

National Strategies and Initiatives for Sustainable Development

A 19-Country Analysis of Strategic and Co-ordinated Action



Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH



Bundesministerium für
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
und Entwicklung

Canada

ffu

Environmental Policy
Research Centre

iisd

International
Institute for
Sustainable
Development

Institut
international du
développement
durable



Stratos

strategies to sustainability

Research Partners:

- International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) – Darren Swanson [dswanson@iisd.ca], László Pintér
- Stratos Inc. – Francois Bregha [fbregha@stratos-sts.com], Mary Jane Middelkoop, Barbara Sweezy
- Environmental Policy Research Centre, Freie Universität of Berlin – Axel Volkery [volkery@zedat.fu-berlin.de], Klaus Jacob, Simone Klawitter

Funding Partners:

- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ Pilot Project Rioplus, Environmental Policy and Promotion of Strategy Processes for Sustainable Development; commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development – BMZ) – Jan-Peter Schemmel [jan-peter.schemmel@gtz.de]
- The Government of Canada – Canadian International Development Agency, Department of Foreign Affairs Canada and Environment Canada [Lynn.Berthiaume@ec.gc.ca]

External Advisors:

- IUCN – The World Conservation Union
- United Nations Division for Sustainable Development

Introduction

Ten years after Rio, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg (August–September 2002) worked to prioritize new and existing sustainable development (SD) commitments and to integrate them with commitments in related fields such as trade and finance. In this international and collaborative research project, we studied and learned from strategic and co-ordinated action toward SD taken at the national level in 19 countries, before and after WSSD.

This research project was undertaken to enhance and expedite the development and implementation of national SD strategies and specific SD policy initiatives. Also included in this analysis is an up-close look at national efforts toward integrated water resources management—an important strategic co-ordinating mechanism for ensuring the sustainability of water supplies.

The specific overall objectives of this research project were to:

1. analyze national strategies and policy initiatives for SD used by a number of developed and developing countries; and
2. from the case studies, identify the key innovations, challenges and lessons learned in the development, participation, implementation, and monitoring and adaptation of national SD strategies.

Countries studied were Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Denmark, Germany, India, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom as well as the European Union.

Research for each of the 19 countries was framed by the following analytic components:

- SD strategy type (e.g., single comprehensive and multi-dimensional strategy; sectoral strategies; and/or cross-sectoral strategies);
- SD strategy development and institutional aspects;
- participation aspects;
- monitoring, learning and adaptation aspects; and
- implementation aspects and specific SD policy initiatives.



The Project Synthesis Report and Country Case Studies will be available electronically – May 14, 2004:

<http://www.iisd.org/measure/capacity/sdsip.asp>
<http://www.gtz.de/rioplus/download>

Final Project Results

The project's final synthesis report and the 19 country case studies will be available electronically in mid-May 2004, and available in hard copy in June 2004.

This project strives to advance the state of thinking related to national strategies and specific policy initiatives for SD and, in particular, the project builds on many of the recent studies in this regard such as *2002 SD Strategies – A Resource Book* (prepared by the International Institute for Environment and Development and funded by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations Environment Programme).

Specific questions to be addressed in the final project report will include:

- More than 10 years after Rio – are developing and developed countries learning their way toward more systematic and effective national strategies for SD?
- What are some of the key innovations, challenges and lessons learned regarding the development, participation, implementation, and monitoring and adaptation of national SD strategies?
- How are national efforts toward integrated water resources management progressing? – An important strategic co-ordinating mechanism for ensuring the sustainability of our water supplies.

To provide pragmatic information for government SD managers, the project results will pull together the main challenges facing strategic and co-ordinated action toward SD; identify what types of processes and institutions have been developed to meet these challenges; and provide specific examples from countries that have demonstrated innovation.

