"Quality: The Roadmap to Sustainability"

The Impact of Quality on an NGO

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Abstract

The concept of sustainability appears to be a universal aim, but it remains unclear and controversial how to realise synchronized, or rather, harmonized actions that recover damages and sustain life's quality on the earth. In parallel, in order to keep up with the challenges of globalisation, almost every entity seeks to sustain its competitive advantage amidst the uncertainty and unpredictability that characterize the contemporary world of business and development. The Total Quality concept represents a solution or a road map to positively respond to the internal deficiencies of a system, and to the external threats and global challenges.

This paper proposes an approach that analyses the various aspects of quality leading to human satisfaction, since human beings are solely accountable for environmental deterioration and inclusively concerned with survival. Concerned players are categorized in major sectors embedded into a puzzle of roles that, when functioning in synergy, could tackle sustainability issues. Synergy is the most logical formula capable of ensuring developmental and environmental sustainability. These propositions are illustrated by the real life experience of Imam Sadr Foundation, an NGO guided by the principles of quality to intensify its social and developmental impact amidst the conflict that ravages its area of action.

Introduction

Charles Darwin states that "it is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change." This ability is actually much required nowadays, where "the sole constant in the formula is change. It has thus become unwanted that the present is relaxed and assured to what the future would bring; the cause has turned into eagerly envisaging every evening what realities would subsequent days carry[1]". The cause no longer lies in accepting or refusing change; change should rather be promoted through transforming threats into investable opportunities. Besides, realising value through improving known facts is no longer sufficient; one should learn how to delve into the unknown[2].

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[1] Extracted from paper presented by Dr. Rabab Sadr in the Conference on Quality Management Systems, Beirut, 2001, "Quality in the Civil Sector in Lebanon, a Reading into the Course of Imam Sadr Foundation", P.19, unpublished research.

[2] Extracted from a lecture given by Dr. Jamshed Jeeh Irani, Chairman of Indian-American Business Council, titled "Corporate Social Responsibility in

Throughout history, people have adapted to dealing with a changing environment that arises from a natural drive independent of human will. However, what has been introduced during the past decades is a more complicated interactive relationship between people and the environment. In fact, global warming, biological diversity, and other environmental changes are no longer independent of people's activities. The resulting complication, at the level of phenomena and outcomes, compels that new methodologies are adopted in order to dissect facts and touch on solutions. It has become irrational to sink into events that diverge one from recognising the trend. Thus one should maintain scenarios that take note of all potential "reactions" of nature to people's actions on one hand,

and realise damages incurred thus far in order to be restored on the other.

The first section of this paper presents the concept of sustainability, its dimensions and the key-players. Sections two and three address the development of the concept of quality, so as to keep up with the challenges of globalisation. These sections also propose an approach that differentiates among the various elements of quality, so that the latter leads to human satisfaction since human beings are solely concerned with environmental sustainability and responsible for its deterioration and, thus, maintenance. The fourth section categorises concerned parties into several major sectors and proposes a comprehensive classification of roles that, when functioning in synergy, could tackle sustainability issues. Synergy is believed to be the most logical formula capable of ensuring developmental and

the Indian Experience", in the 27th annual meeting of the Indian-American Business Council, 2002.

environmental sustainability. The last section demonstrates the experience of an NGO guided by the principles of quality, in order to intensify its social and developmental interventions.

When discussing the roles of major players in sustainability-fulfilling quality, it will be noticed that these roles/procedures are complementary, or assumed to be so. Quality is in fact not only a state of mind, but also the methodology most destined to transfer sustainability from the current assumptive state to an achievable and measurable track.

What Is Meant by Sustainability?

The concept of sustainable development has recently emerged since environment conservation became a top priority and a predominant headline in policies, treaties and major projects. Its significance finds its roots in the high costs of environmental deterioration on the continuity of life on this planet. The pressing questions, on all levels ranging from the individual to the international, are: (1) is sustainable development possible? (2) How can it be made possible? (3) How to teach and learn the means to sustain life on this planet in order to maintain it bright and blue in this universe?

In its report addressed to former US president Bill Clinton, the American Council for Sustainable Development recommended three kinds of learning[3]:

1- Learn how to believe in becoming rich by wanting little rather than by having much;

[3] Olson, Molly Harris (1996), "Charting a course for sustainability". *Environment*. 38. No. 4. Expanded Academic ASAP. Gale. Retrieved on 17 Jan. 2008

2- Draw legislations in line with nature's boundaries and capacities rather than human desires;

3- Accumulate greater knowledge about how ecological systems respond to human activity.

These kinds of learning require much effort, especially those dedicated to learn how one could feel fulfilled. Furthermore, most legislation all over the world reflects citizens' desires or special interests, while disregarding neighbouring countries' legislation or the general interest of humanity. In addition, the concept of sustainability still carries various connotations depending on the party using it.

In for-profit organisations, shareholders look for highest returns and lowest risks for their investments; they thus look at companies with the highest chance of continuity. Continuity hence implies 'the ability of an organisation to adapt to change in the business environment to capture contemporary best practice and methods and to achieve and maintain superior competitive performance' (Zairi 2002).[4]

The concept of sustainability is also present in NGO literature, where project sustainability is a basic headline sought by donors. The latter are interested in projects that will continue after external support comes to an end, as well as in those with long-lasting social and developmental impact. Of the many factors upon which project sustainability depends, the most significant are looking into the views of implementers and beneficiaries, choosing the appropriate technology, taking into consideration environmental aspects, social and cultural

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[4] Zairi, M. (2002) Beyond TQM implementation: the new paradigm of TQM sustainability. *Total Quality Management.* Vol. 13. No. 8. p.1161

acceptance, and organisations' ability to manage the project.

