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ScienceDirect

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 219 (2016) 159 – 166

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

3rd Global Conference on Business and Social Science-2015, GCBSS-2015, 16-17 December
2015, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

A New Approach for Sustainable Development Goals in Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

This paper discusses a new approach to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from Islamic perspective. It seeks to answer the main question of how to implement SDGs in Muslim countries. Seven of SDGs comprise of the end goals of development narrowed down to people's well being, and the rest of the goals are the means to reach the ends. Based on the secondary data obtained from library research, Islam provides guidance for SDGs in terms of the relationships between human and Allah SWT, human and human, and human and the environment. Islam does not solely promote the three relationships as the embodiment of spiritual power, but it also provides the mechanisms of the interrelationship. The new approach proposes a more comprehensive conceptual framework that encompasses the efforts of developing human beings and establishing a system as the medium for the implementation of the economic, social, educational, and governmental mechanisms.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of the 3rd GCBSS-2015

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainable Development, Islamic Perspective

1. Introduction

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a new guidance for the world after 2015. At the United Nations

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Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030 (UNDP, 2015).

SDGs are a substitute of MDGs and simultaneously a response to the challenge of sustainable development at the global level, which according to various reports, has not been successfully implemented since its concept was first introduced publicly in 1987. The non-success is inextricable from the influencing factors, including understanding of the concept of sustainable development itself.

Sustainable development has definition, principles and dimension with focus how to integrate economic, social and environment. However, experiences of many countries showed that there are practical difficulties in integrating the three dimensions and in putting the concept into operation (Noorbakhsh and Ranjan, 2009). Meanwhile, some scholars such as Roberts (1997), Moles, et al. (2008), Taylor in William (2013), Hamnett in William (2013), Nolon and Salkin (2011) advocate the role of planning to achieve sustainable development goals. Furthermore, Williams (2013) proposes strategic planning as the most appropriate place to integrate Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) into the planning system. More importantly, Roughley (1999) and (AlQahtany, et. al, 2013) proposed framework of sustainable development planning.

Unfortunately, experiences of some countries was unsatisfied. In Ohio, USA for instance, Jun and Conroy (2014) analysed 46 township plans in Central Ohio and found that the township plans do not provide balanced support for sustainability principles and so are not adequately prepared to withstand and adapt to exogenous shocks. Similarly, in Australia, Williams (2013) showed that there was inadequate strategic planning, largely due to the State Government not fulfilling its role in this area. This was cited to be a key barrier to an improved implementation of Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD) in New South Wales. In South Africa, Sowman and Brown (2006) and Ruhanen (2008) attributed the failure of sustainable development to the lack of a common understanding of the sustainable development concept itself, apart from the fear amongst professionals of ‘doing things differently’ and institutional barriers to mainstreaming. Furthermore, in the smaller local municipalities, the lack of mainstreaming environmental sustainability issues was largely due to the lack of capacity in areas such as human resources, technical expertise and financial resources.

Many scholars such as Hajer's in Robert (1997), Redclift in Briassoulis (2001), Counsell (1999), Holden (2008), and Astrom (2011), proposed that sustainability need fundamental changes in the ideology, transformation of cultural attitudes and behavior, paradigm shift, institutional reform supported by appropriate political and institutional structures.

The problem is, then, to which direction are the ongoing transformations and reformation heading, considering the disparate ideology, socio-culture, economic structure, politic and institution of each country? Muslim countries have Islamic ideology. The question is, how to implement SDGs in these countries?

This paper attempts to seek for the answer to this question. In so doing, this paper is divided into two main sections. The first section deals with an analysis on SDGs in Islamic perspective. The second section attempts to explain new approach for SDGs achievement especially in Muslim countries.

2. Analysis SDGs in Islamic Perspective

SDGs have 17 goals which are primarily intended for the well-being of human beings. According to human development approach, it means that the focus of SDGs is people and their well-being as the end of development. Meanwhile all efforts and processes that contribute to its enhancement become the means (Seldadyo, 2015). Seven of SDGs comprise of the end goals of development narrowed down to people's well-being, and the rest of the goals are the means to reach the ends as depicted in figure 1.

Many previous scholars studied Islam as religion and sustainable development such as Zuair (2006), Marsuki (2009), Astrom (2011), Abdurachman (2011), Al-Jayyousi (2012), Hossain, D. M (2014), Narayanan, Y (2013). Abdurachman (2011) and Narayanan (2013) enriching the concept in which an injection spiritual development as a pillar of sustainable development.

