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OECD WORKSHOP ON NATIONAL PLANS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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OECD WORKSHOP ON NATIONAL PLANS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Scope and summary

First, a definition. At the 1992 UNCED conference, governments undertook to adopt National Strategies for Sustainable Development (hitherto referred to as NSDS) (*) as part of Agenda 21, which they agreed:

"...should build upon and harmonize the various sectoral economic, social and environmental policies and plans that are operating in the country. The experience gained through existing planning exercises such as national reports for the UNCED conference, National Conservation Strategies and National Environmental Action Plans should be fully used and incorporated into a country-driven sustainable development strategy. Its goals should be to ensure socially-responsible economic development while protecting the resource base and the environment for the benefit of future generations. It should be developed through the widest possible participation. It should be based on a thorough assessment of the current situation and initiatives." (**Agenda 21, Chapter 8.7**)

This paper will review

- the progress that non-OECD countries have made in the production of NSDSs;
- how the latter differ from other similar plans;
- how the process of producing NSDSs could be made more effective, particularly in the context of experiences gained from conventional development planning.

It must be qualified here that the conclusions drawn in this paper are based less on primary information from governments which was slim, and more on secondary sources of information (see selected bibliography) and on reports of related environmental studies (such as the reports on Uganda and The Gambia). The only original documentation on NSDS that was made available to us was from Ghana, Pakistan, China and Bolivia. Information from other countries, such as Nigeria, Hungary and Madagascar have also been referred to support the paper's conclusions. There was no direct information available from Eastern Europe at the time of writing.

(*) NSDS corresponds to both National Strategies for Sustainable Development and National Sustainable Development Plans.

The range of national plans and strategies

The objective of the NSDS as generally understood is to link in all existing environmental studies and plans to make national planning a holistic, long-term and "three dimensional" affair (economic, social and ecological). In practice, the most common types of country environment plans or strategies are the National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs), National Conservation Strategies (NCSs) and the Tropical Forestry Action Plans (TFAPs) all of which are action-oriented and tend to have strong donor support. Box 1 provides a concise summary of the types of national strategy pulled together by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

National environmental action plans (NEAPs)

The production and implementation of NEAPs appears to be relatively advanced in a number of non-OECD countries. In Africa in particular, a review of NEAPs in January 1992 found that:

- Madagascar, Lesotho and Mauritius had approved NEAPs and were implementing the investment programmes;
- Burkina Faso, Ghana, Rwanda and Seychelles had approved NEAPs and were preparing for implementation;
- the NEAP process in the remaining countries was either stalled or at an early stage (Multi-Donor Secretariat, 1992).

Since that review some countries have completed NEAPs, e.g. Gambia, Ghana and Uganda, and interest is being expressed by others, eg. Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal and Tanzania. This may reflect the commitment of African Governments to environmental planning, on the other hand it may also be a symptom of the donor driven nature of these plans. In **Uganda** for instance, the World Bank, UNDP, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) provide the bulk of donor support for their NEAP. In **The Gambia**, USAID has made the Government adoption of the Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP) a pre-condition for further aid in the natural resources field.

National conservation strategies (NCSs)

National Conservation Strategies are intended to be seen in the context of the World Conservation Strategy the most recent of which appeared in 1991. Past NCSs, like the World Conservation Strategy itself, have tended to be characterised as "preservationist" and more concerned with "green" than "brown" environmental issues. The latest World Conservation Strategy, however, does grapple with the concept of sustainable development and joins the consensus of environmentalists who argue that some development is essential for environmental protection, especially where it relieves extreme poverty.

Some recent NCSs (eg. Pakistan) tackle "brown" issues alongside their more usual "green" ones. Both the drawing up of NCSs and their implementation heavily involve the national non-governmental organisations community.

BOX 1. THE VARIOUS TYPES OF NATIONAL STRATEGY

To date, many different strategic approaches have been advocated by governments and international agencies in different contexts. They cover a spectrum from those that focus mainly on environmental concerns and their integration into the development process, e.g. the early National Conservation Strategies (NCSs) to those that deal with social and economic issues as well, e.g. later NCSs and National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs). Of the approaches listed here, NCSs and NEAPs have provided most of the lessons for all forms of strategic planning. As well as successes, both approaches have had their problems and difficulties, but the experience has been an iterative one and the lessons learned have led to improvements over time, with some convergence in approach. National strategies fall into two categories: those that attempt a comprehensive coverage; and those that are sectoral or thematic.

COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL STRATEGIES

- **Conventional National Development Plans:** produced by national governments (often by the central ministry of finance and/or development planning), usually time-bound (e.g. rolling 5-year plans) and focusing on fiscal targets, major infrastructural development, etc.
- **National Conservation Strategies (NCSs):** conceived by the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the World Wide Fund Nature (WWF) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (1980 onwards). These were proposed by the World Conservation Strategy in 1980 as means to provide a comprehensive, cross-sectoral analysis of conservation and resource management issues, in order to integrate environmental concerns into the development process. They have aimed to identify the country's most urgent environmental needs, stimulate national debate and raise public consciousness, assist decision-makers to set priorities and allocate human and financial resources, and build institutional capacity to handle complex environmental issues. NCSs have been strongly process-oriented. Information has been obtained, and analysis undertaken, by cross-sectoral groups. NCSs have sought to develop political consensus around issues identified through such group interaction. They have resulted, inter alia, in policy documents approved at high level, sometimes accompanied by a set of project profiles.
- **National Environmental Action Plans:** promoted by the World Bank (1987 onwards). These have been undertaken primarily by host-country organisations (usually a co-ordinating ministry) with technical and/or financial assistance from the World Bank, various international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other donors. They have been expressly designed to provide a framework for integrating environmental considerations into a nation's overall economic and social development programmes, sometimes in response to structural adjustment imperatives. They also make recommendations for specific actions, outlining the environmental policies, legislation, institutional arrangements, and investment strategies required. They have usually culminated in a package of environmentally-related investment projects, many of which are intended for donor assistance.
- **Green Plans:** an evolving process of comprehensive, national programmes for environmental improvement and resource stewardship, with government-wide objectives and commitments, produced to date by Canada and the Netherlands. Key goals include: cleaner air, water and soil; protection of ecosystems and species; and contributions to global environmental security. The Netherlands National Environmental Policy Plan is radical. It calls for massive reductions in many emissions and wastes within a generation, backed by major clean up of contaminated sites, to restore and maintain environmental carrying capacity. Targets and schedules provide a means of gauging success and reinforce another key of environmentally responsible decision-making.
- **National Environmental Management Plans:** are currently being developed by many island countries of the South Pacific, co-ordinated by the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme with support from the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and IUCN. These plans follow a process of round table discussions and consultation with key decision-makers and organisations. They lead to the definition of a policy framework and portfolio of programmes and projects for donor support.
- **National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs):** called for by Agenda 21. In this document, we suggest the NSDS is a *generic* name for a participatory and cyclical process to achieve economic, ecological and social objectives in a balanced and integrated manner. The process encompasses the definition of policies and action plans, their implementation, monitoring and regular review. NSDSs may take many forms, and incorporate/build on many of the above approaches, i.e. NEAPs, NCSs, etc.

Box 1. (continued)

SECTORAL AND THEMATIC STRATEGIES

- **Conventional Sectoral Master Plans:** these plans are often prepared as a sectoral expression of the Five-Year Development Plan, and as a means to co-ordinate donor involvement in a sector. They have been widely prepared in Asia, sponsored by the Asian Development Bank, for such sectors as forestry, agriculture and tourism. Although not normally following a participatory process, at their best, sector plans have resulted from a massive research and policy development effort over many years, and they attempt to address inter-sectoral issues. The plans are a comprehensive information resource, but some bear little relation to the institutional capacity of the sector to implement them.
- **National Tropical Forestry Action Plans:** sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and promoted under the Tropical Forestry Action Programme (TFAP) (1986 onwards). These are related to a global strategy developed by FAO, UNDP, the World Bank and the World Resources Institute (WRI). National TFAP exercises are undertaken by the country concerned, starting with a multi-sectoral review of forest-related issues, and leading to policy and strategy plans. They are followed by an implementation phase for policy measures, programmes and projects. The plan seeks to produce informed decisions and action programmes with explicit national targets on policies and practices, afforestation and forest management, forest conservation and restoration, and integration with other sectors. Round tables involving governmental bodies, NGOs, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, and international organisations are held at different stages of planning and implementation. NFAPs have been subject to international co-ordination.
- **National Plans to Combat Desertification:** sponsored by CILSS (the Permanent Inter-States Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) (1985-1988). These documents analyze the socioeconomic and ecological situation, review current activities and discuss policies and actions required to combat drought; they represent the national anti-desertification plans for a number of Sahelian countries.
- To this list may shortly be added the "national plans" that will arise out of the international Climate Change Convention and the Biodiversity Convention and the country poverty assessments being planned by the World Bank.

DOCUMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO STRATEGY PROCESSES

- A variety of Country Environmental Profiles and State of the Environment Reports, prepared by bilateral aid donors, governments and NGOs. These vary but, in general, they present information on conditions and trends, identify and analyze causes, linkages and constraints, and indicate emerging issues and problems.
- UNCED National Reports (1991-1992) on environment and sustainable development are descriptive/analytical documents. These were prepared by national governments, sometimes with NGO involvement. In practice, these varied enormously, but the UNCED Secretariat guidelines proposed that each report should address: development trends and environmental impacts and responses to environment and development issues such as principles and goals, policies, legislation, institutions, programmes and projects, and international co-operation. UNCED guidelines were also issued on procedures for report preparation. Many countries consulted local, regional and international NGOs, women's groups, and industry. The reports identify how national economic and other activities can stay within the constraints imposed by the need to conserve natural resources. Some consider issues of equity and justice. Certain of them are intended as the foundation for future NSDSs.

Note: The 1993 Directory of Country Environmental Studies (WRI/IIED/IUCN, 1992) lists and provides abstracts for most of the reports resulting from the above approaches.

Source: IIED/IUCN, "National Sustainable Development Strategies: A Guide to Implementing Agenda 21" (draft, April 1993).

Tropical forestry action plans (TFAPs)

TFAPs have been sponsored by the FAO since 1986 to:

"...curb forest loss by promoting the sustainable use of all forest resources to meet local and national needs."

Since the launching of TFAPs, lessons have been learnt from earlier successes and failures and the current approach has shifted from an imposed top-down approach to a process which is cross-sectoral and involves grassroot participation. The operational principles highlight the TFAP approach:

- its initiatives are co-ordinated and harmonised rather than piece-meal or ad hoc;
- the processes are led and co-ordinated by the country itself;
- procedures are flexible, in line with the national situation and capacity, subject to goals not being compromised;
- forestry planning should be multidisciplinary;
- given the external origins of many forestry sector problems, inter-sectoral linkages should be recognised and the TFAP clearly placed within the framework of national development plans;
- the interests of rural people most dependent on forests be recognised and they, like other groups, be consulted in a spirit of transparency and partnership;
- implementation be participatory at all stages, with all levels of society involved.

There are probably more lessons to be learned from the implementation of TFAPs based on the above operational principles, that would be relevant to National Sustainable Development Plans than from any other single exercise. In a sense, the TFAP is a sectoral representation of the full range of policy initiatives that a national exercise should direct itself to.

In some countries, however, TFAPs have become subsumed in the NEAP process. The existence of various simultaneous initiatives and the political jostling for power and funds can cause a breakdown in co-operation and communication, as in the case of Madagascar (see Box 2).

National sustainable development plans (NSDSs)

At the time of writing, no non-OECD countries have produced NSDSs in the strict sense. The fact that countries have been slow to produce NSDSs is no surprise -- given what they are being asked to do, it would be worrying if results had been quicker. Reasons for this are:

- The sheer technical difficulty of producing a coherent strategy for long-term sustainable development on a three-dimensional concept (economic, social, ecological) for which there are as many definitions as exponents.

BOX 2. MADAGASCAR'S NEAP PROCESS: POLITICAL CHESS

Until early 1993, the main achievement of the NEAP in Madagascar was the establishment of a completely new administrative organisation combining newly created and older institutions. Chief among them are the following:

L'Office national de l'environnement (ONE), under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, is in charge of the co-ordination of the Environmental Action Plan (EAP). Its task is to prepare an environmental policy, and to control the management of the environment by preparing and proposing environmental laws. A first environmental decree was passed in January 1992, entitled: "Mise en compatibilité des investissements avec l'environnement". This law for instance will oblige companies setting up new industries or investments such as hotels to prepare environmental impact studies. The Malagasy Environmental Charter (law 90-033) has also been officially adopted.

In addition, there are a series of implementation agencies which co-ordinate the actions of the EAP.

DEF (Direction des eaux et forêts) is directly in charge of forest management and conservation.

ANGAP (Association nationale pour la gestion des aires protégées) has an NGO status and is in charge of co-ordinating the specific activities of the protected areas (PAs), such as controlling project activities, or collecting tourist fees in PAs. A Grant Monitoring Unit selects interesting projects and decides on the allocation of funding.

ANAE (Association nationale d'action environnementale) has NGO status, and is currently undertaking actions in watershed management.

FTM (the Geographical Institute) is in charge of the mapping of the forest and of the installation of a geographical information system (GIS).

The main donors for the EAP, in support of the World Bank, are USAID, the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD) and INTERCOOPERATION (Switzerland), while implementers of the plan and various actions include Conservation International (CI), WWF, UNESCO, CARE, and other NGOs.

