



OPPORTUNITIES TO INTEGRATE GREEN ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ASPECTS INTO POLICY PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCESSES IN MONGOLIA

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ABSTRACT

'Sustainable Development' becomes core strategic thinking of development agenda in last three decades and recently the 'Green Economy' terminology becomes the only tool to achieve it. Both terminologies are not well understood not only among conventional citizens but also among scientists. Sustainable Development is well defined but not the Green Economy. Hence, policy makers face serious challenges to convert the vague concept of Green Economy in the planning processes. The paper investigates the level of knowledge of both terminologies from policy makers and monitoring and evaluation officials of government organizations in Mongolia. A survey was conducted among 267 officials including 157 planners and 110 monitoring and evaluation officials in 2014. The result shows that the most of the planners, and monitoring and evaluation officials view that the 'Green Economy' is an environmentally friendly economies. However, important two aspects of the Green Economy misunderstood or never taken into account, which are improving human well-being and social equity. Planners' understanding of Sustainable Development and Green Economy is better than the monitoring and evaluation officials. The author recommend that to improve the knowledge of the Green Economy and its diverse terminologies among planners and monitoring and evaluation officials.

KEY WORDS: Sustainable Development, Green Economy, policy planning, monitoring and evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Since 2012, the United Nations conference on Sustainable Development (SD) in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, the member countries agreed to apply "Green Economy" (GE) concepts in development policies of them; and Green Economy is to refer to the economy that tends to decreasing environmental degradation and poverty, and improving human well-being. Green Economy intends to provide more opportunities to

benefit from the economic growth to the '*marginalized group*', especially poor people, and to reduce environmental degradation and natural resource scarcity. United Nations Development Programme defined that "*Green Economy is one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities*" [1]¹. The definition

¹ "Green Development Policy of Mongolia" stated that "Green Economy is an economy that results in reducing environmental risks and degradation, while has a goal to improve human well-

being and social equality" ([2]). Please note that the Green Economy is defined differently, although the study did not consider other definitions in focus.

has three aspects in general: **First** aspect is to reduce practices leading to natural resource scarcity and environmental pollution as a result of wasteful and improvident use of both renewal and non-renewal natural resources by human beings, increased natural disasters (hereafter *Environmental protection and natural resource management-NRM*). **Second** aspect is to maintain condition to ensure human right for quality life, which include such elements as environment for healthy life, food security, education and economic security, while ensuring environmental protection and proper use of natural resources (hereafter *human well-being*). **Third** aspect is for socially inclusive economic growth and development to benefit all stakeholders equally. It means to nurture living of middle income group in the society and prevent them to fall over to poverty, offer the poor all opportunities to help them to move to middle income group (hereafter *social equity*). **Marginalized group** should be provided with opportunities to benefit more from economic growth². “To provide opportunities to them” means that to enable access to education to their children, their access to social services such as social insurance, healthcare, employment and participation in social activities.

“Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” [3]. By this definition, three pillars of the development are: Sustainable 1) environmental, 2) economic and 3) social development. Mongolia included concept of Sustainable Development in Millennium Development Goals based

METHOD

Survey questionnaire was developed and finalized in consultation with officials of Department of Development Policy and Strategy Planning, Ministry of Economic Development (abolished in 2015) between June and August, 2014. The questionnaire forms were distributed to and collected the filled forms from ministries and local government offices. During both visits the instructions were given and explained to target respondents.

² Marginalized Group refers to a group of people who had been relegated to the lower echelons, or outer edges, of society based on gender, education, genealogy, culture, nationality, race, or economic status. for example: by economic status the poor, by education school drops, by health disabled, by race black people, by ethnicity Kazakhs.

³ According to the survey done by Odmaa Narantungalag, consultant of “Strengthening the Government Capacity of National Development Policy and Planning (NDPP)” project, there were 338 planning officials, who work in the departments and other structural units in Ministries, excluding Ministry of Justice and Ministry of

Comprehensive National Development Strategy of Mongolia (CNDS, 4).

