

CHAPTER

4

Key Steps in Starting or Improving Strategies for Sustainable Development¹

Harnessing effective strategic mechanisms in a continual-improvement system

In each country that participated in the OECD DAC project on strategies for sustainable development, stakeholder dialogues were organized to examine current and past strategic planning processes and to assess how they had been conducted, what had worked well or less well, and the reasons for this. These dialogues and wider experience from around the world suggest a number of steps that will assist a country in strengthening its strategic planning processes and moving them in the direction of a sustainable development strategy. This entails the identification, coordination and continuous improvement of mechanisms that can help towards balancing the economic, social and environmental concerns of multiple stakeholders. Figure 4.1 illustrates the types of mechanisms that usually will be needed. The way that these mechanisms are coordinated must be consistent with the principles and elements in Boxes 3.1 and 3.2 – most notably, that of continual improvement, the only practical way to deal with large change agendas in situations of uncertainty and limited resources.²

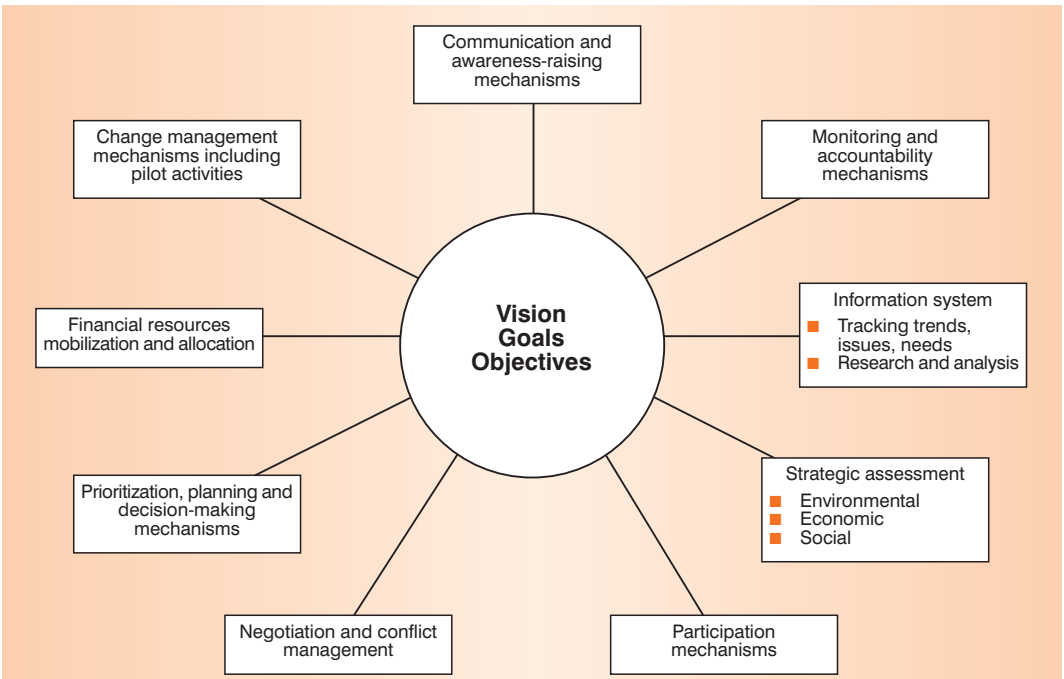
To achieve a continual improvement process, the mechanisms need to work together as an action-learning system. A continual improvement approach is broadly cyclical (illustrated in Figure 4.2). Priorities

The guidance in this chapter is based on practical experience

A continuous improvement approach is most practical

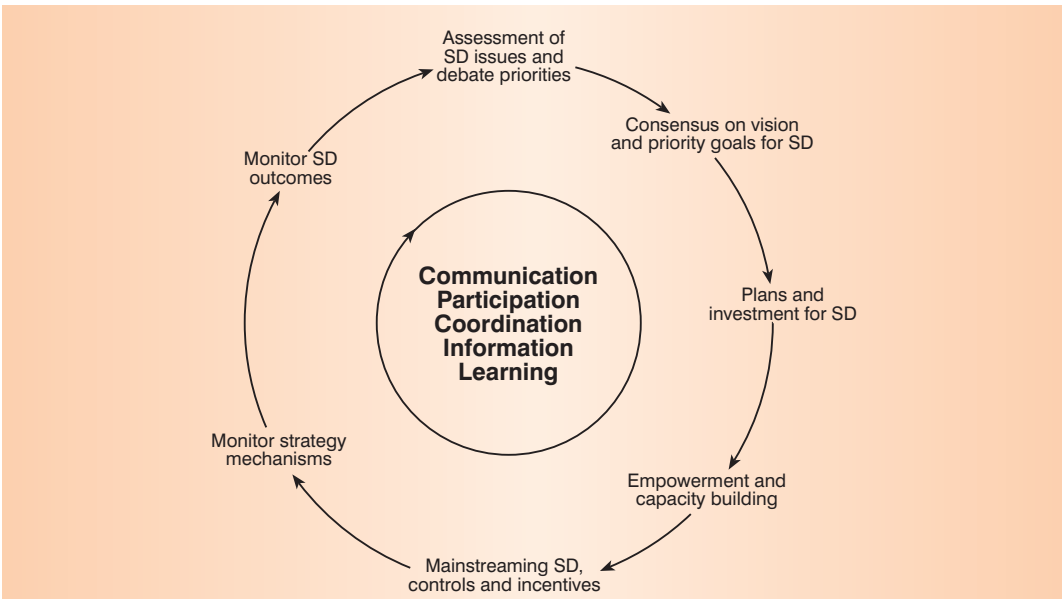
¹ This chapter has benefited from review comments and additional material provided by Ralph Cobham, UK; Jorge Reyes, Philippines; and Joseph Opio-Odongo, Uganda.

² This premise is supported by two decades of experience of quality/environmental management systems in progressive corporations and government agencies; and also by the experience of pioneering efforts by some segments in wider society (especially civil society organizations): to revitalize or help to create new institutional mechanisms, to change the rules of engagement for stakeholders, to build infrastructure to link initiatives and learn from each other, and to encourage greater participation to allow the vision of sustainable development to flourish across society.



Explanation: This figure visualizes suggested basic elements of a system for developing and implementing a strategy for sustainable development. The system should encourage and facilitate the building of consensus in society about a vision, goals and objectives for sustainable development (the centre circle). It should provide a coordinated set of information and institutional mechanisms to deliver these (the satellite boxes). In establishing such a system, there is a need to look at precedents, recent trends and improvements in mechanisms beyond branded and packaged approaches that might provide examples on how to make progress – adhering to the basic principles and elements set out in Boxes 3.1 and 3.2. Note that this figure does not cover the particular relationships between the different elements: these should be designed for a particular case. Figure 4.2 suggests a basic 'continuous improvement' approach to such relationships.

Figure 4.1 Constellation of mechanisms contributing to a strategy for sustainable development



Note: The figure shows some of the more important relations between the mechanisms shown in Figure 4.1. As portrayed, it suggests that the overall process involves a rigid sequence of steps. However, in practice, these are ongoing and necessarily overlap. Key features of the central tasks are stakeholder identification, strengthening capacity, collaboration and outreach

Figure 4.2 The continuous improvement approach to managing sustainable development strategies

are dealt with first; experiments are incorporated; lessons learned are shared; time is taken for people to realize the need for change and to change attitudes and approaches. The idea is to achieve key targets to build both the capacity (especially analytical and problem-solving skills) and the commitment that will enable even more challenging targets to be addressed. The process and its outcomes (whether institutional changes, legal reforms, particular initiatives or action programmes, etc) are monitored and evaluated to provide lessons and feedback for review and revision. The strategy, through an iterative process, thus operates as a knowledge system that coordinates the collection of information, analysis, monitoring and communication.

In contrast, unsuccessful strategies have usually been linear processes, that is, designing, implementing and (sometimes) monitoring a new strategy as separate phases. This has usually resulted, at best, in only partial implementation (see section on learning from current practice, page 35). The agenda has been too big to deal with over the strategy 'project's' short life; there has been inadequate time for experimentation, feedback, debate and attitudinal change; the component activities are seen as 'outside' day-to-day reality and are given less attention; and there is no way of dealing with changed circumstances such as economic difficulties – the actual realities that strategies should accommodate. In other words, there has been very limited room to manoeuvre.

Usually, there will be many possible 'entry points' to the strategy process

Figure 4.2 is not intended to describe strict phases in a strategy 'cycle', with an obligatory starting point and sequence. A key task (described in detail in the section on mapping out the strategy process, page 102) is to take stock of which of the strategic mechanisms shown in Figure 4.1 already exist, especially those that have effective stakeholder engagement processes and collaborative structures. These mechanisms and elements, and their associated tasks, are likely to be spread among a variety of local and national strategic planning frameworks as well as one-off initiatives such as the more recent NCSs and NEAPs. Taking stock might involve national debate and analysis among a wide range of stakeholders on what the different strategic approaches have to offer and whether prerequisites for effective strategies are in place; for example, whether the country is in peace, with democratic systems, freedom of speech and the rule of law.

A strategy system must improve synergies and encourage participation

Bringing together 'what works' can be cost-effective and credible, ensuring 'buy-in': This would enable a strengthened strategy system or framework to be constructed, using the best of what currently exists to improve synergies, remove inconsistencies, avoid conflicts and fill gaps. The system would not *plan* everything, but would largely aim to *guide* change in circumstances of uncertainty, and to encourage a culture of experimentation and innovation. This 'framework' approach is conducive to wide ownership, as it can accommodate many thematic, regional, decentralized and local strategies, some of which may have been around for some time, as well as others which will be developed in the future.

Sometimes it may be desirable to develop a new comprehensive strategy. This could be the case where stakeholders agree that a new identity is required, either because of problems with past approaches or to signal a fresh vision and major investment in strategy mechanisms. Care must be taken in introducing a new initiative, as it is then all too easy to ignore existing approaches, to compete with them and to cause confusion, if not resentment. Even if a new identity is required, it should be presented and promoted as building on what has been achieved so far – especially if this involves learning the lessons from previous failures.

It is essential to use and strengthen existing capacities

Whether an 'evolved' or a brand new approach is adopted, it is essential from the outset to use and strengthen capacities to plan and implement on a nationwide scale. These are challenging tasks because the resultant strategy will need to address all of the main development issues that confront society: health, transport, energy, water and food supply, natural and cultural resource conservation, and so on. In short, the goal is to 'mainstream' sustainability into administrations, sectors and livelihoods. Strategies do this through processes of debate, agreement, learning and ultimately behaviour change. This can only work if stakeholders are involved in the strategy. As processes that promote continuous improvement, strategies

themselves are an efficient way to build capacity. Usually adequate national/local resources will be available to keep a strategy process alive if there is enough understanding about its importance, and if the process is designed continually to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Bearing these points in mind, illustrative steps for identifying, coordinating and developing strategy mechanisms are summarized in Box 4.1, and explored further in the rest of this chapter. Further details on operating the component mechanisms – analysis, debate, communication, planning, strategic decision-making, financing, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review – are offered in Chapters 5–10.

Scoping exercise

One of the earliest tasks involves conducting a ‘scoping’ exercise. This is likely to test and ideally capture the interest of multiple stakeholders. It would entail an initial assessment of the need for, and approach to, sustainable development (see Chapter 2), looking at which actors might be affected by a strategy process and its possible outcomes, and considering the notional costs and benefits. It would also involve a preliminary examination of the opportunities and challenges of undertaking the steps suggested in Box 4.1 and the likely actors. In particular, it would entail:

- First, identifying what stakeholders consider to be the top priority economic, social, institutional, environmental and technological **issues** (problems and opportunities). Chapters 5 and 6 cover the analytical and participatory tasks required to do this.
- Second, estimating the net **benefits** that stakeholders can expect to derive from all of the resources required to provide the solutions. This component will need to embrace both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. An example from Barbados is provided in Table 4.1. Chapters 5, 6 and 8 also cover aspects of the methods involved in quantifying benefits, costs and risks.

Not until such a ‘scoping’ exercise is either well advanced or completed is it usually possible to achieve the required commitment to the whole strategic planning process from a country’s prime decision-makers. Furthermore, the determination and weighing of priority issues³ can serve as an extremely helpful way of identifying the nature and composition of the institution that should be commissioned to coordinate the overall process. The ‘scoping’ exercise itself can, if necessary, be facilitated either by an existing multi-disciplinary development planning unit within a lead ministry or by an ad hoc team specifically established for the purpose.

Establishing or strengthening a strategy secretariat or coordinating body

The steps and functions suggested in Box 4.1 and the mechanisms shown in Figure 4.1 will require careful management and coordination for effective progress to be made. It will, therefore, be necessary to establish some form of secretariat or coordinating body. A strategy secretariat is needed for the following *key tasks*:

³ Experience has repeatedly shown the need for such priority issues to be addressed in the ‘macro’ rather than the narrow or ‘micro’ context. A classic example relates to the development of a multi-sectoral strategy designed to conserve and use sustainably the tropical high forest resources of a country. There has been a tendency by some international agencies (particularly the bilateral aid agencies) to seek to address the issue in relation to forestry alone. However, in reality, it calls for an integrated multi-sectoral approach, involving such dimensions as good governance; poverty alleviation; rural infrastructure development; community value systems; agricultural and population pressures; the non-timber values of forests (eg wildlife, water catchment, tourism); international and local trading patterns and markets; institutional capacities and reforms; certification and sustainable management tools; national parks and biodiversity management.

An early task is to identify stakeholders’ views on sustainable development priorities and benefits of a strategy

The scoping exercise can help to build high level commitment

A secretariat is needed for key tasks ...

Box 4.1 Illustrative steps for starting, managing and continually improving a strategy for sustainable development

The following steps apply in full to strategy development tasks, that is, those needed to scope out and establish the strategy by building on existing mechanisms, and/or initiating new mechanisms if necessary. But the same or similar tasks are then iterative during strategy coordination and continuous improvement.

A useful first step is to undertake an initial *scoping exercise* to identify stakeholders' views on priority issues that need to be addressed, and to estimate the benefits that might derive from developing and implementing a strategy. Such an exercise would involve a preliminary examination of the opportunities for, and challenges of, undertaking the steps suggested below (page 77).

It should not be assumed that the subsequent steps should be undertaken as a rigid sequence. In practice many of them will need to be pursued in parallel and some might best make use of opportunities as they arise.