Since sustainable development became a widespread topic in the past couple of decades, its definitions abounded; however a clear and consensual one is yet to be set. There remains a general agreement on the following:

1- There is a need to stop environmental deterioration and to conserve the vital role of natural systems, for the sake of present and future generations. According to some, sustainable development is the 'development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Quinn – 2000 and Gladwin et al. – 1995). Others (Garvate & Isaksson – 2001) consider sustainable development to be a 'process to reach a steady state where both humanity and nature thrive'[5]. In both definitions, as in many others, the issue at stake is the means rather than the goal, where the need to survive represents a general consensus. Major discussions are currently being held among nations over many unsettled issues related to management of natural resources and ensuring environmental sustainability.

2- The process is of concern to different entities, including individuals, organisations and societies. In addition to the benefits, risks and life-conservation, the main driving forces are equity among generations and virtue.

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[5] Both cited by Zairi (2002), ibid., p. 1162

3- Sustainable development has three dimensions: economical, environmental and social. This leads to revisiting the concept of the Triple Bottom Line = People, Planet, Profit, and re-expressing the need to formulate a smart equation that ensures prosperity of the three parties with no hegemony of one over the others. According to the above-mentioned report, the three dimensions are interconnected and need to be tackled together[6]. For instance, GDP is no longer an indicator used in developmental assessment, unless accompanied by an index of waste of natural resources. The same applies to unemployment. Alone, it fails to provide a picture of the workers' conditions; it thus should be coupled with information on wages and work environment, along with the latter's adherence to health and safety measures.

These three discussed dimensions are present in most literature on development, where the only divergence is mainly detected at the level of emphasising one dimension rather than the others. One could thus differentiate between those who focus on local development by giving priority to the economic and social dimensions and those interested in developing resources and by giving priority to both environment and economics, while ecologists focus on environment and society.

Humans thus face three mandatory and synchronised headlines. The following table is suggested for further study and analysis:

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[6] Olson (1996). Ibid.

Table 1: Dimensions of Sustainability

Dimension / Goal	Means	Main Player(s)
1- Economic growth	Creating added value	Private sector
2- Sustaining results and widening their impact	Empowerment and social integration	Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)
3- Conserving the environment, meaning the rights of all generations	Competence and optimised resource-utilisation	Public sector and international organisations

The table above does not intend to suggest a new division of labour especially that the crosscutting among the sectors' tasks is too complicated to be narrowed down. In fact, as thousands of NGOs focus on environment and as social responsibility expands within companies, the practical impossibility of separating the three dimensions becomes more evident.

The next section of the paper tackles the methodology of quality. Today, companies tend to incorporate environmental and social responsibilities, while maintaining their primary focus of creating value and increasing economic returns. They thus still aim at widening the circle of the beneficiaries from economic growth. Furthermore, civic organisations cannot but modify their structures and technologies in order to become flexible enough to adapt to the fast pace of change and to the pressures of

doubts and unknowns. Total Quality has a say in both issues.

Quality Is the Solution

The concept of quality, with its connotations and applications, developed over several stages. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, the concept remained in its first three stages a problem that needs a solution: whether quality control, quality management or quality assurance, the focus remained on the internal processes within the organisation. However, the 1990s witnessed a leap towards focusing on the beneficiary, where quality became a solution and organisations moved towards anticipating and meeting consumer and market needs. Thus, we noticed this shift from being in search of a solution for a problem to being an avoided problem, implying that control and inspection are converted to prevention. It

now signifies an increase in productivity and reduction in costs rather than an additional burden[7]. It is thus at the core of sustainability, since reducing costs implies saving nature resources; especially that "focus shifted from the minimum acceptable risk to the organisation's vision based on sustainable development."[8] In fact, safety of workers and customers has become a definite criterion. Besides, work processes are being improved to minimise waste of resources used in production on one hand and minimise output of pollutants on the other.

Globalisation, along with its challenges at the levels of certitude and forecasts (wider markets, changing production patterns, and inevitable world-market competition), induced the fifth stage of quality (Kaye &

[7] Zairi, M. (2002) ibid., p.1161-1172
[8] Ernest D. Weiler; Larry S. Andrews; Kevin H. Reinert; Kathleen V. Maher, (2005), *"Institutionalizing Sustainability Concepts: Some Decision Support Tools",* Environmental Quality Management; Spring 2005; 14, 3;

Dyason–1995)[9]. The latter was aroused through competitive continuous improvement, and is now known as Total Quality. Focus shifted towards organisations' flexibility to quickly respond to the changing moods of consumers, who promptly interact with competitors' benchmark and inventions. "A world-class organisation is one that has the production and/or service capability that is competitive in the dynamic global economy."[10]

Nowadays, companies address not only beneficiaries' satisfaction but also their delight. By beneficiaries, total quality not only implies consumers but also shareholders, suppliers, and employees among others, i.e. the entire society. The concern of maximising shareholder returns is fading to give way to maximising all beneficiaries' interests.

Total Quality is a comprehensive model for emphasising learning, collaboration and innovation. In order to face the existential challenges of environmental sustainability, three principles of total quality should be met: learning how to objectively assess environmental problems, collaborating as fundamental parties to remedy these problems, and inventing new solutions to conserve the environment.

An Analytical Approach to Quality

There are several methodologies for quality, and each has its distinct approach. The approach adopted in this paper purposely sorts the components of total quality in a manner that allows distinguishing various levels of quality elements, as follows:

1- Quality General Goal

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[9] Cited in Zairi, M. (2002), ibid., p.1165
[10] Zairi, M. (2002), ibid., p.1165

Human Satisfaction, instead of "beneficiary satisfaction" or "customer satisfaction" as listed in literature on quality. Successful organisations, far and wide, are those that institutionalised the culture of quality, and thus became governed by values of rights, equity, integrity, equal opportunities, social responsibility, environmental respect and seeking what's best for the general good.