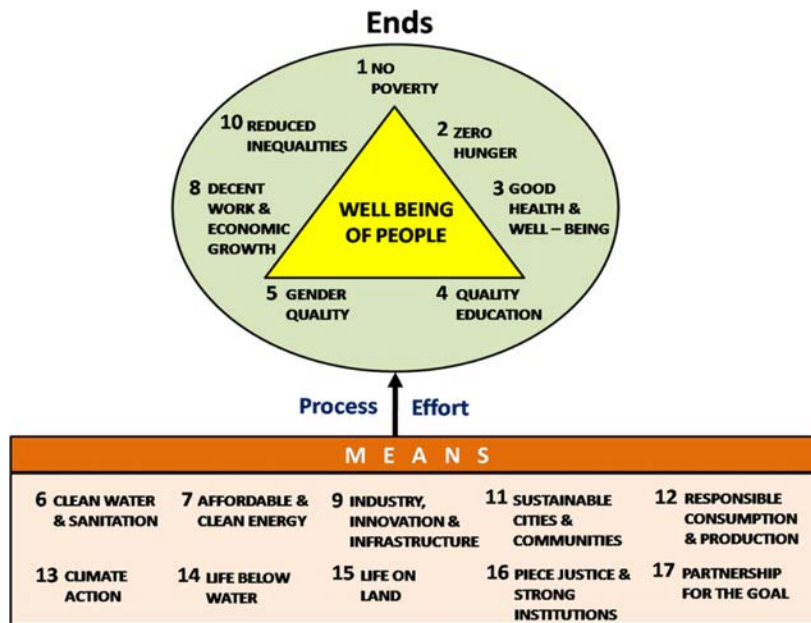


Figure 1. Ends and Means of 17 SDGs

In analyzing these 17 goals from an Islamic perspective, one would come up with three observations. Firstly, according to human development approach, the seventh goals are end of SDGs, that is the fulfilment of basic needs and justice of the human beings. In Islamic perspective, however, this is inadequate. There is an apparent disregard of human’s spiritual components, whereas in Islam, the spiritual components are the determinants that shape the physical beings. In fact, Al-Ghazali (2011) argues that the most essential need for human beings is religion that encompasses the spiritual domain, while wealth is secondary to the religion. He put forward such an argument in a discussion on *Maqashid Syariah*, which consists of five essential elements, namely religion (*al-Din*), life (*al-Nafs*), intellect (*al-Aql*), progeny (*al-Nasl*) and wealth (*al-Mal*).

Secondly, is on the view of the 17 goals. Blanc (2014) analyzes that goals and targets can be seen as a network, in which links among goals exist through targets that refer to multiple goals. Nevertheless, connection between these goals must be viewed in its value. The work of Al-Jayyousi (2012) could be one of the examples. He explored the framework for sustainable development based on Islamic worldviews. His model comprises a core circle that represents good life (*hayat tayebah*) and a larger circle that represents the notion of earth’s construction (*emmaret al-ard or al-kawn*). He founded the development of his framework on four dimensions, namely justice (*adl*), excellence (*ihsan*), social capital (*arham*) and limit of mischief (*fasad*). His framework is different the framework of other scholars as he did not discuss the dimensions of economic, social and environment. However, he created a new dimension based on Islamic value, in which an implicit interplay between the dimensions and Islamic values of sustainable development exists. In Islamic perspective, economy is the immediate target and it should be just. Subsequently, the social dimension is viewed as kinship characterized by solid social capital. Managing the environment sustainably and responsibly is God’s mandate. Therefore, in Islamic perspective, behind the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development lie the values that uphold justice, the strength of social capital, and environmental awareness in accordance with the instructions of Al-Qur’an and Hadith.

Thirdly, in Islamic perspective the ultimate end of development is *mardhatillah* (the pleasure of Allah SWT) not human well-being. Prosperity and welfare will be truly meaningful if Allah grants His *ridla* (*mardhatillah*), because the two aforementioned aspects are not concerned with human life in the present world, but also in the hereafter. The need of the two aspects on the basis of *matlamat*, or looking for Allah’s *ridla*. With the pleasure of Allah SWT, human beings would gain happiness both on earth and in the hereafter, or otherwise known as *al-falah* (Salleh, 2003). Although it is possible that prosperity and welfare will not be achieved in the present world, if Allah is willing, we will achieve them in the hereafter. This means that our perspective of *mardhatillah* is more holistic and optimistic than the one merely aimed at the achievement of prosperity and dignity.