- (a) Establish or strengthen a *secretariat or coordinating body* acceptable to stakeholders, with sufficient authority and resources to coordinate the steps outlined in this box, and the continuing strategy mechanisms (page 77).
- (b) Establish or strengthen a *steering committee or equivalent multi-stakeholder forum* (eg National Council for Sustainable Development) with a broad balance of representation from government, the private sector and civil society acceptable to stakeholders (page 77).
- (c) Seek or improve *political commitment* to the strategy preparation and implementation process from the highest levels as well as all other levels (page 82).
- (d) Secure or confirm a *mandate* for the strategy. The more this represents domestic public demand with high-level support, rather than external mandates, the better (page 85).
- (e) Identify the *stakeholders* that will own the preparation and implementation of an integrated sustainable development strategy, and encourage discussion of their (potential) roles (page 85).
- (f) Ensure *broad-based ownership* by key ministries and agencies, civil society and the private sector (pages 87–90).
- (g) Mobilize the *required resources*. Identify, secure, and allocate in a timely and accountable manner, the required:
 - skills, and sources of knowledge and learning;
 - management, legal and institutional support;
 - financial resources (page 90).
- (h) Define and seek agreement on the roles of *stakeholders* (ie their rights, responsibilities, rewards, and relations) – private sector, civil society (eg NGOs, local communities), donors, national and local government, the Secretariat, etc (page 94).
- (i) *Map out the strategy process*, taking stock of *existing processes and mechanisms*:
 - catalogue the range of existing strategies related to sustainable development;
 - identify the issues covered, vision, goals and responsibilities;
 - identify mechanisms and processes used by existing strategies (see Figure 4.1);
 - review achievements of these mechanisms in terms of synergies, clashes and gaps, and their outcomes;
 - determine the existence/extent of sectoral policy conflicts and inconsistencies, and the work necessary to resolve them;
 - identify what is required to improve synergies and plug gaps (page 102).
- (j) Develop or improve *coherence and coordination* between strategy frameworks at all levels from international to local; and between and within sectors (page 104).
- (k) Establish or improve the *ground rules* governing the strategy process:
 - debate and agree how all decisions will be made and agreed, and uncertainty dealt with;
 - coordinate means for negotiation of trade-offs and conflict management (page 110).
- (l) Establish and promote a *schedule or broad calendar* for the strategy process – determine activities, responsibilities, capabilities and resources needed, and their timing (page 112).
- (m) *Promote* the strategy as a unified concept. Possibly publish a 'prospectus' for the strategy outlining all the above (page 112).
- (n) Establish or improve provisions for *regular analysis, debate, communication, planning, implementation, monitoring and review*; to ensure that all stakeholders are best able to play their part in the strategy. These processes are the 'heart' of the strategy and are discussed in detail in separate chapters. They will involve establishing or improving:

- *means for analysing sustainability, stakeholders, mechanisms and processes, and scenarios* (Chapter 5);
- *regular stakeholder fora and other means for participation* (thematic, national, decentralized and local) to reach and improve consensus on basic vision, goals, principles, system components, pilot activities, targets and responsibilities, and to review progress (Chapter 6);
- *communication and information systems* to ensure regular flows of information concerning both the strategy and sustainable development between stakeholders and between fora. This will include development of key information products to improve awareness and stimulate action, and the establishment of knowledge management systems to ensure sharing of experience and facilitate collective learning (Chapter 7);
- *major decision-making arrangements*, notably: structures and roles; handling global and local values and risk; means of delivering consensus and handling negotiations; and ways of linking those involved (Chapter 8);
- *implementation services and control mechanisms* – means for selecting policy implementation instruments (regulations, incentives and voluntary mechanisms) and applying them (Chapter 8);
- *means for planning investments* – tasks involved in making the case to different investment sources, and the criteria that should be used (Chapter 9);
- *monitoring and accountability mechanisms* to assess both strategy processes and their results. These will include: developing and reviewing sustainability indicators, baselines, standards and codes of practice; identifying and encouraging innovative processes to promote the culture of action-learning; independent monitoring; and feedback to decision-making (Chapter 10).

Source: Modified from OECD DAC (2001a)

- Organizing and coordinating the overall strategy processes.
- Gaining confidence and support for the process from key political groups, statutory bodies and (where needed) donor organizations.
- Planning specific activities, meetings and events.
- Facilitating the setting of agendas at all stages of the strategy process, and follow-up of decisions/agreements.
- Budgeting for and procuring expertise and resources.
- Ensuring that the roles of participants in strategy processes are clearly established.⁴
- Supporting working groups and other committees.
- Acting as a communications focal point for information and enquiries.
- Ensuring adherence to timetables.

Thus the secretariat does not make the key decisions on strategy goals, policies, and so on, nor is it expected to undertake everything itself, but to fulfil an organizing, anchoring and support role to provide day-to-day coordination on a continuing basis within a broadly agreed timescale. The secretariat needs to command the respect and trust of stakeholders and to discharge its functions in an open and neutral way. Past experience shows that a secretariat works best if it is located centrally within government; for example, within the office of the president or prime minister or within a body which has recognized authority for cross-government and cross-sectoral coordination such as the ministry of finance and development planning or a national planning commission (often the latter are directly responsible to the president or prime minister). Where a secretariat is placed within a line ministry, there is the danger that the strategy will become, and be seen as, an activity of that ministry and will cease to command the wider acceptance and support that is needed. Alternatively, a secretariat can be established in an independent body – or one with

... fulfilling an organizing, anchoring and support role ...

⁴ Sometimes it may be required to identify and resolve potential conflicts between stakeholder groups, or to engage neutral and independent third parties for this task.

Table 4.1 Scoping some of the main benefits of preparing a national conservation strategy in Barbados

A.1 Generic benefits applying to all or most stakeholders and sectors of society	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Generation of increased GNP through resource restoration, implementation of sustainable development programmes and new resource use opportunities (eg recycling of wastes) 2 Generation of employment
A.2 Generic benefits to decision-makers that also apply to most other stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Establishment of the linkages between environment and sectoral economic development policies and integration programmes (eg the tourism and craft industries) 2 Identification and removal of the policy gaps 3 Formulation of policies and programmes for pollution prevention, control and 'clean-up' 4 Identification and use of appropriate performance indicators
B.1 Specific benefits for the 'educators': formal and non-formal sectors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Identification of issues, practices and linkages to be communicated 2 Modification of curricula to include sustainability dimensions 3 Procurement of the necessary funding
B.2 Specific benefits for NGOs and community groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Clarification of priority sustainable development actions required 2 Coordination of research and training programmes to avoid duplication and to achieve optimal benefits 3 Assistance with procurement of donor funding support
B.3 Specific benefits for the media	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Identification of the main sustainable development issues likely to be newsworthy over the next 3–5 years and the potential roles of different sectors of the media 2 Assistance with the procurement of funds to assist in raising the standards and levels of public awareness about sustainability issues and practical solutions
B.4. Specific benefits for the business community and property developers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Identification of the potentially most helpful sustainability contributions that this sector can make 2 Provision of greater opportunities to achieve accreditation as a 'green or sustainable company' 3 Increased access to incentives to participate in resource conservation and enhancement 4 Improved scope for opportunities to win customer/public acclaim for sustainability performance improvements
B.5 Specific benefits for the general public	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Introduction of measures which result in the reduction of all forms of pollution and environmental degradation, plus enhancement of the living environment 2 Enhanced opportunities for gaining stakeholder recognition and awareness about the key improvements that are required

Source: Cobham (1990)

a broad mandate – acceptable to all stakeholders and especially to government (for example, a parastatal, or a national research council as was the case in Zambia where stakeholders agreed that the council was sufficiently independent and objective to run an effective forum).

At the outset, when the strategy is being designed and support sought from different constituencies, it might only need a few staff. More may be required later when analyses and facilitation functions are needed. But, in general, a secretariat should limit what it undertakes itself and rely, wherever possible, on bringing together and commissioning others to work together on tasks, or on tapping into the capabilities

of existing affiliated networks. For this to succeed, it will be essential for all those involved to demonstrate an ability to relate to multi-sectoral perspectives rather than to single sector needs.

To command confidence, respect and support from all stakeholders, the secretariat will need to operate in an open and transparent way. It will also need highly skilled staff with experience of coordinating multi-stakeholder processes (see Box 4.6).

Although best located centrally within government (for coordination purposes), the secretariat should not be established as a formal organ of government. Rather it has been found best for a secretariat to be responsible to a broadly based and formally mandated steering committee or equivalent forum (see below).

Establishing or strengthening a strategy steering committee or equivalent forum

A multi-stakeholder steering committee, comprising representatives of the private sector and civil society as well as government, has generally been found necessary to ensure equitable governance of the strategy processes and to make the key decisions. This body needs to be seen both to have, and to be able to exercise, the powers required to formulate a strategy, achieve consensus on its scope and content, and monitor its development, implementation and impacts.

Its *key tasks* include:

- promoting acceptance (in political circles) of the need for, and benefits of, the participation of stakeholders in the strategy process;
- encouraging the sustained participation of key stakeholder groups in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy, its outcomes and impacts;
- providing general oversight of the strategy process, and particularly representation of stakeholders within it;
- taking responsibility for the appointment and conduct of the secretariat;
- approving process design and revisions;
- reviewing major evidence on sustainable development problems and potentials;
- reviewing technical and policy options;
- making policy decisions (or recommendations to higher authorities where needed);
- obtaining (when required) timely decisions from higher authorities that enable strategic planning and implementation processes to be seen to be working;
- reviewing and approving major strategy documents and progress reports, and formal submission of such documents to government, where needed;
- providing appropriate advocacy for the process among respective constituencies (government, private sector, civil society and, where appropriate, the donor community) to engender confidence.

It is the membership and procedures of this committee or forum that form the ‘heart’ of the strategy process. As such, they will largely determine the credibility of the strategy – whether it is perceived as a venture reflective of society at large, and not merely another government project or donor-driven initiative. For similar reasons, it is preferable for the chairperson of such a steering committee/forum to be an independent, eminent person not beholden to any particular interest group. The steering committee/forum needs to meet regularly. Where an NCSD has been established as recommended by Agenda 21 (see Box 3.14),⁵ this can serve as a ready-made NSDS steering committee. Box 4.2 provides an example of a specially convened steering committee for Balochistan in Pakistan.

... and it must operate in an open and transparent way

A multi-stakeholder steering committee should have overall responsibility for the strategy process

Preferably, the chairperson should be independent

⁵ Box 8.7 gives even more detail on NCSD mandate, structure and composition, and Box 8.8 on decision-making approaches.

Box 4.2 Membership of steering committee for Balochistan Conservation Strategy, Pakistan**Government of Balochistan**

Additional Chief Secretary (Development), Planning and Development Department (Chairman)
 Secretary, Environment, Wildlife, Livestock, Forests and Tourism Department
 Secretary, Education, Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs Department
 Secretary, Finance Department

Civil society

Chief Executive, Balochistan Rural Support Programme (an umbrella organization focusing on institutional, vocational capacity-building of CBOs)
 Country Representative, IUCN Pakistan
 Chairman, Society for Torghar Environmental Protection (a community-based project)
 Chairperson, Female Education Trust

Private sector

President, Balochistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries

Note: The NGO sector in Balochistan is extremely weak. Given this fact, the inclusion of two organizations operating at the grass-roots level was considered to be most balanced

Source: Government of Balochistan and IUCN Pakistan (2000); Maheen Zehra (personal communication)

Seeking or improving political commitment for the strategy

*Political commitment
is vital*

Political commitment at the higher levels (eg parliamentary, cabinet or head of state) and at decentralized levels (eg members of parliament) is central to an effective strategy, notably to:

- ensure that priority sustainable development issues can be addressed from multi-sectoral dimensions rather than narrow sector standpoints;
- underpin appreciation that in order to progress towards sustainable development, a magnitude of interrelated issues need to be addressed in terms of their physical, social, economic, financial, technical and environmental implications;
- enable the strategy coordinating system to work (the secretariat and steering committee will rely on political support for their formation and operation);
- ensure that the principles and elements set out in Boxes 3.1 and 3.2 are followed throughout the strategy process;
- ensure that the NSDS vision and objectives incorporate political goals consistent with sustainable development;
- conversely, ensure that the NSDS vision and objectives are reflected in political aspirations, developments, plans and policy statements;
- ensure that the policy implications of the strategy are followed and considered throughout the process, and not merely at some formal end-point (to allow a continuous improvement approach to work);
- make decisions on recommended policy and institutional changes;
- ensure that changes are introduced and followed through;
- instruct government departments that relevant policies, plans and procedures should be coordinated with the strategy;
- commit government funds (and, if necessary, donor assistance);
- keep the strategy process open and inclusive, and not confidential and closed – encouraging

participation in the strategy, giving participants ready access to information, and encouraging them to adopt critical approaches.

Sustainable development is about making key decisions for transforming society. This is very close to the realm of politics. But the two have been viewed separately: previous sustainable development plans have too often been seen as technocratic dreams, and the political support essential to sustainable development has been missing. They need to come together in non-partisan ways, by dealing with real stakeholder needs, and with real constraints in a step-by-step (continual improvement) process.⁶

The pioneering first Netherlands' National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP) was, to a large extent, a response to public concerns about pollution (Box 4.3). Similarly, political demand for Canada's Green Plan (1990–1996) grew out of increased environmental awareness in the late 1980s, particularly concern about local air quality following accidents involving polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). In the run up to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, the environment became the number one public issue with demands that the federal government 'do something'.

Sustainable development is a political process – it requires key decisions

Box 4.3 The Netherlands' National Environmental Policy Plan – a response to public pressure

The main motivation behind The Netherlands' first National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP) and subsequent plans was a desire to bring about a shift from a sectoral to a theme-based approach to environmental planning and management. The report of the Brundtland Commission (WCED 1987) was very influential and 'provided a strong tail wind'. Public opinion was strongly in favour of the government playing a more active role on the environment. This had come about for various reasons, including the Chernobyl accident in 1986, the coming to light in the 1980s of domestic scandals concerning soil pollution in the 1970s, and the high public expenditure needed to deal with the pollution created by attempts to clean up the water. In the 1970s and 1980s, it was possible to smell polluted air and see waste heaps grow.

The Cabinet, which wanted to 'take a lead', established the NEPP process in 1987. But there was also strong leadership from key individuals in the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM), who saw the need for NEPP, were not 'afraid of other influential ministries' and who 'made possible the enormous jump forward represented by NEPP'.

