

Sustainable development

The principles of sustainable development have a long history starting in 1972 and the UN Conference on Human Environment. Rich countries were seeing the environmental damage that industrialisation had brought from smog's to wrecked oil tankers and in order to clean up they had to work together on the other hand the poorer countries wanted industrialisation to improve their economies and tackle poverty what ever the cost. For the first time these issues were brought forward for discussion, the west saw the damage it was causing and the poverty of the south.

But then nothing happened until the Brundtland Commission of 1982 which concluded that if we continue to use up the earths resources, if we continue to ignore the poor and if we continue to pollute the environment and generate waste there will be a decline in all our quality of lives. It was this commission that produced the definition of sustainable development above and it demands a change in life style and more attention to the destructive and wasteful effects of poverty.

By 1988 this principle had been adopted by 50 national leaders spearheaded by Norway, the UK, the UN, Russia, France and India. This is what ultimately lead to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit out of which came Agenda 21. It was the first meeting of world leaders since the end of the cold war and the emphasis had changed from East/West to North/South and from political ideology to economic and environmental realities.