



Analysing Definitions and Values

In this activity you will analyse the values underlying five common definitions of sustainable development.

First, read the definitions below, carefully considering the different dimensions of sustainable development supported by each one.

Then, give each definition a score from 1-3 to show how much emphasis you think each one places on the four different dimensions of sustainable development, where:

1 = Very strong

2 = Medium emphasis

3 = Weak or no emphasis

Definition	Dimensions			
	Social	Economic	Ecological	Political
Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Source: World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) <i>Our Common Future</i> , Oxford University Press, Oxford.	1	1	1	1
	2	2	2	2
	3	3	3	3
A primary goal of sustainable development is to achieve a reasonable (however defined) level of fairly distributed economic well-being that can be maintained for many human generations. Source: Goodland, R. and Ledoc, G. (1987) Neoclassical economics and principles of sustainable development, <i>Ecological Modelling</i> , Vol. 38.	1	1	1	1
	2	2	2	2
	3	3	3	3

<p>Sustainable development means the will to follow a rational approach to economic policies; to show respect for future generations by integrating concern for environmental protection into decision-making; and progressively to evolve towards the full participation of all concerned actors.</p> <p>Source: Barboza, N. (2000) Educating for a sustainable future: Africa in action, <i>Prospects</i>, 30(1), pp. 71-85.</p>	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
<p>The simplest definition of a sustainable activity is that it can be continued for the foreseeable future. And this has at least three dimensions: it means not unreasonably depleting natural resources, not producing waste products that significantly alter natural systems, and not undermining social stability.</p> <p>Source: Lowe, I. (1990) 'Sustainable development: How do we get there?' <i>Australian Society</i>, June, No. 5.</p>	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
<p>Sustainable development means:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ensuring self-sustaining improvements in productivity and quality of life of communities and societies; 2. ensuring that production processes do not overexploit the natural resource base and compromise the quality of the environment, thus limiting the options of the poor, the present and future generations; and 3. ensuring that people have basic human rights and freedoms to participate societies. <p>Source: Singh, N. and Titi, V. (1995) <i>Empowerment: Towards Sustainable Development</i>, Zed Books, London, p. 8.</p>	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3

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