Since the DEF, under these new arrangements, has lost its authority over PAs, the situation is very confused. On the one hand, ONE asserts its co-ordinating authority for the EAP, but it is as yet scarcely recognised by the DEF, and it has no mandate to implement. DEF says its authority is superior to that of ANGAP, the main protected area implementing body. Indeed, ANGAP as an NGO is dependent on DEF and cannot implement any initiative without agreement, or support any policy different from a DEF one. Since 1991 ANGAP has been responsible for the first twelve priority PAs, and in 1993, this responsibility should be extended to the next twenty projects on the PA list. Thus the transfer of power is gradual. ANGAP is still a very young organisation and although the field implementors agree over its necessity, they criticise its lack of dynamism and flexibility. (For example they have to provide an increasing number of quarterly or monthly reports, and give provisional plans for project activities almost day by day.) Thus it looks increasingly like becoming another administrative, bureaucratic structure.

The fact that ONE and DEF do not come under the same administration does not make the task easy, and it appears obvious that the DEF, previously independent and completely in charge of the forests, does not appreciate its new reduced role.

The resulting power struggle has a direct influence on the field and explains some problems in the WWF project under scrutiny. For example, all the National Directors of the various projects have to be Malagasy citizens, and the DEF originally also insisted that they should all be foresters, and nominated specific civil servants to the posts. However, when responsibilities were transferred to ANGAP, WWF decided to recruit new National Directors who were not civil servants. Despite the fact that a new director has been recruited for the Andohahela project, he was not accepted by the DEF because he is an agronomist (1). Meanwhile the previous director, a civil servant who does not want to leave either the WWF project or the state service, is still in post.

The confusion of the duties of these different institutions may even increase, as it appears that the new Government will probably create a Ministry of Environment.

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1. Although DEF and WWF buildings are in the same compound in Tolagnaro, there is little communication or co-operation between the two organisations.

Source: Buchy, M. "Managing the Forest Boundary: Madagascar", Case Study for the ODI, 1993.

- The world's governments have endorsed a document -- Agenda 21 -- which flies in the face of three decades of disillusionment with planning -- in OECD members during the 1960s, non-OECD developing countries in the 1970s, and the former centrally-planned economies in the 1980s and early 1990s. The whole process of planning has now to be looked at in a fresh light.
- Those, still numerous, countries with authoritarian traditions and procedures have endorsed a process of participation by NGOs and by the general public in planning and policy-formation which would, if realised, revolutionise their public life.

Early this year, IIED and IUCN examined the progress of 17 African and Asian countries which had embarked on the development of strategies for sustainability. Some efforts had been premature, lacking what are perceived to be critical political pre-conditions, such as:

- high-level political support based on a clear understanding of what the process entails and its expected results;
- political stability;
- a political system conducive to participation, critical thought and freedom of expression;
- an administrative system that combines autonomy with cross-sectoral co-ordination;
- an appropriate degree of influence for the strategy-forming body within policy-making.

The importance of these pre-conditions cannot be over-stressed as they are a telling indicator of the degree of involvement of people and agencies responsible for development in pulling together national plans.

At the time of UNCED, countries had produced various reports, serving different purposes and with different sponsors. One comprehensive collection includes 354 studies done in 129 countries, 93 per cent of which were produced within the last five years (IIED/WRI/IUCN, 1992). Commenting on an earlier collection of the same kind, it was noted:

"While this is an impressive body of work, much of it has had little or no impact on environmental management because the great bulk of the work was addressed to the diagnosis of problems rather than to treatment and cure. Many studies conducted to date lack in-depth analysis of basic policy issues and options, either because this was not part of their objectives or because policy matters were considered too politically sensitive." (O'Connor & Turnham, 1992)

How far is this a fair comment on the process to date?

A preliminary assessment

It must be stressed that what distinguishes an NSDS from other similar plans is that

"...a national strategy for sustainability is a participatory and cyclical process of planning and action to achieve economic, ecological and social objectives in a balanced and integrated manner. NSDSs aim to achieve all three objectives. Other comprehensive

strategies emphasise one or two of them. The process in most cases encompasses the definition of policies and action plans, their implementation, monitoring and regular review." (IIED/IUCN, 1993)

Since the process of preparing NSDSs is so recent, there are little or no finished products to assess. This section will therefore define the subject more liberally to include all country environmental studies that purport to analyze the state of the environment, and contain recommendations on policy and institutional reforms. Where information is available, this section compares and assesses a range of NSDSs so far developed by examining:

- the preparation process: scope, content and participation;
- links with other plans and strategies;
- modalities for implementation;
- monitoring and reporting systems;
- the involvement of external assistance.