A Glimpse of Preliminary Conclusions

The case study research illustrated that there have been many innovations over the past decade, pre- and post-WSSD. The innovations can be seen in all aspects of strategic and co-ordinated action including strategy types, content, development and institutions, participation, monitoring, and implementation. This body of innovation raises the bar in terms of what could be called best practices in strategic and co-ordinated action, and can help SD managers enhance and expedite efforts toward national level strategic and co-ordinated action for SD.

However, despite the innovation that has occurred, we are only at the early stages of learning about the development and implementation of effective SD strategies. An overarching conclusion of this research is that no country is pursuing a truly strategic approach to SD. The strategic management cycle remains fragmented due to a systemic weakness in formal feedback processes that enable nations to monitor the process and outcomes of SD strategies and policy ini-

tatives, to learn from this monitoring, and most importantly, to make critical adaptations while navigating the SD journey.

Based on the challenges and lessons synthesized from the preliminary case study research, a number of other conclusions were drawn:

- Four main types of national SD strategies have been pursued: comprehensive and multi-dimensional (e.g., Germany); cross-sectoral (e.g., Cameroon); sectoral (e.g., Canada); and integration of SD into existing planning processes (e.g., Mexico). The final project synthesis will consider the role of each type in creating effective strategic and co-ordinated action. In many instances the type of strategy pursued in a country was simply the path of least political resistance. In other countries the choice of strategy type was dictated by capacity constraints and/or self-learning;
- National SD strategies still operate at the periphery of national budgeting processes;
- Sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies are still caught in “the administrative trap”¹ and need to make co-ordination as sophisticated as the SD problems being addressed;
- National strategies seldom link to local SD strategies and, therefore, often fail to leverage progress and the self-organizing capacity at the local level;
- National SD strategies could benefit from application of systems thinking—to greatly improve our understanding of the inter-relationships between economic, social and environmental systems;
- Public participation approaches have progressed considerably since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, but significant challenges remain in terms of building trust among stakeholders, providing sufficient time for the participatory process and strengthening the capacity of civil society in developing countries;
- The implementation of national SD strategies and specific policy initiatives often suffers from a lack of central co-ordination in terms of monitoring progress; and
- While a mix of specific policy initiatives is used by most nations, the use of economic policy initiatives appears to still be in its infancy and countries lagging in this regard could learn from the innovators in this field (e.g., Sweden).

There is clearly a need for more innovation to complete the strategic management cycle for national SD strategies and specific initiatives. One of the essential definitions of innovation involves the notion of learning to learn. This notion of “organizations as learning systems was perhaps one of the most valuable contributions of organizational theory to innovation.”²

A Sampling of Innovations from 19 Country Case Studies

SD strategy content

- The timelines associated with Sweden’s national SD strategy extend to cover one generation (i.e., 25 years). For instance, the strategy includes a vision for the future, which “should remain valid for a generation” while at the same time acknowledging that measures may need to be re-assessed at more frequent intervals. Specifically, the “overall objective of environmental policy is to hand over a society to the next generation in which the major environmental problems have been solved.”³

¹ “The administrative trap” – government administrative structures organized vertically into sectoral, or functional, ministries and departments. This works reasonably well until the system encounters a problem of very broad and highly integrated nature, such as desertification. Then it tackles the parts which are identifiable to each ministry and then each ministry tackles the symptom as a problem in, and of, itself (in Carley and Christie 2000).

² Carley, M.C. and I. Christie (2000). *Managing sustainable development*. 2nd Edition. Earthscan: London.

³ Swedish Government (2002), *A summary of Government Communication 2001/02:172 Sweden’s National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2002*, Stockholm, Sweden.

Co-ordination with other strategies and planning processes

- In the Philippines, The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)—the highest social and economic development planning and policy co-ordinating body in the country—was designated the lead government agency for the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD). The location of the PCSD secretariat in NEDA has been a great advantage for integrating the Philippines Agenda 21 into other medium- and long-term development plans.⁴

Legal framework

- Underpinning Switzerland's 2002 sustainable development strategy is the country's new Federal Constitution of 1999, which elevates sustainable development to the status of a national goal. The Federal Constitution provides a binding requirement for sustainability action on all levels of government, as well as incorporating sustainable development into its foreign policy goals.

