CHAPTER

3

The Nature of Sustainable Development Strategies and Current Practice[1]

Introduction

This chapter describes the nature and scope of national sustainable development strategies (NSDSs), articulates key principles and common elements, and provides examples of current practice in a range of countries. It offers guidance to understand the linkages that are needed between the array of national level mechanisms that can contribute to an NSDS.

An NSDS requires coordinated mechanisms and participatory processes, with monitoring, learning and continuous improvement

Recent policy guidance on NSDSs developed by the OECD DAC, notes that our perception of a strategy has evolved over the last decade. It was once seen as a single, new, master plan for sustainable development. Today there is increasing consensus that it comprises a set of coordinated mechanisms and processes that, together, offer a participatory system to develop visions, goals and targets for sustainable development, and to coordinate implementation and review. It is also accepted that a strategy cannot be a one-off initiative but needs to be a continuing participatory process, with monitoring, learning and continuous improvement. These and other characteristics are discussed in the key principles section on page 33. They provide a useful frame of reference for a country to structure its own approach according to its individual needs, priorities, existing mechanisms and processes, and available resources.

Existing strategic planning approaches include elements of good practice

'Learning from Current Practice' on page 35 introduces the existing integrated frameworks that can be built upon, including domestic ones such as national development planning and national budgetary exercises as well as externally stimulated or driven frameworks such as national environmental action plans (NEAPs), national conservation strategies (NCSs) and poverty reduction strategies (PRSs). International organizations and development cooperation agencies have invested heavily in shaping and driving a number of these national level strategic planning frameworks. Elements of good practice can be found in such existing approaches, but usually they have not been coordinated appropriately as an integrated NSDS, and national ownership may have been lacking.

1 This chapter has benefited from review comments and additional material provided by Professor Michael Carley, Herriott Watt University, Edinburgh; Carol James, Trinidad; and Maheen Zehra, IUCN-Pakistan.

Research, analysis and international sharing of experience on the systems, processes and practices of past and current strategic planning frameworks has contributed to building consensus on a range of key principles (Box 3.1) and common elements (Box 3.2), as well as other lessons and guidance, for the development and implementation of NSDSs. Together, these describe desirable characteristics that are sufficiently flexible to allow for the incorporation of local perspectives. Although not intended as a prescription, it is hoped that these principles and elements, cross-referenced throughout this Resource Book, will provide a useful template for fashioning individual NSDSs.

Lessons and guidance are illustrated by concrete examples of approaches and practice from a range of countries, both North and South – from national through sub-national to village and micro-levels – and opportunities for convergence and linkages between these various levels are highlighted. Comparisons are made between the aims of, and approaches to, strategic planning in both developed and developing countries.

Ten years after the Earth Summit, there are still few examples of truly home-grown, successful sustainable development strategies. This underscores the need for the guidance and lessons for practitioners at all levels provided by this Resource Book.

What are sustainable development strategies?

Blueprint approaches are best avoided

To meet the challenges of sustainable development, discussed in Chapter 2, strategic policy and planning mechanisms need to become more participatory, integrated and flexible. They also need to be recognized as learning processes, in which information about progress towards sustainability, or lack of progress, is used constructively to revise the mechanism and the means of realizing objectives. Rigid, standardized or blueprint approaches are best avoided, usually being at best irrelevant and, at worst, counter-productive. So also is the production of an 'encyclopedia' or a long 'wish list' of unrealistic possible actions, which have little chance of being implemented. Instead, there is a pressing need to structure a strategic approach to national sustainable development according to each individual country's own needs, priorities and resources. In light of this, the DAC policy guidance on strategies for sustainable development (OECD DAC 2001a) defines a strategy as comprising:

Each country's strategy should be structured to meet its own needs, priorities and resources …

> *A coordinated set of participatory and continuously improving processes of analysis, debate, capacity-strengthening, planning and investment, which integrates the economic, social and environmental objectives of society, seeking trade-offs where this is not possible.*[2]

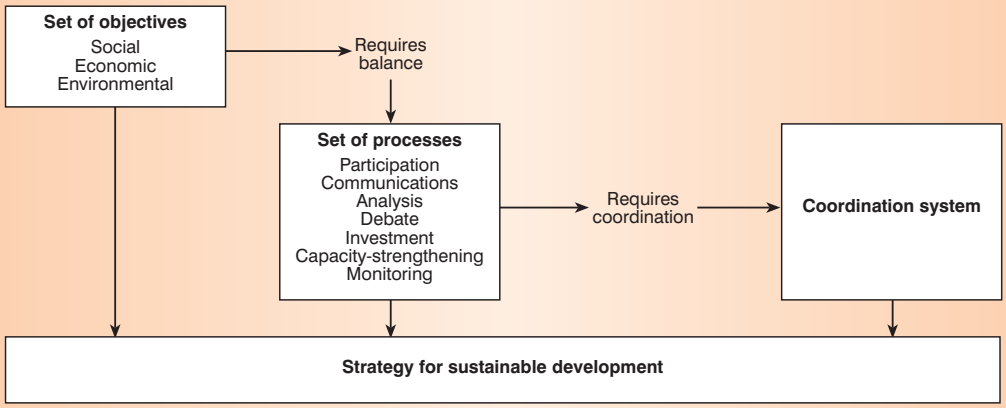
Figure 3.1 illustrates the logic behind the NSDS approach.

The learning generated by the country dialogues, carried out as part of the development of the OECD DAC policy guidance, confirmed that putting a sustainable development strategy into operation would, in practice, most likely consist of building on, and improving, existing strategic planning frameworks and their coordination. Improvements are needed in:

- mutual consistency;
- actual implementation;
- the political attention given to strategic planning frameworks;
- the leadership of these frameworks;
- understanding of, and commitment to, them.

This is preferable to trying to establish a new, time-bound approach, which is not recommended.

2 This definition also reflects the indicator for sustainable development strategies agreed in IMF/OECD/UN/World Bank (2000) which focuses on the importance of effective (strategic planning) processes.



Note: This figure might suggest that a sustainable development strategy involves a linear sequence of steps. In practice, strategies need to follow a cyclical, continuous improvement approach with monitoring and evaluation of the processes and outcomes; enabling renewed debate on key issues and needs; review of the national development vision; and adjustment of actions – as shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 3.1 Rationale for a systematic approach to sustainable development strategies

The country dialogues also identified a number of specific mechanisms and processes that could strengthen the effectiveness of countries' development strategies. These are outlined in Figure 3.2 and discussed in Chapter 4. The manner in which these existing and new mechanisms and processes are implemented needs to be consistent with a set of basic strategic principles, discussed below. Where these principles are successfully applied, the result will be progress towards a NSDS, although the planning framework might be given another label. National development plans, poverty reduction strategies, national conservation strategies and other approaches all provide a basis on which to build in moving towards the goal of an effective NSDS (OECD DAC 2000d; UN DESA 2000b).

… and should build on existing frameworks

Figure 3.2 Constellation of mechanisms contributing to a sustainable development strategy

Key principles for developing sustainable development strategies

Differing national circumstances and priorities among countries result in varied approaches to strategic planning. These are reviewed on page 35. But consultations with developing countries during the OECD DAC dialogues, and wider international experience emerging from the UN regional consultative workshops on sustainable development and experience of comprehensive development frameworks and poverty reduction strategies, have shown that there are common features of good practice. These are presented as a set of principles which underpin the development of effective strategies in many developing countries (Box 3.1). These principles have been endorsed by the DAC in its policy guidance on strategies for sustainable development (OECD DAC 2001a). In November 2001, a UN international forum on national strategies for sustainable development (held in preparation for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development) confirmed almost identical principles – which the Forum termed 'elements' (Box 3.2) – these were defined as being applicable to both developed and developing countries alike (UNDESA 2002b).

Common principles or elements underpin effective strategies

They are applicable in both developed and developing countries

Many of these principles represent good, common-sense development practice and many are already being implemented at the project level. But putting these principles into practice in strategic planning and policy processes is more of a challenge. A cautionary note is indicated by the fact that many existing and past strategic planning processes, such as NEAPs and NCSs, have not had a lasting impact in terms of moving countries towards sustainable development. This is because they were not focused on the full set of key principles.

Many past strategies were not focused on the full set of NSDS principles

Traditional development often tends to generate severe competition over resource allocation and use, and this leads invariably to conflict among stakeholders. Strategy development needs to address this issue for genuine partnership and participation. Thus, resolving conflicts, averting potential ones, facilitating and building capacity for negotiation, bargaining and effective inclusion must be central elements of the strategy process.

Box 3.1 Key principles for sustainable development strategies

These are principles towards which strategies should aspire. They are all important and no order of priority is implied. They do not represent a checklist of criteria to be met but encompass a set of desirable processes and outcomes which also allow for local differences.

1. **People-centred.** An effective strategy requires a people-centred approach, ensuring long-term beneficial impacts on disadvantaged and marginalized groups, such as the poor.
2. **Consensus on long-term vision.** Strategic planning frameworks are more likely to be successful when they have a long-term vision with a clear timeframe upon which stakeholders agree. At the same time, they need to include ways of dealing with short- and medium-term necessities and change. The vision needs to have the commitment of all political parties so that an incoming government will not view a particular strategy as representing only the views or policies of its predecessor.
3. **Comprehensive and integrated.** Strategies should seek to integrate, where possible, economic, social and environmental objectives. But where integration cannot be achieved, trade-offs need to be negotiated. The entitlements and possible needs of future generations must be factored into this process.
4. **Targeted with clear budgetary priorities.** The strategy needs to be fully integrated into the budget mechanism to ensure that plans have the financial resources to achieve their objectives, and do not only represent 'wish lists'. Conversely, the formulation of budgets must be informed by a clear identification of priorities. Capacity constraints and time limitations will have an impact on the extent to which the intended outcomes are achieved. Targets need to be challenging – but realistic in relation to these constraints.
5. **Based on comprehensive and reliable analysis.** Priorities need to be based on a comprehensive analysis of the present situation and of forecasted trends and risks, examining links between local, national and global challenges. The external pressures on a country – those resulting from globalization, for example, or the

impacts of climate change – need to be included in this analysis. Such analysis depends on credible and reliable information on changing environmental, social and economic conditions, pressures and responses, and their correlations with strategy objectives and indicators. Local capacities for analysis and existing information should be fully used, and different perceptions among stakeholders should be reflected.

6 **Incorporate monitoring, learning and improvement.** Monitoring and evaluation need to be based on clear indicators and built into strategies to steer processes, track progress, distil and capture lessons, and signal when a change of direction is necessary.

7 **Country-led and nationally-owned.** Past strategies have often resulted from external pressure and development agency requirements. It is essential that countries take the lead and initiative in developing their own strategies if they are to be enduring.

8 **High-level government commitment and influential lead institutions.** Such commitment – on a long-term basis – is essential if policy and institutional changes are to occur, financial resources are to be committed and for there to be clear responsibility for implementation.

9 **Building on existing mechanism and strategies.** A strategy for sustainable development should not be thought of as a new planning mechanism but instead build on what already exists in the country, thus enabling convergence, complementarity and coherence between different planning frameworks and policies. This requires good management to ensure coordination of mechanisms and processes, and to identify and resolve potential conflicts. The latter may require an independent and neutral third party to act as a facilitator. The roles, responsibilities and relationships between the different key participants in strategy processes must be clarified early on.

10 **Effective participation.** Broad participation helps to open up debate to new ideas and sources of information; expose issues that need to be addressed; enable problems, needs and preferences to be expressed; identify the capabilities required to address them; and develop a consensus on the need for action that leads to better implementation. Central government must be involved (providing leadership, shaping incentive structures and allocating financial resources) but multi-stakeholder processes are also required involving decentralized authorities, the private sector and civil society, as well as marginalized groups. This requires good communication and information mechanisms with a premium on transparency and accountability.

11 **Link national and local levels.** Strategies should be two-way iterative processes within and between national and decentralized levels. The main strategic principles and directions should be set at the central level (here, economic, fiscal and trade policy, legislative changes, international affairs and external relations, etc, are key responsibilities). But detailed planning, implementation and monitoring would be undertaken at a decentralized level, with appropriate transfer of resources and authority.

12 **Develop and build on existing capacity.** At the outset of a strategy process, it is important to assess the political, institutional, human, scientific and financial capacity of potential state, market and civil society participants. Where needed, provision should be made to develop the necessary capacity as part of the strategy process. A strategy should optimize local skills and capacity both within and outside government.

Source: OECD DAC (2001a)

Notes:

Principle 1:

(a) Particular attention must be paid to youth to ensure nurturing of long-term attitudinal changes in society – educational reform is central to this process.

(b) While many past strategies have been about development, they have often had mixed effects on different groups.

Principle 8:

(a) It is crucial that the lead institutions are truly representative and reflect the many publics in the country, to ensure national buy-in. There is a tendency to assume that NGOs, CBOs and market-oriented interest groups from the private sector and industry represent civil society. More care is needed to ensure the inclusion also of organizations/leaders drawn from academic, religious, political, cultural and grass-roots levels.

To the above list of principles endorsed by the OECD DAC, can be added:

Principle 13: Incorporate effective conflict and negotiation management systems.

Traditional development often tends to generate severe competition over resource allocation and use, and this leads invariably to conflict among stakeholders. Strategy development needs to address this issue for genuine partnership and participation. Thus, resolving conflicts, averting potential ones, facilitating and building capacity for negotiation, bargaining and effective inclusion must be central elements of the strategy process.

Problems included:

- many were not, and did not aim to be, *integrated* into a country's mainstream strategic planning system;
- very many were 'wish-lists', lacking clear objectives and achievable targets; or
- there was often a very narrow base of *participation* which did not represent a partnership of key stakeholders; or
- they were not supportive of *existing processes, strategies and capacities* but attempted to start something new without building on existing strengths and capabilities;
- a large number were not *country-led* but were induced and/or imposed by external agencies;
- finally, in developing countries, external agencies pushed their own strategy initiatives and there was often competition between these 'brands'.

This record of poor quality strategic planning mechanisms has given the concept of 'strategies' a bad name. Despite this, these examples also provide us with useful 'lessons of experience' on which to build more robust approaches, discussed in the next section.

Learning from current practice: existing strategy frameworks

In most countries, there is a range of past and current strategic planning approaches at both national and decentralized levels. In developing countries, many of these have been externally conceived, motivated and promoted by multilateral development banks, development cooperation agencies, UN organizations, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other external organizations – often as planning mechanisms to implement international agreements (see Box 2.4) or as conditions for securing financial assistance. Few of these external organizations have adopted or built on the systems, mechanisms and practices that were operating in the country for some time, such as national development plans, local plans and traditional participation mechanisms.

In developing countries, many strategic planning approaches have been externally conceived, motivated and promoted …

Research and analysis, the DAC dialogues and international experience captured through numerous workshops show that a number of principles and elements appear to be common to the more successful strategies (Boxes 3.1 and 3.2). This is not so surprising since many have followed a basic framework developed in the 1980s for NCSs.

The common approach has then been built upon for NEAPs, tropical forestry action plans and similar initiatives as experience has grown (see the section on building on national level strategies, page 38). Furthermore, these approaches have been promoted in developing countries as time-bound projects, rather than ongoing policy mechanisms, mainly by donors who have provided financial support and technical assistance, partly as a framework for planning aid support. In many cases, expatriate technical experts and advisers worked on strategies in several different countries and then translocated their experience and approaches. In any case, the World Bank was at the centre of NEAP guidance and learning, as was IUCN in the case of NCSs (although there were some attempts at South–South exchange, eg the Bank supported an African network on NEAPs, and IUCN supported regional NCS reviews and workshops).

… often as time-bound projects, rather than ongoing policy mechanisms

The outputs of many of these initiatives remain paper plans which, at best, have been only partly implemented. This is due in large measure to the limited emphasis placed by their sponsors on generating national ownership and establishing participatory processes for their elaboration. However, valuable lessons have been drawn from these failures in developing the NSDS principles in Box 3.1 and elements in Box 3.2. Analysis of past and existing approaches (see Chapter 5) can inform effective strategy decision-making (Chapter 8).