Preparing NSDS: scope and content

NEAPs tend to be more comprehensive than NCSs, though some recent NCSs have comprehensive cross-sectoral coverage. **Pakistan's** National Conservation Strategy focuses on 14 core areas, including crucial habitats (soils, watersheds, etc), and cross-cutting issues (biodiversity, energy efficiency, pollution, etc). Population is one core area. There are highly specific targets for soil protection/improvement, improved irrigation water use, watershed protection, afforestation, rangelands productivity, aquaculture, biodiversity protection, energy efficiency and renewable energy, air pollution, waste management, and population growth.

Uganda's NEAP brings together a range of environmental issues through eight NEAP Task Forces:

- environmental policy, legislation and institutional arrangements;
- environmental education, research and human resource development;
- land management, agriculture, livestock and rangelands;
- wetland, water resources, fisheries and other forms of aquatic biodiversity;
- terrestrial biodiversity (including forestry, wildlife and tourism);
- population, health and human settlements;
- mining, industry, hazardous materials and toxic chemicals; and
- energy and climate change.

Ghana's NEAP also deals with environmental problems in similar areas: land management, forestry and wildlife, water management, marine and coastal ecosystems, industrial pollution, mining, hazardous chemicals and human settlements. The Plan does not go into detail on targets, concentrating instead on data collection, creation of institutions, and policy/regulatory reforms. This points to a need for capacity building at a very basic level, a need which is echoed in the **Philippine** Agenda 21 plan:

"...it is imperative that the country embark on an intensive capacity building programme in the public, private, and NGO/GO sectors; the academic and research community, and other sectoral groups... to enhance capabilities in evaluating policy options and modes of implementing sustainable development strategies..."

Participation

One of the more remarkable phenomena triggered by UNCED has been the formal acceptance, at least in theory, of the involvement of NGOs in policy discussions in many countries. For instance, in **Pakistan** the National Conservation Strategy was initially formulated by the Government and the IUCN -- the first time an NGO had been so closely involved in policy formation. The actual document was written by local physical and social scientists, supported by external specialists mobilised by IUCN. The content of the Strategy was discussed at some 300 district level meetings. Likewise, in **China**, the National Report to UNCED was prepared after extensive consultation, much of it with the country's formidable scientific and academic community.

Countries with a lesser indigenous environmental capacity and NGO constituency have a difficult choice between producing a plan -- particularly to a tight timescale -- and developing a proper sense of "ownership" of their plan. A number of countries have resorted to using foreign consultants and advisers in preparing their various plans. While this may expedite their production, the risk is that national professionals will have little sense of ownership of the document, and the local learning process from its production is slight. In **Uganda** for instance, an FAO TFAP officer became aware in the course of his visit that NGOs involved in the NEAP were there on an invitation-only basis, and that the "consultation process" was limited to two weeks of field trips. Research for the NEAP documents was mainly conducted in Kampala, writing of the documents was done by Kampala-based professionals and that the NEAP management and sponsors intend to produce a new environmental law, new policy statements and an investment programme before the end of the year. (A. Inglis)

In **Nepal**, the NCS Secretariat staff was very small, leaving most of the technical work to be done by experts from other government agencies, NGO and private sector representatives. A concerted effort was made to involve rural communities in the planning and analysis process by holding public meetings and discussion sessions in rural villages. In **Bolivia**, intentions have been made clear that the NEAP process must include NGOs, all other interested institutions and liaise with the Government Departments for Fisheries, Forestry and others co-operating on development, as well as with existing plans such as the TFAP. Similarly, in **The Gambia**, the Gambia National Forestry Action Plan (GNFAP) is aware that to be effective, it needs to be:

"... complementary to the NEAP process launched in January 1993, to take advantage to the extent possible of the policy, institutional and other improvement proposed by the GEAP. The role of the TFAP should in this case be to deepen the analysis, to mobilise action, and in general, to more sharply focus attention on initiatives in forestry within the overall framework of the EAP." (M. Chipeta)

If

"the minimum participation necessary in national policy development is effective involvement of all government sectors and the government's legal system, different levels of government, NGOs and the formal private sector, and some communities..." (IUCN, 1992, p.11)

then there is still a lot of ground to cover, the problem in some resource poor countries is that NEAPs are being packaged and pulled together too rapidly for real participation to take place in the strategy decision process.

Links with other national and sectoral plans

It is clear from experience so far that NSDSs are far from being fully integrated into the conventional development planning system. The exceptions are few. In **Pakistan**, which like other South Asian countries has a long tradition of economic planning, the current Five-Year Plan (FYP), effective from 1993, has, for the first time, a chapter on the environment. The projects identified in the NCS are taken into account in the relevant parts of the FYP. **China** too, intends to incorporate the results of its Agenda 21 action plan into its Eighth and Ninth Five-Year Plans (1991-95 and 1996-2000 respectively).

