human rights. A basis for this can be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 28, which states: 'Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized'.

The problem arises when a State is unable, even given the necessary will, to fully realize human rights. A State may be unable to do so because it is

subjected to external threats, outside of its control [19]. In this case, he proposes a strict internal discipline, thereby restricting the freedom of action of individual citizens. Similarly to any other States, particularly developing countries, the Indonesian State may itself be unable, due to the present unjust international economic order, to fulfill the rights of its citizens to an adequate standard of living. In other words, the structure of the international order may result in severe limitations for some States, so that these States cannot accomplish fully their people's rights. This will not be a justification for violating basic integrity rights of the individual, but it may be a reasonable justification for incomplete fulfillment of other rights [20]. Therefore, I argue that the structure of the international economy should be altered in order for the States to be able to fulfill their obligation towards their individuals' rights.

Development literature offers two predominant explanations of transformation from State-led to market-led approaches – one emphasizing the expanding role of market forces and competition in determining State economic policy, and another concentrating on the loss of State capacity [21]. Even though development is far more than economic growth and extends to social, political, cultural, environmental and gender concerns, economic growth remains as the main State goal of development [22]. In measuring the result of development itself, there are various frameworks represented through concepts such as GNP or per capita income, self-reliance, the satisfaction of basic needs, and the respect and fulfillment of all human rights [23]. As economic growth is still at the centre of the development discourse, national and international institutions such as the State, IMF and World Bank usually measure development with GNP. The focus on the macro-economic approach leads to some critique of negative impacts of development such as increasing poverty [24]. In responding to this situation, especially in reducing poverty as well as maintaining economic growth, there are two approaches, i.e.:

1. top-down approach and
2. bottom-up approach [25].

The top-down approach, as believed by the World Bank, is important for national economic growth because the profit from the growth will also reach the poorest, and in this way the national poverty level will be reduced [26]. The World Bank also notices that a market-led approach would not have the same desired effect on the local realities. Karin and Osada (1998) emphasize the failure of the top-down approach of poverty fighting, and oppose it to a bottom-up approach. This approach aims directly at the poorest. It considers that growth should start at micro level, then gradually which will help to grow at macro level.

In terms of the right to sufficient basic needs particularly right to food, Alston (1984) describes two approaches, i.e. maximalist and minimalist approach. The maximalist refers to adequate food, while the minimalist refers to freedom from hunger [27]. The effort to achieve sustainable development through providing sufficient food for example, can be compared with the effort to combat AIDS. Nelson Mandela argues that two approaches are essential to combat AIDS, i.e. practical and political (Mandela, Undated). Providing sufficient food is a practical approach and altering an unjust economic structure is a political approach, both efforts are necessary for eradicating unsustainable development, in this case for eliminating poverty. The impact of providing sufficient food alone has been questioned when it is not complemented with an appropriate political approach.

From the above explanation of unsustainable development especially in a case of poverty, it is clear that poverty should be solved not only by addressing the symptoms such as providing sufficient food, but also the basic causes of poverty by altering the unjust economic order on the basis of humanitarian grounds and that the State has the prime responsibility.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper focuses on presenting the complexity of sustainable development especially between human rights, poverty and development. Although the development has legal and philosophical reasons for supporting the poor, its impact is not yet significant when the fundamental cause of poverty is not altered. For the poor, having a sufficient food as a practical approach and altering unjust economic order as a political approach are needed to fulfill their basic rights. The primary responsibility for providing sufficient food rests with the State, even international community also has an obligation to assist the implementation of human rights. In other words, the missing one of the three inter-linked indicators on sustainable development – environment, social and economy – lead to unsustainable development. Therefore, any approach of development must include all those three indicators.