The most recent consideration of the GE and SD are reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals in new Sustainable Development agenda–2030 [5]. Mongolia also approved the new development policy document which is “Mongolia Sustainable Development Vision 2030 (SDV)” approved in 2016 according to law on Development Policy Planning (DPP) that is to legislate every steps of processing and developing policy documents in Mongolia, for the first time [6, 7].

The goal of this study is to identify level of knowledge of GE and SD of government officials in DPP and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) at national and subnational level and find out how they integrate these concepts and elements into their processes. Following objectives were raised 1) Assess level of knowledge of GE and SD of officials at divisions and departments of DPP and M&E at national and subnational level; 2) Identify needs of trainings; 3) Explore to what extent a particular government institutions integrate GE and SD aspects into their work; 4) Identify challenges faced in addressing or integrating GE and SD concepts into DPP and M&E processes.

I identify the significance of the study as that it identifies gaps in understanding of GE and SD; findings of the study will be big contribution to incorporating basic principles of GE and SD into DPP processes and strong evidence for existing practice and current situation.

Survey questionnaire was developed in two different formats; one for development policy planners (hereinafter planners), another for M&E officials (MEOs). Totally, there were 286 respondents participated in the survey; however, 19 were dropped because of incomplete or invalid answers. Then, I analyzed data of 267 observations, including 157 planners (46.4% of total planners) and 110 MEOs (54.7% of total MEOs)³. The data can be statistically

Defense, and local governments to undertake responsibilities for DPP. In total, 201 government officials responsible for M&E work in the Ministries, excluding Ministry of Defense, Local Governments excluding Uvurkhangai province and Cabinet Secretariat, Government of Mongolia. No M&E official participated from Umnu Gobi province. Out of 157 Planners, 91 from ministries, 58 from provinces, 1 from local governments, 7 from districts (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Out of 110 M&E officials, 80 from Ministries, 30 from provinces.

representative as about 50% of the total planners and MEOs were participated in the survey at local and national level including 14 Ministries (out of 16 Ministries) and 21 provinces and 3 districts (*Khan-Uul, Chingeltei, Bayanzurkh* districts).

How policy planners and MEOs understand the term of GE and SD has direct effect on the activities and functions. Respondents defined the GE in their opinions and I grouped them into eight types. Therefore scoring from 0 to 4 was used to give score for accuracy and completeness of the eight type of definitions (Table 1). Scoring was used to define completeness and accuracy of the definition options by respondents including 3 aspects of GE in the questionnaire (Table 1).

Respondents defined the SD in their opinions and I grouped them into 12 types. Scoring from 0 to 4 was used in analysis to see how accurate and complete the 12 types of definitions of SD given by the respondents was compared to the its original definition (Table 2). Scoring was applied to response options provided by the respondents to include three aspects of SD for completeness and accuracy (Table 2).

I identified 22 elements, based on literature review, to analyze how deep respondents' understanding of GE, and how these elements integrated into DPP and M&E. These are grouped under the three aspects of Green Economy. The most of these elements have been integrated in the "Green Development Policy" and SDV [2, 7] ().

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding and Integration of Green Economy

Respondents were asked about whether they ever heard of the term "GE". Out of 267 respondents, 207 (77.5%) answered that they heard of it in some way

(83% for planners and 69% for MEOs). The options of definition of GE provided by the respondents are summarized and grouped in Table 1.

Table 1.