The main outputs have often been only partly implemented plans, but they provide valuable lessons

Box 3.2 Elements of a national sustainable development strategy

Recent UN guidance on preparing a national sustainable development strategy (drafted by a consultant) features a range of recommended elements of an NSDS. These were finalized by a UN-organized international forum on NSDSs held in Ghana in November 2002 (UN DESA 2002a) and presented formally in January 2002 to PrepCom2 for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The strategy elements are based mainly on the OECD DAC principles in Box 3.1, drawing also from the experience of UNDP's Capacity 21 programme, the Earth Council's work with national councils for sustainable development and discussions at the forum:

a) Integration of economic, social and environmental objectives, and balance across sectors, territories and generations

- linking local, national, regional and global priorities and actions;
- linking the short term to the medium and long term;
- linking the national, regional and global levels;
- linking different sectors;
- coherence between budgets and strategy priorities.

b) Broad participation and effective partnerships

- institutionalized channels for communication;
- access to information for all stakeholders and effective networking;
- transparency and accountability;
- trust and mutual respect;
- partnerships among government, civil society, private sector and external institutions.

c) Country ownership and commitment

- strong political and stakeholder commitment;
- sound leadership and good governance;
- shared strategic and pragmatic vision;
- strong institution or group of institutions spearheading the process;
- continuity of the national sustainable development strategy process.

d) Developing capacity and enabling environment

- building on existing knowledge and expertise;
- building on existing mechanisms and strategies.

e) Focus on outcomes and means of implementation

- the means to assess and agree priority issues in place;
- coherence between budget, capacity and strategy priorities;
- realistic, flexible targets;
- linked to private sector investment;
- anchored in sound technical and economic analysis;
- integrated mechanisms for assessment, follow up, evaluation and feedback.

Source: UN DESA (2002b)

In developed countries, approaches have been fashioned by domestic agendas

The situation in developed countries has been substantively different. Approaches have been fashioned by domestic agendas, following national government styles and cultures – and sometimes those of business and the networks of civil society – rather than the dictates of external agencies (Dalal-Clayton 1996). Although this means they have been more realistic in terms of existing policy processes, many have been prepared as one-shot processes with little in the way of monitoring and no follow-up revision.

In light of this experience, some basic comparisons can be made between experience in developed and developing countries (see Table 3.1).

In approaching the challenge of developing national strategies for sustainable development, it is apparent that the countries of the North and those of the South have much to learn from each other's experience. For example, in many developed countries, the response to Agenda 21 has been to develop plans

Table 3.1 Basic comparisons between developed and developing country strategy processes

Developed Countries	Developing Countries
Approach	**Approach**
Internally generated	External impetus (IUCN, World Bank, etc)
Internally funded	Donor-funded
Indigenous expertise	Expatriate expertise frequently involved
Political action	Bureaucratic/technocratic action
Brokerage approach	Project approach
Aims	**Aims**
Changing production/consumption patterns	Increase production/consumption
Response to 'brown' issues (pollution)	Response to 'green' issues/ rural development
Environment focus	Development focus
Means	**Means**
Institutional re-orientation/integration	Creation of new institutions
Production of guidelines and local targets	Development of project 'shopping lists'
Cost-saving approaches	Aid-generating approaches
Links to Local Agenda 21 initiatives	Few local links
Awareness-raising	Awareness-raising

Source: Dalal-Clayton (1996)

and strategies focusing narrowly on environmental concerns. Such 'green' plans could take a step towards becoming genuine sustainable development strategies if they were to adopt the approaches being promoted in the South and address social and economic issues as well as the environment in an integrated manner. In developing such strategies, Northern countries also need to review those policies and practices which lead to over-exploitation of natural resources in developing countries (their 'environmental footprint').[3]

Southern countries, on the other hand, would benefit from better analysis, the development of market-based instruments, efforts at cost-savings, and better use of existing government structures, with Northern countries showing ways forward here. In both North and South, most approaches need to improve the basis of their participation, and need to be periodically revised to take into account feedback and lessons from review following implementation. In this way, they would become genuine, cyclical, 'learning by doing' processes.

A notable example of a country that has taken this constructive approach to sustainable development is The Netherlands, where the National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP) is revised every four years through a dialogue between the government, industry and the public. NEPP (1989), NEPP2 (1993) and NEPP3 (VROM 1997) set out the broad policy, the latter for the period 1999–2002, taking 2010 as a horizon year. NEPP4 was completed in mid-2001 extending the horizon to 2030.

Countries of the North and South have much to learn from each other's experiences

Strategies in all countries need to improve participation and become learning processes

3 In recent years, widespread concern about links between trade and environment/sustainable development have fanned large-scale and often violent protests at major global meetings (notably, WTO and the World Economic Forum, but also a few other economic fora). Analysis of the negative impacts of trade and foreign direct investment on sustainable development is outside the scope of this resource book.

The Netherlands illustrates a constructive approach

Through the rolling NEPP process over the last decade, The Netherlands has succeeded in reducing its environmental burden (particularly reducing pollution levels) while enjoying improved living standards and economic growth (a process the NEPP calls 'decoupling', which means achieving economic growth while reducing material use and pollution). A particular achievement of the NEPP process is that it has involved representatives of government at all levels, business and voluntary organizations, including environmental activists, in dialogue, visioning, planning and setting objectives and targets for the country's short-, medium- and long-term future.

In early 2001, the Dutch Cabinet established an interdepartmental body, guided by a ministerial group led by the Prime Minister, to develop a National Strategy for Sustainable Development. This group decided that the government would first publish an overview of sustainable development policies on five subjects (population, climate, water, biodiversity and developing an economy based on know-how), indicating which dilemmas would influence further policy debate over the next decade. Furthermore, all policy areas should be embedded within the notion of sustainable development, and experiments will be started to apply the integration of economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects of major government investments.

Each ministry has been requested to give an overview of its contribution to sustainable development in its annual budget to be discussed in Parliament. Selected indicators will be used to show whether The Netherlands is moving towards sustainable development, with targets set for the next 5–10 years. The Cabinet decided to start the process of reviewing the strategy in public, while making an inventory of the many initiatives of municipalities, provinces, business and citizens which was to be submitted to Parliament in spring 2002. The process to prepare a revised strategy has started with the aim that the next government (following elections in May 2002) would continue the process.

Building on national level strategies

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Many developing countries have a strong tradition of preparing periodic national development plans, often covering a five-year span and setting out grand objectives (see the examples of India – which is typical of many Commonwealth countries – and China in Box 3.3). Usually, line ministries prepare sector chapters for national plans following guidance issued by a national planning commission or equivalent coordinating body. This body normally undertakes the tasks of screening against financial and political concerns, usually a very influential factor, and environmental and social concerns. It is often the case that finance ministries are in charge of development planning, with the all-too-frequent implication that the quality of environmental and social screening, and accountability for it, are weak. At best, the general approach is to screen out potential bad impacts, rather than to screen for the most positive environmental and social outcomes. The development planning body also usually integrates the sector plans. Sometimes, the task of integration is supported by inputs from the decentralized levels (Box 3.21 on Ghana).

The quality of environmental and social screening is often weak in national development plans

The national plans derived from this process tend to set out broad goals and include projects and activities to be funded from the annual recurrent and development budgets. Economic, or only occasionally social, imperatives have been predominant, with minimal inclusion of environmental concerns. These plans tend to be linked into the annual budget or to the medium term expenditure framework (MTEF) – a three-year rolling budget mechanism. Often, the plans have been linked weakly to institutional or procedural changes which could foster strategic, sustainable development.

There has been little civil society or private sector involvement in the past

In the past, there has been little civil society or private sector involvement in developing or monitoring such national plans. But there is increasing evidence of stakeholder participation in these mechanisms in a number of countries, for example, in Thailand (Box 3.4). There is also greater use of environmental screening mechanisms (although usually to screen out certain bad impacts, rather than to optimize

Box 3.3 Five-year planning in India and China

India

Planning in India derives its objectives from Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution. The Planning Commission was set up in 1950 to prepare the blueprint of development, taking an overall view of the needs and resources of the country. To date there have been nine five-year plans: beginning in the period 1951–1956 with the latest, ninth plan covering the years 1997–2002. In the past, economic planning envisaged a growing public sector with massive investments in the basic and heavy industries. Now the emphasis on the public sector is pronounced and current thinking on national planning is that, in general, it should increasingly be of an indicative, rather than prescriptive, nature.

The objectives of the Ninth Five-Year Plan evolved from the Common Minimum Programme of the government and the Chief Minister's Conference on basic minimum services. They include:

- priority to agriculture and rural development with a view to generating productive employment and eradication of poverty;
- accelerating the growth rate of the economy with stable prices;
- ensuring food and nutritional security for the vulnerable section of society;
- providing the basic minimum services of safe drinking water, primary health care facilities, universal primary education, shelter and connectivity to all in a time-bound population;
- containing the growth rate of the population;
- ensuring environmental sustainability of the development process through participation of people;
- empowerment of women and socially disadvantaged groups (eg minorities);
- promoting and developing Panchayati Raj (the lowest unit of local self-government – at district, block and village level), cooperatives, etc;
- strengthening efforts to build self-reliance.

Source: www.travel-india.com/stat/economics/five_year_plans

China

In China, the five-year planning mechanism is a long-term programme at the heart of the country's economic development. The aim of this mechanism is to provide a detailed plan for major construction projects, distribution of productive forces, and proportional development of the national economy, as well as to set an orientation for the future development of the country. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, nine five-year plans have been developed. The first covered 1953–1957 with the latest, ninth plan, covering the years 1996–2000.

The major objectives of the Ninth Five-Year Plan are:

- complete the second phase of the strategic plan for the modernization drive; and quadruple the per capita gross national product of 1980 under the condition that the population in 2000 will have increased by 300 million over that in 1980;
- raise living standards to that of a fairly comfortable life with poverty practically eradicated and expedite the formulation of a modern enterprise system and establish a socialist market economy.

The major tasks set are to:

- ensure sustained and stable growth in agriculture and the rural economy as a whole;
- actively promote readjustment in industrial structure;
- promote the coordinated development of regional economies;
- strive to maintain macro-economic stability;
- continuously raise the people's living standards in both urban and rural areas.

Source: www.afrchn.com

environmental potential), and progress in mainstreaming environmental concerns in national development plans, as in Morocco (Box 3.5).

Box 3.4 Civil society involvement in recent national plans in Thailand – and their alternative agenda

Since 1961, Thailand has implemented successive National Economic and Social Development Plans. The country is currently operating under the Eighth Plan (1997–2001) and the Ninth Plan is under development with civil society involvement. Hundreds of NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) and thousands of people from all walks of life were invited by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) to engage in formulating the eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan by voicing their concerns and providing inputs. The process was very successful and many NGOs began to feel that they were gaining for the first time some ownership of the Plan.

However, many issues they raised were subsequently left out in the synthesis process. The plan mentioned sustainable development, but in an unfocused way, along with a wide array of other ideologies. As a result, some NGOs, notably the national NGO network, and various people's organizations, subsequently refused to participate in the development of the Ninth Plan and instead launched their own alternative National Agenda for the Free Thais. This consisted of issues covering 16 key areas (eg politics, agriculture, marine resources and fisheries, AIDS and education). It did not specifically refer to sustainable development but the issues covered, taken together, effectively addressed the concept.

At the same time, another NGO network and many CBOs continued to work with the NESDB on drafting the Ninth Plan, trying to correct the earlier problems by emphasizing the need for parallel local/community plans as a complement to the national plan. In this context, they raised issues such as the need for decentralization and community rights.

Source: Poapongsakorn et al (2001).

Box 3.5 Harmonizing national development plans in Morocco

In Morocco, attempts have been made to integrate environmental concerns and priorities into mainstream economic and social development plans, and to provide synergy between sectors.

Supported by UNDP's Capacity 21 programme, multi-stakeholder workshops on such integration have been organized around the country. Two inter-sectoral workshops have also been organized: one on legislation, regulations and finance; the other on information, education and communication. Participants included key stakeholders from development sectors such as industry, population, energy, soil, agriculture, water, health, land management, urbanization and habitat – each providing information about their sector and lobbying for it to be considered.

The goal was that this process would produce a set of integrated action plans and raise awareness of the potential for synergies towards sustainable development. The hope was to avoid a sense of confrontation and stalemate between environmental and economic priorities.

Through an integration workshop, key recommendations from each of the sectoral workshops were brought together to produce a cohesive, integrated Environmental Action Plan. In turn, this plan was then linked with Morocco's three other national development plans: the Economic and Social Development Plan; the Plan to Combat Desertification; and the Land Management Plan.

> *Each Plan was prepared while taking the other plans into account. There are no redundancies or repetitions, but there is synergy. The whole point is to protect the environment and natural resources while fighting poverty, and each plan makes its contribution to this common goal.*

Source: www.undp.org/capacity21

Box 3.6 The Bangladesh Flood Action Plan

The Bangladesh Flood Action Plan (FAP) was developed with international support, as a response to periodic and devastating floods. But those institutions and individuals driving the FAP viewed water management rather narrowly without taking account of the complex nature of the issues and interrelationships. Consequently inadequate attention was paid to environmental issues and to the necessary participation of floodplain communities in the FAP process. Critics pointed to the need for strategic planning to provide for integrated water resource management, and the FAP was subsequently replaced by a national water plan developed in a more participatory manner.

Source: Hughes et al (1994)

Plans are now shifting to creating enabling conditions and building partnerships

Most national development plans have now shifted from a philosophy of central planning to one of 'creating enabling conditions', to accommodate a degree of voluntary and civil society action, which contributes to partnership and the implementation of strategy. This approach, and some of the planning infrastructure set up for it, is conducive to NSDSs. Applying the principles and elements of NSDSs (Boxes 3.1 and 3.2), and bringing together the systems in Figure 3.2, could result in national development plans offering much that is required for NSDSs. Attention would especially have to be paid to developing shared, multi-stakeholder visions of development goals, and to broader criteria for making trade-offs.

Box 3.7 National human development reports

National human development reports (HDRs) are powerful tools for national policy analysis. They generally compare data from regions, provinces or localities on indicators such as education, life expectancy, gender disparities and income, pointing to achievements and disparities.

More than 350 national, sub-national or regional HDRs have been issued in 130 countries since 1992. The reports have introduced the human development concept into national policy dialogues through country-led processes of consultation, data collection and report writing. Preparation of the reports brings experts from different fields together, often helping to build a national consensus on key issues.

Since the first national HDRs were published, in Bangladesh and Cameroon, the concept has spread rapidly. The reports are prepared by national teams assembled by UNDP's country offices, led by an independent national coordinator – usually an independent think tank, an NGO, an academic institution, or a semi-public or governmental institution.

Most national HDRs share the following key elements:

- *Advocating human development* and highlighting a more people-centred approach to policy-making. They fill an important niche within the policy dialogue among development partners, complementing other government-led planning as well as civil society initiatives and donor-supported studies and reports.
- *Highlighting critical concerns:* In most countries the first national HDR provides a general profile of the state of human development; subsequent reports address specific themes. Bangladesh, Benin, Cambodia, Cameroon, Madagascar, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, among others, have all prepared reports focusing on poverty. Many of the reports in Eastern Europe and CIS have focused on the transition from centrally planned to free market economics, and are now beginning to focus on issues related to governance and human rights. The 1997 report from Namibia focused on HIV/AIDS and poverty. The Philippines and Bangladesh have prepared reports focusing on women and development, while Armenia, Lithuania and Poland, among others, have focused on human settlements.
- *Providing a tool for development planning:* By providing comprehensive human development indicators and indices (see Box 5.12), the national HD reports help to monitor progress and setbacks in human development and poverty. One of the most exciting features of many of the national HDRs is the disaggregation of human development indices (human development index, gender-related development index, gender empowerment measure, and human poverty index) by region or groups within the country. Measuring human development by region, province, gender, urban/rural populations or ethnic groups has provided a useful planning tool for governments to target development programmes and public expenditure to areas where human deprivation is the most critical. This approach helps governments to focus on *equity* when planning for development and, in some cases, when conducting public expenditure reviews. This is the case in, for example, Brazil, Bolivia, Turkey, Namibia and Egypt. Through the use and analysis of human development indicators and indices, disaggregated by region or group, the reports can be used as an essential input for developing human development strategies and action plans.
- *Articulating people's perceptions and priorities:* Some HDRs provide interesting insights into people's perceptions of human development and their concerns and priorities, and have incorporated them into the policy analysis. A good example is the 1996 Bangladesh report which gives equal weight to two different approaches to assess human development and poverty: an analytical study by academics, using data and survey results, and a comprehensive participatory appraisal by poor people themselves.

