

SEEKING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS TOGETHER

FOCUS FOR THE GLOBAL ISSUES SERVICE SUMMIT

Our goal for the Global Issues Service Summit Africa 2010 is to work towards “Seeking Sustainable Solutions Together.” Over the course of the three days, we will strive to work together to:

1) **Seek context**

Knowing the context in which we are working is central to seeking sustainable solutions. What facts do we know? What data do we have? Where are we working and with whom are we working? What is the context of Africa, and how should it inform what solutions we seek?

2) **Understand sustainability**

Sustainability is a complex concept and even experts do not agree on its definition. How do you define it and what are the criteria? How do its key areas (economic, environmental, social) interact? What are the challenges or roadblocks to sustainability? What tools do we need to build sustainable solutions?

3) **Enact solutions**

Ultimately, we must take our context and understanding of sustainability to enact solutions. How can we act to make a difference? How do our actions impact others? What do I learn from my actions, or how can others’ actions inform our understanding of what works and what doesn’t? Are there times when we might have to reconsider our approach?

DEFINITION & CRITERIA

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

- United Nations Brundtland Report, 1987

According to the United Nations, sustainable development contains two key concepts:

- 1) The needs of people, especially the essential needs of the world’s poor
- 2) The limitations imposed by society and technology on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs

Sustainability is often discussed as the intersection of three key areas, as depicted in the Venn diagram below:

- 1) Economic
- 2) Environmental
- 3) Social

When all three needs are met, the solution is considered sustainable. It is also important to consider the context of the community, particularly the cultural context of each of the three areas of economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