Human satisfaction is realised through a series of steps, mainly acknowledging a person's needs – i.e. human rights – and aspirations. Balancing these rights with human duties towards others and towards the environment. Respecting the social contract with the state (respecting laws and paying taxes) is also of utmost importance.

Realising human satisfaction requires ensuring its occurrence, through accompanying and consulting people, as well as managing relationships with them within a framework of pre-acknowledgement and mutual respect. The so-called quality of life comprises of human rights to positive learning, work compatible with their cognitive and scientific abilities, life within a clean environment, and integration within the society[11].

2- Three Basic principles of quality

Continual improvement, which is identified by some to be a general goal of total quality. Human satisfaction is however believed to remain a nobler goal;

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[11] Bahzani, Universities and the Eco-techno-ideology, retrieved on January 15, 2008 from www.bahzani.net,

while continuous improvement of capacities, policies and procedures is rooted in serving people, and not vice versa. Said principle stands for a prompt, continuous and cumulative progress that aims at improving both processes and outcomes in order to eventually enhance efficiency, competence, as well as ability to analyse problems, infer solutions and promote innovations.

Improvement in this context denotes "evolution" to indicate the significance of continuity and accumulation, as opposed to "revolution" which is associated with revolting against prevailing conditions. By no means does this eliminate chances of sudden steps forward in the fields of discovery, concepts and systems. In fact,

quality represents the enabling and catalysing environment for breakthroughs and brilliant leaps, and not the other way around. This concept's centrality led some to upgrade it to the level of "the culture of continuous improvement"[12], the backbone of which is the ability of the system, or organisation, to adapt to changing opportunities and to requirements of all involved parties.

Methodological steps for continuous improvement entail identifying the field that requires improvement, its problems and sought outcomes; selecting the issues to be studied; revealing obstacles; collecting and analysing data on obstacles; carrying out

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[12] Zairi, M. Ibid., P.1170

corrective measures; and finally monitoring the results of undertaken measures.

Total involvement: the issue here is the core of quality, which lies in the organisational framework but applies primarily to the broader human one. People would not put forth more efforts to protect the environment and improve quality of life unless they are partners in decision-making process[13]. Besides, as organisational structures shift towards becoming more complicated, several basic decisions are being made at the level of middle-management. This phenomenon rendered bottom-up communication, as well as top-down one, significant, without relegating the role of high-rank individuals in leading the process of change[14].

It is known that with the IT and telecommunication revolution, and despite the various obstacles set by patents and intellectual property rights, industrial secrets and modes of production are not monopolised anymore. Thus in the time of fierce competition, sustainable competitive advantage no longer outperforms others' competitive edges, nor the ability of organisations and countries to involve individuals in building a better future through project-ownership. The latter entails satisfaction, self-fulfilment, enthusiasm, dedication, belonging and pride.

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[13] Olson, M. Ibid

[14] Ernest D., ibid

When addressing quality as a human priority, the first and foremost issue is the challenge of involving everybody, through three dimensions: (1) subjecting people to the concepts and techniques of quality, (2) sharing gains and losses – if any, and (3) gradually empowering them in influenced and influencing participation. The pivotal role of CSOs that are directly connected to grassroots lies in this particular issue; it will be discussed in detail later on.

Improving processes and procedures: it is momentous to achieve one's aspirations on condition that the employed means are not only adequate, but also ensure realisation of the same, if not better, results when reapplied.

Means for achieving goals are of utmost importance as they incubate the learning element, which in turn leads to the first principle of continuous improvement. Improving procedures entails a series of steps, mainly: identifying the process's course, approach, results, and intersection with other processes; evaluating potential risks; and defining responsibilities.

3- Elements or Means

- **Leadership committed** to illustrating the vision and to mobilising towards the general goals;

- **An enabling structure** formed in accordance with the organisation's mission;

- **Lifelong learning** through institutionalising research and training centres within a comprehensive empowerment vision;

- **Evaluation and performance assessment** in order to establish a fact-based environment for decision-making;

- **Incentives and assessment of achievements** in order to provide motivation and strengthen commitment and innovation chances;

- **Decisions based on scientific and statistical data**, which is to be analysed methodologically and logically;

- **Effective communication** that is to take place in several dimensions in order to strengthen participation and exchange of information.

In brief, the components of total quality, along with its goals, principles, means or conditions could be summarised in the following diagram[15]:

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[15] Raed Charefeddine, *"Lebanon and Quality: Luxury or Priority?"* This model was firstly presented in the first conference of the Lebanese Society for Quality (LSQ) held in Beirut on the 7th of April, 2007 and entitled "Developing the Culture of Quality: A Basis for Success"