Source: Dalal-Clayton (1996)

In some cases, strategy development has followed a decree by the head of state or the prime minister because of their commitment to a particular cause or development approach. For example, preparation of Zambia's NCS was launched in 1981 on the instruction of former President Kenneth Kaunda who had long been committed to conservation. He was much persuaded by the goals of the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN/UNEP/WWF 1980) and committed his country to developing the first NCS. Similarly, Ghana's Vision 2020 (Ghana NDPC 1994) was the idea of former President Gerry Rawlings who had a vision that Ghana could become a middle-income country within a generation. The weight given to strategies by such presidential involvement can give the bodies charged with coordinating them (the NCS Secretariat in

⁶ Politicians have found it relatively easy to make speeches on sustainable development, which offers good buzzwords and easy-to-use phrases that can be used rather vaguely and without serious commitment; for example, 'developing an integrated response to global threats' and 'involving stakeholders in a partnership with government'. The concept of sustainable development and what it really implies for governance is still rather intangible to politicians. It has been far easier to make election promises and commitments over sectoral or stakeholder-specific concerns, especially when these have clear political advantage. Equally, sustainable development planners have too easily seen their work as separate from the 'messy' world of politics and too often blame failure on 'a lack of political will'. In reality, political commitment is generated by social forces and dynamic balancing of interests – and NSDS processes are designed to help this materialize in a positive way.

Zambia, the National Development Planning Commission in Ghana) considerable 'authority' to bring government departments together.

But political support can also mask negative trends and realities

Yet political support and other excellent features of a strategy process can mask the march of negative trends. There is a danger that success in 'process' terms can provide false security that outcomes are being achieved; that is, the very resources that the process seeks to sustain are still being lost. For example, in Ghana's case, substantial depletion of the country's tropical rainforest took place during the period when the Vision 2020 was being prepared (Vordzorgbe et al 2001). In Malawi, there was an even more acute gulf between aspiration and reality. Here, while an exemplary suite of sustainable development documents was being developed, the country continued to suffer major loss of forests and soil erosion. This points to the need to ensure good monitoring and to keep in mind the possible need to establish 'emergency or contingency management procedures and powers'. Otherwise, the key components of a vision, strategy and action plan (which can take between two and six years to develop and secure widespread acceptance) may represent little more than 'paper tigers'.

In some countries, such as Lesotho and Botswana, these practical difficulties have been tackled directly either by commissioning independent, special rapid appraisal studies or by conducting strategic environmental assessments led by impartial international consultants. In all cases, field developments have been suspended until the outcomes of the investigations have been concluded and publicized.

Cross-party support, focused on a compelling vision, can underpin long-term commitment

Political commitment also needs to be long term, and should therefore involve longer-term stakeholders such as the range of political parties and younger generations of commentators and decision-makers. Otherwise, there is the danger that an incoming government will see a particular strategy as representing the views or policies of its predecessor and so will either ignore it or even initiate a new strategy process more in line with its own thinking (see Box 4.4). The conclusion from reviewing strategies in Ghana (Vordzorgbe et al 2001) is that a strategy for sustainable development needs to focus on a compelling vision to which all parties will aspire, and on basic mechanisms (of the types illustrated in Figure 4.1), to allow continuous improvement to take place. If the strategy is too strongly associated with the details of individual regimes and programmes, it may not survive any changes in political administration.

Box 4.4 Strategy survival through changes of government

In Pakistan, the National Conservation Strategy was prepared through an elaborate participatory process spanning six years. It gained widespread support in government (at high level), 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 recognition and support and is still being implemented.

The Ghana Vision 2020 was an initiative of the president and ruling party and became the country's guiding development policy, recognized across government and among stakeholders. A new government was elected in December 2000 and rejected the vision as unachievable in the planned timeframe. It replaced it with its own alternative vision (see Box 3.15).

Cabinet commitment can cement support across government and departments

It is probable that early commitment to a strategy for sustainable development will lie with individuals. We have noted the case of presidential leadership above, but leaders might also be civil servants, or work with NGOs, academic institutions, the private sector or in civil society. However and wherever this initial inspiration arises, an early step should be to gain political support and, given the importance of the agenda and weight of the task, to seek cabinet commitment so as to cement such cross-government support and bind in line agencies. It is also helpful to seek the support of parliamentarians and lower level political bodies, as noted in Namibia (Jones 2001). A useful way to introduce the idea is to provide information or make a presentation to the parliamentary committee responsible for sustainable development, or indeed to

the cabinet. Such presentations have usefully been made through videos; for example, in Botswana, Nigeria, St Lucia and Pakistan.

NCSDs (Box 3.14) will often be the most appropriate vehicle through which to first raise and then promote the notion of a strategy for sustainable development with government and politicians. Moreover, although their membership is usually drawn from a mix of sectors, NCSDs are public institutions through which the influence of the public, private and civil society sectors can be channelled.

Finally, political commitment should not be seen solely in terms of a 'prerequisite before starting a strategy', although clearly a certain level is needed. The continual improvement approach helps to generate and raise political commitment through the involvement of politicians in the NSDS process at key stages, and through providing them with relevant information.

Establishing or confirming a mandate for the strategy

If it is to be effective, a strategy should be a national initiative that will need broad support across government as well as the private sector and civil society. As we have seen, this will often entail setting up new bodies (eg steering committee/council and secretariat) perhaps with little precedent. In order for them to be able to promote the concept and process, they will need a clear mandate:

- to engage with stakeholders, encouraging and negotiating their support and involvement;
- to call for information;
- to organize analysis and debate on major topics concerning sustainable development;
- to make recommendations to identified bodies (cabinet or other high-level bodies);
- to make certain decisions (within agreed limits – cabinet will usually make the major decisions).

Such a mandate needs to be provided by a trusted, powerful body that also reflects public demand. This can be a tall order in some countries: the mandate might come from government at a high level (see page 82), or from parliament or a decentralized system such as a panchayat. Mandates similar to those of parliamentary or people's commissions have been used.

The mandate should be made public and signal the authority given to the steering committee/council and secretariat to carry out their functions and clearly indicate that the process has high-level support in government. One way would be for the mandate to be provided through legislation. This provides the committee/council with permanent status and insulates the process from the vagaries of politics or changes in political regimes, reducing the problem that support for a sustainable development strategy can change as governments and administrations change (a serious problem in a number of countries, eg Ghana – see Box 3.16).

Ensuring broad ownership of the strategy

Central to the NSDS approach is the notion that people and institutions alike do not change because someone else tells them to – they have to be involved in understanding and realizing the need for change, making decisions about change, and then going through the process themselves. An NSDS, however, involves a broad range of stakeholders who all need to undertake change towards sustainable development. NSDS 'ownership' is therefore not a simple task. It implies that stakeholders from the private sector and civil society, as well as government, are involved in all stages of the process of developing and implementing the strategy, and in making decisions about its scope, the process and the outcomes (Table 4.2).

A clear public mandate will authorize and help to sustain the strategy process

A strategy needs the broad support of civil society and the private sector as well as government

Table 4.2 Checklist of key stakeholder groups in a national sustainable development strategy

GOVERNMENT	CIVIL SOCIETY	PRIVATE SECTOR	REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> President ■ Cabinet ■ Line ministries ■ Government agencies ■ Sub-national authorities at all levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Independent academic and research institutions ■ NGOs and NGO coalitions ■ Community-based organizations/groups ■ Private voluntary organizations ■ Resource user associations (farmers, hunters, fishers, tourism operators, etc) ■ Community groups ■ Environment organizations ■ Human development and rights organizations ■ Indigenous peoples' organizations ■ Professional associations ■ Political parties/groups ■ Relief and welfare organizations ■ Churches and religious groups/institutions ■ Schools, teachers and parent-teacher associations ■ Trades unions ■ Women's groups ■ Campaign groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Banking and financial institutions ■ Industry associations ■ Major companies ■ Small and medium enterprises ■ Informal enterprises ■ Chambers of commerce ■ Business round tables ■ The media ■ Enterprise development agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Multilateral development banks ■ Bilateral development cooperation agencies ■ Multinational/global organizations (eg UN agencies) ■ International NGOs ■ Regional aid organizations ■ Regional coalitions of countries (eg SADCC, ASEAN, EU)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government-supported bodies ■ Research establishments ■ Educational institutions ■ Armed forces ■ The judiciary ■ Parliament ■ Resource management authorities and agencies ■ QUANGOS (Quasi autonomous NGOs) 			

Note: Non-government stakeholders are very diverse – only examples can be given. Stakeholder analysis (page 120) can be used to 'map' the key groups who should be engaged in a strategy process. (Chapter 6)

Real 'ownership' of the NSDS is achieved by:

- all stakeholders (particularly those making key contributions to policy development and decision-makers) having a comprehensive understanding of the multi-sectoral strategic planning and implementation process involved;
- balanced participation of the above stakeholders, and the widespread perception of this;
- stakeholder representation that takes good account of how well representatives are accountable to the group they are required to represent, and how clear their identity is with that group;
- clarity in expectations about what stakeholder involvement can and cannot achieve;
- an agreed level of shared control of the NSDS process;
- all stakeholders having adequate access, time, resources and incentives to be involved in those parts of the NSDS process that they believe are relevant to them;
- transparency in decision-making;
- reliable and relevant information about the ongoing process and its outcomes, and effective means of communication;
- clearly defined and bounded roles of external parties such as development agencies.

In many countries there is a tangible lack of ownership of strategic planning processes. The primary reason for this is the perceived lack of balanced participation and excessive control by government or influence of external agencies. To confront this problem, seminars and training programmes have an important role to play in building both a common understanding of sustainable development processes and the management capacities of stakeholders.

Many country planning frameworks are externally driven as a consequence of conditionality and time pressure and are therefore seen as being owned by international and bilateral development cooperation agencies. For example, in the past, NEAPs were required by the World Bank if countries wanted to secure soft loans under IDA and, currently, the IMF requires poor countries to prepare PRSPs if they are to receive debt relief. Strategies driven by such external pressures can result in a lack of coordination between different frameworks, and a tendency for responsibilities to be left to a particular government institution. These are often ministries of environment when environment and natural resources issues are the focus, and ministries of finance where budget support is involved. This can result in a lack of policy coherence and the alienation of others who might also have legitimate interests or could make important contributions. In some cases, discontent with national processes has led private sector and civil society stakeholders to develop their own parallel strategies (see, for example, Box 3.4). In order to increase country ownership it is crucial to build on strategies that already exist and to ensure the continued development and improvement of such strategies through monitoring and evaluation.

Securing strategy 'ownership' and commitment by all ministries

We have seen that government 'ownership' of a strategy must not be too strong in relation to civil society and private sector stakeholders. Nor must it be too skewed in the sense that it is perceived as the 'property' of narrow or weak interests (commonly an environment ministry). But perhaps more strategies have failed because of weak government understanding, leadership and overall commitment.

As discussed in Chapter 3, a strategy for sustainable development should only rarely involve a completely new or stand-alone strategic planning project. Instead, there are likely to be several existing strategies, programmes and processes covering, for example, health, poverty, population, economic development, water and energy supply/conservation, housing and environment, and combinations thereof (the main ones are discussed in Chapter 3). Taken together, a number of these existing frameworks could meet the definition of

Building common understanding of sustainable development processes can encourage broader strategy ownership

Building on existing strategies increases country ownership

an NSDS in Chapter 3 (page 31), meet the principles and elements in Boxes 3.1 and 3.2, be combined in the strategy system illustrated in Figure 4.1 – and thereby increase the basis of ownership.

Doing this is especially important where there is strong ownership of some of the component processes – although this may not be the case (see section on mapping out the strategy process, page 102). Lead responsibility for existing processes is usually vested in particular line ministries and government agencies. So an early step will be to bring these departments and agencies together to assess the degree of ownership, express aspirations, scope out a shared vision, and consider how to deal with coordination and rationalization. Working in this way requires a preparedness to work in different ways from those that have generally prevailed to date. Some existing strategy mechanisms may have shown more promise and could be used for this exploration.

Bringing existing initiatives closer to an effective strategy for sustainable development might involve complementing them with a broad ‘umbrella’ vision, goals and objectives to give a common purpose. It will certainly mean coordinating or rationalizing them as an integrated set of mechanisms and processes – improving their complementarity, smoothing out inconsistencies and filling gaps when needed (activities which need to be done judiciously if they are not to destroy a sense of ownership).

Another key challenge is to maintain the interest and commitment of government ministries throughout a strategy process. Scheduling regular meetings to take stock of progress can help, especially if they are informal and relaxed. For example, in Zambia, in the early 1980s, the development and coordination of the NCS process was greatly enhanced by a monthly lunch for permanent secretaries (hardly anyone ever missed a meeting!). The regular but informal exchange of information and ideas, and reviews of progress, became a powerful ‘fuel supply’ for the NCS process. A further approach is to ensure that NSDS processes and activities become integrated into the work plans and targets of government organizations and individual officers. In North West Frontier Province, Pakistan, ministry focal points have the job of improving information flows and developing incentives for ministry officers to stay involved in the provincial conservation strategy (Box 4.14).

Securing strategy ‘ownership’ and commitment by civil society and the private sector

It is very important to secure the commitment of the civil society and the private sector. Many community-based and civil society organizations are sometimes more aware than line ministries of problems resulting from decisions taken by central government. In Thailand, for example, many such organizations have become environmental watchdogs with a continuous commitment to monitor new and existing projects for compliance with rules and regulations. This has led to better feasibility and impact studies, public hearings and the cancellation of some projects with adverse impacts.

In response to the challenge of globalization, the private sector is addressing its role in fostering sustainable development, for example, through the work of the WBCSD (see Chapter 2, page 17) and initiatives such as the new UN-Private Sector Global Compact on responsible business behaviour. Many multinationals are working vigorously to understand the implications of sustainable development for their businesses and clients and to develop their own policy responses.

Throughout the last decade there has been increasing dialogue in many industrial countries between governments and the private sector, particularly industry, in strategic planning. In The Netherlands, for example, this led to the agreement of voluntary covenants between the government and industry (Box 4.5). Other examples are to be found in Egypt (via the successful environmental pollution abatement programme) and the UK (through the Eco Management and Audit Scheme and ISO 14001 environmental management system).

Ministries should be brought together to scope a shared vision and agree on coordination

Regular, informal meetings can maintain interest and commitment

Many civil society and private sector organizations are committed to fostering sustainable development

There is increasing dialogue between governments and the private sector ...