Source: www.undp.org

SECTOR AND CROSS-SECTORAL PLANS AND STRATEGIES

Sector plans often suffer from weak integration

Associated with these national development planning instruments, line ministries frequently prepare sector-wide plans and investment strategies in policy areas such as transport, agriculture, health and education. However, no matter how good a sector plan appears on paper, it can suffer from the weak integration, and the lack of sustainability criteria, inherent in the overall national planning process. There is a great challenge, however, in defining sustainability criteria and timeframes for a national plan that suit the different conditions facing individual sectors. The NSDS approach represents an organized mechanism for addressing these issues.

A good example of a progressive approach to building on sectoral planning is provided by Jamaica. Here, the Planning Institute of Jamaica has developed strong capacity for systematic data collection and analysis, presenting comprehensive reports which facilitate the integration of sectoral plans into an holistic national planning framework (see www.pioj.gov.jm).

Many countries prepare cross-sectoral or issues-based strategies

Many countries also prepare cross-sectoral or issues-based strategies such as those for reducing HIV/AIDS, for food security or for improving rights for women. Examples of cross-sectoral strategies for environment include coastal zone management plans, and plans for freshwater management (Box 3.6).

National human development reports share common key elements

Since the launch by UNDP of the annual Human Development Report in 1990, many countries have prepared national human development reports. These are cross-sectoral and focus on analysis of key national or sub-national issues and priorities. The reporting processes vary from country to country but most share common key elements, which can be built on in developing an NSDS (Box 3.7).

PLANS AND STRATEGIES RELATED TO CONVENTIONS

Many environmental strategies have been developed as a response to the Rio Conventions (Box 2.4). Responsibility for the preparation of these plans has usually been given to national environment ministries, which carries the risk of isolating the strategy process from key aspects of policy controlled by the ministries for finance, economic development and social affairs.

Convention on Biological Diversity National biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) have been prepared by many countries. Usually, these plans include a systematic analysis of issues and problems, as well as the establishment of agreements among public and private organizations on how to implement various provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992). They are then the basis of detailed programmes setting out how individual countries propose to manage their biological resources. A number of guidelines have been prepared to assist countries in preparing such plans (eg Hagen undated; Fernández 1998; Prescott et al 2000).

National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans often lack integration with other plans and strategies

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has provided grant support to some countries for developing NBSAPs and, according to UNDP's Biodiversity Planning Support Programme (www.undp.org/bpsp), by March 2001, 80 of these countries had completed plan documents.

The approach being taken in India is briefly described in Box 3.8. Such strategies and plans may suffer from a lack of integration, especially with other national institutions and planning mechanisms. A notable exception is Jamaica where the NBSAP has been used to integrate biodiversity concerns into other planning mechanisms (see www.nrca.org; and www.nepa.gov.jm).

Global biodiversity objectives may be favoured over local ones

They may also tend to favour global biodiversity objectives (protecting species that are rare and threatened at global level) over local biodiversity objectives (people-centred goals for conserving biodiversity for cultural reasons, or for use in times of hardship, etc). This is partly because the institutions that have been developed to address biodiversity issues have been heavily influenced by global institutions concerned with biodiversity. Currently there are few institutions capable of integrating local biodiversity and livelihood concerns, and these tend to be weak in terms of their influence on policy and local action.

Box 3.8 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, India

In 1999, India's Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) prepared a national policy and macro-level action strategy on biodiversity through a consultative process. It identified the need to prepare more detailed action plans building on this framework document. It was recognized that the preparation of such a detailed micro-level plan for the conservation of the country's biodiversity was part of India's obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and funds were accessed from the GEF to prepare a national biodiversity strategy and action plan (NBSAP).

The NBSAP is being managed by a national project directorate in the MoEF, and executed by a technical and policy core group (TPCG) headed by Kalpavriksh, an environmental NGO, and comprising experts from various fields and parts of India. The administration of the project is coordinated by the Biotech Consortium India Ltd.

The NBSAP process will result in the formulation of about:

- 20 local-level action plans;
- 30 state-level plans;
- 10 inter-state ecoregional plans;
- 14 national thematic plans.

All of these plans will then be built into an overview national plan, but will also remain independent action plans, capable of being implemented at the level for which they are prepared.

The guidelines to the executing agencies preparing these plans indicate that each Strategy and Action Plan (SAP) should consist of the following:

- statement of the issue or problem;
- identification of ongoing initiatives regarding the issue, key actors involved and major gaps in coverage;
- delineation of steps needed to plug gaps and enhance the effectiveness of ongoing initiatives;
- list of measures and strategies needed to implement these steps;
- identification of key elements needed for implementation: institutional structures, funds, expertise/human resources, policy/legal measures, monitoring, etc;
- timeframe for implementation.

The NBSAP is being developed in a highly *participatory* way, involving a large number of village-level organizations and movements, NGOs, academicians and scientists, government officers from various line agencies, the private sector, the armed forces, politicians and others who have a stake in biodiversity. This approach aims to encourage wide ownership of the process and the product (the NBSAP) so as to ensure implementation of its recommendations.

The NBSAP sets out to assess and take stock of *biodiversity-related information* at various levels, including distribution of endemic and endangered species, site-specific threats and pressures, social/political/economic issues, ethical concerns and ongoing conservation initiatives by various sections of society. All agencies are required to keep in mind two bottom lines: ensuring the ecological security of the country and the area they have responsibility for, and ensuring the livelihood security of communities most dependent on biological resources.

The NBSAP *builds on existing expertise and information* and involves no new field research. The process emphasizes gender sensitive decentralized planning and the use of inter-disciplinary working groups involving all sectors concerned with biodiversity conservation. The detailed action plans (at sub-state, state, regional and national thematic levels) will be consolidated to produce the national-level action plan.

Source: www.sdnp.delhi.nic.in/nbsap/index-main.html

NBSAPs have tended to deal inadequately with the reality that people have always used biodiversity to sustain themselves. While these plans flag the issue of unsustainable patterns of biodiversity use, they seldom include analyses of patterns of use (by communities, countries, multinational companies, etc), or assess practical applications of indigenous know-how on sustainable resource use, which could provide lessons to shape mechanisms for reversing such trends. Recommendations concerning unsustainable use of biodiversity tend to be too prescriptive and focus on projects.

They seldom analyse patterns of biodiversity use or assess indigenous people's know-how

Funding constraints and time limitations have often hampered progress, and many plans have failed to arouse much political interest and remain on the shelf. However, in some countries, the plans have led to further action; for example, in Guyana, where the NBSAP evolved from a participatory formulation process and stimulated ongoing actions two years after it was completed (www.sdnp.org/gy).

Convention to Combat Desertification In response to the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) (1994), many dryland countries have prepared National Action Programmes (NAPs). In addition, some regional and Sub-Regional Action Programmes (RAPs and SRAPS) have also been developed. During 1985–1988 (sponsored by CILS, the Permanent Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel), some countries in the Sahel region had already prepared National Plans of Action to Combat Desertification (NPACD) prior to the adoption of the Convention. They adopted these plans into the NAP process and identified concrete field-level activities. As stated in articles 9 and 10 of the Convention, the purpose of a NAP is:

> *'to identify the factors contributing to desertification and practical measures necessary to combat it and/or mitigate the effects of drought'. The NAP is expected to 'incorporate long-term strategies to combat desertification and be integrated with national policies for sustainable development. In addition, preventive measures should be fundamental in NAPs'.*

By taking a problem-based approach, rather than a sectoral focus, NAPs have tended to be strategic from the start. But they still face the challenge of having to integrate a variety of policies and the actions of a broad range of local institutions in order to move natural resource management towards a more sustainable basis. A preliminary overview of progress in developing and implementing NAPs sets out the envisaged broad scope and process of a NAP (UNSO 1999):[4]

National Action Programmes (NAPs) to combat desertification should include policy and institutional measures

> *The actions under a NAP should entail policy and institutional measures that facilitate the establishment of an enabling environment at national level for sustainable resource use. The process should follow a bottom-up approach and therefore should build on local level development activities to preserve and/or restore the resource base and improve livelihood security of affected populations. As highlighted in the Convention, the NAP is process-orientated, bottom-up, iterative and decentralized. Through it, a set of integrated measures should be identified. The process itself could continue beyond the identification of these elements to provide for implementation and continuous review and adjustment. In formulating and implementing the NAP, maximum flexibility is called for to take into account variations in the circumstances of the affected countries.*

The overview noted 'significant progress' in the first four years after the adoption of the CCD, although the stages of implementation and approaches differ from country to country. It also reported some shortcomings.

NAPs have made significant progress, but also show some shortcomings

> *For example, in some countries, the involvement of some key stakeholders (civil society, external partners) may not have been satisfactory; some of the approaches may not necessarily be in conformity with the spirit of the Convention; and some of the support arrangements are either not*

4 For report, see www.undp.org/seed/unso/prog/prog.htm

> *yet in place or their potentials have not been fully realized (eg partnership arrangements, enabling policies and legal frameworks, funding sources and mechanisms, etc). Still the issue of the way forward in programme development (ie 'stand-alone' NAPs or integrate into sectoral programmes) is not yet fully addressed … The failures … should serve as lessons to guide future action.*

Others have also criticized shortcomings in the NAP process. For example:

> *Ministries of Environment have been preparing NAPs while other policy and legislative changes – such as decentralization and land reform – of enormous relevance to the desertification agenda are taking place, yet with no link made between them.* (Toulmin 2001)

Some 50 countries have received UNDP/UNSO funding to help with their NAPs. Most have adopted a three-phased approach: (1) launching of the NAP process; (2) implementation of agreements at the first forum; and (3) full implementation of the NAP and continued monitoring with periodic reviews in subsequent stakeholder fora.

NAP-related activities in participating countries during recent years have focused primarily on launching the process, community-based activities and efforts to convene and follow-up on the first forum. A national coordinating body or focal point is usually within a government ministry or agency. A steering committee is responsible for the overall organization, developing a vision, a 'road map' of objectives and a timetable for involving the relevant parties and ensuring timely inputs and actions.

Country NAP approaches vary considerably, but have some common features

No single country process typifies the NAP approach – the realities in affected countries are different not only between the regions but even within the regions. However, the examples of approaches being pursued outlined in Box 3.9 demonstrate some important common features and elements of the process. These have much in common with the principles in Box 3.1.

Box 3.9 Examples of effective principles in national action programmes to combat desertification

Good preparations through effective participation: In Burkina Faso 30 Provincial and 10 Regional Committees have been set up to facilitate consultation at the local level. The stakeholders were able to identify the problems, set priorities, determine their responsibilities and decide who would represent them. Such consultations are vital for effective participation and bargaining in the forum in order to elaborate national strategies for local needs.

Demand for decentralization: In Cape Verde, the first African country to ratify the Convention, local participants at the National Forum insisted that people on each island be trained to facilitate the preparation of action programmes and to work to build partnerships directly between government and donors. The issue of decentralization surfaced in Botswana where participants at the National Forum called for provincial action programmes complementary to the national process, to govern local activities.

Participation of civil society: There has been positive participation by members of Swaziland's civil society where the NAP process is gaining priority status in government circles. Consultations among specific stakeholder groups in Senegal involved religious leaders.

Clear responsibilities: Niger, a Sahelian country that has been wrestling with democracy, held its first Forum meeting in March 1998 which was distinguished in that the 517 participants sought to define not only what programmes they thought were necessary, but also to clarify the responsibilities of the various stakeholders.

Quick action: Eritrea, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe are participating in a pilot programme to support local initiatives, aimed at promoting access to small grant resources to address their priorities and make communities responsible for the programming and monitoring of resources. Cape Verde has identified eight community pilot projects. Niger decided on 'urgent actions' that would provide concrete, short-term results, which would give the process visibility.

Building on existing frameworks: Several countries such as Bolivia, Chile, Mexico and Peru had already adopted an approach to address land degradation issues prior to the development of the CCD, and efforts focus on strengthening these initiatives in response to the principles of the CCD. In Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, the current emphasis is on improving participation in existing frameworks. The Sahelian countries can generally build on the strategic frameworks that many of them had prepared with UNSO support.

Role of the private sector: The private sector has started to join forces in a number of countries, such as Brazil and Peru, and representatives of the private sector and NGOs are on the national steering committees of many African and Latin American countries.

Integration with national policies and strategies: The Zimbabwean Government has chosen a 'bottom-up' approach, whereby the District Environmental Action Plans (DEAPs) provide the framework in which the NAP has been integrated. In Burkina Faso the NEAP Secretariat has been designated as the focal point for the NAP process and also in Mali, Senegal, Togo and Uganda. In Botswana and Ethiopia, the National Conservation Strategy provides the framework for the NAP.

Harnessing local expertise: A number of countries, such as China, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, already possess some expertise on the scientific issues concerning desertification, and emphasis is now placed on building operational and management capacity at the local level, as well as to promote participatory processes.

Source: www.undp.org/seed/unso/prog/nap.htm

Developed countries must submit a National Communication within 6 months of ratifying the Climate Change Convention

Framework Convention on Climate Change Under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (Article 12, UNFCC), industrial countries (including Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, also known as Annex I parties) are required to submit a 'national communication' to the Secretariat six months after ratification. These require a considerable amount of assessment and planning in their development and are to include:

I An inventory of all greenhouse gas emissions in the country from different sectors (eg transport, energy, industry, agriculture, etc) following the methodology prescribed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).[5]

II A projection of future expected emissions of greenhouse gases using a business-as-usual economic growth scenario and identification of ways to reduce expected emissions in future.

III An assessment of the vulnerability of the country (including both natural ecosystems and human systems) to the impacts of climate change, highlighting the most vulnerable areas and groups within each country.

IV An assessment of possible options for adaptation to climate change in order to reduce the expected impacts.

These are independently audited to determine coherence with other policies

In preparing these national communications, Annex I Parties must follow guidelines, which have been revised several times. The communications, once submitted to the UNFCCC secretariat, are then subject to independent audit. Auditors examine such issues as coherence with other national policies and the degree of stakeholder involvement (cf NSDS principles). The majority of Annex I Parties submitted their first national communication in 1994 or 1995.

Non-Annex I Parties (developing countries) must make similar national communications, but have three years to do so from entry into force of the Convention for that Party, or from the availability of financial resources. They are also eligible for financial and technical assistance to prepare their national communications – provided by the GEF through its implementing agencies (UNDP, UNEP and the World

5 The IPCC Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories oversees the National Greenhouse Gas Inventories Programme. http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/

Bank) and following specific guidance from the COP. The same issues are reported, but there is no obligation to make formal commitments to the policies and programmes described, although a number of countries have made commitments, notably on energy, and many have emphasized greenhouse gas inventories and mitigation plans (Box 3.10). Small island developing states (SIDS) have focused particularly on vulnerability and adaptation. Least developed country Parties may make their initial communication at their discretion.

Developing countries have 3 years to submit a National Communication, and GEF support is available

By the end of 2001, 77 non-Annex I Parties had submitted their initial national communications. The external support has, however, tended to focus on gas inventory and projections, and the developing countries are now asking for resources to assess vulnerability, to make adaptation plans and to improve integration – specifically with NSDSs. Methodologies for these tasks, however, are currently lacking.[6] So far, over 100 countries (including both developed and developing countries) have submitted their national communications on climate change to the UNFCCC Secretariat. These communications can be accessed on the UNFCCC website (www.unfccc.de/resource/docs/natc).

They have overemphasized greenhouse gas inventories and mitigation plans

Box 3.10 Experience of non-Annex 1 (developing) countries in developing national communications for climate change

A common experience of many developing countries in preparing their National Communications on Climate Change has been an overemphasis on preparing the greenhouse gas inventories and mitigation plans (in many developing countries, their emissions of greenhouse gases were very small in the first place) in comparison to assessments of vulnerability and especially of adaptation options. Many countries felt that more resources and effort should have been allocated to the latter.

In many developing countries, there was a perception that the National Communication for Climate Change had not been linked at the national level with other environmental plans required by the Rio conventions (eg Biodiversity or Desertification Action Plans) as well as with national sustainable development strategies.

The exceptions to this tended to be those countries where the adverse impacts of climate change were expected to be very severe, including some of the small island developing states (SIDS). An example of one such country that was able to carry out its National Communication for Climate Change with some integration into the other environmental national plans, as well as the national development planning mechanism, was Jamaica (www.unfccc.de/resource/docs/natc/jamnc1.pdf).

