CHAPTER 6

Participation in strategies for sustainable development[1]

Introduction

This chapter reviews past theories and current thinking on the nature and use of participation, issues and requirements to ensure effective participation, and methodologies for participation in sustainable development strategies.

There is a high degree of consensus on the need for participation of stakeholders in order to progress towards sustainable development. However, what precisely is meant by the term 'participation' is less clear and there are considerable differences in the way that participation is perceived and understood. 'Understanding participation' on page 178 explains the *multiple types* of participation, and the many different perspectives on it.

Participation drives the whole NSDS process; its many tasks must be agreed and planned

'Why participation is needed in strategies for sustainable development' on page 186 explores the *rationale for participation*. Sustainable development is essentially a political process, and political structures can tend towards top-down systems of governance. But sustainable development requires the consensus and commitment of society as a whole; experience shows that this cannot be delivered by government planning and acting alone. So participation processes are needed to involve the private sector and civil society, as well as government, in a partnership – processes that will transform governance approaches and facilitate multi-stakeholder involvement in the development and implementation of NSDSs.

The basic *requirements* for effective participation are examined in 'Ensuring effective participation – issues and planning requirements' (page 193), including: agreed principles for participation; a proper understanding of what participation means; using catalysts for participation; using specific activities and events; following a phased approach; selecting appropriate participatory methods; securing adequate resources, skills and time; and developing learning environments. An effective NSDS process requires that stakeholder interest in participation be built and carefully sustained. Practical guidance is given on the costs

1 This chapter has benefited from review comments and additional material provided by Duncan Macqueen, IIED, and Carol James, Trinidad. It also draws extensively on two existing reviews of experience of participation in strategies for sustainable development: Bass et al (1995), Dalal-Clayton et al (2000).

and benefits of participation, the importance of carefully selecting representative stakeholders, and clarifying roles and expectations. The structures, organization and legal framework needed for effective participation are discussed.

Practical guidance on *participatory methodologies* is provided on page 193, distilled from a wide range of field experiences. Concrete examples of their application are included and participatory mechanisms relevant to particular levels of decision-making are identified – ranging from experiences at rural/community levels, through decentralized planning systems to multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Understanding participation

Multiple perceptions, expectations and definitions of 'participation'

Participation traditions can be found in all societies …

Participation is nothing less than the fabric of social life. People have always participated in survival strategies and in the development of their own cultures. Whether through formal or informal organizations, autocratic or democratic means, a variety of participatory structures and procedures has evolved to define and address collective needs, to resolve conflicts and to make plans and take the steps necessary to implement them, (see, for example, Box 6.1).

The term 'participation' pervades the literature, everyday language and rhetoric of sustainable development. The World Bank's Learning Group on Participatory Development (1994) has defined participatory development as: 'A process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, and the decisions and resources which affect them.' Prior to this, Adnan et al (1992) observed: 'It is often difficult to understand whether those talking about people's participation mean the same thing or simply use the phrase as a kind of magical incantation.' And Rahnema (1992) noted: 'people are dragged into participating in operations of no interest to them, in the very name of participation'.

… although the term 'participation' is being captured by some groups for narrower purposes

The term 'participation' is now used by different people to convey quite different meanings (Box 6.2) and has created several paradoxes. It has been used on the one hand to justify the extension of control of the state and, on the other, to build local capacity and self-reliance. It has been used to justify external decisions, as well as to devolve power and decision-making away from external agencies. It has been used for data acquisition by experts and for interactive analysis. The varied perceptions of participation are illustrated by the opinions voiced during the development of the Bangladesh Flood Action Plan and by comments on rural planning in Tanzania (Box 6.3).

Typologies of participation – and associated dilemmas

The many ways in which the term 'participation' is interpreted and used can be resolved into seven clear types that range from manipulative and passive participation, where people are told what is to happen and implement pre-determined tasks, to the stage where communities take initiatives on their own (Table 6.1).