Understanding of Green Economy among planners and MEOs

№	Definitions by respondents	Responses (%)			Scores for 3 aspects of Green Economy*			Overall Score*
		Planners	MEOs	Total	Environmental protection and NRM	Human well-being	Social equity	
1	"I don't know" or I've never heard about it.	29.3	49.1	37.5	0	0	0	0
2	"Environmentally-friendly economy, development, policy, technology, industry and activities."	45.9	35.5	41.6	3	3	1	3
3	"Sustainable Development and social, economic and environmental long-term development."	9.6	3.6	7.1	3	3	2	3
4	"To protect and save the planet, environmental protection"	0.6	2.7	1.5	4	2	2	1
5	Specialized (renewable energy, 3R of waste management (Reduce, Re-use, Recycle), to reduce greenhouse gas emission, etc.)	8.9	4.6	7.1	2	2	2	2
6	"Efficient economy" or economic growth	1.9	0.0	1.1	1	4	2	1
7	"Definition of GE exactly and correctly stated in the answer"	3.2	1.8	2.6	4	4	4	4
8	"Others"	0.6	2.7	1.5	1	1	1	1
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	-	-	-	-

Source: Author's calculation

*Level of knowledge ranked by the author of this paper: 0=Very poor, 1=Poor, 2=Average, 3=Good, 4=Very good.

In overall, 37.5% of total number of respondents told that they did not have any understanding about GE and 41.6% of respondents explained that the term GE meant an environmentally friendly economy. This definition is close to the original definition of GE by 1 [1]; however, aspect of social equity or social inclusiveness of GE lacks in their understanding. Only 1.5% of respondents provided complete and accurate definition of GE. In overall, 49% of the respondents have good

understanding of GE, but 37% of the respondents understanding is very limited. Table 1 shows that planners have better understanding of GE than MEOs. For instance, 29% of planners told that they did not know about GE, which is about 49% for MEOs. Therefore, 56% of planners have good understanding of GE, whereas it is 39% for MEOs. Average score was used to define to what degree each respondent included three elements of GE in the option they provided in the questionnaire (Figure 1).

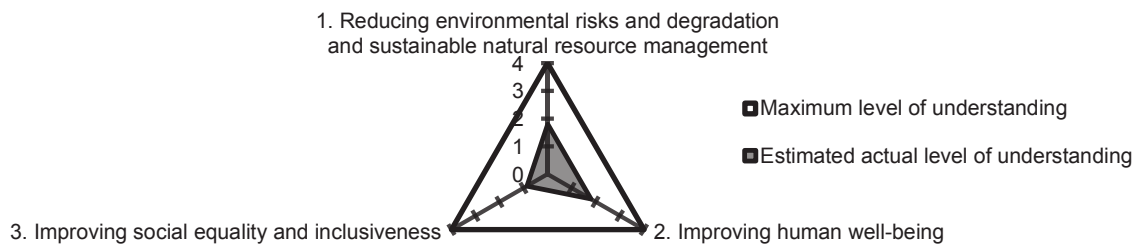


Figure 1. Level of inclusion of the 3 aspects in the definition of GE, total sample

Source: Author’s calculation

When respondents asked to define Green Economy, 1st aspect of GE included in their definitions scored to 1.79 (45%), for second aspect it is 1.80 (45%), for third aspect it is 0.87 (45%). Average of scoring for completeness and accuracy of definition by respondents including three aspects of GE is between 0.8 and 2. It shows that in overall, planners and MEOs understanding of GE is weak. Findings of survey confirm that planners have better knowledge of three aspects of GE than MEOs. Understanding of the term of GE as environmentally friendly economy or development is prevailing

among planners and MEOs. However, it is clear that understanding of third aspect of GE to improve social equity and inclusiveness side of GE is limited. In addition, understanding of these two terms SD and GE as interchangeable/identical is common among them. Generally, 37% of the respondents have not heard of GE and have no awareness about them. Respondents degree of integration of aspects of GE was about 41% for all 4 aspects of GE⁴. There is clear difference is noticed between planners and MEOs for integrating the GE aspects into DPP and M&E processes (Figure 2).

