

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- (1) The concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given.
- (2) The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.”

Is this a practical definition that may be applied to “real world” problems?

- (1) What is meant by “development”?
 - welfare
 - consumption
 - determinants of welfare other than consumption
- (2) Who determines “needs”?
 - absolute or relative
 - subsistence
 - beyond goods and services
- (3) How do we forecast “future needs”?
 - same as our own
 - linear or non-linear interpolation based on past experience
 - changes in tastes/technology/endowments
- (4) Who are “world's poor”?
 - absolute or relative measure
 - identified by nation/region/individual characteristics
- (5) How are “limitations” identified?
 - best practice
 - global average
 - nation/region specific
 - forecasting future limitations