

**Civil Society Intervention in the Plenary Panel 2: Understanding the Nexus, 16 November 2011, Bonn Nexus Conference, by Shiney Varghese, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy**

Referring to the presentation by Global compact person, on integrating: 1. governance, 2. pricing as a means of valuing Natural resources, and 3. the need for integration of social economic and environmental aspect, this intervention is to share a different perspective on the same issues.

Failure in governance and lack of regulation in private sector, especially in the areas such as finance and natural resource use, has had several negative impacts. The most serious of these include large scale corruption, food price speculation and resulting food insecurity, as well as degradation of natural resources leading to water insecurity. Strong regulatory frameworks have to be integral part of the governance for the nexus approach to be realized meaningfully. In other words, institutional mechanisms for holding corporations accountable should be available for exercise when voluntary corporate responsibility does not meet the desired standards for the well being of the society, from social, economic, health and sustainability point of views of the communities they affect.

Pricing should be only one of the several tools, for appreciating the value of natural resources. Pricing of ecosystem services may make sense in some cultural contexts, where even caring for a neighbor can be an economic transaction. But there are several other ways of valuing and caring for natural resources that occur in other cultural contexts and other societies. Just as public money is paid as incentives in some countries for watershed protection practices, public support could be given to communities that value and protect ecosystems in other ways. This can be best explained by comparing ecosystems to another very similar unsung pillar of human society: women's domestic labour. Even as women's movements around the world call for valuing the reproductive role of women the call is not about pricing women's labour. Instead many of us might appreciate state-funded initiatives that would help reduce our burden as carers of homes and bearers of children, as reflected in the call by UNCSW, enabling women meet their basic needs and have opportunity for self development. Like women, whose domestic role could be appreciated through public support, rural and urban communities engaged in ecosystem protection should be appreciated for what they are doing through state funded incentives to protect their commons, and through improved infrastructure for public service delivery.

Integrating the social component in nexus solutions is easier said than done. Most of the examples of green economy in the context of the nexus are from resource efficiency perspective, and are developed mostly in the northern context. An excellent example is the growth in bio-economy. The poorest billion, actually uses resources most efficiently. Unlike them, we, who consume far beyond our share of earth's resources, surely have to improve our resource use efficiency. However, so far in these attempts to improve resource use efficiency, in the north, we have hardly had to look at the social component, since the marginalized in the north are rarely part of the green economy. In fact in the global south, a similar right based approach to green economy become essential if it is to be equitable. Integrating the social component into nexus solutions would require that green economy is built on the three nexus pillars of right to water, right to food and right to energy, two of them already recognized by the United Nations.