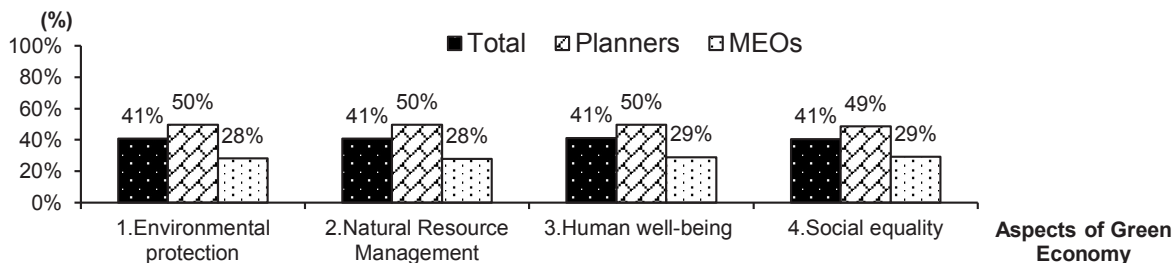


Figure 2. Level of integration of 4 aspects of GE into DPP and M&E processes (%)

Source: Author’s calculation

Note: Assume that maximum level of integration is 100%, so that average scores are converted to percentages.

⁴ The first aspect of the 3, is divided to two separate including environmental protection and NRM.

There is no statistically significant difference between the aspects of the GE for both planners and MEOs.

Understanding and Integration of Sustainable Development

The respondents were asked to define the term “Sustainable Development” and responses are summarized in

Table 2.

Understanding of Sustainable Development among planners and MEOs

№	Definitions by respondents	Responses (%)			Scores for 3 aspects of Sustainable Development*			Overall Score*
		Planners	MEOs	Total	Environment	Economy	Society	
0	Don't know	22.9	50.0	34.1	0	0	0	0
1	Sustainable Development for Environment, Economy and Society	17.8	12.7	15.7	4	4	4	4
2	Long Term development planning, and policy, continued development	17.8	8.2	13.9	2	3	3	3
3	Sustainability of policies and legal environment	1.9	0.9	1.5	2	2	2	2
4	Sustainability socio-economic environment	7.0	4.6	6.0	0	4	4	2
5	Green Economy and Green Development	0.6	0.0	0.4	3	3	3	3
6	Government Policies that are continual	1.9	1.8	1.9	1	1	1	1
7	Sustainability of environment and economy; and Environmentally friendly economy and development	5.7	3.6	4.9	4	4	0	2
8	Sustainability of environment and society	2.6	0.0	1.5	4	0	4	2
9	Economic sustainability, growth, increase of people income	5.1	8.2	6.4	0	4	0	1
10	Social sustainability, poverty alleviation, ensuring social equality	2.6	3.6	3.0	0	0	4	1
11	Definition of SD exactly and correctly stated	5.1	0.9	3.4	4	4	4	4
12	Others	8.9	5.5	7.5	1	1	1	1
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	-	-	-	-

Source: Author's calculation

*Level of knowledge ranked by the author of this paper: 0=Very poor, 1=Poor, 2=Average, 3=Good, 4=Very good.

In overall, 34.1% of respondents told that their awareness/understanding of SD is very poor, whereas 19.1% of respondents provided complete and accurate definition. Table 2 shows that planners' understanding of SD is better than MEOs. For example, 23% of planners report that they did not

know about SD, whereas it is 50% for MEOs. Twenty three percent of planners have very good understanding of SD, while it is 14% for MEOs. Scoring was applied to assess completeness and accuracy of definition of SD including 3 aspects and then average score was calculated (Figure 3).