Box 4.5 Covenants with industry in The Netherlands

In The Netherlands, there has been a long tradition of cooperation between the government and industrial associations which enabled the second National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP2) (1993) to move away from direct (top-down, command and control) economic and environmental management instruments to more socially negotiated and participatory instruments: for example, voluntary covenants with target groups such as industry. Initially, covenants were essentially 'gentlemen's agreements', with a highly uncertain status and degree of enforceability. But they are now generally standardized and formalized with regard to procedure and content. The government sees them as a way of expressing joint responsibility. By 1996, over 100 covenants had been concluded between the government and the private sector.

Covenants are generally seen as complements to existing legislation rather than as alternatives; they have a special role in meeting NEPP targets. While authorities still prefer to use laws and regulations to exercise control, covenants are used to speed up environmental improvements pending legislation, if there are too many uncertainties regarding the content of legislation to be drafted, if government intervention is needed only temporarily, or if covenants are likely to be less costly in terms of implementation or enforcement. Under NEPP2, some 26 environmental covenants were signed with industry, dealing, *inter alia*, with products, packaging, waste and emissions in general. With the advent of the NEPP, the focus changed from products and packaging to production of waste and emissions.

The main requirements for covenants between industry and the central government are laid down in a code covering procedural arrangements (especially information to politicians) and the content of covenants (objectives, requirements, period of validity, consultation, monitoring of compliance, evaluation and settlement of disputes). The legal status of covenants is generally that of an agreement under private law. If need be, the authorities can turn to the civil courts for enforcement.

Consultation started in 1990 on environmental policy guidelines for the construction industry. After three years of discussion, the government and the industry adopted key objectives and signed an environmental policy plan:

Covenant with the construction industry (policy lines and selected targets)

- A Reduction in use of non-renewable raw materials:
 - 2.5 per cent reduction by 2000 and 5 per cent by 2005 with respect to 1990.
- B Stimulation of reuse of raw materials:
 - Reuse of construction and demolition waste to rise from 60 per cent in 1990 to 90 per cent in 2000.
- C Reduction in volume and separate collection of construction and demolition waste:
 - 5 per cent quantitative prevention of demolition waste in 2000.
 - 80 per cent of demolition operations to use selective demolition techniques and separate collection by 1996.
- D Stimulation of use of renewable resources:
 - Tropical hardwood to be used only from sustainably managed forests from 1995.
 - Use of non-tropical wood to increase by 20 per cent between 1990 and 1995.
- E Reduction of use of harmful materials and substances:
 - At least 50 per cent of paint used by construction industry to be low-solvent paint by 1995.
 - Emissions of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) to be reduced by 50 per cent in 1995 with respect to 1990 levels.
- F Promotion of energy saving heating systems and water efficient installations in new and renovated buildings:
 - Energy consumption of buildings to be decreased by 8 per cent by 1995 with respect to 1989/90.
 - Water efficient installations to be fitted in defined percentage of new and renovated buildings by 1995 (eg 50 per cent with water-saving shower heads).

Considerable progress has already been achieved concerning some of the targets. For instance, recycling of construction waste has reached about 60 per cent.

Under NEPP3, the core policy remained that companies are responsible for improving their environmental performance – industry having, to a large extent, achieved its environmental targets (VROM 1997). The covenant approach was continued. As part of its response to the Kyoto climate change agreement, the government identified the potential to negotiate a CO₂ covenant with electricity producers about changing over from coal to gas-fired power stations.

In developing countries, there has been some engagement of the domestic private sector in strategic planning processes, but there are few cases where the international private sector has been involved. Given that financial flows to developing countries through private investment now dwarf official development assistance, this is a challenge that needs to be addressed in developing and implementing strategies for sustainable development.

... about their concerns, and constraints to innovation and investment

Private sector involvement is more productive if the strategy process is open to voluntary agreements and market-based instruments, balanced with regulatory and fiscal instruments: for example, covenants in The Netherlands (Box 4.5). To engage effectively with the private sector requires dialogue about their concerns in order to understand the constraints they face to be innovative and to invest, and the factors that are likely to bring about improved ways of working. In Pakistan, since 1996, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry has supported a programme of audits of a wide range of industrial units to examine how compliance can be achieved with National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) – designed to promote effective pollution control and to carry forward recommendations in the NCS. The constraints and opportunities identified enabled industry to negotiate revised, and more achievable, NEQS with the Environmental Protection Agency in 1999. The same approach has been adopted successfully in Egypt by the Environmental Affairs Agency

It is important to understand motivations and incentives to engage in a strategy process

The commitment and involvement of both private sector and civil society is dependent on how well the strategy responds to the motivations of these groups and on what incentives they have to engage in the strategy process. Thus, in designing a strategic process, stakeholder analysis should be employed at an early stage. This can provide important information on the motivations and interests of stakeholders, the means they use to secure their interests, the pressures on them to change and the constraints to making changes.

Stakeholder commitment may be improved by working with the fora in existing 'policy communities'

It can be particularly useful to identify how stakeholders are already interacting through concerned 'policy communities'. This is because the most effective approach for improving stakeholder commitment to a strategy may not be through their individual organizations, but through existing 'fora' that have already been trying to influence sustainable development. Policy communities are likely to be issues-based and involve more than one stakeholder type, if not yet fully multi-stakeholder. They might take the form of formal or informal groups, networks or movements concerned with, for example, poverty alleviation or biodiversity conservation. The key point is that they are already communities for interaction, often with strategic functions. They will be committed to – indeed 'own' – particular causes, but may be frustrated by their lack of mainstream influence and impact. Some of them would be potential NSDS 'clients' who could become committed to – and joint 'owners' of – the NSDS. One example is the work of the Centre for Russian Environmental Policy, a leading NGO, which coordinated the inputs of all Russian NGOs to the second All-Russia Congress on Nature Protection in 1999, and published recommendations on the priorities for Russia's National Environmental Policy (Zakharov 1999a, b, c). In some countries, NCSDs bring together a number of theme- or issues-based 'policy communities' under their coordinating umbrella – each relating to sustainable development issues identified as priorities for the country. These communities may be represented on specific NCSD sub-committees (eg biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture). Although the NCSD provides policy coordination, the sub-committees retain a certain level of independence and initiative within their thematic areas.

Mobilizing the required resources

A strategy process should harness a country's skills and capacities for dealing with change

A strategy will require a range of resources: the necessary skills, the support of various institutions, and the financial means to undertake the process and coordinate the resulting policies and plans. In essence, these are resources for participation, coordination and project management, information and analysis. They will rarely amount to a large proportion of the costs of concerned institutions. But they can be demanding of skills – of good analytical skills and creativity – and of the time and attention of senior policy-makers.

Many of the resources will usually be available but there are two problems: of opportunity cost and of getting resources mobilized. Hence the importance of securing commitment (page 82). In the absence of such local commitment, external interests have been able to deal with these problems at a stroke, by offering external resources. However, as we have seen in Chapter 3, such external resources (common to NEAPs, for example) can distort the relevance and ownership of local strategies.

Harnessing the necessary skills

Members of a secretariat team will not be able to, nor should they be expected to, do everything themselves. They will need to identify and draw upon skills and capacity throughout the country, wherever they exist – in individuals or within institutions, in the public or private sector. But, as a minimum, the secretariat team should encompass individuals who have the skills listed in Box 4.6, or at least a basic

The secretariat team needs skills to manage the strategy process

Box 4.6 Checklist of skills required to manage and coordinate a strategy

Those *managing the strategy process* will require skills in:

- identification and quantification of priority sustainable development issues;
- stakeholder analysis;
- facilitation – of meetings, workshops, round tables at national to local levels, and for technical and lay groups;
- participatory methodologies – suitable to employ at different levels (national to local), and for different purposes: for example, meetings, research and opinion-gathering;
- strengthening the planning and management capacities of all the main stakeholders, including, for example, the skills required to conduct impartial cost-benefit appraisals;
- harnessing local, national and international data (eg concerning environmentally friendly production, distribution, consumption, and resource conservation and recycling processes);
- exploring the range of technical, institutional, human resource, economic, financial and other options available for addressing sustainable development issues;
- designing synergistic packages of policy-support mechanisms, comprising legal, economic, institutional and public awareness instruments;
- networking and knowledge management – among stakeholders and internationally with those managing similar processes in other countries;
- negotiation – of agreements on roles and responsibilities between interest groups;
- conflict management/resolution and consensus-building;
- diplomacy and empathizing with different people's perspectives and positions;
- communication:
 - writing, both technical reports and simple pieces for the press;
 - use of mass media (and traditional media);
 - presentations and public speaking;
 - IT skills;
 - awareness-raising about sustainable development and the purpose and role of the strategy process;
- programme management – commissioning and managing research, consultations and pilot projects, with associated financial and reporting skills;
- monitoring and evaluation (first of the strategy development process and subsequently of its implementation).

Those *undertaking strategic analysis* will require skills in:

- evaluation of potential technological solutions and systems for addressing environmental infrastructural service issues: for example, solid waste management, energy generation and conservation, and transport;
- understanding the linkages between disciplines (environmental, social, economic) and sectors, as well as vertical interactions (eg between international, regional, national, sub-national and more local levels) including cross-border issues;
- understanding the institutional, legislative and administrative dimensions and dynamics of development;
- being able to summarize key trends and actual or potential impacts, and produce syntheses and options for debate;
- specific technical expertise in different forms of analysis: environmental, social/stakeholder, economic, institutional, policy, multi-criteria and scenario development – preferably in interdisciplinary contexts.

knowledge of those they lack in order to be able judge how and when such skills are required, know where they are available, and assess how effectively they are being deployed. They will primarily require skills in managing multi-stakeholder research and consensus-building processes, preferably from a position of independence. Such skills will often be in short supply, and may be closely associated with previous or current strategy models. Bringing staff together from more than one approach can improve the process. The secretariat should be given the opportunity to reflect on those models and make improvements.

Wherever, possible, secretariat staff should be drawn from within the country. The necessary skills and capacities can be in short supply in developing countries, and those which exist are usually already heavily committed and overstretched. Capacity building is, therefore, a critical component of NSDS processes. Box 4.7 summarizes the key capacity requirements for an effective NSDS. Where it is necessary to involve skills

The strategy process is an efficient way to build and coordinate capacity for sustainable development

Box 4.7 Capacity requirements for an effective NSDS

The capacity needs of a national sustainable development strategy are manifested at the human, institutional and systemic levels.

The human dimension of capacity building relates to a variety of abilities, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary and process skills. It includes the acquisition of technical skills on both an individual and a collective basis. It encompasses abilities for negotiation, conflict resolution and consensus building, through teamwork and effective communication ('demystifying' the complex codes, symbols and jargon that are often associated with sustainable development). It also includes the capability to internalize diverse experiences and perspectives, to enable effective learning. The dynamics associated with this level of capacity development are often influenced by subjective determinants such as attitude, perception, cultural orientation and intuitive faculty.

Institutional capacity requirements focus on collective learning and institutional change. In addition to tangible skills associated with programme and project development, the principal requirements include institutional capacities to:

- understand and deal with multiple perceptions;
- develop a common vision and sense of purpose that binds stakeholders;
- catalyze internal change processes;
- encourage innovative behaviour;
- encourage incentive mechanisms to enhance capacity development;
- develop effective monitoring and evaluation capabilities for learning purposes;
- coordinate and mobilize activities at different levels;
- adapt to new contexts and challenges.

The systemic dimension of capacity building is closely associated with the 'enabling environment', that is, appropriate policy and legal frameworks, a clear definition of institutional roles and mandates, widespread access to information, upstream/downstream linkages, the availability of a 'culture of dialogue' and enhanced networking capabilities linking diverse stakeholders. These attributes are essential to sustain the growth of institutions and individuals, as well as to generate learning dynamics.

Innovation is important. The testing of new approaches at the local level can often assist learning processes through validation, and thus facilitate integration at the policy level.

Indigenous knowledge needs to be taken into consideration. Indigenous knowledge systems, as growing bodies of locally relevant experience and means for resilience, can also make positive contributions to a NSDS, and institutional processes need to be able to value and encourage them.

Whereas conventional tools such as manuals, guidelines, and formal training and research are of key importance, other means of education and awareness should also be promoted. Different approaches and entry points can be utilized to achieve such improvements. This will include the promotion of 'built-in' performance-based incentive mechanisms that encourage continuous improvement. Traditional organizational models based on hierarchy and compartmentalization should be complemented by more inclusive approaches in order to stimulate greater interaction and shared learning. Institutions should focus on learning from failures as well as from successes. Finally, time and patience are key ingredients – it takes time for capacity building to evolve and mature into capacity retention.

Local governments, private sector and civil society need to play a stronger role in national sustainable development strategy development and implementation. Capacity-strengthening exercises and resources that are made available need also to be relevant to the local levels – and not only be confined to the national level.

from outside the country, such individuals can provide useful international experience – knowledge of, and links to, processes elsewhere. Outsiders should be careful to play a supporting role for the process (eg using their skills and knowledge to help the process, providing training where needed) and avoid influencing the content of the strategy or its outcomes. In an age of globalization, the international dimensions are becoming increasingly important in developing strategies, and so external expertise might be brought in to improve understanding of the international context and dynamics.

An early step for the secretariat should be to map out the tasks to be undertaken and the skills required, and then to identify those skills available in the country (individuals and institutional). This can be done through the use of questionnaires and perhaps by using or creating a skills database. Where particular skills are lacking or unavailable, contacts with sister secretariats in other countries in the region might indicate where help can be found. The assistance of donors can also be sought. Various international and donor-supported capacity-building programmes are working to support NSDS processes: for example, UNDP's Capacity 21 programme, and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) Rioplus programme.

Bringing institutions and individuals on board

An early step for the secretariat should be to identify all those institutions (government and non-government) that should play a role in the strategy process (the timing of their possible inputs may vary). Then, through meetings or briefings – initially of individual stakeholders and later in groups of compatible stakeholders – the purpose of the strategy should be explained along with initial ideas for the approach to be followed. These early consultative exercises should seek to gain feedback and support and commitment either to engage, or to permit or provide staff capable of undertaking particular tasks when needed. (See page 85 for more information on building ownership and commitment.) Careful consideration needs to be given to the appropriate timing for meetings to be convened for different stakeholders. If such meetings are held too early in the process (ie before there is a mature understanding of the issues to be addressed and the participatory nature of the planning procedures), they may prove to be counter-productive.