Diagram 1: Analytical Framework of Quality
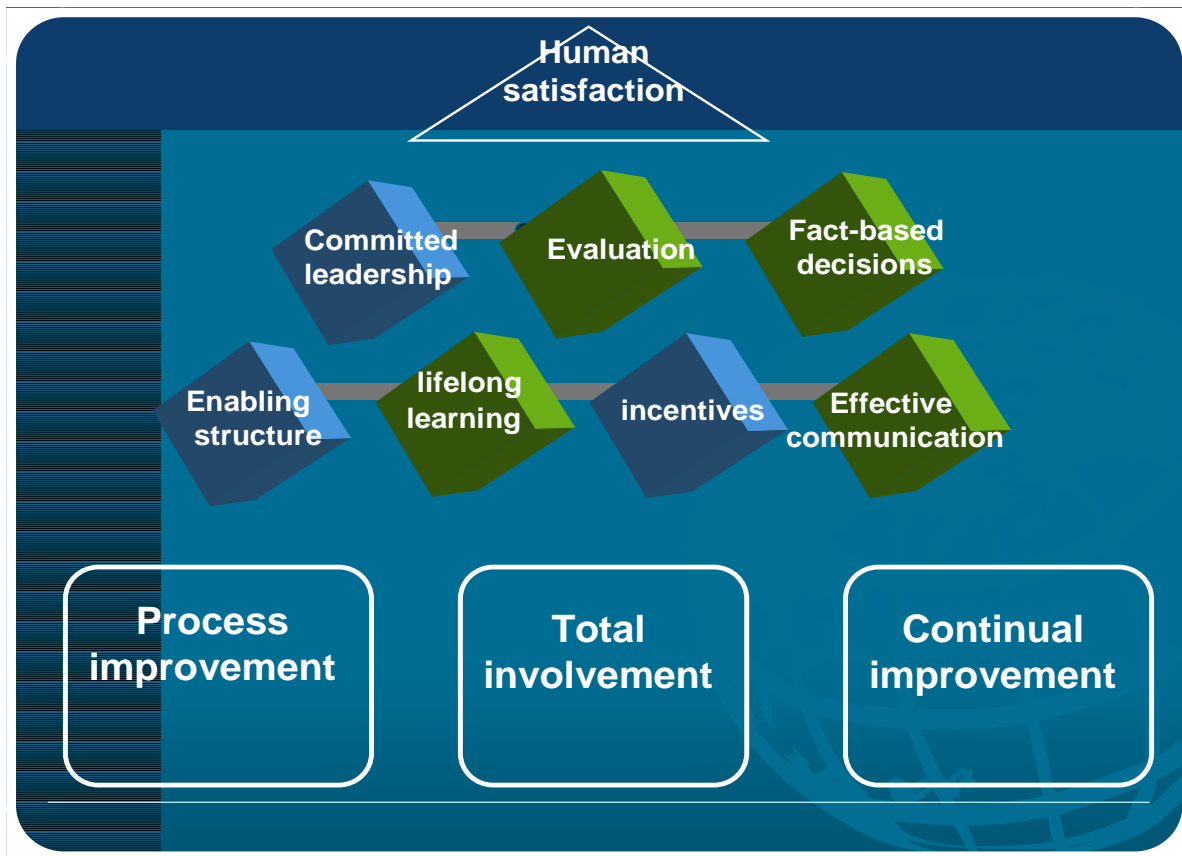
What needs to be explained and stressed in the above diagram is human satisfaction, which from a sustainable development standpoint applies to all times and locations. This is the case as preserving the rights of future generations and considering equity in spreading luxury are the core of sustainability.

At this point, and upon the conviction that the system being discussed is Planet Earth along with its human culture, how can one envision collective participation in running and

preserving this system? And whom does the word "collective" involve?

The Key-Players and Their Expected Roles

The paper already referred to the major fields (economic growth, sustainability of results, and conserving generations' rights) that are related to the main sectors, from a sustainability perspective. The perspective of Total Quality reveals equivalence among many axes. This fact leads to more detailed examination; especially because quality has reached circles beyond its initial adepts of academics, organisers, or decision-makers in private-sector organisations. Similarly, sustainable development stretches to entities ahead of governments and policy makers (Garvare & Isaksson – 2001).

Therefore, sustainable development can be achieved through the Individuals–Organisations–Societies trinity; however, the priorities of the concerned parties need to be redefined.[16]

This paper suggests the following new definitions of these roles from the perspective of Total Quality.

First: The Public Sector – expanding options through securing an appropriate environment for invigorating the culture of quality

1- **The "Good" State** or the state of quality: adopts the concepts and methodology of quality in its performance. It is of elemental importance in developing countries, where the state still plays a direct role in providing

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[16] Cited in Zairi, M. (2002), ibid. p.1162

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health, educational and social services, and in managing the electrical power and water resources. As the government plays the role of the service provider, it needs to abide by the methodology and tools of quality.

2- **The Regulatory State:** sets the necessary legislative framework, as well as sectional legislations related to the infrastructure of quality, such as specifications, technical conditions, and standards. Furthermore, it assesses adhesion to set standards, monitors markets and more importantly sets up or identifies organisations that provide certifications, assess adhesion and sign mutual recognition agreements with similar organisations in other countries.

3- **The Facilitating State:** provides political and moral support to forums concerned with quality; prioritises the major related options; sets up specialised task forces that encompass all sectors; and establishes focal points in all ministries with the sole task of encouraging quality initiatives and activating them.

Second: The Private Sector – maximising returns or creating added value; this sector:

1- **Leads** other sectors, and acts as a catalyst for quality initiatives and a leader in synergy among all stakeholders;

2- **Produces** quality, adopts the methodology of quality in

continuous improvement of products and processes, and creates employment opportunities;

3- **Incubates** and assimilates innovators and pioneers through adopting policies of incentives and rewards, and also provides necessary funds in the form of laboratories, grants and researches.

Third: CSOs – empowering the vulnerable through social services, and encouraging innovation through academic institutions. At the level of Services and Empowerment, this sector:

1- **Monitors** needs and society's expectations, as well as potential side effects on different social groups;

2- **Links** successful local experiences to experiences of other organisations and societies;

3- **Ensures** continuity of quality projects and expansion of their impact to reach various groups, especially the marginalised, the vulnerable, and those with special needs.

CSOs have extended their role beyond protecting the interests of their members (such as syndicates). They now struggle for a participatory rule, i.e. democracy, and thus face the "nationality-less" and "title-less" forces (the dark side of globalisation). Civil society is becoming the solid nucleus of a modernising society and a guarantee against extremist alternatives. Interdependence and trans-national networks may well be the adequate response to chauvinism and

invading hegemonies, as civil society may be the gate to the culture of quality.

At the level of <u>Higher Education, Research and Development:</u>

Special attention should be given to colleges, institutions and research centres as a distinct concerned entity within civil society. In fact, the central components of quality remain learning, habilitation and innovation, especially as wealth formation increasingly depends on intelligence.