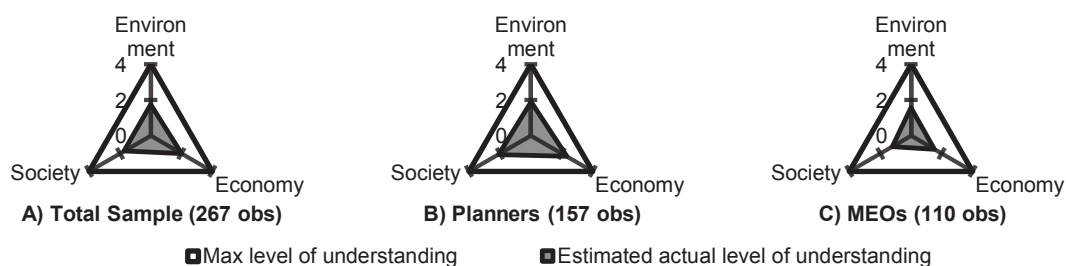


Figure 3. Level of inclusion of the 3 aspects in the definition of SD

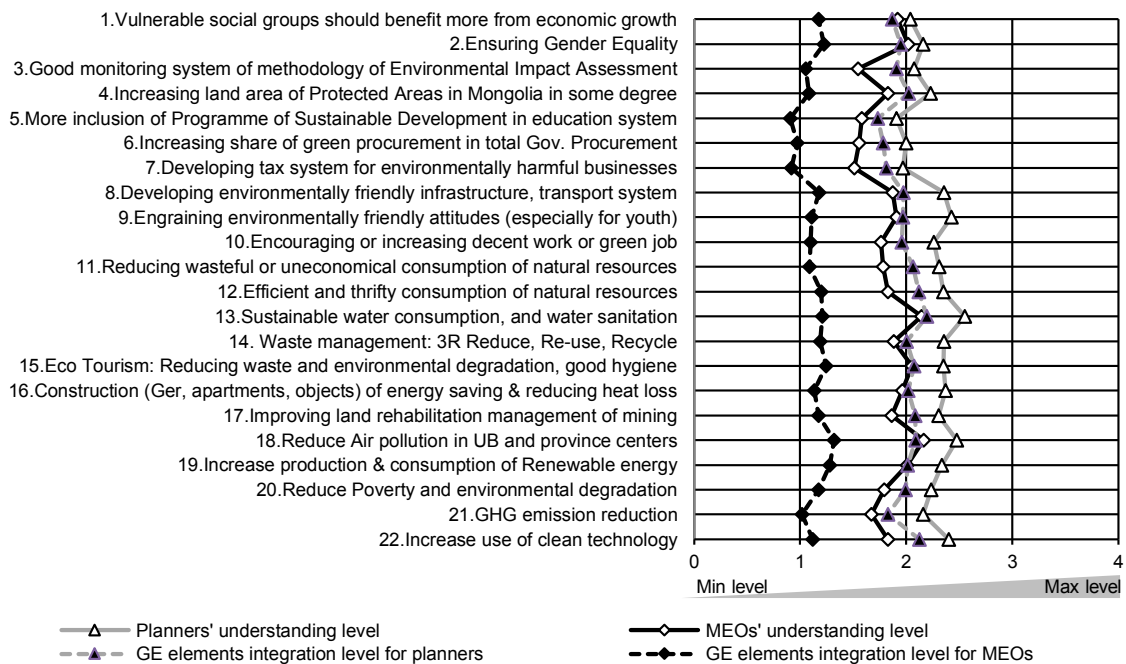
Source: Author's calculation

When respondents asked to define SD, total sample average score was 1.76 (43%) for environmental aspect, 2.0 (50%) for economic aspect, 1.73 (43%) for social aspect out of max of 4 (100%) score. Average of scoring for completeness and accuracy of definition by respondents including three aspects of SD is between 1.7 and 2. In overall, planners and MEOs understanding of GE is medium, as average score weights 45.8% of total expected score, which reveals that the understanding is moderately weak. Findings confirm that planners have better knowledge of three aspects of SD than MEOs do (figure 3). This analysis shows that among respondents major understanding of the term SD as sustainable economic development is prevailing over other two aspects.

Responses given by 267 government officials show that 45.3% of them told that SD aspects are integrated to average degree. Forty nine (thirty three) percent of the planners revealed that they integrate the SD aspects in the DPP processes in “medium (high) level”, but it is 40 (10.9)% for MEOs for M&E processes. One point three percent of planners reported that SD aspects are integrated very poorly, whereas it is 9.1% for MEOs.

Understanding and Integration of elements of Green Economy

Respondents knowledge level is average for 22 elements of GE. People know better about proper use of water, and safe water than other elements of GE. Elements that people do not know very well are eco-tax and green procurement. The following graph shows how well respondents knew these elements by segregated data on development Policy makers and MEOs (figure 4).