Many stakeholders will be able to engage through their existing jobs and roles, but where individuals are likely to devote a significant proportion of the time to working on strategy issues, it may be necessary for their job descriptions or terms of reference to be amended. For others, there will be short-term opportunity costs, particularly where individuals need to take time from their livelihood activities (eg those in civil society and particularly those from local communities where involvement can mean, for example, time lost to harvesting crops). Women may find it particularly difficult to engage in participatory processes due to the multiplicity of tasks they perform. So ways of compensating for this or for providing assistance may need to be found if they are to participate effectively. These ways will need to be defined in the context of normal practice in the country concerned. Examples of mechanisms that have been used include:

- reimbursing travel and other out-of-pocket expenses;
- meeting the legitimate costs of NGOs in organizing meetings, preparing responses, and so on;
- paying honoraria for contributions (eg commissioned work);
- providing attendance fees to those serving on committees and, in some countries, for participating in meetings and workshops.

At the same time, extreme care needs to be taken to avoid meeting and conference allowances forming an essential component of monthly emoluments. This situation has arisen in some countries where civil service salaries are extremely low, and has led to government officers devoting considerable efforts to attending countless meetings and conferences in order to 'harvest' the honoraria. This problem can severely constrain the time available for regular duties and implementation activities.

The secretariat should map the tasks and skills required

Early consultative meetings can encourage stakeholders to engage in a strategy process

Some groups may need financial help to engage in the process

Raising the financial resources

A stable and sustainable source of funding for a NSDS is vital. It is preferable that financial provision for supporting a strategy is made within the country's recurrent budget. This will give it more chance to become a continuing process. Securing a legislated mandate for the steering committee/council increases the chance of such budget provision. Many past strategies have failed because they have been funded by government or development cooperation agencies as one-off initiatives or projects. This has tended to sideline them so that they cannot influence budget decisions; and has constrained timeframes for developing and implementing strategies, undermining the establishment of participatory, multi-stakeholder processes (as it takes time to build trust, confidence and commitment to engage, as well as to consult stakeholders' constituencies). Also, in the past, there has been limited appreciation of the realistic timescales required to establish and sustain effective strategic planning processes.

Preferably, a strategy should receive government budget funding

Although a continuous improvement approach has been identified as desirable for strategies, in practice it will be possible to identify discrete 'phases', depending, for example, on what new mechanisms need to be established, studies or reviews done. Typically, the first stage would be to establish a secretariat with a 'start-up' budget to enable it to undertake a scoping exercise. This would involve tasks such as initial consultations with a range of stakeholders (to build support and constituency for the process), developing a plan or 'prospectus' for the strategy, and preparing a budget for the full process. The budget for this initial stage will need to meet such costs as the salaries of a small team (say three people), operating an office and administration, travel to visit each of the provinces to explain the proposals for a strategy process and to identify priority issues as well as potential solutions, and meetings – especially a significant national meeting to finalize key process decisions and to sign off on the strategy process and its scope (if not yet the final objectives and responsibilities involved). This type of 'process scoping and prospectus' approach was used successfully during the 1980s by IUCN in a number of developing countries; it allowed time for the 'externally introduced' NCS concept to become internalized and redefined.

A phased approach is desirable

The costs of undertaking the full strategy process will vary in different countries and will be influenced by a wide range of factors, such as:

- the area and population size of the country;
- the extent of the natural resource base;
- whether it takes place in a unitary or federal state (ie whether parallel processes need to be pursued in each province);
- the complexity of the process to be adopted;
- the timescale involved;
- prevailing salary and travel costs;
- how many of the component mechanisms of the strategy are already covered by other (recurrent) budgets, and how many need to be set up.

A range of tasks and functions need to be financed

But in preparing a budget, the secretariat will need to consider the costs of a range of key functions and tasks (this an illustrative list only):

- salaries (secretariat staff);
- fees to consultants (eg for commissioned papers and analysis);
- honoraria to participants attending formal meetings (if this is usual practice);
- meetings, workshops, round table events (meeting room hire, lunches, travel costs, accommodation when necessary);

- travel for staff and others to attend events and meetings;
- steering committee/council meeting costs;
- preparation of audio-visual aids to explain the strategy process and its outcomes, for the benefit of the main stakeholder groups, especially local communities;
- publicity through a prospectus and use of local print and broadcast media;
- publication of key background papers, reports, draft and final strategy documents (typesetting, printing, dissemination, website);
- office costs, secretarial support and administration, communications (post, phone, fax, e-mail);
- a fund for trials, demonstrations and pilot activities (see page 112);
- monitoring and evaluation.

Development of a strategy is a challenge for society as a whole and all sections should be expected to play a part. While the government should meet the costs of the secretariat and the key processes for stakeholder engagement (meetings, consultations, etc), the private sector as well as non-governmental institutions and organizations can all provide support in kind (providing skills, organizing meetings, etc, or sponsoring art and essay related competitions, environmental clean-up campaigns, tree planting programmes, etc). Consideration needs to be given to establishing demonstration projects to provide a practical 'shop-front' for the overall process and the range of benefits that it can generate.

Development cooperation agencies are often prepared to support strategy processes but, following the adoption of the DAC guidelines on strategies (OECD DAC 2001a), they are likely to require that the government demonstrates a financial commitment as well by providing counterpart funding. Some development cooperation agencies follow the principle that external funding should be catalytic; that is, it should aim to generate (eventually if not immediately) domestic sources of support consistent with the goal of national ownership.

It is impossible to prejudge the costs of implementing the outcomes of strategy processes. These might involve changes to legislation, policies, institutions and administrative arrangements, or a range of particular targeted initiatives. In the spirit of partnership, opportunities to involve the private sector in the latter should be explored early on. In developing countries, development cooperation agencies will often be prepared to discuss with governments how they can support the implementation of strategies.

Chapter 9 examines the financial basis of NSDSs in detail.

Identifying stakeholders and defining their roles in the strategy

Starting, managing or improving the NSDS process requires that time is taken to identify the key participants from among the relevant stakeholders, as well as defining their respective roles. The first task, identifying the participants, consists of two steps: identifying the interests and then identifying the appropriate representatives of those interests. To identify the interests, there is need to concentrate on groups likely to be affected by the strategy and those with the power to implement or frustrate potential outcomes. To identify the representatives, focus should be on:

- consulting with various agencies, organizations, businesses, and so on, to develop a sense of who is viewed with credibility as an accountable leader or accepted spokesperson strongly identified with the group concerned;
- identifying existing or potential mechanisms that will enable participants to represent their constituencies;
- confirming that the participants are accountable if they represent groups or constituencies.

The private sector, NGOs and other organizations can also provide support

A first task is to identify the participants

Sustainable development requires changes in stakeholder roles

Table 4.2 provides a checklist of potential key stakeholder groups. Methods for identifying stakeholders and their interests, dynamics, relations and powers are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 (see page 125).

Various stakeholders must think in terms of re-negotiating their roles to make and sustain the changes required in the transition to sustainable development:

- from domination by government, private operators' interests and professionals in policy/planning processes, to exploration and integration of different interests;
- from management based on evidence, to a learning process that manages uncertainty and experimentation;
- from reliance on technical expertise and opinion, to the inclusion of local knowledge and proposals from stakeholders, and the need for people-oriented skills;
- from a narrow focus on sectoral economic development and physical planning of resource/land user, to multiple objectives including environmental management and social development;
- from loose ideas of 'participation', to concrete actions for empowerment.

There are two issues here: one, an NSDS should offer the right processes to negotiate such changes in roles; and two, roles in the strategy itself need to be both agreed and conducive to the negotiation process. We address the second issue in this section.

Not all stakeholders need or want to be involved in all tasks associated with the NSDS. One purpose of stakeholder analysis (page 120) is to ensure that the secretariat, and others involved in managing the strategy process, adequately understand the stakes of different interest groups, where they wish to participate, and what their expectations and skills are. This is so that the principle of participation is not watered down by an unrealistic and unnecessary pressure to get all stakeholders to participate at every stage (Box 3.1).

Central government will not be able to shape a strategy for the sustainable development of a country on its own, let alone implement the outcomes. It is but one partner in a network that also includes regional and local government, and a wide array of interest groups in the private sector and civil society, as illustrated in Table 4.2. So it is important to clarify early on the roles of the key participants in strategic planning processes and relationships between them, as defined in the formal roles and mandates of institutions and organizations in the process, and as promoted by the different policy communities. Sustainable development will require effective cooperation between the partners in this network. Failure to define roles can lead to conflicts, lack of strategy implementation and gaps between aspirations and realities, as illustrated by environmental action plans in Nigeria (Box 4.8)

Roles need to be clarified

A useful approach to addressing stakeholder roles is offered in work by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) on developing capacity for sustainable forestry in Africa, which assessed stakeholders' roles as combining their *Rights, Responsibilities, Returns/Revenues and Relationships* (summarized as the 4Rs) (Dubois et al 1996). Applications of the 4Rs approach are discussed in Chapter 5. It can be used as a framework to assess current roles, to negotiate new roles and to monitor change, and is conducive to participatory approaches.

Several aspects of stakeholder roles and relations are particularly important and will require change:

- It is important to *dispense with some traditional 'strategic planning' roles*; for example, that only 'experts' do the analysis, and that only senior bureaucrats and politicians make the major decisions. The roles in an NSDS process need to be able to 'rehearse' some of the likely roles that an NSDS will recommend.

- Vigorous efforts will need to be made to *interest citizens in the strategy process* and to encourage them to become increasingly involved in both analysis and defining solutions to societal issues. Good communication between government and the general public during the development and implementation of a strategy is a prerequisite for its success.
- *NGOs and interest groups will need to be encouraged to* (and be allowed to) assume an increasing role; they can mobilize policy communities, assess public opinion about key problems and make good use of the media, as well as act as watchdog of the NSDS process.
- In many countries, an increasing number of jobs traditionally done by government are now 'privatized' to *commercial or semi-commercial organizations*. Resource survey, market research and opinion polling are all NSDS jobs that can be done by the private sector. In some cases, the self-regulating interplay of supply and demand can be successfully harnessed to find ways to tackle the problems which face sustainable development; for example, in The Netherlands, cooperation between the public and private sectors is increasing (see Box 4.5).
- The trend towards globalization, with less freedom to manoeuvre for national government, is being accompanied by another towards decentralization, and responsibilities for policy development and implementation will need to pass to lower levels. *'Tiered' systems of participation* and good information flows between them will make for a better NSDS. In most cases, decentralized levels have merely been 'consulted' on NSDSs, or have been empowered to make compatible action plans, or been given an information dissemination role. More attention to rights and powers will be needed. Frameworks established by central government must leave some room for manoeuvre for the other partners.
- It can be useful to distinguish between *the broad group of stakeholders* who participate in the strategy process, the *'decision-developers'* who have the responsibility to forge recommendations and options based on analysis and consultation (eg a steering committee) and the *'decision-takers'* who are ultimately responsible for decisions and their impacts (see page 270).

The various organizations and interest groups that need to be engaged in a strategy process each have their own interests that they will seek to promote and defend. They can become involved in the process in different ways and contribute at different levels: for example, to identify and find solutions to problems, to build a vision and goals for the future, and to debate policy options and possible actions. Involvement in a strategy process may be seen as a right, but it also carries with it certain responsibilities, and it is therefore important to establish and agree roles as early in the process as is agreed to be appropriate. Some roles

Roles need to be agreed early in the process

Box 4.8 Unimplemented state environmental action plans in Nigeria: a failure of undefined roles

Gulfs can sometimes arise during strategic planning. A review was undertaken in 1999–2000 of environmental management systems in Nigeria at the federal level and in three states. This revealed that Environmental Action Plans had been developed in each state with abundant stakeholder consultations. But they had not been implemented due a lack of 'ownership' by the State Environmental Protection Agencies (EPAs). Both the consultation and plan preparation exercises had been carried out by the Federal EPA. A huge gap was evident between the aspirations set out by the plans and reality. A number of key strategic components that should have been provided by state agencies were absent from the plans: the formulation of state policies on the management of natural resources and environmental services; the development of packages of supporting measures (incentives and disincentives); the provision of achievable/realistic standards and targets, as well as transparent monitoring and evaluation of annual performance; and the enhancement of public participation through effective communication and awareness campaigns. This case exemplifies the need for the respective roles of federal and state agencies to be properly defined and monitored.

Source: Ralph Cobham (personal communication)

might be obvious or reasonably evident, as discussed in the next section, others might be assessed by answering such questions as:

- Who has the right to do what, and how?
- Who has the required skills, resources and capacity to deliver the agreed outcomes?
- Who does what, and when?
- Who is committed and willing?
- Who pays for particular actions or services?
- What is the best alternative to a negotiated agreement on aspects of policy or particular actions, especially for the most powerful stakeholders?
- What are the means and capacities of different stakeholders?
- What is the procedure in case agreements cannot be reached or, once reached, are breached?

Typical roles of the main actors in strategy processes, and constraints faced

POLITICIANS AND LEADERS

Providing leadership

Politicians and leaders in the private sector and civil society will be expected to provide leadership and to endorse and promote the strategy as an initiative in the nation's interest and of importance to society as a whole.

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

Providing resources, shaping regulations and setting standards

Public authorities (ie central government, sub-national authorities at various levels, resource boards/agencies) play an important role in putting economic, social and environmental problems on the agenda. They must also provide resources for tackling problems (eg money and information); create the framework for economic, political and social rights; shape the regulations to realize goals; establish mechanisms to set standards and to adhere to international obligations; and ensure that policies, plans and programmes are implemented and applied, and that legislation and regulations are complied with. The authorities are also expected to act in the general interest (eg protecting wildlife and landscape).

Establishing mechanisms

The *central government* needs to take the lead in establishing the mechanism(s) for the strategy and creating the necessary enabling conditions – notably an open and transparent, participatory process. Government tends to be bureaucratic and intransigent but can/should:

- resist taking full ownership of and operation control of the process, but play an enabling role – acting as a facilitator of a wider process, creating the broad framework and supporting participation, seeking to engage and empower stakeholders (see Table 4.1) so as to foster a partnership approach between the different levels of government, the private sector and civil society, and promoting the development of a long-term vision for national development;
- use/build on existing forms of participatory structure available within government which have been used in strategic planning (eg the planning systems, decentralized administrative systems, education systems), establish new structures (eg special committees, round tables) and build capacity;
- encourage/promote participation throughout the vertical hierarchy – provinces/states and different types of lower-level divisions;
- ensure the committed engagement of all sectoral departments and agencies and key individuals within them (notably those who have cross-sectoral expertise/vision and are open to change);
- ensure the strategy is not affiliated strongly with particular political parties (to help it to survive a

change of government), is not in the hands of politicians or civil servants who could be moved by a new government, and promote strong support outside government.