The lesson seems to be that national communications for climate change (as well as plans prepared under the other Rio conventions) will tend to be better integrated into national planning and strategy processes where their importance to the development path of the country can be clearly demonstrated.

Source: Saleemul Huq (perssonal communication)

NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMMES (NFPs)

The experience of developing tropical forest action plans (TFAPs) in the late 1980s and early 1990s revealed a number of lessons for mainstreaming social, environmental and economic concerns in the sector. But it was more notable for revealing what was not required for a national strategic approach (Box 3.11).

Tropical Forestry Action Plans were a top-down, bureaucratic, technical fix approach

During the mid-1990s, the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) concluded that, in spite of the incomplete success of the TFAP, some kind of NFP was still desirable. However, such a programme was relevant to all countries, and not just those in the tropics. The IPF also concluded that national forest programmes should be country-led, rather than following a formula developed by outside agencies, and should pay close attention to the integration of forestry policies with other economic and social policies and strategies. A general *definition* of NFPs was given in the IPF Final Report (IPF 1997). It suggested that 'national forest programme' be used as a generic expression for a wide range of approaches to sustainable forest management within different countries, to be applied at national and sub-national levels:

Now, country-led National Forest Programmes are being promoted …

6 The development of methodologies for vulnerability/resilience assessment, and integrated adaptation planning, is currently being undertaken by IIED, among other groups.

Box 3.11 The tropical forest action plan – a non-strategic approach

A sense of crisis has often been a principal catalyst for policy change. The TFAP could be characterized as a top-down, quick – but none the less comprehensive – fix to the perceived tropical forest crisis, the perception being promoted by NGO and media concern about 'deforestation'. The response was essentially a bureaucratic and technocratic one, led by professional foresters, and lubricated by development aid. The product of FAO, UNEP, World Bank and World Resources Institute thinking in the mid-1980s, TFAP set a 'standard' for a balanced forest sector for the next decade, and defined a new liturgy for forestry aid planning.

While the TFAP set out a broad set of worthy areas for aid intervention, in practice it resulted in fewer improvements in forestry than had been hoped. Because it was closely associated with the government-to-government aid system, the TFAP was not able to challenge the inequities and perverse policies that underlie deforestation, and then to build the necessary trust between governments, NGOs, local people and the private sector. Its very standardization, within a global framework, and the exigencies of the aid system that supported it (which often meant that expatriates actually led the in-country planning), meant that the TFAP did not adequately recognize diverse local perceptions, values, capacities and needs. Finally – and despite efforts to house TFAP exercises in powerful but 'neutral' bodies such as planning ministries – the TFAP failed to generate real extra political support to the broad range of forest values, and thus to appropriate aid and investment.

Source: Mayers and Bass (1999)

National forest programmes are comprehensive forest policy frameworks for the achievement of sustainable forest management, based on a broad inter-sectoral approach at all stages, including the formulation of policies, strategies and plans of action, as well as their implementation, monitoring and evaluation. They should be implemented in the context of each country's socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental situation. They should be integrated into the country's sustainable development strategies and into wider programmes for sustainable land use, in accordance with chapters 10 to 15 of Agenda 21.

In this context, the national forest programme is a technical process in the sense that the identification of goals, policies, strategies and mechanisms for implementation are based on accurate information. It is a political process in the sense that the choices between the available options are the outcomes of debates, negotiations and compromises of relevant stakeholders. This means participation of all actors, starting from a process of clarification of their roles and responsibilities, defining their rights of intervention, ways and means of collaboration and cooperation and, eventually, arriving at joint implementation and sharing of inputs and benefits.

NFPs are to be based on the following *principles*:

… based on defined principles and main elements

- national sovereignty and country leadership;
- consistency with the constitutional and legal frameworks of each country;
- consistency with international agreements and commitments;
- partnership and participation of all interested parties in the NFP process;
- holistic and inter-sectoral approach to forest development and conservation;
- long-term and iterative process of planning, implementation and monitoring.

The *main elements* of NFPs, in practical terms, are intended to be:

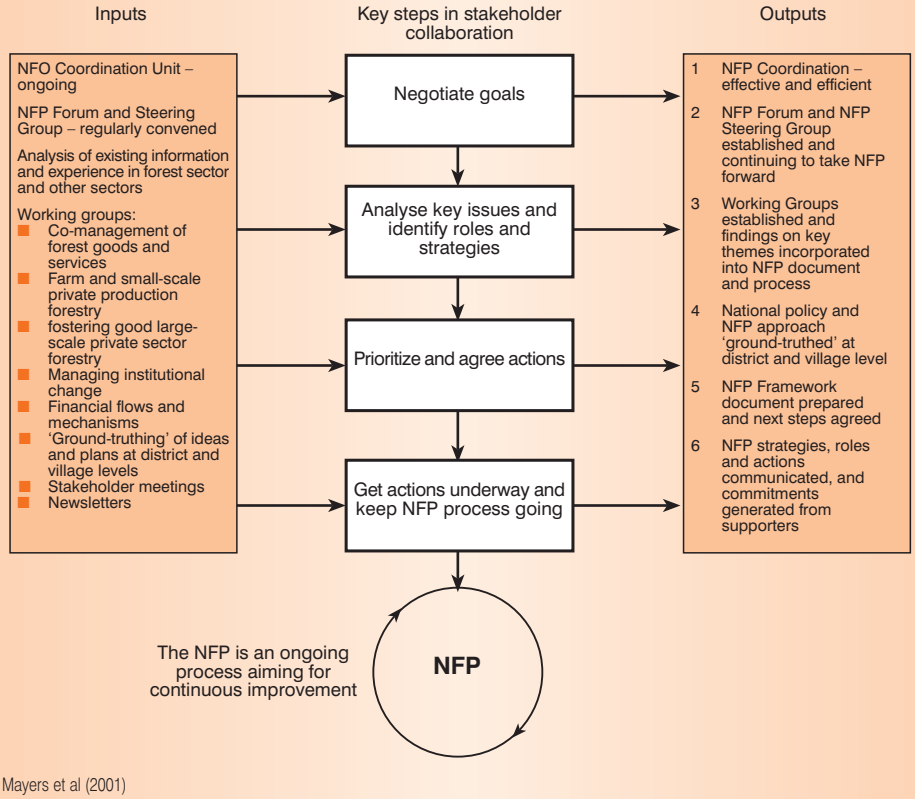
- *National Forest Statement:* a political expression of a country's commitment towards sustainable forest management within related commitments and obligations at the international level.
- *Sector review:* a process to establish an understanding of the forest sector and its relations and linkages to other sectors to identify key issues and priorities for further action; depending on

existing information this could be a major exercise or a continuous process.

- *Policy and institutional reform:* a process of change in favour of sustainable forest management, based on the sector review and dialogue with all actors.
- *Strategy development:* definition of strategies to implement policies towards sustainable forest management, including financing strategies.
- *Action plan:* a bundle of measures, based on needs assessment and jointly agreed prioritization, defined for one planning cycle according to the national development plan (eg five-year plan).
- *Investment programme:* prioritized public sector investments, and incentives for private and non-governmental sectors and partnerships.
- *Capacity-building programme:* to assist stakeholders in fulfilling their roles and mandates.
- *Monitoring and evaluation system:* multi-layered monitoring of the NFP and decentralized forest programmes to provide continuous feedback.
- *Coordination mechanisms:* effective vertical and horizontal coordination within the forest sector and with other sectors, at all levels and in interaction with the international level with regard to donor involvement and forest-related agreements and commitments; for example, through specific fora and consultative groups, inter-sectoral working groups and task forces.

A support facility is being established

An NFP implementation support facility is being set up by FAO, but, as yet, there are no detailed guidelines for these programmes beyond a 'Practioners' Guide' to the IPF Proposals for action. This also offers a framework for screening the relevance of the more than 130 proposals for action to the national context, and for prioritizing them. A few NFPs have been developed according to the new approach. A particularly interesting exercise was in Malawi (Figure 3.3 and Box 3.12).



Source: Mayers et al (2001)

Figure 3.3 Developing Malawi's National Forestry Programme

Most SIDs have a limited natural resource base, and forestry, as a sector producing traditional timber-based marketable products, is less relevant. Here, NFPs must centre on the values and benefits of ecological services and other potential benefits of non-timber forestry. Some SIDS provide good examples of comprehensive forest policy, articulated through participatory processes, which encompass the full range of forestry services, eg Grenada and St Vincent.

NATIONAL CONSERVATION STRATEGIES (NCSs)

Conservation strategies were popular in the 1980s/1990s

NCSs were proposed by the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN/UNEP/WWF 1980) to provide a comprehensive, cross-sectoral analysis of conservation and resource management issues. They were popular in the 1980s and early 1990s when NCSs were prepared in over 100 countries, many with technical support from IUCN. 'Conservation for development' was the 'spin' on NCSs, with the occasional call also for 'development for conservation'. Promoted by IUCN, NCSs harnessed much creativity in their early stages, as there was little precedent for linking the 'weak and soft' concerns of conservation with the powerful, hard systems of development. But they suffered from a lack of commitment from the powerful development and financial interests.

They linked environmental needs and development issues

NCSs aimed to identify urgent environmental needs, link them to development issues, stimulate national debate and raise public consciousness, assist decision-makers to set priorities and allocate resources, and build institutional capacity to handle environmental issues. Information was often obtained and analysis undertaken by cross-sectoral groups. NCSs sought to develop political consensus around the issues identified and resulted, inter alia, in policy documents approved at high level and the establishment of cross-sector coordinating groups. An extensive review was made of NCS experience in three continents, Asia, Africa and Latin America – albeit by IUCN, the organizers of the NCS processes and their close collaborators (Carew-Reid 1997; Lopez 1997; Wood 1997). These reviews found a strong set of common factors: NCSs which could be considered to be successful were characterized by 'legitimacy', 'ownership', 'commitment', 'equity' and good 'networking' – all functions of participation (Bass et al 1995).

Many conservation strategies evolved to address economic growth and poverty alleviation

While most NCSs did not begin with an overt focus on economic growth and poverty alleviation, many evolved to address these issues. This was especially the case where the NCS process successfully raised environmental awareness in key economic and social sector agencies, or in agencies at intermediate and local levels which already had a high level of engagement with community groups and businesses. Some NCSs are now providing a valuable platform for the development of more holistic strategies for sustainable development, for example, in Pakistan (Box 3.13).

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLANS (NEAPs)

National Environmental Action Plans were promoted by the World Bank

In contrast to NCSs, NEAPs were promoted by the World Bank – a much more powerful body, economically and politically. Undertaken from the mid-1980s, NEAPs were primarily developed under the umbrella of a host-country organization (usually a coordinating ministry) with technical and/or financial assistance from the World Bank and other donors. The first generation of NEAPs were strongly criticized as a form of conditionality – if a country wanted to secure soft loans (under IDA-10), it was required that a NEAP be completed by June 1993 at the very latest. Pakistan managed to get its NCS accepted as an equivalent, but most countries were not able to convince the Bank that they had a NEAP in place. The requirement was subsequently relaxed and, under its current Operational Directive on NEAPs (OP 4.02, Feb 2000), the World Bank encourages and supports efforts of borrowing countries to prepare and implement 'an appropriate environmental action plan and to revise it periodically as necessary'. According to this directive:

The first generation of NEAPs was criticized as a form of conditionality

> *An EAP describes a country's major environmental concerns, identifies the principal causes of problems, and formulates policies and actions to deal with the problems. In addition, when*

Box 3.12 The National Forestry Programme, Malawi

The Malawian government's decision to put together an NFP signalled both its intention to meet its international commitments and its need to redress some of the poor relationships between stakeholders stemming from the autocratic approach to forest management prior to the 1990s. The Forestry Department's dialogue with several international organizations and with some of the donor representatives in-country was slowly persuasive in moving the department away from earlier ideas of an NFP as a comprehensive 'master plan' for the sector. It accepted that a thick master plan document with a 'wish-list' of project proposals which poorly reflected the real priorities and motivations of key stakeholders, and quickly went out of date, was not going to get the forest sector to where it needed to be. The department was also painfully aware of its limited financial and human resources and, while increased donor funding was keenly sought, needed an approach that would not demand a level of resources simply beyond its reach.

Actions emerging from the NFP thus needed to be genuinely viable, building on existing capacities and motivations and avoiding the temptation to try everything at once and thus do nothing well. A process that focused on prioritization of issues and actions, and pulled people in to work together, became the agreed need.

A small group of senior staff in the Forestry Department, in contact with key players in some other government departments and several NGOs, reflected on their various international experiences and information available to them related to national forestry programme approaches. Material included personal experiences from previous donor-supported study tours of forest sector programmes in Zimbabwe and South Africa, published NFAP guidance booklets from FAO, and IIED's lessons-learned series on 'policy that works for forests and people'. There was a determination to engage with political and economic reality to show not only what needs to change, but also how it can change.

International emphasis on participation and dialogue, for example, encouraged the government to promote the inclusion of key stakeholders and avoid a top-down and largely irrelevant plan likely to occupy shelf space rather than demand attention. Its highlighting of the strong extra-sectoral influences that could well override forest policy or forestry interventions was also seen as key to ensuring that the fine words laid out in the forest policy actually delivered better lives and forests.

NFP supporters recognized the need for a process which concentrated on agreeing and adopting new roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders, as well as one that brought the then estranged players together so that they might begin to forge meaningful partnerships. The Malawi NFP was therefore seen as one means to break down barriers and to start to dissolve the high level of distrust between partners with very different powers and potentials – most notably the government, the private sector, traditional authorities and local communities.

The ongoing *process* of the NFP can be seen as a 'cycle' – aiming at continuous improvement. The cycle connects the core elements in the process:

- Negotiating goals and roles – stakeholders understanding each other and hammering out core aims and positions.
- Building institutions and prioritizing actions – developing and organizing the capacity around the agreed roles and deciding the relative importance and urgency of all the actions needed.
- Implementing practical actions for sustainable forestry and livelihoods – securing support for the prioritized actions and carrying them out.
- Monitoring and learning – tracking and reviewing implementation to ensure learning and adaptation (which in turn should enable goals and roles to be refined and further developed).

This NFP document can thus be seen as capturing the thinking in the initial round of the cycle – harnessing the results of 'one round' of negotiating goals and roles and one round of prioritizing actions. The process should continue to complete this first cycle and to ensure further rounds of improvement take place.

Source: Mayers et al (2001)

environmental information is lacking, the EAP identifies priority environmental information needs and indicates how essential data and related information systems will be developed. The EAP provides the preparation work for integrating environmental considerations into a country's overall economic and social development strategy. The EAP is a living document that is expected to contribute to the continuing process by which the government develops a comprehensive national environmental policy and programs to implement the policy. This process is expected to form an integral part of overall national development policy and decision-making.

Box 3.13 Pakistan's NCS – a strong basis for a national strategy for sustainable development

In Pakistan, the National Conservation Strategy was prepared through an elaborate, high-level participatory process spanning six years, gained widespread support in government, among political parties, NGOs and civil society, and received cabinet approval in 1992. Despite political upheavals and changes of government, the NCS retains a high level of support and is still being implemented.

A mid-term review of the NCS was undertaken in 2000. It found that, during eight years of implementation, the (quite coherent) strategic objectives and early debate and visioning processes had fragmented into hundreds of unconnected component activities with no feedback mechanism. There was a lack of routine monitoring of project impacts and sustainability indicators, and a lack of policy links between the NCS coordinating body and NCS-inspired projects. As a result, the possibilities for learning were far fewer than there could have been. The NCS review therefore tried to provide a simple base line and framework for correlating sustainability outcomes with strategic processes in future. The review found that the NCS had generated much awareness about the links between environment and development, and had inspired spontaneous innovation and investment in the private sector. The NCS recognized its broad scope, and called for provincial and district conservation strategies to deal with local trade-offs. These local strategies have incorporated economic and livelihood issues more firmly – and indeed, some are seen as sustainable development strategies (Box 3.20).