Source: Author’s calculation

Figure 4. Level of understanding and understanding of 22 elements of Green Economy

Figure 4 shows that, generally, planners know 22 elements of GE better than MEOs. It may be explained that MEOs’ knowledge is less, because their job description does not include little about handling these aspects. In addition the questionnaire did not offer an option “I do not know”, so that most respondents had chosen the response “I know to average degree”. So the responses rated as 2 or “I know to average degree”, indirectly means that the respondent was not sure about how well he/she knew

about it. It was found that respondents have poor knowledge of new terms such as *green procurement* and *eco-tax* etc. *Proper use of water, water safety and security* were the aspects, which respondents said they knew better. Respondents answered that they know well about *reduction of air pollution*, while they do not know well about *greenhouse gas emission*, although reduction of GHG emission and reduction of air pollution is relatively identical. Planners and

MEOs could not tell difference between different terms related to environmental protection.

In overall, for 267 respondents, planners and MEOs integrate the elements of “*proper use of water resources and safe water*” in DPP and M&E processes more than other elements. It was revealed in previous section that respondents know more about *water management*, which may affected them to say that they integrate this issue more to their activities. In opposite, respondents told that they have limited knowledge about *eco-tax* and *green procurement*, therefore they integrate these 2 elements less than

other elements. It can be suggested that the integration of elements into their processes is higher if they know more about the those elements. In fact, when their knowledge about the elements of GE is not strong enough, it is possible that they are not well aware of how widely (to what extent) they integrate GE elements into their processes.

shows that planners integrate elements of GE more widely than MEOs. However there is similarity in general pattern. For example, either planners or MEOs told that they integrate GHG emission element into their processes less than other elements.

Challenges

Respondents were asked to discuss challenges they face in integrating principles and aspects of GE and SD aspects into their processes. In overall, 45.3% of (43.3% of planners and 48.2% of MEOs) total

number of respondents told that they do not know about them. On one hand it is resulted from that they lack in knowledge of GE and SD, hence they don't know whether they face problems or challenges.

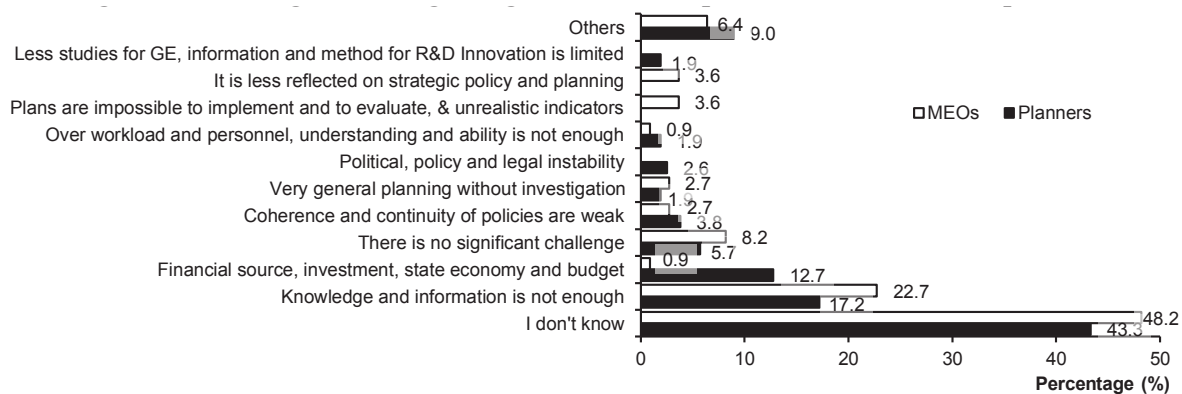


Figure 5. Challenges for integrating GE and SD aspects in DPP and M&E processes

Source: Author's calculation

Challenges for planners: **1)** the biggest challenge is limited knowledge about GE and SD (19.5%); **2)** lack of financial resources, investment, public funding and country's economic situation (10.8%). Some reveal that even when aspects of GE and SD are integrated in budget or investment proposals, they got cut off during budget revisions; **3)** lack of continuity and cohesion of policies (3.8%)⁵ [8]; **4)** Instability in politics, policy and legal framework or politicization (2.6%); **5)** Other challenges, including high workload

of officials and poor knowledge, awareness and information between the government organizations.