Box 6.1 Participation traditions in Central and South America

Indigenous communities in Central America and the Andean region of South America have developed quite effective ways to identify, plan and carry out activities that meet their collective needs. Community issues are discussed and decided in organized meetings, which are run by elected community leaders and attended by representatives from all households. It is expected that all participants provide input in the discussions, where options are assessed and decisions for action taken. Decisions are made by consensus, or near consensus, and are binding for all. Culturally sanctioned means of carrying out plans include labour pooling (known as *minga* in the Andes and *tequio* in Oaxaca, Mexico) and cash or in-kind contributions by each household in the community. Enforcement takes the form of social recognition for households that consistently fulfil their duty, and ostracism, fines or incarceration for those who do not contribute their labour to the community's well-being.

Source: Zazueta (1995)

Box 6.2 Participation – a loaded term

Participation is clearly a 'good idea' that nobody from any position will want to say they are against. But they could often be talking about very different things. To some it will be a *goal or aspiration*, to others a *demand*, and to others a *description* of the way things are. There are too many simplistic exhortations to 'get everyone participating and democratize the process'. Agenda 21 called for the 'maximum possible participation'. But if we consider why participation is needed it is clear that it is not going to be an easy business. Participation is needed because current inequities, bad land management, stakeholder stalemate or other problems persist, due to misunderstandings or lack of knowledge among stakeholders of each other's perspectives, powers and tactics, and the potential for change in these. Participation processes are fundamental to NSDSs – to understand multiple perspectives, negotiate and cut 'deals' between the needs of wider society and local actors, form partnerships and to maintain NSDSs as 'alive processes', not 'dead papers'.

Thus everyone agrees that participation is both a right and a practical necessity. But its form, mechanisms and functions need to be carefully shaped. Participatory mechanisms such as a national sustainable development forum, steering group, working groups and local-level learning groups need to be explicitly designed to tackle particular problems.

Source: Adapted from Mayers et al (2001)

Consultation helps to gather information for a strategy, but does not broaden the basis for decision-making

Consultation is only one form of participation along the spectrum in Table 6.1, but the terms 'consultation' and 'participation' are frequently used interchangeably. Rahnema (1992) concludes that passive, consultative and incentive-driven forms of participation marginalize groups, which have no recognized stake in decision-making. They have often been used more as a vehicle for gathering information and to ensure implementation of pre-conceived plans than for shared decision-making. The 'superficial and fragmented achievements have no lasting impact on people's lives'. If the objective is to achieve sustainable development, then consultative forms of participation alone will not suffice. Sustainable development requires broader participation in governance, to deal with multiple trade-offs and uncertainties. Many of these tasks are so complex that decisions imposed by elected bodies that do not carry the consensual support of society – even though they might be enforced through legislation and the

Box 6.3 Some perceptions of participation in the Bangladesh Flood Action Plan and in rural planning in Tanzania

Villagers:

- 'Participation is about doing something for everyone's benefit' (villager).
- 'Oh yes, the foreigners were here one day, last month. But they only went to school and spoke in English. We are not educated. We could not understand' (a poor peasant).

Government officials:

- 'Yes, we're doing people's participation. We have had people working in Food for Works programmes since the seventies' (top official in Bangladesh Water Development Board).
- 'Your idea regarding women's participation is not correct for the overall national interest.'
- 'But what will be our role if we are to have complete participation?'
- 'True participation is too expensive.'
- 'Participation takes too long and is wasting time.'
- 'There are limits to participation because somebody ultimately has to decide.'
- 'I did the work plan myself on behalf of the district staff' (District Planning Officer, Tanzania).

Foreign consultants

- 'Another idea from the social scientists. Only slogans! First "poverty alleviation". Then "women" and "environment". Now "people's participation"! It's just a new fad!' (Engineer).
- 'You have to consult my socio-economist, not me. I have no time for this participation. I'm working 12 hours every day on the project' (FAP Team Leader).

Source: Adapted from Adnan et al (1992), and Kikula and Pfliegner (2001)

Table 6.1 Types of participation in local-level development

Type	Characteristics
1 Manipulative participation	Participation is simply a pretence
2 Passive participation	People participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. Information shared belongs only to external professionals
3 Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions. No share in decision-making is conceded and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views
4 Participation for material incentives	People participate in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Local people have no stake in prolonging practices when the incentives end
5 Functional participation	Participation is seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined project objectives
6 Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation or strengthening of local groups or institutions that determine how available resources are used. Learning methods are used to seek multiple viewpoints
7 Self-mobilization	People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice but retain control over how resources are used

Source: Adapted from Pretty (1997)

official machinery of government – will not lead to sustainable development. However, once key issues have been explored and debated, and some consensus on the ways forward negotiated by stakeholders, a final decision will often need to be taken/endorsed by elected representatives in the fora of government.