The competitive advantage of the higher education (as well as higher technical education) sector can be invested in:

1- **Development:** Modernise specialisations and programs in accordance with the latest technological advances; establish research centres and laboratories; and contribute to setting standards and granting patents and certificates;

2- **Framing:** Organise specialised forums and workshops; and host events for industrialists in order to discuss the latest production techniques, exchange expertise, understand their needs, and perceive their expectations regarding the required skills and market orientations;

3- **Excellence Incubator:** Discover innovators and provide the environment necessary to unleash their utmost capacities.

Fourth: International Organisations

Sustainable development concerns are acknowledged as global and thus transcend national and political boundaries. This describes global environmental and health threats (ocean

and river pollution, depletion of the ozone layer, bird flu, etc.), especially with the disintegration of boundaries that resulted in an influx of commodities, individuals, ideas, capital, and especially debt issues. Such global challenges require collective efforts, where international and regional organisations are best placed to fulfil the crucial need for collaboration. These organisations thus became the instrument, the arena and the actor all at once.[17]

In other terms, international organisations need to play the following roles:

1- **Convenors:** They should invite all parties to discuss their problems, especially so because international organisations are widely accepted to be representative and relatively neutral;

2- **Financiers:** Many international funds are established to handle global or human problems such as the World Environmental Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Bank, etc.;

3- **Hubs:** At a time when most governments adopt decentralisation to achieve local development and partly relinquish sovereignty to the benefit of multi-party alliances, international organisations can connect local, national and international efforts;

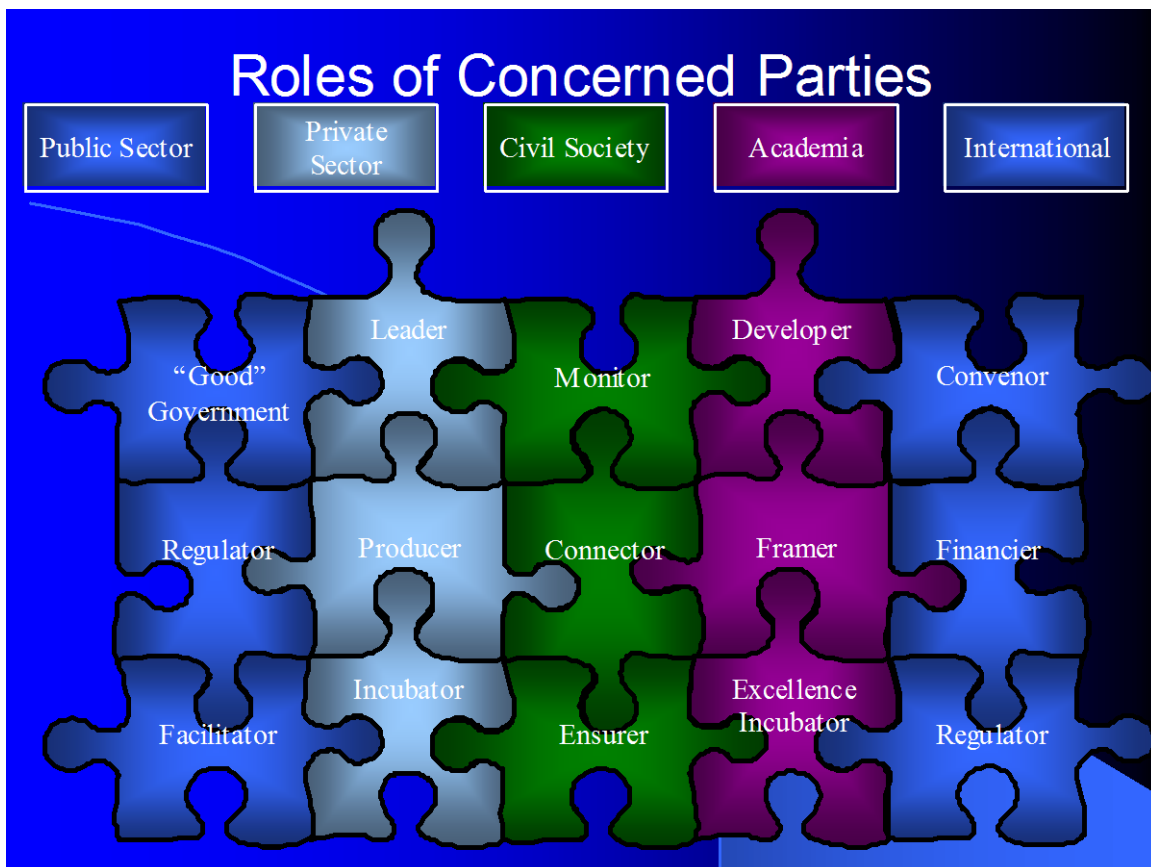4- **Regulators:** Set legislations and standards that are to be globally abided by. These could protect

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[17] Ivanova, H. Maria, (2002), *"Partnerships, International Organizations, and Global Environmental Governance",* presented to the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy. Retrieved on 30 Jany.2008

ecological and meteorological systems, provide ratings and patents, as well as facilitate fairer commercial transactions that contribute to solving development problems in many countries;

The following chart aims at painting the full picture.

Diagram 2: Roles of Concerned Parties

Roles of Concerned Parties

| Public Sector | Private Sector | Civil Society | Academia | International |

"Good" Government	Leader	Monitor	Developer	Convenor
Regulator	Producer	Connector	Framer	Financier
Facilitator	Incubator	Ensurer	Excellence Incubator	Regulator

What do these results point at? How can total quality lead to sustainable development?