Challenges for MEOs: **1)** Poor knowledge, awareness and information of GE and SD (22.3%); **2)** Non-implementable policy documents (the duration of the policy document is too short etc.) and not measurable and evaluable results and outcomes are planned, planning lacks with clear criteria, planning is done without research and rigorous estimations (3.6%). **3)** Weak integration of GE and SD in DPP process (3.6%).

Opportunities

In previous section, it has been seen that integration of aspects of GE and SD into DPP and M&E processes is weak, however there are cases and

initiatives of integration of aspects of GE and SD in their activities answered in survey questions.

At ministerial level, some case were revealed, for example supporting Euro standard fuel consumption

⁵ Although the share deemed small, note that out of 157 respondents 68 or 43.3% told that they do not know about challenges.

in Ministry of Mining; increasing green jobs from Ministry of Labour; manufacturing of Duo-buses from Ministry of road and transport; GE aspects integrated to city development plans etc., from Ministry of Construction and Urban Development etc.

At province and district level, aspects of GE and SD are integrated to province/district policy documents like action plan of province governor, long-term province strategic plans etc. There are initiatives were reported by planning and MEOs, examples include that province green development programme from *Arkhangai*; integrating GE and SD aspects to Environmental Master Plan from *Dundgobi*, *Darkhan-Uul*, *Khovd*, *Uvs* and *Gobisumber*; developed Sustainable Development programme

from *Bayan-Ulgii*; Increase green areas and energy saving initiatives from *Khan-Uul* district, green district programme from *Chingeltei* district etc.

Ten province out of twenty integrate the GE and SD aspects into their policy documents, somewhat. It is also the for three districts. However, it is not clear how much the four aspects of Green Economy have been integrated to those mid and long term policy documents. In previous sections, it was seen that understanding about inclusiveness or social equality aspects of GE was weak among respondents. Moreover, understanding about aspect of sustainable social development of SD was also limited. In other words, weak or limited understanding of aspects of GE and SD can affect to integration of these aspects to DPP and M&E process erroneously.

CONCLUSION

Understanding of aspects of Green Economy (GE) and Sustainable Development (SD) among planners and MEOs is limited. The term “GE” has been growing in discussion recently than term “SD”, therefore, planners and MEOs see the two terms as identical. In most cases, GE is defined by respondents as a environmentally friendly economy, development, policy, activities, technology, and/or SD or environmental protection.

Of the three main aspects of Green Economy, – reducing environmental risks and degradation, and natural resource scarcity – improving human well-being – improving social equality, the respondents know less the last aspect. It is critically important, to include concept of Inclusive Green Growth in training among policy makers, planning and MEOs.

Understanding level of M&E officials is weaker than planners. It can be explained that there is no clear guidance, regulation about M&E, and the integration of GE and SD aspects in their activities. It may not be problem for human capacity of M&E, but it is rather

problem of framework of M&E having weak focus on GE and SD with no clear criteria, or indicator.

Aspects of GE and SD are insufficiently integrated to process of DPP and M&E processes. This is due to lack of understanding, training, information about these terms. Also, planners and MEOs know more about economic development when they talk about SD more than the other two aspects, which are sustainable environmental and social development.

From 22 elements of GE, it is also concluded that planners and MEOs integrate specific elements into their activities more if they know more about those elements. It is directly related to inadequate knowledge of GE.

The most serious challenge to integrate GE and SD are lack of knowledge, finance, budget and investment limitation, and discontinuity and incoherence of policies. Less coherence between planners and MEOs makes misleading progress of integration of GE and SD.

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