

The biggest challenge to this approach is the political constraints to an internationally coordinated action. Nations are so preoccupied with their narrow interests and are so secretive of their measures that they fail to look at the natural system as one comprehensive and complete community. This approach calls for institutions to acquire four basic characteristics called the 4 Ds: ***diversity, dynamism, decentralisation and decisiveness***.

Peter Omara Ojunga has mentioned four actions for applying the ecosystem approach:

- I. An ecosystem inventory to determine community zones.
- II. Identification of natural processes which lead to stability.
- III. An analysis of inventory data to evaluate the functional significance of the ecosystem components.
- IV. Recommendation of the alternative uses based upon their functional significance.

Policies that facilitate action on the above four basic requirements are referred to as sustainable development policies since they protect ecosystems and reorient the search for alternatives.

SAQ 2

What do you understand by the ecosystem approach? How is it different from the human development approach?

So far we have given you a bird's eye view of the dominant perspectives on sustainable development. In the last section of this unit we acquaint you with the views of indigenous communities on this issue.

3.5 INDIGENOUS VIEWS

Traditionally, the rights of communities over their habitat and ecological resources derived from history, cultural traditions and conventions have provided them the means of livelihood. It is important to note that many indigenous communities and aboriginal cultures have long held that any decision taken by the community must be considered in the light of its potential impact on seven generations. It is the same sentiment now being expressed in the Brundtland definition of sustainable development.

Dominant development approaches based industrialised growth have, however, weakened and even destroyed the livelihood of several communities since their control over habitats and resources as well as their indigenous wisdom has remained ignored and unrecognised in these approaches. These communities have been removed from their forests and wetlands under the plea of economic advancement. Since the HDR of 1994 has reiterated that *'protection of all life opportunities of future generations as well as present generations and respecting the natural systems on which all life depends'*, the following two approaches serve the concerns of the vulnerable communities:

- **The Livelihoods Approach**

This approach has been adopted by a number of agencies, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and governments, including UNDP, Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) and Department for International Development (DFID). The livelihoods approach puts people at the centre of development both at the macro and micro levels. This focus on people is equally important at macro policy levels (for example achievement of objectives such as poverty reduction, economic reform or environment protection) as it is at the