The 1992 IUCN Report of Workshops on Strategies for Sustainability gives some reasons for the non-integration of NSDSs as:

"...the strategy secretariat tends to be located in an agency outside the main development planning system, and does not fully engage people involved in the latter process."

For instance, the **Philippine** Agenda 21 is not wanted by either of its logical homes, the National Economic Development Authority or the Philippines Council for Sustainable Development. Consequently the secretariat is expected to be located in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. This risks side-lining Agenda 21 in a sectoral agency that lacks the power to ensure that it becomes the sustainable development strategy for all government.

Ghana illustrates the dilemma of a country committed to producing an NSDS but where conventional development planning is more marginal to policy-making. The relationship of the Environmental Protection Council (EPC) to the National Development Planning Commission is still to be properly defined. EPC is currently an advisory and research organisation, raising environmental sensitivity in government departments and co-ordinating their actions. The National Development Planning Commission, while having comprehensive statutory functions, is still embryonic. Box 2 on Madagascar highlights similar problems.

Other problems cited by IUCN are that:

"Strategies often do not contain clear statements of benefits, nor estimates of costs. Environmental strategies are often regarded as 'preservationist' and sectoral which works against any collaboration with and by other sectors." (IUCN, 1992, p.8)

Hand in hand with these problems go the political wrestling that is common (but unnecessary) to the introduction of new systems:

- fear that a sectoral ministry will not give the proper weighting to national environmental policy;
- leading to control on national environmental policy being taken away from the environment ministry but no appropriate alternative government department provided;
- leaving the now weakened sectoral ministry in a monitoring role with no real policy making powers and possible withdrawal of donor support;
- resulting in confused objectives and further weakening of sectoral links and commitments to national planning.

This cycle has been experienced in **Nepal** and **Uganda**, to mention just two countries.

Modalities for implementation

The most common institutional response has been the formation of environmental co-ordinating committees of various kinds. These tend to involve representatives of the relevant ministries, and -- in many countries -- the private sector, academic community and environmental NGOs. **China** has created such a body -- the Council for International Co-operation on Environment and Development -- specifically to include representatives from the international environmental community. **Bolivia** has set up a National Secretariat for the Environment (SENMA) which aims to be trans-sectoral, and which oversees the Bolivian Plan for Environmental Action (PAAB) and the National Fund for the Environment (FONAMA).

Where a lead agency is preferred, a balance needs to be struck between having a credible and influential body that carries weight within government and with the public, and one that brings freshness and independence to the subject. Specialised environment departments are often at a disadvantage in the power game. Confronted with strongly entrenched sectoral ministries it could be argued that a new environment department could achieve its aims more surely by influencing sectoral policies and project choice than by working on national level plans for which existing ministries lack a strong sense of ownership. Environmental Ministries in countries as different as the United Kingdom and Hungary have had to face this choice (UK DOE 1991, Winpenny 1992).

Environment ministries in federal countries (e.g. Nigeria) have a similar choice to make in their dealings with strong state or provincial governments -- it is not unknown for frictions and disagreements to arise, especially where the state governments rely for revenue on items that are the subject of environmental debate. In **Pakistan**, another country with a central/provincial dichotomy, there is a National Conservation Strategy Unit in the Ministry of Environment and Urban Affairs, an Environment Division in the Planning Commission for public sector programmes, and a strengthened IUCN to provide backstopping. The Provincial Governments are setting up environment divisions in their planning and development departments, and one of them -- the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) -- has its own conservation strategy.

Ghana is proposing to implement its national environmental policy over a ten-year period, the first few years of which would be devoted to data collection and passing the necessary legislation and policy changes. A strengthened EPC would be at the heart of the implementation process, which lays most stress on education, data collection, legislation and policy reform -- with little consideration so far of economic instruments.

In fact, the most striking weakness of the various types of plan produced so far is the *failure to give adequate weight to the relationship between economic policy and its impact on the environment, and to the role of economic instruments as a tool of environmental policy* (Arensberg, 1991).

Monitoring processes and mechanisms

In general, the NSDS process is too recent and incomplete to provide evidence for a satisfactory analysis of monitoring. Most developing countries have fairly good laws/regulations applicable to environmental monitoring, but many are weak on enforcement capabilities, and few if any, have developed either appropriate environmental standards or competent monitoring capability. Until a monitoring system is established, it is very difficult to design and implement a competent enforcement programme.