In industrialized countries, government agencies often follow what Walker and Daniels (1997) call the 3I model: inform (the public), invite (comments) and ignore (opinions). In countries where livelihoods depend more directly on the land and power differences are great, participation is often limited to community consultation, thereby limiting the influence of local initiatives.

In developing countries, there is often incompatibility between the policies of donors about participation and on-the-ground reality. Local people frequently have no genuine say in how and where donor money is spent (unless within specific defined budget lines). The problem is often compounded by the clear incompatibilities between, on the one hand, donor spending cycles and development fashion and, on the other hand, enabling and allowing adequate time for a truly participatory process.

A study of 230 rural development institutions employing some 30,000 staff in 41 countries of Africa (Guijt 1991) found that, for local people, participation was most likely to mean simply having discussions or providing information to external agencies. Government and non-government agencies rarely permitted local groups to work alone, some even acting without any local involvement. Even where external agencies did permit some joint decisions, they usually controlled the funds.

Participation in decisions can bring better results – but is more challenging to authorities than mere consultation

Another study of 121 rural water supply projects in 49 countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Narayan 1993) found that participation was the most significant factor contributing to project effectiveness and subsequent maintenance of water systems. The best results were achieved when people were involved in decision-making through all stages of the project from design to maintenance.

The authorities' dilemma is that they both need and fear people's participation. They need the agreement and support of diverse groups of people – development is not sustainable otherwise – but they tend to fear that greater involvement is less controllable, less predictable, likely to slow down decision-

making, and may challenge the existing distribution of wealth and power. Thus local participation has usually been sought without any meaningful reform of the power relations between government and local communities. Degnbol (1996) argues that it is naive to expect governments to redefine their roles, and that genuine participation will only come about with the emergence of a strong and representative civil society.

Governments can organize participation …

Governments therefore need to work out how to take a leadership role in developing strategies for sustainable development – in terms of making the commitment and setting the agenda, creating an open and participatory 'environment' for the processes involved, inviting civil society and others to participate in all strategy tasks, and providing support where needed. Such leadership means moving towards the right in Figure 6.1. For example, Box 6.4 illustrates how the government of Trinidad fostered a community-based conservation programme and then reduced its own direct involvement.

Most countries include some element of public participation in their policy processes. In an analysis of many actual policy processes, Bass et al (1995) developed a typology analogous to Table 6.1. They found that the greatest degree of public participation was achieved in reaching consensus on the elements of a strategy (level 5 in Table 6.2). Fundamental decision-making on national policies and strategies (level 6) has remained the prerogative of the national decision-making process, democratic or otherwise.

… as complements to local democratic means – not as substitutes

Care is needed to avoid participation being seen or promoted as an alternative to established democratic processes. Rather the approaches and methods available can bolster and support such processes and help to improve their quality and effectiveness. In theory, governments are elected because they have an acknowledged representation function and have the capacity to make difficult decisions. In practice, however, the democratic process is not always as good or effective as electorates would wish. But care is needed, when external agencies promote and sponsor participatory processes, not to undermine the credibility of established local and national governance structures. The legitimate governments of countries hold different political or philosophical development preferences (eg USA versus Cuba), and these may change over time (eg with changes in government). Also sustainable development may take different forms depending on the prevailing religious, social, environmental and social value systems – which set the boundary conditions shown in Figure 2.1.

