

## Sustainable Development

“Sustainable development is a framework for a long-term vision of sustainability in which economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection go hand in hand and are mutually supporting. The term “sustainable development” is defined as “...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

Sustainable development aims to provide a long-term vision for society. Activities to meet present needs may still have short-term horizons, but they must in addition always include a long-term perspective. Sustainable development is an integrated concept involving all human actions down to the local level, and:

- aims to improve the quality of life of both current and future generations, while safeguarding the earth’s capacity to support life in all its diversity;
- is based on democracy, the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights including freedom, equal opportunities and cultural diversity;
- promotes high levels of employment in an economy whose strength is based on education, innovation, social and territorial cohesion and the protection of human health and the environment.

The following paragraphs provide information regarding:

- a) Social sustainability
- b) Economic sustainability
- c) Environmental sustainability”<sup>1</sup>

### a. Social Sustainability

“Social Sustainability is: a positive condition within communities, and a process within communities that can achieve that condition.

The following features are indicators of the condition, and steps towards their establishment and implementation are aspects of the process:

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<sup>1</sup> Annex 9, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

- equity of access to key services (including health, education, transport, housing and recreation)
- equity between generations, meaning that future generations will not be disadvantaged by the activities of the current generation
- a system of cultural relations in which the positive aspects of disparate cultures are valued and protected, and in which cultural integration is supported and promoted when it is desired by individuals and groups.
- the widespread political participation of citizens not only in electoral procedures but also in other areas of political activity, particularly at a local level
- a sense of community ownership
- a system for transmitting awareness of social sustainability from one generation to the next
- a sense of community responsibility for maintaining that system of transmission
- mechanisms for a community to collectively identify its strengths and needs
- mechanisms for a community to fulfil its own needs where possible through community action
- Mechanisms for political advocacy to meet needs that cannot be met by community action”<sup>2</sup>

Applicants to the “We are all Citizens” Programme are required to consider the impact of their proposed projects on social sustainability. Indicatively, they may consider the following:

- “building social capital<sup>3</sup>;
- ensuring that priorities and needs of various groups , in terms of gender, disability, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation are respected, promoting equality and anti-discrimination;
- contributing to the fight against poverty and social exclusion, including of children;
- limiting major threats to public health;
- facilitating access to employment, housing, mobility, and health care; and
- facilitating access to education and skills training.”<sup>4</sup>

#### b. Economic Sustainability

“Economic sustainability means using resources to provide necessary and desirable products and services for the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen McKenzie: *SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY: TOWARDS SOME DEFINITIONS*, Hawke Research Institute, Working Paper Series No 27, Hawke Research Institute, University of South Australia, Magill, South Australia 2004

<sup>3</sup> “Social capital is defined by the OECD as “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups”:

<http://www.oecd.org/insights/37966934.pdf> Last retrieved: 22/7/2014

<sup>4</sup> Annex 9, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-19.

Applicants to the “We are all Citizens” Programme are required to consider the impact of their proposed projects on economic sustainability. Indicatively, they may consider the following:

- “effects in terms of economic development at national / regional / local levels;
- effects in terms of job creation;
- impact on entrepreneurship;
- capacity to create a favourable environment to the development and provision of key services;
- the cost-benefit of the suggested project;
- why the required inputs are justifiable in terms of the outputs (cost-efficiency), including an assessment of costs in relation to alternative approaches; and
- if applicable, the extent to which the government at the relevant level (or other financing bodies), is prepared to continue financing the outputs of the project after the support from the [Programme] has ended (provided that the project is approved).”<sup>6</sup>

### c. Environmental Sustainability

“[Environmental] [s]ustainability is a relationship between dynamic human economic systems and larger dynamic, but normally slower-changing ecological systems, in which 1) Human life can continue indefinitely, 2) human individuals can flourish, and 3) human cultures can develop; but in which effects of human activities remain within bounds, so as not to destroy the diversity, complexity, and function of the ecological life support system.”<sup>7</sup>

In the context of the “We are all Citizens” Programme, all projects must reflect environmental considerations, not only those projects that are specifically aimed at environmental improvements. Examples may include infrastructure projects building activities or economic activities in different sectors. The key issue is to assess systematically the environmental impact of projects, to quantify them (if possible) and to integrate measures to limit any negative environmental impacts resulting from the projects.

The planning phase is crucial when it comes to environmental considerations, as key decisions relating to the project design might be difficult to adjust in later phases. By undertaking environmental considerations during the planning phase, it is possible to identify and avoid any harmful direct and indirect environmental impacts and to enhance environmental conditions.

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<sup>5</sup> New Zealand Curriculum Guides – Senior Secondary: <http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz/Social-sciences/Education-for-sustainability/Key-concepts/Aspects-of-sustainability>. Last retrieved: 4/4/2014

<sup>6</sup> Annex 9, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Constanza: ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS: The Science and Management of Sustainability, Columbia University Press, New York: 1991, p.8.

The following key questions should as a minimum be considered when undertaking the environmental considerations.”<sup>8</sup> Will the project:

- “use natural resources in ways that will pre-empt the use or potential future use of those resources for any other purpose?
- generate waste and hazardous waste, is this prevented and is the waste recycled/reused?
- be located in, and potentially, affect any environmentally sensitive areas such as National Parks and other protected areas, important archaeological and cultural sites, vulnerable ecosystems that provide important ecosystem services or with species threatened by extinction?
- cause soil, water or air pollution, including climate change, and are the potential direct and indirect impacts likely to be of minor or of major significance, and not easily mitigated?
- result in policy initiatives which may affect the environment such as changes in agricultural, water, energy and transport policies?
- involve the risk of accidents with potential environmental impacts (oil spills, chemical spills etc)? How is the risk reduced?
- lead to occupational health and safety risks?

Projects that are likely to have a significant effect on the environment shall undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in accordance with the EIA Directive (Directive 85/337/EEC as amended by Directive 97/11/EC and 2003/35/EC).”<sup>9</sup>

Also, what could your NGO do “to reduce/minimize the environmental impact and risks, in particular energy consumption (e.g. in relation to transportation, energy use in buildings, etc.) and waste generation (including wastewater)”<sup>10</sup>?

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<sup>8</sup> Annex 9, *op.cit.*, p. 17

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.