Given that the NCS retains considerable recognition in the country, it is proposed to retain the label and prepare an NCS-2, although the purpose would be sustainable development. The mid-term review suggested that the NCS-2 should address *national-level concerns, and national institutional roles*, rather than prescribing everything right down to the village level. But it should also recognize, encourage and support the provincial, district and other demand-driven strategic approaches based on local realities consonant with the current devolution plan. This contrasts with the national policy/intellectual push of the original NCS. Finally, recognizing that limited government capacity and weak government–civil society relations had limited the NCS to date, NCS would emphasize the development of *systems* – of participation, information, investment and coordination – rather than the previous 'shopping list' of desirable projects.

Source: Hanson et al (2000)

Most NEAPs included a package of environmentally related investment projects

NEAPs have recommended specific actions, outlining the required policies, legislation, institutional arrangements and investment strategies. But the typical outcome of most NEAPs was not so much institutional change as a package of environmentally related investment projects, many intended for donor assistance. Progress with NEAPs is still reviewed by the Bank and forms a part of its Country Assistance Strategies, but the Bank is now placing more emphasis on Comprehensive Development Frameworks and poverty reduction strategies (see below). NEAPs can therefore be seen as an eclipsed planning tool in the Bank's relations with its member countries, although most of the lessons from NEAP practice have been taken on board in the way the Bank approaches comprehensive development frameworks (CDFs) and poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs).

NATIONAL AGENDA 21S AND NATIONAL COUNCILS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

National Agenda 21s have been prepared by a range of countries, often with support from UNDP's Capacity 21 programme. A common intention has been to set out how Agenda 21 will be translated into action at a country level. These strategies have frequently been developed by National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSDs), multi-stakeholder participatory bodies set up in more than 80 countries (Box 3.14). The Earth Council has supported the development of many NCSDs in developing countries.

National Councils for Sustainable Development are multi-stakeholder bodies, but vary in form and function

The status of NCSDs varies from region to region (they are very active in Latin America, moderately so in Asia, and limited in Africa) but, where they exist, NCSDs have sometimes played an important role in promoting dialogue among stakeholders in participatory decision-making processes. Many have been used as ad hoc think tanks for government, as and when issues arise, although others play more routine roles in development planning. Most importantly, NCSDs have the potential to play a facilitating role in developing strategies for sustainable development. This is often within their mandate, as described in the decrees or acts by which they were established (Table 3.2).

Box 3.14 National Councils for Sustainable Development

Although NCSDs vary widely in form and function, common roles are:

- facilitating participation and cooperation of civil and economic society and governments for sustainable development;
- assisting governments in decision-making and policy formulation;
- integrating economic, social and environmental action and perspectives;
- looking at the local implications of global agreements such as Agenda 21 and other international conventions related to sustainable development;
- providing a systematic and informed participation of civil society in UN deliberations.

Since the creation of first NCSD in the Philippines in September 1992, the Earth Council has facilitated and supported the establishment and strengthening of NCSDs in some 70 (especially developing) countries. The Council's NCSD Sustainable Development Report is a progress report that documents successful NCSD practice and problem areas, and assesses the effectiveness of NCSDs in influencing policy decisions in several key thematic areas.

With funding from GEF-UNDP, a prototype project is under way to develop methodologies to integrate global environmental priorities into sustainable development plans. Participating in the project are NCSDs of Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, the Philippines and Uganda. The project is founded on the concept of 'multi-stakeholder integrative sustainability planning' (MISP) – an approach to development planning that appears to have much in common with the principles for strategies for sustainable development in that it is:

- built on people's participation and action;
- multi-stakeholder, and seeks to reconcile divergent interests of stakeholders;
- flexible and adaptable;
- promotes coordination and vertical and horizontal integration and empowerment;
- dynamic and iterative.

See Box 8.7 for further details on NCSD mandates, structures and composition; and Box 8.8 for a review of their decision-making processes.

Source: Earth Council (2000); www.ncsdnetwork.org

To move towards sustainable development, NCSDs will usually need to broaden their initial environmental focus to cover more fully the concerns of social and economic stakeholders. They may also need to improve their links to decentralized levels of governance and administration, and local action by voluntary organizations and CBOs (the Mexican and Philippines NCSDs provide good examples of this).

They need to broaden their initial environmental focus

NATIONAL VISIONS

National visions for sustainable development are being developed by an increasing number of countries, many supported by UNDP's Capacity 21 programme. National visions bring together different groups of society, including those of different political parties, to agree common development objectives. Examples include Ghana, Pakistan, Tanzania and Thailand (Box 3.15). Their advantage is the opportunity they present for many stakeholders to take a forward view on national development and work towards broad, shared objectives for their country's future. Their success depends very much on the degree to which stakeholders participate, the durability of the vision between successive political administrations, its widespread promotion among those who make key decisions, and its transferability to standard developmental and administrative procedures.

National visions set out common development objectives of different groups of society

Table 3.2 Examples of National Councils for Sustainable Development and similar multi-stakeholder fora for sustainable development

Country	Multi-stakeholder mechanism	Date of creation	Instrument of establishment
Burkina Faso	National Council for Environmental Management	June 1998	Decree
Canada	National Round Table on Environment and Economy	1994	Law
Estonia	National Commission on Sustainable Development	1996	Decree
Finland	Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development	June 1993	Council of State decision
Hungary	Commission on Sustainable Development	April 1993	Decree
Jamaica	Sustainable Development Council of Jamaica	June 1996	International agreement
Mexico	National Consultative Council for Sustainable Development	April 1995	Law
Mongolia	National Council for Sustainable Development	April 1996	Government resolution
Philippines	Philippine Council for Sustainable Development	September 1992	Decree
Romania	National Center for Sustainable Development	June 1997	Project
Senegal	National Committee for Sustainable Development	May 1995	Decree
South Korea	Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development	August 2000	Decree
Uganda	National Environmental Management Authority	January 1996	Law
United States of America	President's Council on Sustainable Development	June 1993	Decree

Source: Earth Council (2000)

COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS

CDF principles are consistent with those of NSDSs

The CDF concept was introduced by the World Bank President, James D Wolfensohn, in 1999, as a holistic approach to development in the Bank's client countries. World Bank programming must be consistent with the CDF, which is based on four interrelated principles and objectives to be pursued at the country level. These are consistent with the basic principles for sustainable development strategies, outlined in Box 3.1:

- a long-term vision and strategy;
- enhanced country ownership of development goals and actions;
- more strategic partnership among stakeholders;
- accountability for development results.

The CDF encourages the use of a long-term strategic horizon of, say, 15–20 years. It seeks a better balance in policy-making by highlighting the interdependence of all elements of development – social, structural, human, governance, environmental, economic and financial. It emphasizes partnerships among governments, development cooperation agencies, civil society, the private sector and others. Of particular importance is a stress on country ownership of the process and direction of the development agenda, with bilateral and multilateral development cooperation agencies each defining their support for their respective plans.

Box 3.15 National Visions

Ghana-Vision 2020 was developed by the government of former President Jerry Rawlings as a policy framework for accelerated growth and sustainable development in Ghana. It gave a strategic direction for national development over 25 years from 1996 to 2020. Its main goal was to transform the country from a poor, low-income country into a prosperous middle-income country within a generation. The goals of Ghana-Vision 2020 were expected to be accomplished through a series of medium-term development plans based on the routine, decentralized, participatory planning framework which requires priority-setting at the district level. Ghana-Vision 2020 was the product of an extensive consultation and collaborative effort over some four years involving many groups and individuals from the universities, the public sector, the private sector and civil society, coordinated by the National Development Planning Commission.

The change of government in late 2000 was followed by initial uncertainty about how it would treat Vision 2020 and the accompanying 2000–2005 policy framework. In May 2001, the new government rejected Vision 2020 as a framework for formulating economic policies as well as the goal to achieve middle-income status by 2020, reasoning that this goal could not be achieved in the planned timeframe, given the major slippages in achieving targets under the First Medium-Term Development Plan (1995–2000). In its place, an alternative vision has been proclaimed – to develop Ghana into a major agro-industrial nation by 2015, propelled by a 'golden age of business'.

The government is currently fashioning a new economic policy framework to enable the nation to achieve this new goal and the specifics are yet to be made public. A National Economic Dialogue (NED) was held in May 2001, with participation by several stakeholder groups, around six themes: poverty reduction strategy; a golden age of business; education, labour market and human resource development; resources for growth; economic policy; and development of the financial sector. It was the first national consensus-building exercise for stakeholders to discuss the new government's economic policies, including its approach to poverty alleviation within the context of its new vision for long-term economic growth and the decision to participate in the HIPC programme. Several of the thematic thrusts of the newly evolving economic policy framework cover the same ground as under the Vision 2000 (Seth Vordzorgbe, personal communication).

Pakistan's 2010 Programme and the 25-year Perspective Plan were developed in the pursuit of defining a long-term vision for the country's development. The goals were to achieve economic growth through technological development and sustained human development. The Planning Commission of the federal government was the main coordinating body with inputs from, and implementation through, other sectoral ministries and departments. A government-coordinated committee organized a consultative process for both initiatives, which included representatives from the civil society and public sector.

Tanzania's Vision 2025 sets targets to achieve a nation characterized by a high quality of life for all citizens; peace, stability and unity; good governance; a well-educated and learning society; and a diversified economy capable of producing sustainable growth and shared benefits. Implementation is to be through short- and medium-term strategies such as the National Poverty Eradication Strategy, Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Medium Term Plan.

Thailand's National Vision was developed over 18 months as part of a participatory process, involving 50,000 people, to prepare the Ninth Economic and Social Development Plan. A draft vision emerged from a first round of consultations in the People's Forum on Development Priorities. This was then subjected to research-based analysis of internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats. A revised draft was amended further by the People's Forum, operational elements related to institutional improvements were added, and the vision finalized.

Progress with CDF has been uneven, but most participating countries have developed long-term visions and engaged in debate on development aspirations

The CDF was initiated in 12 pilot countries[7] and also by some non-pilot countries under their own initiative. Early progress in implementing the CDF was uneven, which was not surprising given the different starting points and varying circumstances of the participating countries. By July 2000, after 12–18 months of the initiative (World Bank 2000), more than half of the pilots had made progress with the majority of CDF elements. Greatest progress was made on long-term vision and strategy development, while least progress was in establishing open, transparent management information systems. Nearly all

7 CDF pilot countries include: Bolivia, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kyrgyz Republic, Morocco, Romania, Uganda, Vietnam, West Bank and Gaza.

pilots were focusing on governance issues, and many were implementing projects to improve their justice systems. Romania, for example, had embarked on a major reform of public administration. Several countries were emphasizing the importance of 'knowledge sharing and transparency' through country-based CDF websites.[8]

The latest review (World Bank 2001c; www.worldbank.org/cdf) reports that sustained progress is being made. The PRSP initiative (see next sub-section) has substantially expanded the number of countries seeking to develop strategies based on CDF principles. Nevertheless, implementation of the CDF principles has been difficult and uneven. The review looked at progress in implementing CDF principles in 46 countries that were either part of the original CDF pilot group or that have prepared interim PRSPs or full PRSPs. It reports that:

- a majority of the 46 countries are developing long-term country visions;
- 80 per cent of these countries are developing strategies based on internal debate around domestic aspirations;
- progress in building partnerships among stakeholders has been slow;
- least progress has been made on accountability development results.

The CDF proposal suggested the use of a regularly updated matrix showing the activities of all partners across all sectors (part of the matrix for Vietnam is set out in Table 3.3). The aim of the matrix is to give all players a framework of information to ensure openness and a basis for coordinating efforts and judging the effectiveness of programmes and strategies. The review uncovered a mixed experience of the use of such matrices. Some countries felt that a matrix should be a regular output of the CDF process, while others have relied on more familiar ways to share information.

The City Development Strategy (CDS) is an application of the CDF at the urban level, and is being implemented in 27 cities, 21 of which are in Asia, including three in pilot countries.

The CDS is part of the Bank's response to the need for decentralization and associated changes in the structure and roles of governments.

Positive aspects of the CDF programme include country ownership, enhanced accountability, and development of long-term vision. Its principles are consistent with the NSDS approach, and CDFs could therefore form a basis for a country's NSDS. However, it is also clear, at this stage, that an intention of the CDF programme as a whole is to enhance the World Bank's role in sustainable development.

POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES

The strategic planning mechanisms of many developing countries have focused on *strategies to reduce poverty*. For example, Tanzania developed a Poverty Alleviation Action Plan in 1996, Uganda's Poverty Eradication Action Plan followed in 1997, and Zambia prepared a poverty alleviation strategy towards the end of the decade. Such plans were of varying quality. The best were truly cross-sectoral strategies to address poverty – with clearly budgeted priorities. Others, however, tended to be no more than a list of social sector investment projects.

To receive debt relief, poor countries must prepare a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) …

Within the CDF framework, the World Bank and the IMF launched *Poverty Reduction Strategies* for low-income countries in 1999. PRSPs are country-written documents detailing plans for achieving sustained reductions in poverty.

Initially required as a basis for access to debt relief in Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), PRSPs are required by all International Development Agency (IDA) countries as of 1 July 2002.

8 Bolivia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kyrgyz Republic, Romania and Vietnam.

The activities of partners who can assist in the development process

Table 3.3 Example of a draft CDF matrix from Vietnam

	Structural				Human			Physical					Specific Strategies			
	(1) Good and Clean Governance*	(2) Justice System	(3) Financial System	(4) Social Safety Net and Social Programs	(5) Education	(6) Health and Population	(10b) Cultural Issues	(7) Water and Sanitation	(8) Power	(9a) Transport	(9b) Telecoms	(10a) Environment	(11) Agriculture/ Rural Dev't (not forestry)	(12) Urban Dev't	(13) Private Sector Dev't	(14) Forestry
Lead External Agencies	UNDP SIDA DANIDA	UNDP (with Danish $)	WB SAC team with IMF	WB SAC team	WB with ADB	WB with SIDA & UN Agencies	Sweden	ADB, with WB & UN	WB with ADB, Japan, Sweden	Japan with ADB, WB	Telstra (Australian part state-owned company)	UNDP	WB with ADB	ADB UNDP Japan WB	WB (IFC)	Netherl. WB ADB
Multi-lateral	UNDP ADB	UNDP	WB IMF UNDP	UNFPA UNDP WB	WB ADB	UN WHO WB WFP		WB UN ADB	WB ADB	WB ADB		ADB UNDP WB	WB FAO ADB	UNDP ADB WB	WB (IFC) UNIDO UNCDF UNDP	WFP ADB
Bilateral	Sweden Germany EC Canada Denmark	Denmark Australia Sweden France Germany	Canada Japan Germany Switzerl. France	Netherl. UK	Australia Japan France Sweden Belgium	Sweden Japan Netherl. Australia Germany	Sweden France Finland Netherl.	Finland Japan Australia Netherl. Denmark	Japan Sweden	Japan Denmark Korea France Australia	Canada France Japan	Netherl. Sweden Canada Denmark Norway	Australia Denmark Belgium France Netherl.	Switzerl. Japan Belgium	Australia Switzerl. Sweden Denmark New Zealand	Japan Germany
Civil Society	Oxfam UK	Radda Barnen, Asia Foundation		Actionaid, Oxfam UK, Save the Children UK			Ford Foundation					WWF IUCN			CECI	
Private Sector											Telstra (1/3 private)					

Note: First draft indicated to be completed gradually by the end of 2000 (title: The prerequisites for sustainable growth and poverty alleviation)
* Donors considering new programming in governance include Denmark, Canada, Australia, Sweden, the EC and the ADB

Source: www.worldbank.org.vn/partner/part2.htm

The stated principles of poverty reduction strategies are that they should:

… following CDF principles …

> *be country-driven, be developed transparently with broad participation of elected institutions, stakeholders including civil society, key development cooperation agencies and regional development banks, and have a clear link with the agreed international development goals – principles that are embedded in the Comprehensive Development Framework.* (Development Committee Communiqué, September 1999)

According to the IMF, PRSPs take the following form:

> *They are prepared by the member country in collaboration with the staffs of the World Bank and the IMF as well as civil society and development partners. Updated annually, they describe the country's plan for macroeconomic, structural, and social policies for three-year economic adjustment programmes to foster growth and reduce poverty, as well as associated external financing needs and major sources of financing. Interim PRSPs (I-PRSPs) summarize the current knowledge and analysis of a country's poverty situation, describe the existing poverty reduction strategy, and lay out the process for producing a fully developed PRSP in a participatory fashion.* (www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/prsp.asp)

… and building on pre-existing decision-making processes

World Bank guidance for CDFs and PRSPs explicitly supports building on pre-existing decision-making processes. Governments developing PRSPs and external partners supporting them have taken advantage of this in many cases, although in some it has taken time for the implications of this inclusive approach to be understood.