3. Islamic Thinking for SDGs Achievement

Islam simultaneously teaches the spiritual (*aqidah ruhiyah*) and political (*aqidah siyasiyyah*) conception, so that Islam teaches a system pertaining to spiritual and political affairs (Abdurrahman, 2012). The spiritual conception includes rules regulating the relationship between human beings and Allah SWT, namely the law of *ibadah* (worship) and the relationship between human beings and themselves, namely the law of *akhlak* (morals), the law governing clothing, and the law governing food and beverage. Meanwhile, political conception is a system that regulates interaction among human beings, covering the government system, economics system, social system, education system, penalty or judiciary system, and foreign policy.

The spiritual and political teachings can ensure the meeting of SDGs, as they direct transformation of cultural attitudes and behaviors through individual development (his or her spiritual side) and institutional reform supported by Islamic political and institutional structures. In a nutshell, this process is illustrated in figure 2.



Figure 2. Islamic Thinking for SDGs Achievement

Spiritual development will develop pious and faithful human beings. In the context of SDGs, human beings with these traits will promote social and environmental awareness. Al-Qur'an provides a description of an ideal human being and instructions on how to maintain the earth and the sky, including a guarantee that the ideal attitudes and behaviors will assist in meeting the tenth goal (reduced inequality), first goal (no poverty), second goal (zero hunger), and twelfth goal (responsible consumption and production) of SDGs.

There are five key terms found in the Al-Quran to explain about human. The five key terms indicate the sensitivity of the Al-Quran when describing the different characteristics of man. The five key terms are: (i) *Basyar*; (ii) *Insan*; (iii) *Naas*; (iv) *Bani Adam* (the Children of Adam); and (v) *Khalifah* (vicegerent). Based on the study of fundamental and *nasabi* (correlation) definition of the key terms, descriptive features of man can be concluded as follows:

- The Al-Quran sees man as a complete biological, psychological and social creature. Hence, man is not only surrounded by biological law but also psychological and social law.
- As *basyar*, man is subject to fate and rules created by Allah, in which just like the other Allah's creatures known as *musayyar* such as sun, animals, and flora. As a human being and *naas*, there certain rules have been regulated. However, man as *mukhayyar* has option to choose either to obey or to disobey. Therefore, man has to be responsible for his action.
- Man has positive as well as negative predisposition. He obligates to ensure the positive predisposition is stronger than the negative by faithfully abide their mandate. It is nature for a man to upsurge his *iman* (faith) and knowledge. The initiative to upsurge faith and knowledge is called as good deeds.

- Man should have historical consciousness of the past, present and future since humans are historical creatures that leaves their traces in such becomes lesson (*ibrah*) to the future generation.
- Man has noble duty on earth: to be the *khalifatullah fi ardl* (proxy of Allah on earth) and this duty is exclusive for human to manage and flourish the earth so that it has a sustainable carrying capacity to preserve the lives of human beings and other creatures. It involves making earth as a safe and comfortable living place, *baladatan thoyyibatun wa rabbun ghafuur* (peaceful and prosperous nation that is blessed by Allah).

Subsequently, Al-Quran describes ideal character of man by terms as: *Al-Muttaqiin* and *Al-Muttaquun* – characteristic of the cautious person, *Mukminun*, *Mukminan*, *Mukninuuna*, *Mukminiina* – characteristic of the believer, *Al-Shobiruuna*, *Al-Shobiriina* – characteristics of the forbearing, *Ibaadurrahmaan* – characteristic of the compassionate, *Ulul Albaab*, *Ulil Albaab* – characteristic of the thinker (Abdurrahman, et. al, 2015). These five terms appear explicitly in 110 verses of the Al-Quran. Analysis conducted to these terms found that the characteristics of cautious person, believer, forbearing, compassionate and thinker reflected in the following components:

- Belief in the unseen (*ghayb*) element such as the existence of Allah, the afterlife, and aware that every creatures will return to his Creator.
- Kind by preserving the rules of Allah have high awareness to obey His commands and prohibitions, humble, cautious and surrender only to Allah.
- Careful and cautious towards Allah, remember Him in any situation and condition, while standing, sitting or lying down.
- Interact socially by giving *zakat*, donating and sharing some of the possession and fortune, able to suppress anger and be patient, able to forgive the mistake of others, reliable to his promises and commitments, help each other, enjoin the right and forbid the wrong as well as avoid worthless actions. Social interaction of the servant of Allah also involves preservation of self vanity by avoiding adultery and dress modesty. Apart of these, social interaction also includes preservation of wealth by avoiding interest and usury, honest in transaction, and do not oppress the others