REFERENCES

- [1] Porter, D.R. (2001) 'A Brief Introduction to SD' in Porter, D. R. (Ed.) *The Practice of Sustainable Development*, Washington : Urban Land Institute.
- [2] Holmberg & Sandbrook, Sustainable development: What is to be done? In J. Holmberg (Ed.), *Policies for a small planet*. London: Earthscan, 1992.
- [3] Porter, D.R. (2001) 'A Brief Introduction to SD' in Porter, D. R. (Ed.) *The Practice of Sustainable Development*, Washington : Urban Land Institute.
- [4] Porter, D.R. (2001) 'A Brief Introduction to SD' in Porter, D. R. (Ed.) *The Practice of Sustainable Development*, Washington : Urban Land Institute.
- [5] Porter, D.R. (2001) 'A Brief Introduction to SD' in Porter, D. R. (Ed.) *The Practice of Sustainable Development*, Washington : Urban Land Institute.
- [6] Davison, *Technology and the Contested Meanings of Sustainability*, New York : State University of New York Press, 2001.
- [7] Lele, S. M. "Sustainable Development: A Critical Review," *WorldDevelopment*, Vol. 19 No. 6, 607-621, 1991.
- [8] Davison, *Technology and the Contested Meanings of Sustainability*, New York : State University of New York Press, 2001.
- [9] "Sustainable development," *iisd.org*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.iisd.org/about-iisd/sustainable-development>. [Accessed: 28-Oct-2020].
- [10] S. Schaltegger and F. Figge, "Sustainable development funds: Progress since the 1970s," in *Sustainable Banking: The Greening of Finance*, Greenleaf Publishing Limited, 203–210, 2013.
- [11] Harcourt, "Negotiating positions in the sustainable development debate Situating the feminist perspective" in *Feminist perspectives on sustainable Development*, London : Zed Books Ltd, 1994.
- [12] Government of Western Australia.
- [13] Government of Western Australia.
- [14] Atkinson, et.al, *Measuring Sustainable Development-Macroeconomic and the Environment*, Cheltenham : Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1997.
- [15] Eide, 'The International Human Rights System', 1984 in United Nations University Press, *Food as a Human Right*. Tokyo, Japan: United Nations University, 1985.
- [16] Brownlie, *Basic Document in International Law (ed.)*, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1995.
- [17] Alston, 'The International Human Rights System', 1984 in United Nations University Press, *Food as a Human Right*. Tokyo, Japan: United Nations University, 1985.
- [18] Eide, 'The International Human Rights System', 1984 in United Nations University Press, *Food as a Human Right*. Tokyo, Japan: United Nations University, 1985.
- [19] Eide, 'The International Human Rights System', 1984 in United Nations University

- Press, *Food as a Human Right*. Tokyo, Japan: United Nations University, 1985.
- [20] Eide, 'The International Human Rights System', 1984 in United Nations University Press, *Food as a Human Right*. Tokyo, Japan: United Nations University, 1985.
- [21] Jessop Garson, *Micro-finance and Anti Poverty Strategies: A donor perspective*, New York : United Nations Development Program (UNDP), 1996.
- [22] Harcourt, "Negotiating positions in the sustainable development debate Situating the feminist perspective" in *Feminist perspectives on sustainable Development*, London : Zed Books Ltd, 1994.
- [23] Zalaquette, J. 'The Relationship Between Development and Human Rights' 1984, in United Nations University Press, *Food as a Human Right*. Tokyo, Japan: United Nations University, 1985.
- [24] Harcourt, "Negotiating positions in the sustainable development debate Situating the feminist perspective" in *Feminist perspectives on sustainable Development*, London : Zed Books Ltd, 1994.
- [25] Nieto and Escoriaza, 'Micro-credit: A Human Development Tool' in Work as Key to the Social Question, a presented paper, Rome and Vatican, 2001.
- [26] Jessop Garson, *Micro-finance and Anti Poverty Strategies: A donor perspective*, New York : United Nations Development Program (UNDP), 1996.
- [27] Alston, 'The International Human Rights System', 1984 in United Nations University Press, *Food as a Human Right*. Tokyo, Japan: United Nations University, 1985.