Sub-national authorities (eg at regional, provincial, district and municipal levels) play a parallel role to national government, promoting the development of strategies at these levels. They can/should act as a broker between national policy and the specific demands of different groups on the ground, establishing links and dialogue with the general public (resource user groups, local communities, NGOs, etc) and private sector businesses.

But these more local authorities will need to be given more 'policy space' – more ability to develop policy that is relevant at their geographic levels. Thus, they will need to consider how to transform and translate any national-level strategy(ies) into more detailed or comprehensive approaches relevant at their levels and addressing more local concerns – this may mean taking the lead in establishing a more local strategic planning process (eg a Local Agenda 21). Conversely, such authorities (and other stakeholders) will be able to build on already existing sub-national strategies (eg the approaches they have followed, the issues and problems addressed, and the solutions and outcomes agreed) in contributing to a national process.

Regional and local authorities will also have to assume and discharge (formal and legal) responsibilities for which they are (or will be) accountable to central and other government bodies and others. They will have to assume responsibility for reporting, monitoring and providing quality assurance, and make clear agreements with one another on these matters. Partnership implies mutual accountability, first horizontally, to the authorities' own management board and the local community, and thereafter vertically to the government level which sets the framework. As monitoring and reporting becomes more integrated, less policing by central government of policy implementation and enforcement will be necessary.

Local rural and municipal authorities are the layer of government closest to the general public, and this gives them a special responsibility for getting ordinary citizens involved in the strategy process (working with NGOs wherever possible – see below).

Resource boards/agencies (eg water boards) play a key role in coordinating resource use, increasingly on an integrated resource management basis (this is now acknowledged as more appropriate to sustainable development). They can make valuable contributions to fostering debate and coordinating actions related to natural resources at national to local levels.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The private sector is responsible for creating goods and services, generating profit for investors and providing employment opportunities, innovation and economic growth. It can nominate representative, accountable members of the sector to engage in the strategy process. Leaders of large businesses responsible for making new patterns of investment and operation can play an effective role. But there should also be representatives of smaller-scale industries, which are important for employment, and smaller businesses with particularly high resource requirements (eg small-scale mining, agricultural processing) or industries that have sensitive impacts (eg tourism).

Organizations and businesses in particular economic sectors or in other homogeneous groups – sometimes referred to as target groups (eg agriculture, industry, retail trade, transport) – can be the source of particular problems (eg pollution) and, as a consequence, can contribute to their solution (eg by improving production processes). They also benefit from the good social, economic or environmental conditions (eg the food industry needs clean water). Often, the organizations and companies in these sectors have considerable in-house know-how. The private sector (from large multinationals to domestic, small and medium-sized enterprises) also has a major role to play in identifying how it can ensure that it invests in activities and ventures that promote and underpin, and not undermine, sustainable development.

Acting as a broker between national policy and local demands

Responsibility for reporting, monitoring and quality assurance

Getting citizens involved

Coordinating resource use

Both large and small businesses should be involved

Investment should support sustainable development

CIVIL SOCIETY

Some of the more prominent civil society groups tend to be combative and territorial, but can/should:

- Elect/appoint organizations/people to participate in strategy meetings, workshops and so on, ensuring that they are accountable and aware of/reflect the views of the groups they represent, and have a mandate to voice particular views. Accountability can better be achieved when an interest group is represented by an association with democratic procedures (eg chambers of commerce, professional association).
- Resist being compromised by any support provided to enable their participation (eg to meet the costs of attending meetings or preparing informed positions).

NGOs play varied roles and are important partners. Their involvement in strategy processes in developed and developing countries has differed

NGOs can play an important role in drawing attention to particular issues and problems, mobilizing public opinion and advancing knowledge. In developing countries, NGOs play a vital role undertaking development programmes in poor urban and rural communities, have much better knowledge of community problems and concerns than government and can play a key catalytic role in engaging communities in voicing their concerns. In developed countries, the NGO movement is very sophisticated and maintains a dialogue with industry and government. Environmental NGOs, for example, play a major role in nature and environmental education and take action, often through the courts, to defend conservation and environmental interests. NGOs and interest groups must therefore be important partners in any strategy process. Unlike public authorities or target groups, NGOs seldom have any formal responsibilities for implementing or applying government policies, and are free to choose their own roles (the role of NGOs is discussed in more detail in Box 4.9).

The public put sustainable development into practice by making choices

The public ultimately determines how ambitious policy can be and which measures are acceptable. A societal support base is therefore a prerequisite for a successful strategy. It is the public that puts into practice the notion of sustainable development – by making choices in which they trade off economic and social factors against environmental considerations. The public will play a key role in bringing about desired socio-cultural, administrative and technological breakthroughs and achieving society-wide changes; for example, changing consumption patterns, greening tax systems or moving to environmentally friendly transport systems.

The *public* are particularly significant as consumers. Individuals demand and purchase durables. They respond to financial instruments and price incentives and have their say in local policy-making and planning. They undertake their livelihoods, use resources, produce and dispose of waste (even separating it), pursue recreation, drive vehicles and continually make choices that affect the environment or other citizens and therefore influence sustainable development. But the public also fulfils other roles and they have rights and obligations. They form part of the immediate living environment and comprise employees, employers, self-employed workers, voluntary workers, recreationists, members of householders, those raising children and so on.

Citizens' groups can communicate with the public

Other, more general, organizations such as *citizens' groups* (eg trade unions, motorists' associations, councils of churches, consumers' associations, youth groups) can play a key role in communications with the public. Emphasis needs to be placed on action as much as knowledge. The citizen needs to know what he or she can do him or herself, and both 'desire and be able' to change. It is difficult for the government to gain access to private citizens. Specialist organizations are better placed to do this.

DONOR AGENCIES

Donors can support and assist strategy processes

In developing countries, development cooperation agencies have a role to play in providing support (when requested) to assist the development and implementation of strategies. Donors can support strategies in four main ways:

Box 4.9 The role and functions of NGOs

The way in which NGOs have been involved in strategic planning processes in developed and developing countries differs markedly. In industrial countries, they have been consulted extensively in strategic planning processes, although their inputs have mainly involved providing information, gathering data and commenting on strategies. In contrast, in developing countries, NGOs tend to have been viewed more as vehicles for strategy implementation in the field. With notable exceptions, they have been canvassed less frequently for their views and information for the strategy process – and still more rarely involved in policy formulation, monitoring and the other elements of strategies. But it is now recognized that NGOs in all countries have a vital role to play in strategies.

NGOs form a very diverse group, covering a spectrum from long-established, major international and national institutions to fragile, local operations with no staff or guaranteed funding. They may work on single issues or broad-spectrum development concerns. Almost all of them operate through organizing groups of people to make better use of their own resources. Their expertise and views encompass many practical functions which can be enormously important in both developing and implementing strategies:

- mobilizing the public, or certain groups;
- detailed field knowledge of social and environmental conditions;
- delivery of services: disaster relief; education, health;
- encouraging appropriate community, organization and capacity building;
- research, policy analysis and advice;
- facilitation and improvement of social and political processes;
- mediation and reconciliation of conflict;
- awareness raising and communications;
- watchdog, warning and monitoring;
- advocacy and challenging the status quo; promoting alternatives;
- training in, and use of, participatory approaches.

NGO coalitions can complement and buttress governments where the latter are weak, such as in welfare and in engagement with local communities, and where governments are limited in their capacity to use participatory methods. Working with government can help to 'scale up' the contribution of NGOs, which otherwise can remain parochial. On the other hand, NGO coalitions can act as a check and critic where governments and the private sector are too strong (eg in appropriating natural resources and causing adverse social and environmental impacts).

It must be remembered that NGOs do not act as one group. With respect to sustainable development, they cover a spectrum of approaches:

- 'interest-based' NGOs, for example, natural history societies and professional association;
- 'concern-based' NGOs, for example, environmental and animal welfare campaigning and advocacy groups;
- 'solution-based' NGOs, for example, education and rural development groups.

It is the type of approach, as much as the functions of the NGO, that will really determine how it can participate in a strategy. As Bass et al (1995) note:

Many NGOs, particularly the 'solution-based' groups, are comfortable with ideas of participation and consensus – and actively promote them. Others, who work through lobbying and advocacy, tend to see their role as one of 'disagreeing', not of seeking compromise. Consequently, a few of these NGOs (particularly from environmental and welfare campaigning interests) take approaches, which appear to be incompatible with sustainable development – which depends upon negotiated trade-offs. Normally, such NGOs are likely to stay on the margins of a participatory strategy – where the debate and consensus usually will take place within a middle ground which none the less should cover all sectors and major groups.

Often, NGOs have been successful at organizing participation locally. Occasionally, NGOs can play central roles in sustainable development in a government 'vacuum'. For example, in Kenya and Tanzania, NGOs operate a major proportion of the health system. In Northern Pakistan, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme is the leading actor in rural development support. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) runs a large proportion of primary schools.

These major operations are the exception. Yet their much-publicized success tends to have resulted in NGOs being viewed principally as 'delivery mechanisms'. This view – or worse, viewing NGOs merely as amateurs, rather than as development organizations with lessons to teach – is a serious error.

In the past, NCSs and NEAPs tended to involve environmental NGOs more than other types of NGO. But strategies for sustainable development need to deal more extensively with the social dimension, in which development NGO/CBOs have much experience. This is particularly the case because NSDSs will need to address the common policy/planning system failure to: link government to local communities and resource users; understand and act on local complexity; and enlist local resource users in implementation. All of these are areas where NGOs have comparative advantages – at the 'meso' level between central government and local communities.

- in changing their *internal* procedures and practices to support the principles and elements of NSDSs (Boxes 3.1 and 3.2);
- at the *international level* in discussions and negotiations on issues of relevance to sustainable development strategies;
- at the *national level*, in the policy dialogue with partner country governments;
- at the *operational level* in the projects and programmes which development agencies support.

These roles and donor involvement in monitoring strategies are considered in detail in the OECD DAC policy guidance for development cooperation on NSDSs (OECD DAC, 2001a) (see also the section on formal internal and external monitoring, page 311).

Mapping out the strategy process, taking stock of existing strategies and other planning processes

It is usually best to build on existing strategic planning processes

As noted in the section on harnessing effective strategic mechanisms in a continual-improvement system on page 74, the DAC policy guidance on strategies for sustainable development (OECD DAC 2001a) does not generally recommend a strategy to be a completely new or stand-alone initiative, but strongly recommends building on existing strategic planning processes in a country – at national to local levels – and seeking convergence between them (see page 104). Chapter 3 (pages 30–73) describes the main types of strategy framework likely to be found in most countries. Box 4.10 illustrates how a diversity of mechanisms can contribute to the development of an NSDS.

So a key task is a stocktaking exercise to identify and analyse past frameworks ...

In designing the processes and coordination system(s) that will be required to develop a strategy for sustainable development, a key task will be to map out existing strategic planning processes, as well as any past ones which can provide important lessons – identifying the key features of the processes followed, the mechanisms used, and analysing what has worked well or less well. This will help to suggest which processes and mechanisms can be built upon, which approaches might best be avoided, where there are synergies to be forged and where there are gaps that need filling. Such a mapping and stocktaking exercise is considered in detail on page 161. It may be summarized in two basic steps:⁷

- 1 *Identify* all existing and past strategic planning frameworks, mechanisms and processes, and gather a collection of all key documents (covering: process followed, background materials, major reports and outputs).

It will be necessary to contact all line ministries, government agencies and sub-national authorities to identify those official processes they are leading and/or involved in as participants. In addition, similar information in respect of unofficial and project-related processes should be sought from NGOs such as key NGOs and NGO coalitions, and private sector organizations.

- 2 *Analyse* the different existing strategy frameworks, processes and mechanisms, setting out their main features according to a common set of parameters and undertake a comparative analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. This will include an assessment of both process and content, as explored further in Chapter 5.

This should include: mandate; principles followed (from Box 3.1); main stakeholders and their responsibilities; functions employed (analysis, debate, communication, decision-making, planning investments, implementation and control, monitoring and review – see Figure 4.2); types of

⁷ These steps will need to be undertaken in parallel to assessing the net benefits of a strategy as part of the initial scoping exercise – see page 77.

Box 4.10 The development of El Salvador's National Sustainable Development Strategy: a diversity of contributing mechanisms

Following the end of civil conflict in 1992, El Salvador has been in transition to democracy. It provides a concrete example of a country where a variety of mechanisms emerged and were used to help develop a NSDS. Different sectors and levels of society debated and promoted a wide range of proposals, mechanisms and initiatives aimed at greater participation and decentralization in order to consolidate democratic processes and generate inclusive, sustainable development (**vision and goals** for the country).

Converging towards a unified objective, a variety of mechanisms were initiated or drawn upon.

- Several institutions/organizations provided channels for **communication and awareness-raising**. An advocacy campaign – using consensus documents as a platform – was pursued by the National Association of Private Enterprises (ANEP), together with two prestigious national research institutes: the Salvadoran Fund for Economic and Social Development (FUSADES) and the El Salvador Centre for Democratic Studies (CEDES).
- ANEP drew up the 'Entrepreneurs' Manifesto to the Nation' and FUSADES/CEDES presented 'The Salvadorian challenge: from peace to sustainable development'.
- The NGO Network for Local Development promoted decentralization and local development, laying the groundwork for **participation** mechanisms.
- At the invitation of the country's President, the National Commission on Development promulgated the 'Basis for the National Plan' (a **strategic assessment**).
- Subsequently, the Commission presented 'Initial Actions in the National Plan', following extensive consultations with citizens and the participation of numerous national professionals as part of **planning, prioritization and decision-making** mechanisms.
- The 'Proposal for a National Strategy for Local Development' (ENDL) was developed and presented by the Social Investment Fund for Local Development (FISDL) and the Consultative Group (formed by other organizations representing civil society and government). This set out a comprehensive and integrated approach to development, including **institutional change management** mechanisms.

Among the numerous processes and proposals formulated, various **coordination mechanisms** can be identified. For example, in 1997, government and donor agencies collaborated in:

- forming the National Council for Sustainable Development (CNDS), created by decree;
- supporting amendments to the Law on the Fund for Economic and Social Development (FODES) that allocates 6 per cent of the national budget to municipal development (**financial resources mobilization and allocation**);
- advocating and supporting the 'Proposed Guidelines for a Rural Development Strategy' by the Rural Development Committee (CDR) based on three fundamental pillars: (1) establishment of the basis of development; (2) adoption of policies to benefit rural areas; and (3) co-responsibility of civil society in rural development (**negotiation and conflict management**);
- backing the citizens' consultative process at the local level under the framework of the National Plan, as well as the establishment of the National Mechanism for Follow Up on the National Plan for Reconstruction and Transformation (**monitoring and accountability**).