A PRSP sourcebook is available

The Bank and the IMF have prepared guidelines for the preparation and assessment (Joint Staff Assessment) of I-PRSPs and PRSPs (annexes in IMF 2001). These reflect the principles of the CDF and embody a three-part approach to poverty reduction, based on creating economic opportunity, empowering the poor and addressing vulnerability (as set out in the World Development Report 2000/2001). A PRSP Sourcebook has been developed as a compendium of reference material to help countries in preparing their own country-specific strategies, bringing together information on international best practices and policies for poverty reduction. The Sourcebook is an evolving document that will be revised in the light of comments and country experience. It is presented in two volumes: the first covers core techniques (eg poverty measurement and analysis, monitoring and evaluation) and cross-cutting issues (eg participation, governance, environment); the second volume deals with macro and structural issues (eg pro-poor growth, trade), rural and urban poverty, human development, and private sector infrastructure (available at www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/sourctoc.htm).

Interim-PRSPs are road maps to full PRSPs

A comprehensive PRSP review reveals growing country ownership, more open dialogue, but the need for realistic targets

By March 2002, the World Bank and IMF boards had considered a total of 42 interim PRSPs, which are 'road maps' to forthcoming PRSPs intended to reduce delays in debt relief and concessional lending. Ten full PRSPs had also been considered for Albania, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Honduras, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Tanzania and Uganda (www.worldbank.org/prsp). Three first annual PRSP implementation progress reports had been submitted (Tanzania, Uganda and Burkina Faso). The boards also received a report on a comprehensive review of the PRSP approach (started in mid-2001), which provides descriptions of good practice for countries and partners, numerous country examples and coverage of sectoral issues. The boards endorsed its main findings: the need for realism of targets and choosing appropriate indicators; ensuring timely monitoring of progress; good public expenditure management; and focusing on growth, sources of growth and the role of the private sector (www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/review) (Box 3.16).

Box 3.16 Progress with PRSPs: key points of the comprehensive review by World Bank and IMF

It is clear that the development of PRSPs is a major challenge for low-income countries, in terms of both analysis and organization. Besides managing a complex policy dialogue with development partners, low-income governments have to put together an integrated medium-term economic and poverty reduction strategy, complete with short- and long-term goals and monitoring systems; these are a set of tasks few industrial countries could systematically do well. And in many countries, these tasks must be managed with limited technical and institutional capacity and in ways that reinforce – rather than undermine – existing national institutions, processes, and governance systems. Thus, there is a need to have realistic expectations about the PRSPs that are being developed.

The central message is that there is broad agreement among low-income countries, civil society organizations and their development partners that the objectives of the PRSP approach remain valid … and that there have been improvements over time in both process and content … There is widespread agreement on four key achievements of the PRSP approach to date:

- a growing sense of ownership among most governments of their poverty reduction strategies;
- a more open dialogue within governments and with at least some parts of civil society than had previously existed;
- a more prominent place for poverty reduction in policy debates;
- an acceptance by the donor community of the principles of the PRSP approach.

While it is premature to draw any firm conclusions about the development impact of the PRSP approach, there are nonetheless a range of good practices by countries and their development partners … In reality, there are only a few concrete cases where such practices are in place.

Interim PRSPs

The requirements for an I-PRSP were deliberately minimal, although this was evidently not widely understood by all stakeholders. The I-PRSP was to describe the existing situation (with respect to poverty: the existing poverty reduction strategy and macroeconomic and policy framework) and set out a plan for developing the full PRSP (including the participatory processes; plans for identifying and developing appropriate policies, targets and indicators; and a system for monitoring and evaluating implementation). Policy commitments and targets for the outer years were to be revised in the full PRSP.

While the quality of I-PRSPs has varied, their preparation has served a useful purpose by encouraging countries to take stock of existing data and policies, to launch a broader process of rethinking current strategies, and to produce time-bound road maps for the preparation of their first full PRSP. In many cases (eg Mongolia and Nicaragua), I-PRSPs were longer than expected, as countries put forward quite comprehensive documents. At the same time, however, the road maps were sometimes relatively weak with respect to plans for participatory processes (eg Senegal); plans to fill data gaps (eg Sierra Leone) and the proposed institutional arrangements for the PRSP (eg Moldova and Tajikistan). This appears to have been due to both an unclear understanding about the intended nature of an I-PRSP, coupled with pressures imposed by HIPC and/or PRGF timetables.

Although I-PRSPs were initially viewed as a transitional device, they may still be useful in many of the nearly three dozen low-income countries that will need to prepare PRSPs for access to Bank/Fund concessional lending and/or debt relief.

In order to qualify for debt relief, many countries prepared their I-PRSPs too hastily. In fact, the push by many countries to reach their Decision Point at the earliest possible date came at the expense of the quality of some I-PRSPs road maps, for example, participation plans and proposed institutional arrangements.

Full PRSPs

Ten countries have now finalized their first full PRSPs. These varied considerably in form and content, reflecting each country's own starting point, capacities and priorities. Each of the documents included the four elements proposed in the joint Bank/Fund paper on PRSPs (Operational Issues, SM/99/290, 12 Dec 1999): (a) a description of the participatory process used in preparing the PRSP; (b) a poverty diagnosis; (c) targets, indicators and monitoring systems; and (d) priority public actions. However, the PRSPs varied considerably in the relative weight given to the treatment of the core elements and to key areas within these elements, and in style and format of presentation. Key points raised about PRSP documents and the approach include:

- PRSPs have generally built on existing data and analyses and on prior strategies;

- they reflect considerable improvement in both process and content relative to their corresponding I-PRSPs;
- they have received attention at the highest political level in almost all countries, and many provide useful information about the institutional arrangements for preparation and implementation;
- in some cases, documents have clarified the linkages between PRSPs and existing governmental plans and decision-making processes – especially budget formulation.

Participation

- PRSPs have established a presumption in favour of openness and transparency and broad-based participation – the approach has often led to an improved dialogue within the various parts of government and between governments and domestic stakeholders, and has brought new participants into the policy dialogue;
- however, some concerns have been expressed about inadequate engagement by certain groups or institutions seen as key to successful poverty reduction efforts;
- sectoral ministries generally are less fully involved than core ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Planning;
- the role of parliaments in the PRSP process has generally been limited, although individual parliamentarians have been involved in some countries;
- in most countries, bringing civil society organizations into the process has improved with time;
- in some cases, there have been constraints to deepening and widening the process to all constituents to meet their expectations;
- there is some evidence that civil society's efforts have affected PRSP content, particularly in drawing attention to problems of social exclusion and the impoverishing effects of bad governance;
- in some countries, there may be a risk of 'participation fatigue'.

Poverty diagnostics

- despite the significant advances in poverty data and analysis in PRSPs relative to pre-existing government strategies and policy frameworks, analysis of the impact of the policy actions on the lives of the poor appears to have been limited;
- poverty and social impact analysis of major policies and programmes has typically not been undertaken as part of PRSPs.

Targets, indicators, monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

- many PRSPs set long-term targets that seem overly ambitious relative to prior achievements and/or likely available resources;
- PRSPs often lack good indicators of intermediate processes that would help track the implementation of public programmes;
- many PRSPs have detailed plans for improvement of M&E capacities, but the institutional structure for monitoring has not always been clearly defined.

Priority public actions

- PRSPs are generally weak regarding the prioritization and specificity of public actions;
- some early PRSPs have made progress in identifying pro-poor growth policies;
- there were various shortcomings in the macro-economic frameworks put forward in the early PRSPs, both in terms of presentation and content. All included ambitious growth targets and could have benefited from a sharper analysis of the likely sources and levels of growth;
- key cross-cutting issues (eg gender, HIV/AIDS, good governance, rural development) have been addressed to varying extents;
- all PRSPs have emphasized access to services as a key concern, with improved access to education a priority;
- in general, the primacy of the private sector for growth is acknowledged;
- most PRSPs have dealt with issues concerning trade openness in only a limited way.

EXAMPLES

Tanzania's *poverty reduction strategy is anchored within a macroeconomic framework designed to raise the GDP growth rate while maintaining macroeconomic stability. It focuses on reducing income poverty and on enhancing human capabilities, survival, and well-being. Reduction of income poverty is to be achieved through rural/agricultural*

development and export growth. The government also places special emphasis on improving primary education, access to health services and water (especially in rural areas), and governance (including anti-corruption and better access to the judicial system). At the same time, the PRSP candidly acknowledges gaps in poverty analysis, in some strategy components, and in the comprehensiveness of participatory processes. The PRSP spells out plans to rectify these gaps in the coming months.

While acknowledging the positive aspects of the strategy, the Joint Staff Assessment of the PRSP and comments from the Executive Boards identified a number of areas where additional work will be needed, including: statistical information on poverty; programme costing, monitoring and evaluation; added attention to specific areas such as gender, environment, and the impact of HIV/AIDS; and, critically, fleshing out Tanzania's agricultural development strategy. Work already undertaken by the government and civil society on the integration of gender issues into the budget planning process should provide an opportunity for ensuring that gender is fully integrated into Tanzania's poverty reduction strategy.

Mauritania's *anti-poverty strategy preceded the PRSP approach. It has included the introduction and expansion of participatory processes with civil society, as well as consultations with development partners. Building on these processes, the PRSP recognizes the multidimensional nature of poverty, and offers an integrated vision for poverty reduction based on four inter-related elements — accelerating economic growth with macroeconomic stability; stimulating pro-poor economic growth (ie rural development, support for small and medium enterprises); developing human resources by improving education and health services and access to basic infrastructure; and strengthening institutional capacity and governance (including civil service and judicial reform, decentralization, enhancing partnerships with civil society, and developing effective and transparent public expenditure management and impact monitoring systems). The PRSP sets ambitious targets for halving income poverty by 2010, and reducing it to about one-third of its estimated current level by 2015. The boards of the World Bank and IMF strongly endorsed the strategy, while noting that it is subject to certain risks, including possible shortfalls in economic growth targets, in budgetary revenues and external financing, and in the efficient and timely delivery of services to the poor.*

Both Executive Board discussions and Joint Staff Assessments of PRSPs have been frank in noting gaps in countries' analyses of the complex mix of policies and priority actions needed to secure both broad-based economic growth and specific poverty reduction outcomes. Not surprisingly, those countries able to build on prior experience with poverty reduction programmes have been able to elaborate initial strategies more successfully than those lacking such experience. But even in the more successful cases, basic problems, such as capacity constraints and lack of adequate data, have made it hard for countries to prepare fully worked out strategies. For example, the full PRSPs for Mauritania and Tanzania had to rely on poverty data that were 5–10 years old. To some extent, existing Bank and Fund work — such as core Bank economic and sector work (ESW) — can help provide countries with the material they need in preparing their strategies, but additional technical assistance and support for capacity building, including from development partners, is likely to become increasingly needed, especially as countries make the transition to full PRSPs.

Note: This box is based on extracts drawn from the main review report and the separate summary of main findings (available on: www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/review)

Source: IMF (2001)

Despite the intensive role played by the Bank and IMF in PRSPs, and their relative lack of attention to date on key issues of environmental sustainability, economic growth and diversification, these approaches are capable of taking on the broader role of NSDSs.

PRSPs need improved participation

Improvements to the basis of participation and analysis of environment/poverty links would help, as stressed by the World Bank/IMF review. A separate World Bank study of participation in PRSPs by the Participation Group of the Bank's Social Development Department has brought together a synthesis of external assessments of participation in the PRSP process with the in-house review of participation in 33 I-PRSPs and 9 full PRSPs (World Bank 2002). The report concludes that 'almost all countries are on the lower half of the spectrum' and information-sharing and consultation is largely confined to capital cities. Furthermore, the process is driven by finance and planning ministries, with other ministries such as health and education playing minor roles. On participation by civil society organizations, the report concludes that NGOs are assuming an increasingly important role. However, non-conventional NGOs such as community

groups and women's organizations are given little attention. Other weaknesses highlighted include the poor quality of data and a lack of gender analysis. The study suggests joint learning and assessment across countries and greater focus on the participation of local government.

NGOs are sceptical and critical

The development of PRSPs has gained momentum, but considerable scepticism remains about their underlying intentions. Two statements in 2001 by participants representing civil society concluded that the PRSP approach is simply delivering re-packaged structural adjustment programmes rather than poverty-focused development plans. They were also said to have failed to involve civil society and parliamentarians in discussions of economic policy. More recently Asian NGOs have commented on the problems they face with PRSP processes in their region (Box 3.17).

Box 3.17 Civil society opposition to PRSPs and NGO views

In May 2001, 39 organizations and regional networks from 15 African countries agreed a statement at a meeting in Kampala that PRSPs were:

> *simply window-dressing to improve the IMF and World Bank's declining legitimacy. The content of PRSPs continues to put corporate rights before social, human and environmental rights. Rather than enable local people to decide their content, PRSPs means more IMF and World Bank control not only over financial and economic policies but over every aspect and detail of all our national policies and programmes. The macro-economic programme is still not open for discussion and anti-poverty programmes are expected to be consistent with the neo-liberal paradigm including privatization, deregulation, budgetary constraints and trade and financial liberalization. Yet these ignore the role of international/global factors and forces in creating economic crises and poverty.*

The statement details how problems with the process limit civil society participation, and notes that southern NGOs have been distracted from the task of opposing structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and the HIPC debt initiative. It calls for NGOs to 'return to our own agendas and reinvigorate and further strengthen our engagement and work with people at the grass roots' (for statement, see afrodad@samara.co.net.zw).

Another statement signed by 19 French NGOs in March 2001 points to the 'illusion' of ownership. It calls for the international financial institutions (IFCs) and their major shareholders to cancel poor countries' debts, ensure the full participation of national parliaments and civil society organizations in macro-economic reform discussions, and engage in a thorough reform of the IFCs (for statement, see agirici@globenet.org and www.globalnet.org/ifi).

Source: Bretton Woods Project (2001)

Focus on the Global South has issued a report assessing PRSP processes in Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam. Drawn from interviews with NGOs and World Bank missions, the report concludes that the interim PRSPs produced for these countries are not about poverty eradication. While Vietnam has been better able to direct the process, in both Lao PDR and Cambodia, interim PRSPs conflict with existing medium-term development plans. The report criticizes the level of participation in the drafting process. While prominent NGOs were consulted, a failure to translate the papers into either Khmer or Lao marginalized the majority of civil society actors. Focus researchers believe that the World Bank is repeating errors of the past, as policy recommendations are similar to previous structural adjustment measures. The report reveals that none of the three governments had been informed of the results of the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative assessments of the impact of SAPs in their countries.

In Bangladesh, at a national convention on the poverty reduction strategy (PRS) on 9 March 2002 organized by the People's Empowerment Trust (PET) and Action Aid Bangladesh, participants condemned the lack of transparency in the PRS drafting process. Criticism was made that the timeline set by the World Bank and IMF for people's participation in the process threatened to lead to the 'abandonment of the very principles of poverty reduction'. A declaration by participants called on the World Bank and IMF to remove PRSP conditionality for receipt of further funds, and develop a transparent 'route map' to guide the process (www.focusweb.org).

Source: Bretton Woods Project (2002)

Box 3.18 The DEAP mechanism in Zimbabwe

District Environmental Action Plans (DEAPs) were launched as a pilot exercise in 1995. This was a follow-up to the National Conservation Strategy developed with support from IUCN and UNDP. DEAP is being implemented by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. The objective of DEAP is to prepare environmental action plans for all rural districts in Zimbabwe. The first phase concentrated on one ward in each of eight pilot districts – including budgeted portfolios for the sustainable development of the natural resource base in the district and one activity to be implemented immediately to tackle an environmental issue identified by villagers in the district.

Following an earlier critical review, the initiative was extended in 1999 – overall there are now two districts covered per province. The focus of the DEAPs is on poverty alleviation, socio-economic improvement and environmental degradation. The overall programme is overseen by a steering committee of senior officials. Provincial strategy teams are responsible for the training of district, ward and community strategy teams. In each district, a district strategy team is responsible for facilitating the process and reports to the relevant sub-committee of the Rural District Development Committee.

