

Innovation, Sustainability, Development: A New Manifesto



Roundtable Report Nepal, 6 May 2009

May 2009

Roundtable Details

- Convenor Name: Dr David J. Grimshaw
- Participants (name and any organisational affiliation): see list appended
- Venue: Innovation Asia Pacific Symposium, Everest Hotel, P.O. Box 659, New Baneswor, Kathmandu, Nepal
- Duration of meeting: 2.5 hours
- Region: Asia Pacific
- Countries: Nepal, India, Vietnam, Fiji, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Lao, Vietnam, Philippines and China.

Report

(based on STEPS-recommended format and word-count)

1. Local and global sustainability and development objectives and associated “directions” of innovation/ development

There was a wide range of development objectives identified and discussed including: reducing the gap between rich and poor; enhancing social and economic security; food security; enhancing livelihoods; meeting people’s needs; social justice and rights based approaches. Many tables gave more time to the discussion of sustainability.

One group felt that sustainability objectives were geographically dependant. All tables felt that environmental aspects of sustainability were important. Other sustainability objectives identified included: equitable access for poor farmers; natural resource management; innovation that is locally supported by research and development; and health improvement in relation to environmental improvements. The need for financial sustainability was also stressed.

2. Forms of innovation that are relevant to meeting these objectives

Innovation is needed in governance systems; learning and communication systems, institutional development and partnership building. Links with the private sector were considered important by some groups. Innovation is needed in the areas of process, product and policy. Devolution can increase the capacity to make decisions locally and thereby increase the voice of the poor. In particular there should be recognition of indigenous technology and knowledge and the development of capacity to communicate new ideas.

Ways of linking people and communities to supply chains were felt to have the potential to lead to innovation and improved livelihoods.

3. Principal constraints to these or other sustainable innovations

Having a supportive policy framework is important. Set in a wider context the overall governance in a country can constrain innovation. Too much of a focus on the “hardware” of technology will also constrain sustainable innovation. Additional constraints discussed by some groups were: budgets; mass replication, cost and resource availability. One group suggested there was a gap between what we do and what we know and felt that complexity was a key constraint.

The problem of increased complexity was also identified as a constraint.

4. Alternative policies, institutions or governance arrangements that could promote innovation in more sustainable directions or better support existing practices/knowledge that help meet sustainability objectives

Empowerment and decentralisation are key to the improvement of sustainable innovation. A focus that includes the “software” of technology is important. Government transparency can help to promote innovation. Investment in social capital and promotion of a learning culture are also important.

5. Evidence (if any) for the effectiveness of these alternatives and remaining research needs for better understanding their effectiveness

There was insufficient time for groups to engage with this question.

Registered Discussion Members

Full Name	Organization
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Keshav Kumar Sharma	Practical Action, Nepal
Lamira Shakya	BSP, Nepal
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