Source: Jorge Reyes (personal communication)

participation used; resources actually employed; links to other processes (including regional and international links); where and how decisions are made; and stakeholder opinions, differences and contentions regarding the strategy processes. This should be supplemented by a stocktaking of the scope/content of each strategy to include: major issues covered by theme and sector; strategy objectives; schedule of resulting vision, policies and programmes or recommendations for these; and stakeholder opinions, differences and contentions regarding the strategy contents.

Questionnaires can be used, but experience shows that more useful information and materials can be elicited through semi-structured interviews with key individuals (those responsible for managing individual processes and key stakeholders who participated – or were excluded from – these processes), and by convening small stakeholder workshops.

... leading to a status review report as a baseline ...

The outcome of such a stocktaking should be synthesized in a 'status review' report, which can be used as a baseline for further work and as a means to inform potential stakeholders about the status of existing processes and where there are gaps (eg issues not being addressed) or critical opportunities for making progress. This report would be submitted to the steering committee as one of the first outputs of the strategy process.

As a 'map' of the country's key strategic planning experience emerges, depending on the number of frameworks involved, it might be necessary to prioritize which ones should be the focus of deeper analysis. It will also be necessary to decide how far back (in time) the search and analysis should reach. It is probably worth undertaking a general sweep back over the last decade in the first instance. As a rough guide:

- If there is *one clearly dominant strategy process* which initial review and discussions indicate is by far the most important and has had great influence on development in the country, then it would make sense to focus mainly on this, but still to devote some effort to examining other processes which it is felt will yield important lessons. It will probably be useful to focus the analysis from a clear turning point (eg a major shift in government policy, or the establishment of a new cross-cutting institution with influence and power).
- If there are *several strategies* which are seen as being of broadly similar importance and influence, then it might be worthwhile covering all of these, at least at first, and then selecting which one(s) to focus on (based on an assessment of importance, influence and likelihood of deriving important and useful lessons).

... identifying key cross-cutting issues

The initial assessment of these strategic planning processes will identify key cross-cutting process and content issues that are going well. It will also show which need to be tackled further through a strategy for sustainable development. This all helps to establish a useful agenda for an early steering committee meeting, which should be focused on *where do we want to go, what might our strategic objectives be, and what processes will best take us there?*

Seeking to improve coherence and coordination between strategy frameworks at all levels

Coherence, coordination (and convergence) of national strategic frameworks

Currently, there is insufficient convergence between different planning frameworks at both national and decentralized levels as well as between these levels and between sectors. This is not surprising, as these frameworks are often based on fundamental differences in the motivations and mandates of the 'driving' institutions, stakeholder power bases, concepts, ideologies and funding. It follows that these strategic frameworks have different intentions, stakeholders and objectives, and use different mechanisms. Where they all impact on sustainable development aspirations and outcomes, there is a need to strengthen coordination and coherence. Multiple strategies that are *not* united by a basic common vision or use the same processes for continuous improvement will risk duplication, conflict, waste of scarce administrative and intellectual resources, and rapidly decreasing goodwill.

It is not feasible to merge all frameworks, although some may converge. It is feasible, however, to work towards coherence and coordination so that different strategic planning frameworks are mutually supportive. The key here will be to encourage (or require) those responsible for the different frameworks to adhere to the principles and elements outlined in Boxes 3.1 and 3.2. The process of convergence could be enhanced by better information. Governments (in partnership with key stakeholders in the private sector

There is insufficient convergence of planning frameworks at and between all levels

Coherence and coordination of planning frameworks is essential

and civil society, as well as with development agencies) should ideally develop and maintain a matrix framework of all the existing and new strategic planning processes in their countries, highlighting linkages, differences and relationships between them, and how they adhere to the principles and elements in Boxes 3.1 and 3.2. This would focus attention on what needs to be done for complementarity. The mapping and stocktaking exercise discussed on pages 102–104 would produce the baseline matrix (the CDF aims to promote this approach – see page 54). Such a matrix would help to ensure that new planning frameworks build on what already exists and create links between frameworks. This is a simple informational approach – the advantage being that it would encourage the different frameworks to come together for certain operations, such as visioning and monitoring. It would save costs and unite efforts. Eventually, it should become clear where stronger management of the coherence process is needed; for example, through regulation or by establishing some elements as formal policy.

Where such links have been made and strategies have built on what exists, progress has been good and resulting strategies have broader ownership, as evidenced by different experiences of developing poverty reduction strategies (Box 4.11).

One practical measure to enhance coherence would be to invest in the capacities to implement and enforce.⁸ This applies particularly where effort is spent on upgrading and consolidating laws and regulations as part of the strategic planning process. Through parallel investment in legal revision and enforcement improvements, the merits of coherence become self-evident (page 162). The fact that they remain obscure to many participants in many countries indicates that there is still a long way to travel.

Focusing strategic objectives at the right level – from regional to local, and between sectors – and ensuring coherence and coordination there

As we noted in Chapter 3, many previous national strategies have, in fact, been ‘encyclopedias’ covering all kinds of possible actions from national institutional reform to local technical issues (eg proposing particular soil conservation technologies). Many strategies have been rather insular, and have not particularly touched on international political objectives (eg to improve ocean management) – although others have included this in the mix. Pakistan’s experience has shown quite how unstrategic this is. In contrast, the intention for the next iteration of Pakistan’s NCS is for it to focus on what can only be done at the national level to mainstream sustainable development. This primarily means improving federal policy on, for example, finance, growth and poverty, and developing strategic, supportive links to local strategic mechanisms that work well or are promising: for example, provincial and district strategies, major rural development programmes and the new political devolution process (see below). But it also means improving trade and foreign policy so that the international ‘rules of the game’ can begin to favour sustainable development in Pakistan. Box 4.12 gives further details on this development. Ghana’s Vision 2020 is a good example of where such national issues as finance, trade and foreign policy were explicitly considered and the responsible ministries have all been heavily involved in developing the medium-term policy frameworks to operationalize the vision.

Decentralization potentially offers an effective mechanism for the convergence of different planning frameworks. Integration can often be more successfully achieved through bottom-up demand rather than top-down reorganization. Strong local institutions, accessible information, fora to allow debate and

It is important to be clear about what a ‘national’ strategy should do

Strategic links should be established between national and local levels

⁸ The strengthening of enforcement capacities needs to extend beyond the recruitment and training of additional legal staff (police or administrators), as well as beyond the changing of public attitudes and acceptance of codes of behaviour. It should also include the education and training of judges, magistrates and related staff to appreciate the full nature of the environmental and social impacts that violations of the law can have. This should enable proportional corrective penalties to be determined and administered. Unfortunately, to date, many activities which are detrimental to sustainable development remain largely ‘beyond the law’. See page 162 for discussion on legal mechanisms.

Box 4.11 Building on what exists: links between poverty reduction strategies and other strategic planning processes

Uganda

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was based on a revision of Uganda's own 1997 Poverty Eradication Action Plan. It also drew on other existing strategic assessment work including a Poverty Status Report, a Participatory Poverty Assessment and a Plan for the Modernization of Agriculture. This inclusion of previous work has apparently greatly increased country ownership of the PRS.

Bolivia

The Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan was developed through a highly participatory process that ensured an emphasis on poverty alleviation through economic activities related to the sustainable use of biodiversity. Following lobbying by the Minister for Sustainable Development in the Economic Policy Council, this strategy has now been incorporated as part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Burkina Faso

When the PRSP was developed, efforts were made to incorporate its intentions into existing sectoral policies, plans and reform programmes (eg basic education and health). This integration needs to continue, particularly to ensure that sectoral policies and plans specifically address the linkages between poverty and environment, and define indicators to track these linkages.

The process of integration could have been strengthened by drawing on the country's National Action Programme (NAP) to combat desertification. The NAP was developed in a participatory manner, with nearly 50,000 people involved in its development, and was based on considerable analysis. But those responsible for the NAP were not involved in the PRS process, and the experience and lessons from undertaking the NAP were not drawn into it. The updating of the PRSP provides an opportunity to address this.

In developing the OECD DAC policy guidance, development agencies supported a dialogue process in Burkina Faso, which played a catalytic role in fostering this convergence of frameworks. The dialogue ensured that recommendations to government reflected the views of stakeholders. These included proposals for the sustainable development strategy for the country to be prepared not as a document with new policy assessments but rather as an umbrella for the main legal instruments, principles for intervention and institutional reforms. In this way, the strategy would aim to ensure sustained growth, taking into account and responding practically to issues such as:

- sustainable human development;
- equity in the distribution of the benefits of growth;
- transparency in the management of public affairs and the provisions of help;
- efficiency and sustainability of development programmes;
- reinforcement of capacities at the national level.

The dialogue proposed measures for improving the PRS which are being used as a reference framework by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, namely:

- to present the PRSP more widely as the only framework which the cooperation programmes of development assistance agencies should follow;
- to make the PRSP more widely available and to prepare shorter and more simple versions;
- to update the PRSP, with a view to integrating all sectoral plans within a single framework. This will involve close collaboration between all the ministries, the private sector and civil society so as to ensure harmonization and coherence among existing or planned coordination mechanisms, indicators, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation;
- to generate new financial resources for the national budget to implement the strategy.

Ghana

In contrast to the above cases, a domestic poverty eradication strategy had been prepared in Ghana. This was subsequently transformed into an interim PRSP. The preparation of the full PRSP is being undertaken as part of the preparation of the Second Medium-Term Development Plan to implement Ghana's Vision 2020 – a broader, longer-term framework. This plan will also incorporate the core development objectives of Ghana's Comprehensive Development Framework (developed through separate institutional arrangements) and the UN Development Assistance Framework. The convergence of these strategic planning processes attests to the common principles that underpin them.

consensus/conflict management mechanisms can all forge integrated solutions – if they really have the power to influence intermediate-level and national decisions. Hence there is an imperative to link top-down and bottom-up approaches. This needs to be accompanied by:

- the transfer of financial resources and the empowerment of appropriate organizations to raise such resources locally;
- capacity building (this is a key component of Tanzania’s Local Government Reform Programme, 2000–2003);
- a clear delineation of government roles in planning, financial management, coordination and so on, at various hierarchical levels;
- comprehensive legislation and administrative actions to bring about integration of the decentralized offices of government agencies into local administrative structures;
- coordination of development agency support.

Box 4.12 Initiating bottom-up strategy approaches in Pakistan: complementing provincial and district strategies

Following the National Conservation Strategy (NCS), provincial strategies were developed in most provinces. These adopted many process innovations such as round table workshops, contact focal points in line agencies, and much more consultation with resource user groups and ‘policy communities’. Subsequently, this led to district strategies in Sarhad (North West Frontier) Province. The nearer to the level of direct resource management, the more clearly are sustainable development and livelihood trade-offs having to be addressed. The challenge recognized in Pakistan is now to develop channels for information and demand to be expressed from district, to provincial, to national levels.

It is therefore proposed that NCS-2 should focus on *national-level concerns, and national institutional roles*, rather than prescribing everything right down to the village level. But it will also recognize, encourage and support provincial, district and other demand-driven strategic approaches based on local realities consonant with the devolution plan. This contrasts with the national policy/intellectual push of the original NCS. Thus the scope includes:

International issues

- Pakistan’s position and contribution in relation to global environmental issues and conventions;
- sustainable development aspects of globalization;
- regional issues such as river basins, shared protected areas, transboundary and marine pollution.

National issues

- need for an overarching framework for the preparation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and updating of regional and provincial strategies, including the national coordination of research and development programmes relating to sustainable development;
- bringing together the most useful and effective mechanisms required for developing and implementing a strategy (eg information systems, participatory mechanisms, packages of supporting measures, economic instruments, etc – see Chapter 8);
- continued guidelines for provincial and sectoral policies for mainstreaming sustainable development through policies, principles/criteria, standards, indicators and monitoring;
- coordinating major national programmes aimed at sustainable development;
- promoting sustainable development within macro-policy concerns, notably structural adjustment loans, poverty reduction, national environment and security issues;
- assessing and monitoring sustainable development and environmental standards.

Supporting provincial, urban and district issues

- supporting provincial sustainable development strategies and initiatives – especially so that local (urban, district and community-related) institutions are able to drive the strategy from the bottom up;
- controls and incentives for increased private sector innovation and investment in sustainable development, and for responsible practice.

Coherence can be forged through 'sectoral/thematic' processes

In Canada, a slightly different approach has been followed to develop a 'national' strategic response to sustainable development challenges. Individual ministries/departments in government are expected to take a lead in integrating sustainable development into sectors and policy communities. There is no single national strategy for sustainable development. Nor does one institution 'strategise' for the others.⁹ Instead, parliament has established a 'Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development' to hold all of government accountable for 'greening' its policies, operations and programmes, and for ensuring sustainability is central to all of these. Thus, its prime responsibilities include monitoring, evaluation and coordination. Legislation requires all federal ministries (including finance, trade and foreign affairs) to table departmental sustainable development strategies in parliament. An advantage of this approach is that it enables a greater clarity on what sustainable development means for a particular sector. The departmental strategies are prepared under the guidance provided by a 1995 government policy statement on sustainable development, *A Guide to Green Government* which gives direction on broad objectives, priority areas and how the strategies are to be structured and prepared (Box 4.13). However, it remains to be seen how effective this singularly different approach proves to be. Much will depend on the extent to which parliament is required to act upon the advice and recommendations provided by the Commissioner. One area where government departments have determined that more work needs to be done is in developing more coordinated approaches to sustainable development issues that cut across departmental mandates. To this end, departments have agreed to work closely together on a number of theme areas and to reflect them in their individual strategies.

Work is currently under way to synthesize the 28 individual departmental strategies in order to present a more comprehensive view of sustainable development effort across the federal government. The shared jurisdiction and responsibility between the federal and provincial and territorial governments makes moving towards a 'national' sustainable development strategy particularly challenging (Clara Rodrigues, Environment Canada, personal communication).