Activities in each district include:

- participation with villagers to identify environmental problems, set priorities and initiate action;
- collecting relevant environmental, economic and institutional data in all wards;
- scanning all environment projects/programmes;
- mobilizing technical inputs in developing the plans;
- documenting relevant institutions and expertise, and defining their roles in plan implementation;
- identifying and designing projects/programmes to constitute the main elements of each plan;
- documenting requirements for implementing each plan;
- disseminating each plan among institutions and groups and building consensus on its appropriateness.

The entry level for activities is now at the ward rather than community level – the latter was judged to have failed and the training in the use of participatory methods introduced in the first phase has ceased. This initiative is very much on a pilot, experimental basis. The transaction costs of scaling up such a comprehensive approach are considerable, especially given a tendency to weak institutional capacity in local councils. It is also the case that the achievement of strategic objectives at the municipal level can be conditioned by the integration of sustainable development policy and practice at the national level, and by determination of appropriate spatial levels of governance for various actions. For example, the success of recycling processes at the village or neighbourhood level can be conditional on support from higher-level strategies and economic instruments.

Source: Munemo (1998)

Sub-national strategies

Many countries have strategic planning frameworks at different sub-national levels, including urban and regional planning. Some of these frameworks are inspired by national mechanisms. A series of boxes set out experiences in this regard. In Box 3.18, the district environmental action plans in Zimbabwe are described. Local Agenda 21s have been developed in many countries and are described in Box 3.19. The experience in Pakistan of preparing, in sequence, national, provincial and district conservation strategies is set out in Box 3.20. This reveals growing attention to stakeholder participation, which can be correlated with increasing attention to a broad range of developmental (as opposed to environmental) affairs. But it also suggests a capacity limit to intensive conservation strategy approaches at 'lower' levels. The prospects in both Pakistan and Zimbabwe for such strategies in all districts are slim at present – there is much institutional development to be undertaken first. However, as the tentative plans for NCS-2 in Pakistan suggest, local institutional development, under the devolution plan currently being implemented, can in part be achieved *through* the strategic exercise – if it is carried out in ways consistent with the principles and elements in Boxes 3.1 and 3.2.

Applying NSDS principles can help local institutional development

Box 3.19 Local Agenda 21

The Local Agenda 21 (LA21) concept was formulated and launched by the International council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) in 1991 as a framework for local governments worldwide to implement the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). ICLEI, along with partner national and international local government associations and organizations (LGOs), championed the LA21 concept during the 1991–1992 UNCED preparatory process.

Following UNCED, local governments, national and international LGOs, and international and UN organizations began experimenting with implementing the LA21 concept. Some local governments, often supported by national municipal associations, developed LA21 planning approaches appropriate to their circumstances.

LA21 gets to grips with the capacity problem, which has limited other approaches (Boxes 3.13 and 3.15). It can help to address many weaknesses or limitations in local development planning and environmental management – they have increased the willingness of citizens, community organizations and NGOs to 'buy in' to planning and environmental management where they are organized in such a way as to encourage and support their participation. They also have some potential to integrate global environmental concerns into local plans.

LA21s represent a major innovation in local planning for sustainable development. They have an international identity and an international network, but are (meant to be) locally driven and implemented. At their best, Local Agenda 21s:

- are grounded in a broad inclusive process of consultation, coordinated by a local authority and drawing in all key stakeholders;
- ensure that environmental concerns, from the very localized to the global, enter the mainstream of urban planning and management;
- provide an efficient and equitable means of identifying common goals, reconciling conflicting interests and creating working partnerships between government agencies, private enterprises and civil society groups.

Experience with ten years of LA21s indicates that local leadership and commitment are critical, but that the success of a LA21 is also very context dependent. Their effectiveness depends on the accountability, transparency and capacity of local government, although they can also become a means for promoting these qualities. Thus, most examples of successful and influential LA21s come from cities where there have been major improvements in the quality of local government, only a few of which can be ascribed to the LA21 process itself. Similarly, the capacity and incentives for LA21s to integrate global environmental concerns into local plans depends on supportive national and international networks, although they can also help to strengthen such networks.

According to ICLEI (2002), LA21 processes are expanding worldwide: 6416 local authorities in 113 countries have now either made a formal commitment to LA21 or are actively undertaking the process; and national campaigns are under way in 18 countries accounting for 2640 processes.

The most successful LA21s can provide a source of inspiration for strategic planning for sustainable development, not only at the local level, but also at the national and international levels, where the establishment of associations of local authorities can help to provide collective voice and influence. They have helped to create new and better ways of managing local environments, and engaged a wide range of stakeholders in the process. There is also much to learn from the less successful examples, which illustrate some of the key obstacles to local sustainable development planning – including the dangers of staying at the margins of urban planning (and initiating a few minor projects but steering well clear of the major policy issues) or of underestimating the resistance to new ways of doing things (and going through the motions, without really changing the standard operating procedures of local government).

Several assessments can be found at www.iclei.org. They show that one of the most important challenges for effectiveness has been harmonizing national and local regulations and standards. Unless local actions and regulations are supported by national policy and regulatory frameworks, they cannot be effective. The establishment of a national association of local authorities can help to provide a collective voice and influence.

LA21 has actively encouraged city governments to share their experiences. This led LA21 practitioners to identify five key factors for success – which also accord with the principles and elements of strategies for sustainable development in Boxes 3.1 and 3.2.

- *Multi-sectoral engagement* in the planning process, through a local stakeholder group which serves as the coordination and policy body for preparing a local sustainable development action plan.
- *Consultation* with community groups, NGOs, business, churches, government agencies, professional groups and unions, in order to create a shared vision and to identify proposals and priorities for action.
- *Participatory assessment* of local social, economic and environmental conditions and needs.
- *Participatory target-setting* through negotiations among key stakeholders to achieve the vision and goals set forth in the action plan.
- *Monitoring and reporting procedures*, including local indicators, to track progress and to allow participants to hold each other accountable to the action plan.

Source: ICLEI (1997, 2000); Hardy et al (2001); Gordon McGranahan, personal communication

Box 3.20 Relations between Pakistan's national, provincial and district conservation strategies

Pakistan's National Conservation Strategy (NCS) called for more specific provincial strategies (PCSs). North West Frontier Province (NWFP or Sarhad) was the first to respond. It took participatory and integrating approaches a step further than the NCS, being the first province to:

- adopt multi-stakeholder round tables (informed by a Canadian model, through CIDA support);
- adopt district conservation strategies (DCSs) – in Chitral and Abbotabad;
- attempt to define 'indicators for sustainability' to measure progress;
- adopt provincial Sustainable Development Funds;
- attempt liaison between a PCS and private sector bodies.

Much experience in conservation strategies has accrued over time in Pakistan, in the NCS, then SPCS, and now via the DCSs. While the NCS lost the momentum of a learning process within government due to weak management at the centre, there has been continued learning during SPCS and DCSs. It is principally IUCN-Pakistan and some foreign donors that are actively monitoring that learning. A 1999–2000 Mid Term Review of the NCS (Hanson et al 2000) had this to say:

> *We have been struck by the extent to which most strategy activities operating at local levels have been demand-driven, while those operating at higher levels, especially at the NCS level, are supply-driven. The NCS deals with a worthy set of concepts that have an influence on the lives of people, but in the complex and abstract way in which they are presented, they represent an abundant supply of new thinking that appears to be beyond the grasp of institutions to implement properly. At very local levels, people and local institutions are reasonably clear in what they demand in the context of their particular community, household, etc. Pollution control objectives, waste management, clean drinking water, access to irrigation water of sufficient quality and abundance, income from wildlife protection, are examples. At the provincial level there is a mix of practical demands and an extensive supply of theoretical constructs about adequate natural resource and environmental management. This is abundantly clear in both the Sarhad and Balochistan Conservation Strategies.*
>
> *[Thus we] conclude that the closer strategies operate to clients—the people of Pakistan and their local institutions—the more likely they are to reflect actual interest and demand, and therefore the more influential they are likely to be. Of course, there is still a need to have a continuing supply of ideas that may go beyond current demand, but as long as these are so far beyond the capacity and perhaps even interest/knowledge levels of people, it will be difficult to implement them. In essence, this means placing much greater emphasis on development of local level implementation and understanding of demand. It reinforces the need for the whole conservation strategy process to work in ways that are consistent with the government efforts at devolution, and to be able to monitor the demand side of sustainable development as carefully as possible in order to be reasonably certain of current concerns within specific districts and at the community level.*
>
> *[There are] three interesting points in addition to the supply/demand issue. One is the flow from conservation principles to developmental priorities in moving from NCS to DCS. Secondly, the NCS still needs to deal with macro policy and international links as a set of concerns that may affect the other two levels. Third, the issue of scale-up and resource mobilization will be huge concerns at the district level, likely with a high degree of provincial intervention for both.*
>
> *Without a coherent set of provincial strategies throughout the country, it will be more difficult for a revitalized NCS to be as effective as it should be. The NCS should be allowed to focus on national and international issues, and on supporting provincial strategies—the latter being driven largely from the provinces and, in turn, the districts.*

The characteristics of the various strategies are compared in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Comparison of strategies at different levels in Pakistan

National Conservation Strategy	Provincial Conservation Strategy	District Conservation Strategy
Guidelines	Policy/ plan in progress	Plans
1980s concerns	1990s concerns	Current concerns
Intellectual push	Round tables freely discussing and promoting SD	Demand pull through village planning—asking for demonstration and action
Natural resource conservation principles	Broad mix of conservation and development issues	Developmental priorities
MISSING STILL?	*MISSING STILL?*	*MISSING STILL?*
Macroeconomic integration/ arguments International links Federal policy Linking PCSs together Information support Monitoring, learning	Prioritization Institutional reform and capacity Provincial policy change Support to private sector	Local governance and institutional capacity Resource mobilization Means for scale-up to cover many districts

DECENTRALIZED DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Decentralized participatory planning is hampered by limited skills and capacity

Where governance is being decentralized, districts and municipalities increasingly assume devolved responsibility for sustainable development and are therefore required to prepare and implement development strategies and plans. There is a growing movement to do this through participatory processes, which can be backed by new legal requirements, as in Bolivia. However, the skills, attitudes and methods to undertake decentralized participatory planning are frequently lacking or weak, and the finances to implement plans inadequate. Often such plans are constrained by high-level policies – and at very least need to be passed upwards for harmonization and approval at regional and national levels, as in Ghana (Box 3.21) and Tanzania. In short, policy and institutional challenges need to be addressed if decentralized sustainable development planning is to be effective.

Village and micro-level strategies

Local institutions are the basis for participatory planning

Successful local strategies share a common focus on strengthened local institutions, whether villages, user groups or stakeholder organizations. These local institutions are the basis for participatory planning, joint action, 'striking deals' with service providers, monitoring and review, and – critically – for ensuring more effective coordination by higher-level authorities. In developing countries, there is considerable experience of village planning. Increasingly, such planning is undertaken in a strategic, participatory and transparent manner. In Tanzania, the HIMA (*Hifadhi Mazingira*, conserve the environment) programme and the *Tanzakesho* (Tanzania tomorrow) programmes help wards (of 3–5 villages) to prepare plans through identifying major problems, solutions and sources of required resources (Box 3.22). In Nepal, under the Sustainable Community Development Programme, CBOs have been trained to develop community plans reflecting shared economic, social and environmental priorities.

A variety of other local-level strategies are developed through mechanisms which are largely ignored by central government, but which could potentially provide important local pillars for a sustainable development strategy and a supporting coordination system. Some involve *traditional fora* in which communities and local groups are able to express concerns and agree actions to create culturally appropriate

Box 3.21 Decentralized planning in Ghana

The previous, highly centralized government planning system in Ghana marginalized local government. Now, a decentralized system has been introduced which is avowedly participatory and 'bottom-up'. Each of Ghana's 110 districts now has full responsibility to develop and implement its own medium-term (5 year) and annual District Development Plans that should address sustainable development, following guidelines prepared by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC 1995). This responsibility lies with the District Assemblies (DAs) whose members are elected every four years from people ordinarily resident in the district. In addition, the President, in consultation with traditional authorities, can appoint one-third of the members – in practice from individuals nominated by the districts to ensure the inclusion of people with skills and expertise so that the business of local government is properly conducted. The District Chief Executive is also appointed by the President, subject to approval by the Assembly.

Bottom-up and integrated procedures: The base level for planning lies in Unit Committees for groups of settlements with a population of 500–1000 in rural areas and 1500 for urban areas. Community problems are identified here and goals set out and passed to the DA. Committees of the DA prioritize problems and opportunities. Departments of the DA together with sectoral specialists and NGOs collaborate to distil the ingredients of the District Plan. The District Planning Coordinating Unit integrates the district sectoral plans into long-term, medium-term and short-term and annual plans/budgets for consideration by the DA. District Planning Officers have received training to facilitate community meetings, through which communities can identify their concerns and needs. This process has led to some unexpected requests. One village, for example, wanted funds for a brass band, reasoning such a band at their weekly village market would attract other villages and enhance economic growth.

Each District Plan must be subjected to a public hearing. District Development Plans are harmonized at the regional level by Regional Coordinating Councils, and these regional plans are then consolidated with individual sector plans (prepared by line ministries and also subject to hearings) by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) into a National Development Plan. The NDPC undertakes this task through cross-sectoral planning groups that have representatives from the public sector, business, university, districts, trade unions and farmers. The first of these rolling medium-term development plans covered the period 1997–2000 (Ghana NDPC 1997). A second, covering 2001–2005, is under preparation.

Power and resources have been accorded to the districts: At least 5 per cent of internal government revenue is allocated by Parliament to the District Assemblies Common Fund, and legislation has given power to the DAs. Each year, Parliament agrees a formula for the distribution of the Fund. This takes into account the population of each district, weighted by its development status (judged pragmatically by indicators such as the number of pupils attending school, the presence of commercial banks) and its revenue mobilization effort (the percentage increase over the amount collected in the previous year). DAs are able to use these funds for capital expenditures in implementing their development plans. For example, five districts are currently implementing a poverty reduction programme under which targeted communities decide on what action is to be taken.

But capacity is weak – too few staff and too many demands: DAs have limited capacity to undertake these new responsibilities as districts still lack decentralized departments of many line ministries. In the past, line ministries operated centrally determined programmes and many had district-based staff. Under the Local Government Services Bill, district offices of line ministries will become departments of the DAs answerable to the DCE. However, there is resistance to the new arrangements and lingering allegiance of district level staff to their regional and national headquarters. Some staff have been reluctant to accept postings, particularly to deprived districts. The quality of district staff is generally poor, although it has improved following training courses and postings of national/regional staff to districts. As a result, some DAs have turned to consultancy firms to assist in the preparation of their plans.

The DAs have also become burdened by pressures from line ministries to establish a variety of district committees; for example, for environmental management, disasters and health. The new system also faces continuing logistical problems (inadequate accommodation, equipment, vehicles, etc) despite the establishment of the District Assemblies Common Fund.

sustainable societies, such as the traditional *khotla* system of village meetings in Botswana, and Maori *hui* meetings in New Zealand.

NGOs often mobilize local energies to combine socio-economic development and environmental conservation at the grass-roots level. For example, in Northern Pakistan, the Aga Khan Rural Support

Box 3.22 Village level planning in Iringa Rural District, Tanzania

HIMA (*Hifadhi Mazingira*, a Swahili phrase meaning 'conserve the environment') is a natural resource programme, funded by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) since 1989, which operates in several districts in Iringa Region in Tanzania's southern highlands. The programme collaborates closely with central government, local government and local communities through research, extension and training to promote the sustainable and equitable use of resources by preventing and controlling the degradation of land, water and vegetation. Awareness raising and participation are central elements of the strategy. HIMA is supporting village institutions in allocating land to its most productive use, and is supporting the improvement of farming systems within given sub-catchments (watersheds). Since about 70 per cent of farmers in villages are women, the programme pays special attention to the needs of poor women and female-headed households, especially those who are involved in programme activities.