In verses 28:77, 7:31, 6:141 for instances, emphasize the principles of Islamic teaching that guide humankind on the ways to manage the earth and use all the earthly resources to ensure the earth is protected for the present and future generations of humankind. The Quran (28:77) stated that “But seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief.” Quran (7:31): “O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters.” And in Quran (6:141): “It is He Who produceth gardens, with trellises and without, and dates, and tilth with produce of all kinds, and olives and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and different (in variety): eat of their fruit in their season, but render the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered. But waste not by excess: for Allah loveth not the wasters”. Moderation and balance in worldly pursuits, which the verses of the Qur’an repeatedly emphasize, are intended to support this basic Islamic concept of sustainable development.

Principally, there should be ethics or norms in exploiting natural resources and the environment. According to Abdurrahman (2012), Islamic environmental ethics should be based on the conceptual framework constituting: *tauhid* (monotheism that Allah is the Only God), *ibadah* (devotion, having the value of charity), *ilm* (knowledge searched in an attempt of glorifying Allah), *khilafah* (exploiting and preserving the nature), *amanah* (being honest in treating the nature and just in empowering it), *adalah* (balance, where violators of amanah will be rebuked by the prevailing law), *jamal* (beauty, beautiful phenomena should not be damaged), and *halal-haram*. As a consequence, the efforts of exploiting natural resources and the environment should be planned simultaneously in the context of its protection.

Furthermore, the ideal human figure is not only a pious and faithful human being, but also one who is well educated and physically healthy. These two things are explicitly contained in the third, eighth, and fourth goals of SDGs. In Islamic perspective, education development is oriented at obtaining ease in life in the form of benefits from science and technology and guidelines for developing faithful human beings as well as realizing noble morality. The ideal human beings will be developed through education that integrates the mind and the heart, knowledge and deed, *daruri* knowledge and *nazari* knowledge, *fardu ‘ain* knowledge and *fardu kifayah* knowledge (Salleh, 2003). Previous study in all six Islamic educational institutions in Bandung, Indonesia indicates almost similar process of shaping ideal man

which is through boarding school that integrate national curriculum with the *pesantren* approach. Apart from that, they also incorporate particular discipline in the internal environment of the school, use certain jargon as their special legacy, communicate and interaction with the outside community, understand the wisdom of nature, live for two to three days with the unfortunate family and visit to the children house for cancer (Abdurrahman, et. al, 2015). Beside education, health is also basic need. Three of the five *maqasid syariah* are concerned with health (Chalil, 2009).

Still in the context of human development is that each individual needs food, clothing, and housing, which is met through development in the economic field. The efforts of developing human beings who are self-sufficient in terms of wealth have to be supported by an Islamic economic system and Islamic political economy. The three principles that have to be considered to build Islamic economic system are ownership (propeprty right), ownership management, and wealth distribution (An-Nabhani, 2010). In relation to ownership, Islam regulates it starting from individual, public, and state ownership to its utilization both for consumptive and productive activities. One of the productive activities is property development. Islam has set the boundaries between what is halal and haram in developing property. The halal ones include property development in the sectors such as agriculture, processing industry, trade, and other services. Including in the halal activity is joint partnership (*syrkah*) with its various types, with *mudharabah* being the most famous type. However, Islam prohibits property development in the forms of gambling, *riba*, *gharar*, and scam. Meanwhile, The example for the wealth distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Wealth Distribution According to Ownership Types

Ownership	Market mechanism	Non-market mechanism
Individual	<i>Ijarah</i> and revenue sharing in the utilization of TK	<i>Zakat</i> , <i>infaq</i> , <i>shodaqoh</i> , <i>hibah</i> (grant) , <i>hadiah</i> (gift)
	Land and building rental	
	Revenue sharing between capital owner and businessman	
Public	Earnings from resource exploitation and public ownership as one of the posts of income that will be spent for the needs of the whole communities	Provision of free water and energy
State	The results of exploitation of state ownership as one of the posts of income that will be spent for the needs of all communities	Direct assistance, subsidiary, gift (<i>hibah</i>)

Islamic political economy, namely the implementation of various policies guaranting the meeting of all primary needs of each individual and community, along with ensurance enabling each individual to cater to their secondary needs according to their abilities (Al Maliki, 2009). Individual primary needs consist of food, clothing, and housing. Community’s primary needs cover education, health, and security. They can be catered to through development in the fields of agriculture, processing industry, residential infrastructure, education, security, and health. Because the principles and references are based on Islamic values, in the development of agricultural sector, agricultural laws prevail, specifically in land exploitation. The same is true for the development of processing industry sector, there are boundaries for the development of industries which are prohibited by the religion, such as alcoholic beverage industry, pork-based food canning, etc. In addition, individuals or private sectors are prohibited from developing industries producing goods belonging to public property, such as gold, silver, copper, oil, and coal mining; electricity; and toll way. Islam highly recommends to prioritize the development of heavy industries, in the forms of machineries, to encourage the growth and development of downstream industries.