Coherence can also be built through 'link' officers

In the Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS) in Pakistan, coherence between government departments is being attempted in a different fashion – Focal Point staff link that department to the provincial strategy secretariat and to thematic round tables connected to the provincial strategy process (Box 4.14). Similar institutional arrangements were established in the Governorate of Sohag, Egypt, as part of the provisions for effective implementation of the Environmental Action Plan in 1997/98; they have also been advocated, and are variously being applied, in Botswana, Kenya and Cross River State, Nigeria.

Coherence and coordination with finance and development authorities needs extra attention

We have stressed that NSDSs need to involve all key ministries, and that one ministry should not dominate. But the fact is that, in all countries, major development decisions tend to be taken by ministries responsible for finance and economic planning, and their major stakeholders such as banks and corporations. Special efforts must be made to involve these, and to ensure coherence and coordination with their policies and procedures. However, sustainable development has usually been made the responsibility of environment ministries, which have limited influence in government, and have therefore not been seen as of interest in other sectors. At best, this has enabled the formation of a community or network concerned only with environmental policy. At worst, this undermines progress towards sustainable development through lack of integration in these key sectors. For key finance and economic stakeholders to become

⁹ In the past, a particular ministry has often initiated discussion on a strategic planning process. There has rarely been effective engagement with other line ministries to build cross-government support, and seldom has the issue been introduced in cabinet so as to gain broader political commitment at an early stage. Experience shows that when lead responsibility for a strategy lies within a particular line ministry (especially where it controls the process and budget), this creates a perception that the strategy is a project of that ministry or a sectoral matter. This results in limited involvement and cooperation from other ministries (OECD DAC 2001a).

Box 4.13 Departmental strategies for sustainable development, Canada

The Canadian government's *A Guide to Green Government* is designed to assist all federal departments in preparing sustainable development strategies. It comprises three parts:

I. The Sustainable Development Challenge translates the concept of sustainable development into terms that are meaningful to Canadians, underscoring its important social, economic and environmental dimensions. A series of sustainable development objectives are presented (for example, using renewable resources sustainably, preventing pollution, fostering improved productivity through environmental efficiency) that represent a starting point for the preparation of departmental strategies.

II. Planning and Decision-making for Sustainable Development sets out the policy, operational and management tools that will facilitate the shift to sustainable development. It encourages an integrated approach to planning and decision-making, based on the best available science and analysis, and visions and expectations of Canadians. The approaches discussed include: promoting integration through the use of tools such as full-cost accounting, environmental assessment and ecosystem management; developing strategies by working with individuals, the private sector, other governments and Aboriginal people; using a mix of policy tools such as voluntary approaches, information and awareness tools, economic instruments, direct government expenditure and command and control.

III. Preparing a departmental Sustainable Development Strategy presents the main elements that departments could consider as the basis of their strategies. It is recommended that 'strategies should all be results-oriented, showing in clear, concrete terms what departments will accomplish on the environment and sustainable development; comprehensive, covering all of a department's activities; and prepared in consultation with clients and stakeholders'. Six steps are suggested for the preparation of strategies:

- 1 Preparation of a **departmental profile**, identifying what the department does and how it does it.
- 2 **Issues scan**: assessment of the department's activities in terms of their impact on sustainable development.
- 3 **Consultations** on the perspective of clients, partners and other stakeholders on departmental priorities for sustainable development and how to achieve them. It is suggested that a brief report 'on the nature of the consultations and how views contributed to the final product would be useful for partners and stakeholders, and contribute to openness and transparency in the preparation of strategies'.
- 4 Identification of the department's **goals and objectives and targets** for sustainable development, including benchmarks it will use for measuring performance.
- 5 Development of an **action plan** that will translate the department's sustainable development targets into measurable results, including specifying policy, programme, legislative, regulatory and operational changes.

Because sustainable development is a shared responsibility among departments, governments, Aboriginal people and other stakeholders, implementation of action plans will likely require cooperation and partnership. In these instances, departmental strategies should describe the cooperative mechanisms and partnerships that will help them achieve the targets, objectives and, eventually, their goals.

- 6 Creation of mechanisms to monitor (measurement and analysis), report on and improve the department's performance.

Source: Government of Canada (1995)

major participants in a strategy, there must be high-level commitment and relevant economic and risk analyses available. In some countries, this has been enhanced on a regular basis by linking strategies to budget processes (see Box 4.15).

Regional issues are important for a nation's sustainable development, and regional processes can be supportive. The NSDS process needs to incorporate a consideration of the issues (notably an ongoing analysis of the impacts on neighbouring countries – and vice versa – and of past strategies and new development options and proposals), and links to key regional processes. Regional approaches need to address, for example, the concerns of indigenous peoples where they are located across international borders, and problems of cross-border refugees. Regional coordination and management is also important

Regional coherence is likely to be increasingly important

Box 4.14 Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy: coordination through 'Focal Points'

Pakistan's National Conservation Strategy (NCS) has relied on a couple of centralized units in the Ministry of Environment, Local Government and Rural Development to promote the NCS to provinces and other ministries. In contrast, the Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS) recognized the need to establish 'insider' posts within the various departments. Some of these 'SPCS Focal Point' posts are filled by government staff, others are IUCN staff.

The job of the Focal Points is to link together the departments, the SPCS Support Unit in the provincial planning department, and thematic round tables (RTs) of the SPCS. They gain intelligence about the plans and progress of the various departments. Thus they can improve communication between the departments and the SPCS Support Unit, and improve coordination in planning. They also aim to encourage full participation by the department in the RTs, and thus integration with the plans of other departments, the private sector and NGOs (each Focal Point's technical agenda more or less corresponds to one of the RTs – see Box 3.20). This is a simple way of trying to improve links, but it is certainly improving information flows and many Focal Points are gaining respect. However, they face constraints that derive from norms in the Pakistani civil service:

- *Inadequate administrative powers:* Until recently, the Focal Points were not of a high enough status. With few bureaucratic powers, they have been obliged to use expert and persuasion powers (and occasionally links to donors) to encourage a greater mainstreaming of sustainable development concerns in that department. However, the departmental counterparts to the Focal Point are now more senior – the Additional Secretary.
- *'Cult of the boss':* Irrespective of the value of the Focal Point's contribution, it is the interest and motivation of the department head which tends to set the tone for the department, not an 'outsider/insider'. This is a general observation in Pakistan – thus the conservation strategies aim for change, demonstrating that real leadership is shared.
- *Few resources for change:* One person with no administrative support does not command 'hierarchy'-related respect or resources, and is overburdened. He or she has to rely on a variety of tactics at various levels in the relevant department to get anything done, sometimes causing delays and upsetting people in the process. Focal Points need training as facilitators, to get the best out of others.
- *Poor links to federal level:* Since there are many aspects of change at provincial level that are still subject to control at federal level, the work of the provincial departmental Focal Points is constrained by poor links between the provincial SPCS Unit and the federal NCS Coordinating Unit.

Source: Hanson et al (2000)

when a number of countries share natural resources and ecosystems (eg a river basin or watershed) or suffer transboundary pollution. If global governance has so far failed to help countries with many international issues, regional approaches appear more promising. Common problems are more apparent, common resources may be available, and similar cultural or political values may be employed in making trade-offs. For example, the Andean Biodiversity Strategy developed by several South American countries provides a shared regional vision and identifies common interests. The Central American Forest Convention provides a framework for individual national forest programmes.

Establishing and agreeing ground rules governing strategy procedures

We have established the principle that an NSDS best builds on what exists already. However, as this approach brings together different initiatives, as well as many actors, there will be multiple ways of working, precedents and expectations. This is particularly the case with expectations relating to participation and consensus processes, and what impact this will have on decisions. Stakeholders need to know that there is an orderly approach to participation (see Chapter 6).

While the strategy principles and elements in Boxes 3.1 and 3.2 provide generic guidance, they need to be given substance when developing and implementing a particular strategy. It may, therefore, be advisable to formalize clear and distinct 'ground rules' (operating rules) governing the strategy process and procedures

Box 4.15 Linking strategies to budget processes

New Zealand: The annual budget and planning cycle includes a strategic phase for establishing the government's priorities in the short-, medium- and long-term. These strategic priorities are 'bedded in' through budget appropriations, purchase agreements and strategic and key result areas in chief executive's performance agreements. Chief executives of government departments that affect the environment are required to take into account in their annual planning the relevant goals of the country's Environment 2010 Strategy.

Canada: The Green Plan (1990–1996) was linked to the federal budget process and had built-in targets and schedules as a mechanism for public accountability.

Botswana: Over the past decade, the National Conservation Strategy Coordinating Agency has been drawn into the national planning and budget review processes of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. Professional linkages have been established although multi-sectoral reform has yet to be achieved.

involved. These will enable those with responsibility for coordinating or managing particular processes to know exactly how to proceed, and within what parameters. It will help all stakeholders to know what can be expected. It will also be helpful to gain agreement from component processes and institutions to adjust their own ground rules to accommodate the strategy.

Ground rules will also be needed to give rigour to the strategy process, ensuring that it is comprehensive, and protecting it from becoming one-sided or inequitable. Nevertheless, ground rules should encourage experimentation.

The ground rules will need to be consistent with the principles and elements in Boxes 3.1 and 3.2, and a discussion of these principles will be a useful starting point. Agreement will be needed on which will be obligatory and which will be merely aspirations. The NSDS ground rules should be simple, and could cover:

- *Membership* of the various steering committees, working groups and secretariat – procedures on representation and attendance – and similar rules on selecting stakeholders for consultations.
- How *decisions* will be made. Where a recognized existing body is used to take decisions, for example, cabinet, the precedent will be clear. Where powers are given to special NSDS groups, rules would cover the development of decisions; for example, the use of consensus (page 272), voting, conflict management and arbitration in relation to different types of decision (major policy decisions versus, for example, programme development or project decisions, etc). Clarity will be needed on the scope and limitations to participation in the strategy. Consensus has generally been found to be a useful approach, since it incorporates principles of equity and learning (see Chapter 8).
- *Conduct of meetings* – their timing, recording, reporting and attribution of ideas and opinions to named groups.
- *Communication and public disclosure* – the channels that will be used, how they can be accessed by stakeholders, and timing.
- *Financial rules* regarding fees and expenses.
- *Monitoring, review and accountability* – it may be helpful to establish some ground rules at the beginning about when, how and by whom the NSDS processes and outcomes will be assessed, and who will be accountable, especially if independent reviews are required.
- The *schedule and timing* (see next section).

NSDS 'ground rules' can clarify how processes should proceed and what stakeholders can expect

A strategy calendar can specify tasks, products and targets

Establishing a schedule and calendar for the strategy process

The secretariat will need to determine activities to be undertaken in developing and operating the strategy, as well as identify responsibilities, capabilities and resources needed, and their timing. A generic strategy 'calendar' can be scheduled, based around existing component calendars, such as those of government (budgetary) processes and other key strategies. This could cover, for example, regular 'state of the environment and livelihoods' reports, major NSDS review meetings and annual national conferences. Three- to five-year cyclical calendars have commonly been used (although the cyclical element may not subsequently have taken place in practice). Specific targets related to the NSDS objectives and major programmes would then be inserted into the first regular 'cycle'; for example, passing a new law, launching a new programme or removing a specific causal problem.

Clear and reasonable limits for working towards a conclusion of the process and reporting on progress or results should be established. Such milestones bring a focus to the process, mobilize key resources and mark progress towards consensus. Sufficient flexibility, however, is necessary to embrace shifts or changes in timing.

Promoting the strategy

A 'prospectus' sets out the aims, objectives, procedures and mechanisms for the strategy

At any stage, it is important for both the purpose and approach of the strategy to be widely known. Once a new approach to an NSDS has been decided, it has been common to prepare a 'prospectus' which combines the timetable/calendar with:

- the broad *purpose* of a strategy – why it is needed, how it can help and what it would aim to achieve;
- the scope of or (later) the specific *strategic objectives* of the strategy – linked to a brief problem/opportunity statement for each;
- the basic *principles and ground rules* governing the strategy;
- an overview of the *component mechanisms* (participation, information, monitoring, decision-making, investment and the various committees, etc) and how they will work;
- the schedule of *steps and actions* for the regular NSDS 'calendar', and to tackle specific strategic objectives;
- an indication of *who needs to be involved* and how they can do so;
- an overview of the types of *indicators* of achievement;
- an assessment of the *key skills and resources required*, how those which are lacking will be found, and the order of cost;
- *achievements to date* where relevant – stories from, for example, pilot projects (see next section) and policy changes. Include a brief overview of past approaches (including their key strengths and weaknesses) when a new approach is being promoted.

A summary version of this should be published for use as a promotional tool and press releases provided regularly to the media to promote the strategy. Chapter 7 provides more details on community approaches.

The role of experiments and pilot projects

Strategy pilot projects can demonstrate implementation and tangible benefits

Many outcomes of strategies take time to prepare, and delays can lead to an apparent vacuum of on-the-ground activity and consequent loss of interest, trust and support. It has been found helpful to undertake pilot projects during the strategy process as a 'shop window' to show how the strategy might be implemented in practice, and to demonstrate some tangible and practical benefits and results early on (eg

better public health facilities, efficient solid waste management, the regular provision of clean drinking water, conservation of natural resources). For example, in 1986, the Zambia NCS supported the Luangwa Integrated Resource Development Project (one of Africa's earliest, and now longest running and most successful, community-based natural resource management initiatives) as a rural pilot, and a poverty-and-environment peri-urban squatter settlement upgrading pilot project (Human Settlements of Zambia). Budget provision needs to be made for such pilot initiatives. Obviously, pilots and demonstrations should continue and not be confined to the early stages of a strategy.

Practical demonstration through such pilot initiatives has a vital role to play in both developed and developing countries – in showing that it is possible to deliver at least some components of sustainable development.

Establishing and improving the regular strategy mechanisms and processes

Certain mechanisms (Figure 4.1) and processes (Figure 4.2) provide the 'lifeblood' of the strategy. They ensure that all stakeholders are best able to play their part, and they enable a continuous improvement approach to take place.

Each mechanism or process will have been mapped out as described on pages 102–104. They will be discussed in detail in separate chapters, covering:

- analysis (Chapter 5);
- stakeholder fora and means for participation (Chapter 6);
- communication between stakeholders and between fora (Chapter 7);
- major decision-making procedures (Chapter 8);
- means for planning investments (Chapter 9);
- monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms (Chapter 10).

Great stress has been placed on how important it is that strategy processes are participatory and transparent. It is imperative, therefore, that they are perceived by all stakeholders to be both demand-led and oriented to the achievement of results, whether process improvements or tangible lifestyle and resource conservation improvements.