A monitoring programme, to be competent and cost-effective, must include the following elements:

- i) delineation and quantification of the valuable environmental resources of concern (for example, for water quality monitoring, of the beneficial water uses);
- ii) selection of scientific monitoring parameters which will serve as meaningful indicators of extent of adverse (or beneficial) impacts on the resource values;
- iii) planning the minimum cost monitoring programme which will do the needed job including determining the number/location of monitoring stations, frequency of sampling/observations, and techniques for sampling/sample storage and transport/analytical determination;
- iv) collation and checking of the monitoring data, especially on reliability/quality of the data;
- v) preparation of economic (benefit/cost) analyses to show why the monitoring is necessary and justified from the point of view of sustained development;
- vi) use of the accumulating monitoring data to establish a national or regional data storage and retrieval system.

While the practice of monitoring in industrialised countries routinely meets these requirements, very few developing countries have achieved this. Instead their monitoring efforts so far have involved mainly the collection of lots of data (including both relevant and irrelevant data), lack of quality control in data collection, lack of interpretation needed if the data are to contribute to continuing country development, and lack of economic justification. As a result, the economic decision makers have come to think of environmental monitoring as a waste of money and have seldom been willing to continue local funding. (Asian Development Bank)

External assistance involvement

Donor agencies have been the driving force behind several kinds of country environmental studies. In **Uganda** the NEAP is being prepared and packaged at the instigation and with the assistance of the World Bank in time for the national elections in January 1994. In **The Gambia**, future USAID relations are conditional on the Government's support for the NEAP. This is one end of the spectrum of external involvement.

In **Bolivia**, there has been \$25m debt cancellation from the United States, combined with loans from the Global Environmental Facility (of \$4.5m) which have been directed towards sustainable development projects. The Bolivians have made it clear that a new set of just and equitable international relations needs to be put in place in order to satisfy the needs of national sustainable development.

In some less developed countries, the NEAP process risks the danger of becoming a mere paper exercise with no commitment, or indeed capacity, to effect the plan because of the insistence of donor agencies for an immediate written form of commitment to a national strategy. The IUCN 1992 Workshop Report recognises the dangers of NEAPs being donor (and expatriate) driven and suggests that:

- It is important to use nationals as much as possible, to rely on national capacities and build there where that are lacking.

- Expatriates should be used only when strictly necessary. Ideally, they should not be hired to lead the project.
- It is important to learn to play the aid game (in order to benefit from it), insist on quality consultants, decide what goods to accept, share in the selection of people. IUCN-Pakistan trains institutions on how to work with donors.

Long-term sustainability: incorporating Agenda 21

The experience of development planning

Agenda 21 is a major shot in the arm for planning. It does, however, go against the grain of recent philosophies and practices of development. Substantial experience has now accumulated of the limits and potentialities of planning as a policy tool. This section examines the experience with "orthodox" development planning and its relevance for the production of NSDSs.

According to one review in the 1980s:

"A review of the experience of the 1970s reveals that the best performers were neither the countries... that attempted comprehensive 'dirigiste' planning nor those... that put forth a weak planning effort. Rather countries... that performed best by and large relied on streamlining incentives for guiding the private sector, but did provide a macro-planning framework for their public investment programmes." (Agarwala, 1983)

Typical problems with planning include:

- poor data;
- scarce trained staff;
- poor inter-ministerial co-operation;
- weak links with the budgetary processes;
- lack of detail on implementation.

At the technical level, techniques of forecasting have proved unreliable and structural coefficients based on input-output models soon show their age.

Politically, plans restrict the freedom of politicians and are soon overtaken by events. The behaviour of the private sector is difficult to include in plans in any satisfactory manner. So-called "exogenous" shocks can seriously disturb the planning scenario. Bureaucrats acquire enhanced power, and may frustrate plans for their own purposes. Plan targets tend to be over-optimistic, and actual experience deviates substantially from that anticipated. (Killick, 1983, Agarwala, 1983)

There are a number of ways in which the exercise could be reformed to make it useful and effective, these include:

- "getting prices right" and allowing sufficient scope for market mechanisms to function;
- developing a sound public investment programme based on good project choice and appraisal, which can be amended in the light of unforeseen events;

- espousing a "consultative" rather than a "technocratic" style -- involving consulting all relevant government departments, the private sector, academics, etc.;
- emphasising "process" rather than blueprints, building flexibility into the system, stressing learning and flexible response;
- opting for selectivity rather than comprehensiveness; concentrating on the most important areas, or those with the best data or the strongest policy lever.