Within Iringa Rural District, HIMA-Iringa operates in three Divisions aiming to cover all 94 villages covering some 7000 km^2 and accounting for over half of the district. The approach involves:

- *Developing a logical framework* as a collaborative exercise by ward and division representatives, village-based extension staff, selected representatives of villages (progressive farmers, knowledgeable people).
- Preparing *guidelines for holistic studies*.
- *Training workshops* for HIMA staff in the divisions (especially extension officers) to elaborate the procedures and information to be collected.
- *Initial visits to villages* to explain the forthcoming activities and to determine dates for holistic studies; followed by development of a work programme.
- *Holistic studies in villages:* Teams of three district government officers spend about one week in each village to capture a broad balance of information (originally teams were as large as 22 people and spent 2 weeks in each village – but this proved too costly). The team works on particular themes (eg socio-economic data, land use planning, forestry demarcation, etc) using a mix of approaches (eg participatory rural appraisal, questionnaires, interviews, surveys, etc) and works with different groups of villagers (eg youth, women, farmers, etc) to compare ideas. This interactive process enables problems, priorities and possible solutions to be identified in partnership between HIMA and the villages. This is followed by data analysis and report writing. The output of the holistic studies, called a village profile report, sets out possible areas that might be supported in the village by HIMA. The information is also used by HIMA to monitor progress and achievement of goals.
- *Annual village planning:* Over time, as villages gain experience, they begin to prepare their plans alone. Each annual village plan is prepared by a village 'team' comprising the village government (20–25 members), progressive farmers selected by the village government and the village extension workers. In the first year, the plan is prepared through the holistic study process. In subsequent years, there is no such study but rather an evaluation and update process taking 4–5 days. This also involves preparing sub-plans for sub-villages by sub-groups (chaired by sub-village chairmen). These sub-plans are compiled by each of the village standing committees, which constitute the village government (usually: planning and finance, social welfare and self-reliance, and defence and security, but sometimes additional ones – each dealing with the issues under its responsibility). This produces the annual village plan and a budget is prepared.

  The plan is then submitted for approval to the Village Assembly, which all members of the village can attend. Village work plans list activities to be undertaken, from brick-making and a day-care centre to bridge-building and training in soil fertility, soil and water conservation, improvement and establishment and care of fruit tree nurseries; each with timing, place, target group and supervisor identified.
- *Submission of plans to HIMA and the District Council* (via Ward and Divisional Committees): A copy of each village plan is submitted to the Ward Development Committee to be passed upwards through the Divisional Committee to the District Council. The plans are consolidated and may be modified at each stage. Independent of this formal process, HIMA identifies the elements of individual village plans that it is able to support (ie those which fall within its remit, excluding roads, bridges, schools, hospitals and other similar infrastructure). This is undertaken through a district planning meeting attended by district heads of department, divisional secretaries, representatives of divisional extension staff and HIMA staff. Following this meeting:
- Implementation of activities.

Source: Kikula et al (1999)

NGOs can mobilize local energies

Programme is now the leading organization supporting rural development, through catalysing, strengthening and linking together village organizations and ensuring their bargaining power is strong in relation to government, NGOs and private service providers. Resource user groups can also play an important role. For example, in Nepal, over the past 40 years, some 9000 forest user groups have assumed responsibility from government for the sustainable management of parcels of national forests and play an important role in sustainable development in remote villages.

There is much to learn from indigenous approaches

Much can be learned from the myriad approaches (coping strategies) of indigenous people, traditional societies and grass-roots organizations in many countries to sustainably meet their survival needs – approaches which have often worked effectively for centuries until disturbed by external influences which have interfered with their rights, access to resources, knowledge systems or social organization. Some assessments have shown that some of these approaches appear to have worked well, others less well or not at all sustainably (eg case studies undertaken under the Caribbean Capacity 21 programme, UNDP 1997). Deeper studies are needed to assess what can be learned from such micro-level strategies and how they can influence the treatment of risk and the building of resilience, through upstream policy formulation.

Convergence and links between national, sub-national and local strategies

A range of initiatives such as the CDF, PRSP, national visioning, Local Agenda 21 and local-level planning initiatives can all encompass many of the principles set out in Box 3.1 and related elements in Box 3.2. They may also demonstrate potential for convergence between these different approaches and with the concept of a unified strategy for sustainable development.

Countries are bombarded by international initiatives

Often there are several such initiatives ongoing in a particular country and most countries are faced with having to develop strategies and action plans in response to international obligations (eg under MEAs) and other external political or technical demands, ideas and initiatives as illustrated by Figure 3.4. This bombardment of both similar and conflicting requirements can be bewildering and place great strains on institutions, especially where capacities are weak. There are similar challenges of coherence between strategic initiatives at different levels within a country.

Only occasionally have the different levels been deliberately linked. Box 3.20 provides an example from Pakistan, which shows such linkage, but it also demonstrates that initiatives can drift apart after an initial integration. It therefore can be critical to find ways of improving convergence around the principles of strategic planning, ensuring complementarity and coherence between:

Complementarity and coherence are needed between strategies across sectors and between national and sub-national levels

- national level strategies for different sectors and different international obligations;
- national, sub-national and local level strategies.

Based on the experience described above, convergence could be improved through:

- tiered participatory fora, leading up to a national council for sustainable development or a similar national forum (Box 3.14);
- frequent constructive reviews and participatory learning exercises cutting across several strategies – to identify what works and what doesn't (page 161);
- common strategic principles shared by all initiatives (Box 3.1);
- common facilities and functions (notably information, participation and coordination systems), and points for mutual reinforcement (Chapter 4);
- exposure of high-level policy-makers to a variety of approaches, and involvement in them, to begin the 'unfreezing' of key institutions enabling them to take a key role in sustainable development;

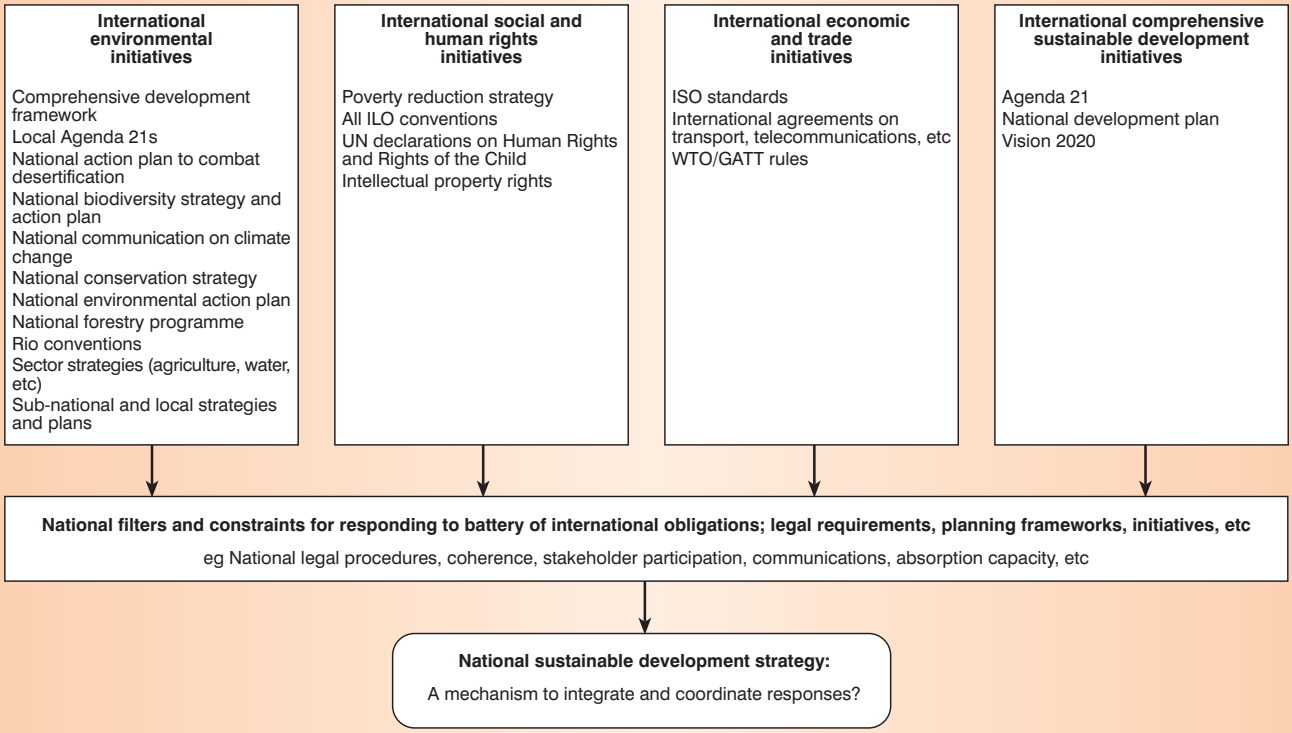


Figure 3.4 Bombardment by strategic planning requirements: illustrative examples of international conventions and initiatives, and national frameworks, that typically challenge a country

- improved coordination between external partners (donor agencies) supporting these initiatives in developing countries, in order not to overwhelm national institutions with planning processes.

Strategies can evolve to integrate NSDS principles

Key principles for a NSDS are that it should provide a means for continuous learning and improvement, building on existing mechanisms and strategies. A number of examples illustrate how strategies can evolve to integrate NSDS principles. In Pakistan, following a mid-term review, the NCS framework is being built on to develop a NSDS (Box 3.12). In Uganda, the evolving approach to develop the PRSP demonstrates increasing incorporation of NSDS principles (Box 3.23).

Regional approaches to developing strategies

Regional strategies can help countries deal with some issues

In some parts of the world, regional strategies and overviews on the theme of sustainable development have been prepared. Countries have found this valuable particularly to deal with issues and priorities of a regional nature.

Examples from before UNCED include the Mediterranean Blue Plan (MBPRAC 1988) and 'Our Own Agenda' of the Latin American and Caribbean Commission on Development and Environment (LACCDE 1990). In 1993, the comprehensive Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe spelled out a process to equalize environmental conditions in the East and West, with an emphasis on the urban environment.

In December 1999, the Helsinki meeting of the European Council invited the European Commission to prepare a proposal for a long-term strategy to integrate policies for economically, socially and ecologically sustainable development. In March 2001 the European Commission issued a consultation paper (SEC(2002)517) providing initial views on the challenges and opportunities for such a strategy, discussing

Box 3.23 The Uganda PRSP

In 1995, Uganda started a process of developing a comprehensive sustainable development strategy with an overall objective of wiping out abject poverty in the country. By 1997, this process had produced the draft Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), which aims at reducing the population living in absolute poverty by 10 per cent in 2017. In 2000, this was revised to incorporate new information generated from widened consultations and analysis, particularly from the pilot Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) undertaken and analysed over the past three years. The revised PEAP also reflects progress in various sectors in terms of elaborating on their policies, investment plans, outcomes and performance indicators. Besides roads and education, the major additions relate to health, modernization of agriculture, private sector competitiveness, water, sanitation, and justice, law and order. The PEAP therefore offers a fairly comprehensive development framework (CDF) and the PEAP summary was adopted in 2000 as Uganda's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

Based on the PEAP as the guiding policy framework, Uganda has pursued the development and implementation of sector-wide policies, investment plans and programmes, with the participation of representatives of as many stakeholders as possible. It is a genuine partnership, which involves the government, both at the centre and in the Districts; external funding agencies (development partners); civil society and NGOs; and the private sector. Uganda's strategic action plan for mass poverty eradication is based on four interrelated pillars for ensuring: sustainable economic growth and structural transformation; good governance and security; the ability of the poor to raise incomes; and improvement of the quality of life.

In Uganda, the focus of economic planning has moved away from the forecasting and management of macro-economic aggregates. Instead, it has turned to the process of refining and implementing a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) which is sustainable in terms of policies, plans and programmes, ensuring proper resource management, and operating within a fully comprehensive development framework. The aim is to transform Uganda into a modern economy in which all agents, in all sectors, can participate in economic growth, keeping in mind the needs of future generations.

Analysis shows that many of the NSDS principles and elements (Boxes 3.1 and 3.2) have been applied successfully during the development of the PRSP as described above:

- strong political leadership;
- shared strategic and pragmatic vision;
- nationally owned and country-driven processes;
- built on existing knowledge, expertise and capacity;
- built on existing mechanisms and strategies;
- spearheaded by a strong institution;
- the widest possible participation;
- process anchored in sound technical analysis;
- short-term linked to the medium- and long-term;
- coherence between budget and strategy priorities;
- continuity of the strategy development process.

while other principles have presented major challenges:

- integrated and balanced strategy;
- setting realistic but flexible targets;
- linking national and local priorities and actions;
- building mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and feedback.

Source: Muduuli (2001)

important trends and presenting a policy toolkit to tackle them. A European strategy for sustainable development was then prepared and adopted in June 2001 at the European Council meeting in Gothenbrg. This strategy builds on a series of previous five-yearly environmental action plans. Under the new strategy, major European policy proposals are to include:

- sustainability impact assessments;
- EU institutions improving internal policy coordination between different sectors;
- Member States developing national sustainability plans.

Common approaches help small island states

Headline indicators are being developed to allow annual reviews of progress.

Small island states have found it particularly useful to work together to share experience and design common approaches, particularly because of their many shared characteristics, challenges and vulnerabilities – notably to external influences. For example, the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP)[9] coordinates the preparation of four-year action plans for managing the environment of the Pacific Islands region. The latest plan (2001–2004) was developed through a highly participatory process and embodies the vision of SPREP members and key stakeholders for the long-term management of their shared environment.

> *It is the main planning document which identifies broad priorities and key result areas of the regional agenda and associated capacity-building processes and interventions. It is intended to be implemented by SPREP member governments and administrations in conjunction with organizations and individuals who are active in the protection of the environment and natural resources of the region. (www.sprep.org.ws/)*

During the 1990s, guided by the regional action plan, SPREP coordinated a programme to facilitate the development of national environmental management strategies (NEMs) in 14 Pacific region island countries. The countries worked together, through SPREP, to a broadly common format and strategy process. Building on the NEMs, SPREP is now coordinating a regional capacity-building programme for sustainable development.

A similar regional approach has been taken by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) – a political grouping of eight member states that has developed a common approach to address developmental problems. This arrangement helps to overcome problems such as limited capacity and resources in individual countries, and members of the OECS have benefited from economies of scale. The OECS states used a participatory process to fashion an Eastern Caribbean Environmental Charter, which provides a legal framework for action – enshrining the principles of sustainable development – as well as a progressive management tool for 'island systems management'. Box 3.24 summarizes those principles of the Charter that are of relevance to NSDSs.

Box 3.24 The Eastern Caribbean Environmental Charter: principles relevant to strategies for sustainable development

Principle 1: Foster Improvement in the quality of life

Each contracting state should develop and promote programmes to address poverty, health, employment, education, social development and provision of basic human needs to improve the quality of life within the carrying capacity of its natural resources, and giving due consideration to levels of acceptable change.

Principle 2: Integrate social, economic and environmental considerations into national development plans and programmes within the concept of island systems management (ISM)

9 SPREP is the regional technical and coordinating organization responsible for environmental matters in the Pacific region. SPREP works on behalf of its 26 members, which include all 22 islands and territories, and four developed countries with direct interests in the region: Australia, France, New Zealand and the United States of America.

Each Contracting State agrees to:

- pursue sustainable development policies aimed at poverty and its alleviation, the general improvement of social, economic and cultural conditions, the conservation of biological diversity, the mitigation of adverse effects of climate change and the maintenance of essential ecological processes and life support systems;
- formulate integrated development plans and programmes to ensure that environmental management is treated as an integral component of the planning processes in pursuit of sustainable development;
- ensure that any action likely to impact significantly on the environment, shall only be taken subject to a prior assessment of the effects of such action on the environment, and subject further to the requisite authorization, following on that assessment;
- take steps to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources which recognize the intricate linkages between ecological systems in small island states, and between these systems and human activity, consistent with the concept of ISM.

Principle 3: Improve on legal and institutional frameworks

Each Contracting State agrees to:

- create or strengthen existing national agencies with responsibility for environmental management to achieve effective management of natural resources;
- rationalize the roles of national environmental agencies to maximize efficiency in managing the use of natural resources;
- collaborate in the rationalization of regional environmental agencies, networks and institutions to reduce duplication, and to realize maximum cost effectiveness;
- support and enhance the capacity of non-governmental and community-based organizations for environmental management;
- strengthen and enforce environmental legislation to effectively implement the principles contained in this charter and reflect the precautionary approach to environmental management;
- create legal and institutional frameworks that allow for the effective participation of the relevant public, private, non-governmental and community-based organizations in environmental management.

Source: OECS (2001)