EDITORIAL

Sustainability and Green Practices in Business in Developing Countries

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In recent decades, the concept of sustainability has emerged as a critical paradigm in global discourse, intersecting with environmental, economic, and social development goals.

Rooted in the Brundtland Commission's 1987 definition of sustainable development. "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs", the idea of sustainability has increasingly been integrated into the realm of business operations and corporate strategy (WCED, 1987[1]). This integration has given rise to the notion of "green business practices," referring to organizational policies and activities aimed at minimizing environmental impact, enhancing energy and resource efficiency, and promoting long-term ecological balance. While sustainability efforts in advanced economies have been well-documented and, in some cases, institutionalized, the role and evolution of green practices in business within developing countries have received comparatively less scholarly attention, despite their profound relevance to global sustainability efforts.

The urgency of addressing sustainability in the business practices of developing countries stems from a confluence of factors. On the one hand, developing nations often exhibit rapid urbanization, industrialization, and population growth—dynamics that place significant pressure on natural resources and ecological systems. On the other hand, these countries frequently face structural challenges such as weak regulatory frameworks, limited financial resources, lack of technological capacity, and insufficient institutional support for environmental

[1] WCED (1987). Our Common Future. World Commission on Environment and Development. Oxford University Press.

governance (Sachs, 2015[2]; UNDP, 2020[3]). These conditions create a paradox: while the need for sustainable practices is arguably more acute in developing contexts due to environmental vulnerability and social inequalities, the capacity to implement such practices remains constrained.

Nonetheless, a growing body of literature highlights the gradual emergence of sustainability and green practices across sectors in the developing world. From small-scale agriculture adopting climate-smart techniques, to manufacturing firms introducing energy-efficient production methods, to service providers reducing waste and embracing circular economy models, examples of green innovation are increasingly observable (World Bank, 2021[4]; UNEP, 2022[5]). The motivations for businesses to adopt these practices are varied and include regulatory compliance, access to international markets, reputational benefits, cost savings, and alignment with global supply chain standards. Moreover, multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international donors have played a pivotal role in promoting green business transformation through funding, capacity building, and knowledge transfer.

At the core of the sustainability discourse in developing countries lies the tension between economic growth and environmental stewardship. Historically, development strategies have prioritized economic expansion and industrial competitiveness, often at the expense of environmental considerations. This growth-first paradigm has led to ecological degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate vulnerability. Yet, there is increasing recognition that sustainable economic development—defined by inclusive growth, environmental resilience, and social equity—is not only possible but necessary. Green business practices can serve as a bridge between these objectives, enabling enterprises to contribute to environmental goals while pursuing economic viability.

In this context, it is crucial to consider the distinct challenges and opportunities that businesses in developing countries face in implementing green practices. One major challenge is the high cost of green technologies and the limited access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which form the backbone of most developing economies. Unlike large multinational corporations, SMEs often lack the capital, expertise, and strategic foresight required to invest in long-term sustainability initiatives. Furthermore, weak enforcement of environmental regulations, limited public awareness, and a lack of market incentives diminish the pressure on firms to go green. On the opportunity side, however, the abundance

[2] Sachs, J. D. (2015). The Age of Sustainable Development. Columbia University Press.

[3] UNDP (2020). Human Development Report 2020: The Next Frontier – Human Development and the Anthropocene. United Nations Development Programme.

[4] World Bank (2021). Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development: World Bank Group Climate Change Action Plan 2021–2025. The World Bank.

[5] UNEP (2022). Sustainability and Circular Economy: Annual Report 2022. United Nations Environment Programme.

of renewable energy sources, the potential for green job creation, and the growing demand for eco-labeled products in global markets provide compelling incentives for sustainable business transformation.

Institutional frameworks and policy environments play a decisive role in shaping the extent to which businesses adopt green practices. In countries where environmental policies are integrated into industrial development strategies, businesses are more likely to embrace sustainability. Policy instruments such as tax incentives, environmental certifications, subsidies for green technology, and public-private partnerships have shown effectiveness in stimulating green entrepreneurship and innovation. International agreements such as the Paris Climate Accord and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have also placed external pressure on governments and businesses in developing countries to align with sustainability principles. Consequently, national strategies and business models are gradually incorporating environmental goals, even in resource-constrained settings.

Culture and consumer behavior are equally significant in shaping green business practices. In many developing societies, traditional ecological knowledge and community-based resource management offer valuable insights into sustainable living. However, modern consumerism and urban lifestyles have often led to increased consumption, pollution, and waste. Businesses thus face the dual challenge of meeting modern consumer demands while promoting environmentally responsible behavior. Public education campaigns, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, and sustainability branding are among the strategies used to raise awareness and build consumer demand for green products and services.

It is also essential to analyze the role of innovation and technology transfer in facilitating sustainable business practices. While technological advancements offer significant potential for reducing environmental footprints, developing countries often rely on imported green technologies, which may not be suitable for local contexts or may be prohibitively expensive. Technology transfer through international cooperation, international partnerships, and inclusive innovation ecosystems is therefore crucial. Adaptation of green technologies to local needs, skills, and infrastructure can enhance their effectiveness and uptake. Moreover, digital technologies—such as mobile platforms, blockchain for supply chain transparency, and remote sensing for environmental monitoring—offer promising avenues for scalable, cost-effective green solutions.

Finally, sustainability in business must be understood not only in terms of environmental outcomes but also in its social and economic dimensions. A holistic approach to green business practice in developing countries necessitates attention to issues such as labor rights, gender equity, poverty reduction, and community empowerment. Enterprises that embed sustainability into their core values and governance structures can become agents of broader social transformation. Such integration requires a shift from short-term profit maximization to long-term value creation—a shift that is beginning to emerge in certain business sectors, particularly those with strong stakeholder engagement or exposure to international sustainability standards.

In sum, sustainability and green practices in business within developing countries represent a complex and evolving field of inquiry, situated at the intersection of environmental imperatives, developmental goals, and market dynamics. This research seeks to explore the drivers, barriers, and outcomes of green business practices in such contexts, with a focus on identifying best practices, scalable innovations, and effective policy instruments. By critically analyzing the interplay between local realities and global sustainability frameworks, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how businesses in the developing countries like Albania can play a transformative role in achieving a more sustainable and promising future.