

CONUNDRUM

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Isn't the ailing planet our responsibility?"

Humans talk about going quid pro quo all the time. Be it lawyers, businessmen, or politicians going quid pro quo is a spontaneous solution to most of our problems. But what about our quid pro quo relationship with the earth? We have been exhausting its resources since time immemorial and what have we given it in return? Depleting forests, melting ice caps or the ever-increasing temperature? This, in order to fulfil our end of the bargain the concept of Sustainable Development was introduced. According to the World Commission on Environment and Development, sustainable development refers to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. On 19 July 2014, the Opening Working Group of the General Assembly on sustainable development goals forwarded to the General Assembly its report containing seventeen sustainable development goals. On 25 September 2015, 193 countries of the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 development agenda for sustainable development. The report makes sustainable consumption and production an integral component of the proposed sustainable development goals. Goal 12 focuses on ensuring SCP patterns. In addition this goal is considered as a cross cutting enabler for achievement of many other sustainable development goals.

One of its core objectives is to decouple economic growth from resource use and environmental degradation notably through improved resource efficiency. SCP is about proselytizing resource energy and efficiency, promoting access to basic services, green and decent jobs and a better quality of life for all.

Although efforts have been made in the past they have proved to be inadequate. Inequality is on the rise, with the billion richest people consuming 72% of the world's resources while the 1.2 billion poorest are responsible for only 1% of global consumption. In order to respond to this deplorable situation, SDG 12 advocates sustainable consumption and production. This means using services and producing products that minimize the wastage of resources and release of toxic emissions so as to not jeopardize the needs of the future generations.

UN Environment has made multitudinous efforts on a palatial scale, especially to support countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Mediterranean region to develop SCP national plans or to integrate SCP into existing national development plans or a similar overarching policy on SCP. Given the difficulty of implementing the full range of SCP policies and instruments, project countries usually select a limited number of policies to be addressed in their SCP national action plans. The SCP contributes to resilient societies in the following ways:

1. It helps in reducing resources per unit of GDP which in turn reduces vulnerability to resource scarcity.

2. It also aims to prevent environmental degradation.
3. It aims to protect human life as well as the environment through its life cycle approach.
4. It advocates proper disposal of toxic wastes besides trying to minimize their generation in the first place.

One third of the world's food is wasted every year which amounts to 1.3 billion tonnes.

The SDG 12 targets cover a range of entry points required for promoting responsible consumption and production. They include:-

- 12.1 Implementing the ten year framework and programmes on SCP.
- 12.2 Efficient use of natural resources.
- 12.3 Halve per capita global food wastage.
- 12.4 Environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes.
- 12.5 Reduce waste generation through 4R's.
- 12.6 Encourage companies to adopt sustainable practices.
- 12.7 Promote public procurement policies that are sustainable.
- 12.8 Efficient fossil fuel subsidies.
- 12.a Support developing countries' scientific and technological capacity for SCP
- 12.b Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable tourism.
- 12.c Remove market distortions that encourage wasteful consumption.

In order to ensure minimum wastage and maximum production it is crucial that public policies create a conducive environment and influence the market and economy as a whole. There ought to be sustainable procurement plans and practices to drive sustainable innovation and subsidies to divert attention from environmentally harmful practices. A fervent change in business practices is also essential. After all, "We have not inherited this planet from our ancestors, we borrowed it from our children."

Simran Kaur Arora

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