Implications of this critique for the NSDS exercise

Certain technical criticisms of previous development plans are not germane to NSDSs or their like, which do not purport to model economic relations or forecast future development. However, the hard-won body of experience of planning, accumulated over 25-30 years, cannot be ignored by environmental partisans, some of whom behave as though they have invented planning afresh.

There are certainly examples of environmental plans which defer to some of the desiderata above. Many exercises have involved widespread consultation, often with segments of the community not normally privy to decision-making. In the spectrum from "consultative" to "technocratic" the NSDS process seems to have gravitated towards the former. This augurs well for public information and education and makes the plan better informed than would otherwise be. Widespread consultation will make the exercise more cumbersome and time-consuming but this will be time well invested in terms of credibility, ownership and sustainability.

Some plans also result in the addition of well-conceived and appraised projects to the public investment programme. **Pakistan** and **China** were noted above in this connection. Unfortunately the advances in the techniques of environmental economic appraisal have still to work through to affect the bulk of investment proposals in this area. The suspicion that environmental protection and enhancement is a "soft" sector, unable to generate "real" economic benefits and recoup its cost of borrowing, dies hard.

Most environmental plans so far err on the side of "process" rather than the provision of categorical texts and "blueprints" and this is welcome in the light of planning experience. In particular, education, training data collection and the creation of consultative structures figure large in plans to date.

The majority of plans aspire to a comprehensive, "integrated" overview of sustainability, inspired, no doubt, by the notion of the natural environment as a unified system deserving "holistic" treatment. While admirable in principle, the best may be the enemy of the good in the usual cases where resources are limited. It is sensible to prioritise problems and to start with those that are most serious, most familiar, where the payoff to policy measures is greatest, etc. In this connection, the whole area of economic adjustment could have profound effects on the environment and attention to these linkages could have major results.

Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of recent environmental plans is that they usually amount to programmes of **public** measures of various kinds; motivating or for that matter, learning from, private individuals and the private sector rarely gets due attention. Where it does, reliance is placed on education, publicity and regulation backed up by legal sanction ("command and control" measures). Aside from the usual nod towards the Polluter Pays Principle, few plans place much reliance on market forces to achieve environmental aims.

Some concluding reflections

All signatories of Agenda 21 have committed themselves to producing versions of NSDSs, and are embarked on the process in widely varying degrees. Despite formal commitment, however, the quality of the output will depend on how countries perceive the value of the process. This final section will briefly consider the real value of NSDSs and other environmental plans and how countries can maximise their utility from them.

- The first and obvious point to make is that the production of NSDSs and other environmental plans is now critical to maintaining a country's "market share" of aid. This is a fact of life in the aid world and it is mere realism to point this out. Nor will it be the first time that planning has received a fillip from the pressure of aid donors -- in the 1960s Latin American countries produced national development plans to assure their share of US aid under the Alliance for Progress, yet their conversion to planning was only skin-deep.

Anxieties have been expressed about similar abuses of environmental plans, in this case of NEAPs:

"...how to avoid the risks of NEAPs becoming bureaucratic exercises carried out by government administrations with activities centred in capital cities, dominated by one or several donors and with lack of adequate country responsibility." (Multi-Donor Secretariat Report)

It would seem to be in the mutual interests of aid donor and recipient that the exercises avoided the cynical reaction that greeted previous planning efforts. Reflecting on that previous experience it was suggested:

"...donors should be less enamoured of medium-term plan documents and be willing to accept alternative forms in which development programmes are presented. They should also concern themselves more with the implementation realities than with observing the outward form of an impressive plan document." (Killick, 1983)

- For recipients, the acid test of the value and effectiveness of an NSDS will be its influence on attitudes and behaviour. This is partly a matter of the judicious choice of department or agency within the administration in order to secure the greatest leverage over government policy. It is partly a question of being able to demonstrate to key policy makers harder evidence on the costs and benefits of policies for sustainability -- which is mostly about the greater use of environmental economic valuation. It is also helpful if plans and policies can generate enough public revenue to at least cover the enhanced role of the environmental agency: if they can do more than this and make substantial net new contributions to the budget, their acceptability at the heart of government will be assured.
- To achieve lasting effects on public behaviour, environmental signals must be sent in prices -- public information and education are not enough. The market is a remorseless educator. One might conclude that the real criterion of how serious NSDS exercises are is the degree to which environmental policy is allowed to work through the market by the use of "green" taxes, subsidies and prices. Few of the existing exercises would come out well on this criterion.

- Environment is, in many countries, itself a victim of poverty. NSDSs therefore need to look not just at conservation, but at generating production and sustainable development (internalising environmental costs and benefits) and relieving the worst kinds of poverty that are the real enemies of the environment.

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