

Cultural/Urban Heritage and Sustainable Human Development

A short definition for Sustainable Human Development can be expressed in three words: **‘enlarging human capacities’**.

Sustainable human development is not merely economic growth but its distribution of its benefits equitably.

It generates and rejuvenates the environment rather than deteriorating or destroying it.

It **empowers** people.

It enlarges **their choices and opportunities** providing at all times peoples’ participation in decisions, particularly affecting their lives in all its manifestations.

SHD is development creating growth with employment, connecting it to the environment and to the empowerment of the people.

It is based on equity.

It provides a platform of choices to people in reference to the environment people live in, may it be urban or natural/ rural or both, and the ability to contribute, participate and embody the **‘culture’** they are part of in their daily lives.

SHD looks at tradition and cultural values not as regressive, primitive or backward, but to the contrary, progressive, contemporary and futuristic. It includes by definition tangible and intangible Heritage.

Sustainable Human Development recognizes *diversity* versus *conformity*. *Tradition* as an asset and not a liability. *Historical* as progressive and futuristic in terms of a *cultural capital* and not as *a-historical*. **Social Capital** is the key.

SHD views thus the place of the human being at the centre of the stage and therefore focuses on **human development, education and institutional strengthening, that produces greater readiness and capacity to work together.**

SHD considers and rests upon **social** and **cultural** values and not merely **physical economic accomplishments in development**.

Heritage Projects, under the aegis of the Lima based RLA - Regional UNDP/UNESCO project, in Latin America and the Caribbean, (of which I had the privilege to be the CTA/CEO) gradually over the years addressed these issues across the board.

It did so by relating the provision of skills, know-how information on conservation and preservation to development not in an isolated fashion but an **integral** part of community and social development.

It was known, right from the beginning in the 70's and 80's, that Cultural Heritage was not ever and is not a **high priority** in the development agenda's of the UN-system as a whole and to that matter in national governments policies/programmes. It was evident that there would be scarce resources available for this subject matter.

It was also evident that we have to enhance the whole concept as such. Three challenges had to be faced:

Firstly, scan the subject of Heritage/Conservation/Management in the widest sense of the term. Make sure, together with partners that the concept of Cultural Heritage had to go **beyond culture per se**. It is in this context that collaboration in developing concepts, policies and programmes addressing the issues of Sustainable Human Development and the Environment and linking them to Cultural and Urban Heritage was necessary. We did it. How?

Firstly we insisted on the close relationship between **culture and development** and collaborated in **designing projects** to that effect. We promoted the concept that Cultural Heritage could not be dealt with in isolation of contemporary social economic and environmental issues affecting the human and natural condition of this planet.

Secondly, in terms of **financing**, the challenge was/is proving that 'funding and availability of sources and services' are directly proportional to the **positive** and **effective outputs** with **substantive visibility**.

Thirdly, we had to care for '**quality delivery**' in all project activities.

These three equations gave us in the last years, and the Governments in the region, the credibility to mobilize and obtain extra-budgetary sources. This has not been an easy task. It demanded **persistence, continuity, omnipresence, knowledge, and experience of development work, vision and executive accountability**.

We believe that '**quality delivery**' in heritage activities should be put **at equal if not more** leverage than any other development subject in various fields. Delivery had to be practical, visible and cost-effective.

Solid Cultural Resources Management and accountable cost-effective heritage work (from research to training to actual conservation/restoration operations) and adequate participation/role of local Governments and people at large, puts heritage at equal footing and/or trigger Urban Development/Social Development/Human and Environmentally Sound Programmes. Where people are subjects of development.

Well managed Heritage Conservation Programmes linked and integrated with programmes of social, infrastructural and economic order can be catalysts for **SHD** and can be considered as an integral part of major development projects, to meet the objective set forth in **SHD**.

Delivery of quality attracts and develops multiplying effects and growing integrated approach.

It is **not** only a question of the **CULTURAL DIMENSION OF DEVELOPMENT, BUT THE SOUND AND EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE OF THE CULTURAL ASPECT WHICH GIVE THIS COMPONENT OF HERITAGE** (or to that matter that of an overall concept of culture) **TO BE AN EFFECTIVELY ACTION-ORIENTED ENTERPRISE.**

Effective actions in Heritage can create employment, strengthen local Governments, attract the private sector and address vulnerable groups by creating economic gains to sustain their daily lives beyond merely a subsistence economy.