Diagram 3: From Quality to Development
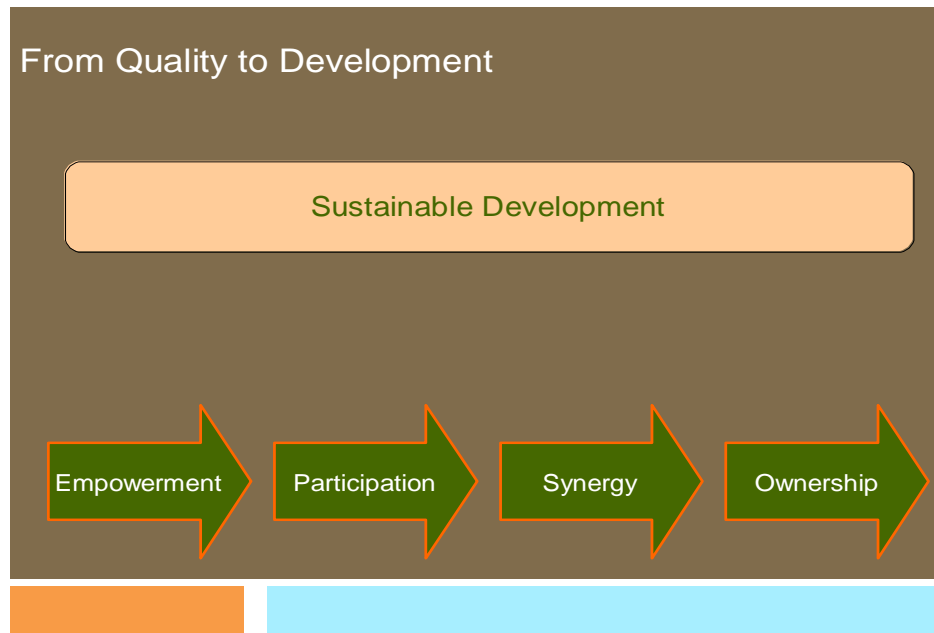
Model developed by M. Bassam, Head of Research and Assessment, Imam Sadr Foundation.

In the foreword of the Arabic Glossary of Development Terms, the following is noted: "Human development is expanding people's options by building their capacities. This vision does not turn into a fact without participation. People gradually reach participation rather than take it as a starting point. It is thus a good idea to start with building participation capacity among people. Here lies the initial investment that leads to people's ownership of development projects that guarantees their success."[18]

Furthermore, quality is based on empowerment through continuous and integrated development of processes. It is thus similar to human empowerment in the sense of adopting the culture of lifelong learning. The bases of quality are completed with the concept of total or

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[18] The Arabic Glossary of Development Terms, 2004, Publications of Imam Sadr Foundation, Beirut, p.4

collective involvement. In the context of the challenges of sustainable development, the word "collective" refers to all entities interconnected in the puzzle of developmental relations be it individuals, regional, national, or universal figures. The main challenge remains how to organise synergy rules, such that solidarity among components through interdependence leads to an increased gross output and to an increased productivity of each component. The ideal answer lies once again in the concept of Total Quality: entirely productive synergy can be achieved through Total Quality, along with its effective communication, appropriate structures, performance assessments, and processes enhancement.

Experience of the Imam Sadr Foundation

Many in today's world consider that CSOs are the only hope to protect humanity from the dangers of extreme alternatives: conflict of civilisations, monopolising depleting natural resources, options that destroy future life on the planet. This hope takes its roots in the idea that civil society holds human consciousness and provides a forum for free multi-party debate. It thus averts extremists and leads to compromises that save human pride and ensure future life.

However, one cannot expect that socially-marginalised groups would care for either their brethren or the environment.[19] Thus, by expanding the circle of beneficiaries of economic growth and integrating

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[19] Sustainable Development Education Panel, www. defra.gov.uk/sustainable/educpanel/furthering, retrieved on 31 Jan.2008

marginalised groups and protecting vulnerable ones, CSOs indirectly contribute to conserving the environment.

The following sections discuss the experience of one CSO that has been active for over four decades in an inflamed region, where currents and interests clash under various political, geographical and cultural banners. The presentation will be confined to the quality perspective; for those who wish to look into its humanitarian and developmental contributions, more information can be found on its website;

www.imamsadrfoundation.org.

Brief Overview of the Foundation

Imam Sadr Foundation is a non-profit, charitable, developmental, and social organisation of public utility. It launched its operations at the beginning of the 1960s and became a public utility organisation as per the Lebanese law. It also gained the consultative status of the Social and Economic Council of the United Nations-ECOSOC (2002). The Foundation's headquarters are in Tyr, South Lebanon, and it has offices in Beirut as well as representative ones in USA and Canada, besides a worldwide network of associates.

The Foundation aims to empower beneficiaries to create their own conditions and enhance their ability to organise themselves. This thus raises their chances of benefiting from public services and economic growth. In other words, beneficiaries need to control their lives, respect their own agendas, feel their internal powers, and trust themselves as well as their entourage. They can thus exercise their legitimate right to choose

among alternatives and to influence the course of their societies and futures.

The Foundation aims to contribute in establishing a harmonious society that is confident in its pluralism and open to others. It is the Foundation's goal to eradicate deprivation in all its forms, be it concrete or intangible. Its activities range from attending to the basic needs of specific deprived groups, to developmental, social and cultural contributions that reach broad classes of beneficiaries.

Moreover, the Foundation offers at its fully-equipped cultural complex in Tyr a variety of academic and vocational educational programs, in addition to a continuous care program that targets girl-orphans and hardship cases. Furthermore, it provides social services, as well as preventive and curative healthcare through a network of dispensaries spread

in South Lebanon. Aside from these programs, it launches several economic and social-empowerment projects, and research and archival activities.