Participation

- Cameroon, as part of its poverty reduction strategy paper, proposed to create a National Poverty Reduction Network (NPRN). The NPRN is designed to act as a forum for “sharing experiences and exchanging data among groups and regarding participatory approaches, as well as a framework for societal supervision of all the activities undertaken to implement the poverty reduction strategy.” The NPRN will “be open to all development players and facilitate a partnership between civil society and the government.” Through this network, “the government expects to gain insight into the way grassroots segments of the population rate the effectiveness and efficiency of public spending on the social sectors and basic infrastructure, and to hear their suggestions for improving budget execution.”⁵

Monitoring and learning

- Canada's Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD), situated in the Office of the Auditor General, plays a significant role in advancing the sustainable development agenda in Canada. The CESD audits the government's overall performance on environment and SD as well as the commitments included in departmental strategies, reporting to Parliament on overall progress towards stated objectives. The findings from the Commissioner's report have often led to direct responses by departments and agencies, and the recommendations have been influential in determining the content and rigour of each round of SD strategies.

Implementation and specific policy initiatives

- Sweden's experiment with environmental tax shifting began in 1991, when it raised taxes on carbon and sulfur emissions and reduced income taxes. In 2001, the government increased taxes on diesel fuel, heating oil and electricity while lowering income taxes and social security contributions. Six per cent of all government revenue in Sweden has now been shifted. This has helped Sweden reduce greenhouse gas emissions more quickly than anticipated. A political agreement between the government and the opposition required a four per cent reduction below 1990 levels by 2012. Yet by 2000, emissions were already down 3.9 per cent from 1990—in large measure due to energy taxes.

For additional information, contact:

Darren Swanson – IISD [dswanson@iisd.ca] – Research Partner

Jan-Peter Schemmel – GTZ Pilot Project Rioplus, Environmental Policy and Promotion of Strategy Processes for Sustainable Development [jan-peter.schemmel@gtz.de] – Funding Partner

Lynn Berthiaume – Sustainable Development, Policy and Partnerships, Environment Canada [Lynn.Berthiaume@ec.gc.ca] – Funding Partner

⁴ National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSD) (August 2001a- latest update): The NCSD Sustainable Development Report Republic of the Philippines, available at: <http://www.ncsdnetwork.org/global/reports/ncsd1999/phi.htm> (Accessed February 16, 2004).

⁵ PRSP (2003). Cameroon: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. IMF Country Report No. 03/249 © 2003 International Monetary Fund, August 2003. <www.imf.org/external/country/cmr/index.htm> (cited January 2004).

National Strategies and Initiatives for Sustainable Development

A 19-Country Analysis of Strategic and Co-ordinated Action

Sample Table of Contents

PART I: Synthesis Report

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Context
- 1.2 Project Purpose and Objectives
- 1.3 Project Partners and Development
- 1.4 Review of Recent Research Related to National SD Strategies and Initiatives
- 1.5 Research Approach and Methods

2. Synthesis and Analysis of Country Case Studies

- 2.1 SD Strategy Typologies
- 2.2 SD Strategy Content
- 2.3 SD Strategy Development and Institutional Aspects
- 2.4 Participation Aspects
- 2.5 Monitoring, Learning and Adaptation Aspects
- 2.6 Implementation Aspects and Specific Initiatives
- 2.7 Advances in Integrated Water Resources Management

3. Discussion

- 3.1 SD Strategy Typologies
- 3.3 Key Innovations in SD Strategies and Initiatives
- 3.4 Key Challenges and Lessons Learned
- 3.5 Assessment of Advances in Integrated Water Resource Management

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

PART II: Country Case Studies

Countries studied are Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Denmark, Germany, India, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom as well as the European Union.