Islamic economic-political strategies constitute the following, firstly, the meeting of each individual needs through an indirect mechanism, namely creating the condition and facilities to meet the needs for primary goods (clothing, food, and housing). Secondly, the meeting of the whole community’s needs through a direct mechanism, where the state directly caters to the needs for primary services in the forms of security, education, and health.

There are five components to indirect mechanism, namely the obligation to work, employment provision, the obligations of beneficiary, neighborhood responsibility, *baitul mal* subsidy, and the laws of *fardhu* (compulsory) work. It is obligatory that the state provides work facilities and opportunities. Meanwhile, beneficiary obligations cover the duty of a husband to support his wife, father to support his children, and children to support their parents. The state

has the right to exert its force on those who neglect their duties, and Baitul Mal must provide assistance for those who are not able to meet their primary needs when the four components cannot fully function.

On the other hand, the state directly ensures the security of all citizens, both Muslim and non-Muslim, by means of stipulating strict rules to anyone that disturbs other people's soul, dignity, life, and property. The state also directly guarantees the health of its whole citizens, both Muslim and non-Muslim by providing free medical and health facilities. Finally, the state provides affordable or even free and adequate education facilities

To ensure the implementation of Islamic economic system, an adequate social system is required. It comprises of the relationship between individuals or groups in various aspects that shapes a society. The establishment of Muslim communities consist of the characteristics of *ta'awun* (mutual aid), *takaful* (mutual share of the burden), and *tadhomun* (having solidarity). The characteristics are instruments of social capital. Al-Jayyousi (2012) evinces that the social capital refers to the social networks, from family to neighborhood and the global human community at large. Research results of Farooqi (2006) shows that the strengthening of informal co-operative networks through the inputs of technology, financial, and human capitals from across different sectors constitutes an essential element in forwarding sustainable development.

All systems must be supported by governmental system. Islamic government system basically has several principles disparate from those of the democratic government system. The most fundamental difference lies in the sources of regulations, which are al-Qur'an and as-Sunnah. Unlike the democratic system that is underpinned by human consensus or the highest votes, in Islam, the holder of sovereignty is Shari'ah law, not the people.

The whole activities take place in a space or location. Each location has specific physical characteristics that the exploitation should be in accordance with the potentials, capacity, and the maximum limit of use. According to Nasr as quoted from Akhtar (1996), Islam, human beings, and the universe are in equilibrium, interrelated, and mutually completing. Allah is the Creator and Guardian of their sustainability. The universe was created with *hikmah*. The number, quantity, and quality have been determined perfectly, and each has been given its own roles. Every creation has its own goals. The number of resources created has been accounted for in order to cater to the needs of human beings. Al-Qur'an depicts environmental equilibrium in several words, '*adl*' (justice), '*qadar*' (fate or divine fore-ordainment), and '*mouzoon*' (balance). The earth and ecosystem have functioned in their limitations and tolerance.

4. Conclusion

The new approach to the achievements of SDGs in Muslim countries requires spiritual "injection" and a shift in the system that regulates development which leads to an Islamic economic system, including in it a regulation for the utilization of natural resources and the environment, Islamic education system, Islamic social system, and Islamic government system. Spiritual development will create ideal human beings according to Islam, with a highlight on great social and environmental awareness. The ideal human beings will shape cultural attitudes and behaviors necessary for the achievement of sustainable development. The opportunity for this achievement is even greater when the spiritual aspect is made possible and strengthened by the supporting institutional and political structures. The whole systems should mutually support and strengthen each other to be the media for the functioning of human beings as *khalifah* or caretakers of the earth. The systems will eventually not only guarantee the achievements of sustainable development characterized by justice but also the pleasure of Allah SWT.

Acknowledgements

This paper is a part of a bigger result of a research funded by Islamic Research and Training Institute (IRTI) of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. We would like to express our gratitude to the Division of Research of IRTI IDB for the financial support to conduct the research.

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