The Foundation succeeded in building a comprehensive team, characterised by a variety of specialisations and the presence of competent and integrated personnel (it is to be noted that the workforce is dominated by women, including the high-ranking positions). It is currently modernising its structures and systems through the introduction of IT and communication systems and the application of the advanced principles of management. The Foundation's record reveals a clear commitment to remedy women's problems and attend to their educational, health and career needs. It has thus gained an important reputation among women, especially the poor, due to

its substantial interventions in the lives of women of South Lebanon.

Quality in Vision and Strategic Choices

In the 1960s, Imam Moussa Al-Sadr summarised the major contemporary issues: "*Despotism and claiming guardianship of the masses, accusing them of being ignorant and incapable of being in charge of themselves, are among the many forms of oppression that crush the energy of a people; as are the use of neglectful policies that reduce the people's opportunities, thus denying them any chance of advancement and even depriving them of good health.*" He further depicts the desired country: "*Lebanon of Tomorrow is a country of justice and equal opportunities, a unified Arab country that carries the message of humanity, civilisation, a place where values and freedom dwell.*"

In an attempt to turn his vision into reality, Imam Al-Sadr employed scientific methodology in social work. He thus adopted:

- Study of social and economic situation (statistics, research, etc.);

- Strategic vision and understanding the consequences of deprivation, which affect the deprived as well as the wealthy through repercussions and social tension;

- Focus on institutional organisation as a primary condition of the success of any action;

- Creating circumstances that allow women to participate in social and cultural emergence.

Facing the threats of marginalisation and misery, and understanding the opportunities of equity and freedom, Imam Al-Sadr accomplished many

changes. Therefore, the Foundation's vision of human society takes root in Imam Sadr's values. In fact, according to the Foundation's culture, targeted citizens are at the core of the social action and their needs guide programs and indicate necessary modifications. Target groups are chosen according to deprivation, where continuity relies upon participation. Priorities are thus always set in accordance with the pressing needs, regardless of religion, gender or other factors.

Diagram 4: Structure for Civic Action (on: www.imamsadrfoundation.org.lb)
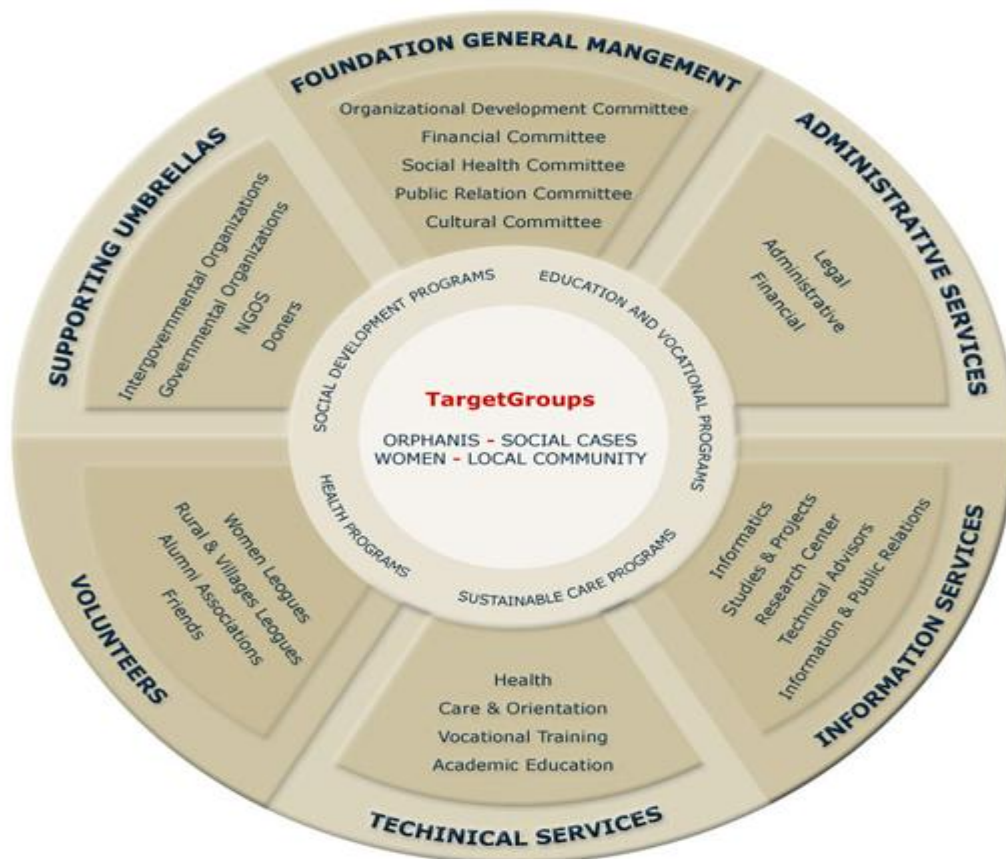
In addition to positioning the beneficiaries in the heart of the system, one can recognise all concerned parties, including government entities and international bodies. These will be discussed later when describing performance.

The Foundation's main geographical area is still the **rural** part of South Lebanon. Reaching approximately 1,300 students and trainees, and with around 50,000 individuals benefiting from the health and social centres, in addition to nearly 400 employees, the Foundation achieved an important developmental and environmental goal due to its strategic positioning in rural areas. In fact, this decision resulted in conservation of the environment; contributed to the defence of a national identity; and limited the formation of rural-based slums around cities. These accomplishments drive confidence and pride.

Empowering **women** lies at the core of the objectives of Imam Sadr Foundation. The evaluation of the Foundation's social returns reveals that women represent a direct beneficiary group. This is in fact depicted by the impact of women in their families, as compared to their situation had the Foundation not intervened.

Empowerment at the levels of education, psychology, health, society and rights takes place through raising awareness on the rights of women and children. It represents a comprehensive methodology that aims at building women's capacities at three different parallel levels: (i) action, to equally contribute to decision-making in all domains; (ii) collective work, to participate in active and purposeful social groups; and (iii) personal aptitude, to develop belief in themselves and in their ability to induce change.

Application of Quality in Performance and Activities.

Administrative development was introduced to the Foundation upon the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in 2000. Efforts in this respect took place at various levels, including consulting experienced entities; holding a series of workshops and sessions on training, evaluation and planning; and restructuring basic and middle positions through acquiring new expertise and developing capacities of personnel.

Organizational development **goals** were defined as follows:

- Establish a realistic bases for building an organisational structure that reflects the Foundation's understanding of its works on one hand and the employees' aspirations on the other;

- Empower units and departments to formulate their own mission statements, and formulate a comprehensive and updated mission for the Foundation;

- Facilitate the process of acquiring data related to decision-making, through standardised periodical and annual reports;

- Enhance organisational and administrative skills of officers in particular, and employees and volunteers in general;

- Employ activities in internal public relations that boost motivation and acquaint different departments;

- Prepare regulation and accountability standards, and clarify administrative processes in order to improve productivity.

Outputs of the administrative development process included formulating a mission statement for each productive unit; preparing job descriptions; administrative organisation charts; periodical reports and business processes; and introducing IT and telecommunication in various processes. At the level of programs and services, outputs encompassed updating curricula for all subjects and educational levels. At the vocational training level, for instance, academic and training materials were first identified and were later allocated individual educational modules. Aside, new specialisations were introduced at the national level in response to market requirements and civil society expectations (social animation and agricultural orientation). At the level of people with special needs, in-house abilities to conduct diagnosis were built.

In addition, individual curricula pertaining to learning difficulties were developed, where a new study-program based on introducing music was set in order to help people with special needs adapt to their disabilities and stimulate their learning and social capacities.

The main **results** were speeding-up procedures and data-processing, expanding turn-over (by a factor of 3.5), improving rates of job permanency, acquiring qualified and young staff, institutionalising training elements, and building capacities of the whole team according to specialisations and responsibilities.

Impact has been noted in several fields; many other are still underway. The main ones are: improvement in educational attainment by 20%; introduction of new specialisations, mainly programs for people with special needs and for social

animation; expansion in the range of health services, as offered specialisations rose from seven to fifteen; improvement in medical equipment; and rise in the number of laboratories (from two to four), permanent centres (from six to eight) and mobile centres (from one to three). Aside from this progress, the number of partners grew to reach 32 as of last year, not to mention partnerships with sister-organisations and government entities. These efforts were accompanied by diverse implemented projects of different contract values.

The positive effects of administrative development have started to materialise at the level of those involved in the Foundation's regular programs, such as first-aid providers, teachers, students and patients. Total Quality efforts soon proved to open new work horizons, and act as a bridge towards sustainable development.

Interaction with involved parties and with the civil society yielded projects superior to traditional services, yet attending to vital needs and serving the Foundation's developmental goals. Partners and supporters positively responded to the proposed ideas, a fact that allowed implementing several projects. Following is a list of select projects:

- **The Arabic Glossary of Development Terms:** 2004, with the support of the World Bank and ESCWA, and the contribution of leading experts, academics, and social and development activists;

- **NGOs Organisational Development in Information and Communication Technology:** 2003 – 2006, with the support of the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations

Development Organisations (AGFUND);

- **Income Generation and Food Security for Rural Poor Households in South Lebanon:** 2001 – 2003, with the support of IFAD and the Mennonite Central Committee;

- **Snack Supply to Public Schools:** 2001 – 2007, with the support the IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities) and financed by USAID (United States Agency for International Development);

- **Awareness on Women's Rights:** 2002 – 2007, in partnership with the Group for Research and Training for Development Action;

- **Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Former**

Detainees in South Lebanon: 2005 – 2006, within the context of the socio-economic development program of UNDP, in collaboration with the Lebanese government represented by CDR;

- **Economic and Professional Empowerment of Female Farmers in the South:** 2007, as part of the Community Development Project and in cooperation with the CDR (Council for Development and Reconstruction) and the World Bank;

- **Creation of a Pool of Social Workers:** 2006 – 2007, Global Fund for Women;

- **Solar Water Heating System:** 2007, as a donation from UNDP, through SIDA (Swedish

International Development Agency);

- **Summer Camps for Children from the region to ease the impact of the war:** 2006 – 2007, in partnership with UNICEF;

- **Assessment of Reproductive Health Features:** 2007, with the support of WHO;

- **Fast Track Vocational Training for Women of Beirut's Southern Suburbs:** 2008, with the support of UNDP.

Conclusion

Imam Sadr Foundation prepares to expand its experience of applying Total Quality through ensuring that its systems and procedures are in line with Corporate Governance criteria. It is also discussing with its strategic partners several projects that would instigate development in various Lebanese regions, despite the atmosphere of unrest that currently dominates Lebanon. As a matter of fact, development, justice and change may constitute radical solutions that eradicate the factors of unrest in the region's societies.

The case of Imam Sadr Foundation revealed adherence to most elements of Total Quality as described by related experiences and literature. The paper thus deduces two ideas:

First, the solution lies in sustainable development that is comprehensive at the levels of time and place. It is no longer logical to improvise partial solutions to global issues, especially after environmental problems aggravated, pressure on natural resources increased, and borders that limited the movement of

people, ideas, capital and commodities disintegrated. This comprehensive and sustained solution requires solidarity among all concerned players, as the exclusion of any party is simply a call to avoidable additional obstacles.

Second, all concerned parties need to experience Total Quality in their operations, philosophies and partnerships. Total Quality, which was bred within private institutions, is currently needed to enhance the performance of the public sector, civil organisations and international bodies. An agreement on a set of criteria and principles will definitely synchronise concerned parties, yielding increased competence, efficiency and consistency in results.

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