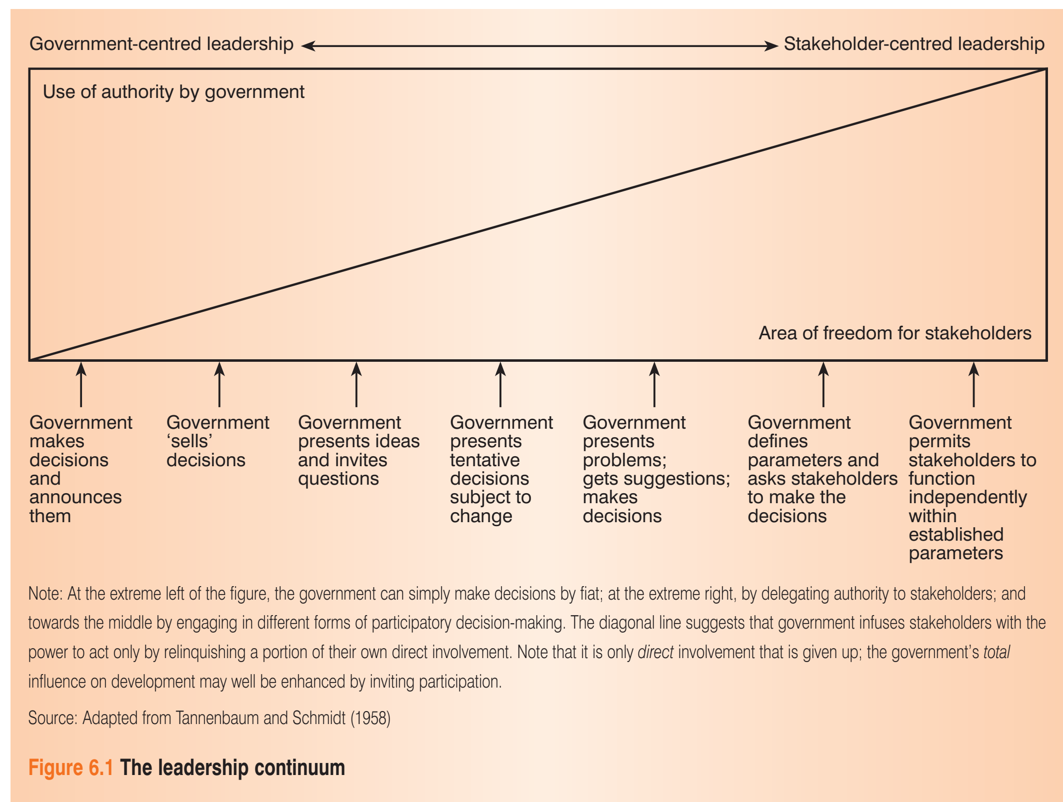
An initial period of investment in participation will be needed

A key NSDS principle (Box 3.1) is that strategies need to be developed as continuous (cyclical) learning processes, which build and improve systems for multi-stakeholder participation – not as one-off exercises. Experience shows that the first cycle necessitates considerable effort to secure commitment and buy-in from different stakeholders, and build trust and confidence to work together. This requires patience, time and resources. It will involve considerable investment in identifying, strengthening and introducing new participatory structures and methodologies. The first full cycle (Figure 4.2) might require as much as 3–5 years. Once in place, however, the participation structures can be employed in subsequent strategy iterations and other exercises, such as sectoral plans.

Table 6.2 Levels of participation in policy processes

1	*Participants listening only* – receiving information from a government public relations campaign or open database
2	*Participants listening and giving information* – through public inquiries, media activities, 'hot-lines'
3	*Participants being consulted* – through working groups and meetings held to discuss policy
4	*Participation in analysis and agenda-setting* – through multi-stakeholder groups, round tables and commissions
5	*Participation in reaching consensus on the main strategy elements* – through national round tables, parliamentary/select committees and conflict mediation
6	*Participants directly involved in final decision-making on the policy, strategy or its components*

Source: Bass et al (1995)



Note: At the extreme left of the figure, the government can simply make decisions by fiat; at the extreme right, by delegating authority to stakeholders; and towards the middle by engaging in different forms of participatory decision-making. The diagonal line suggests that government infuses stakeholders with the power to act only by relinquishing a portion of their own direct involvement. Note that it is only *direct* involvement that is given up; the government's *total* influence on development may well be enhanced by inviting participation.

Source: Adapted from Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958)

Figure 6.1 The leadership continuum

'Horizontal' and 'vertical' channels for participation – and associated dilemmas

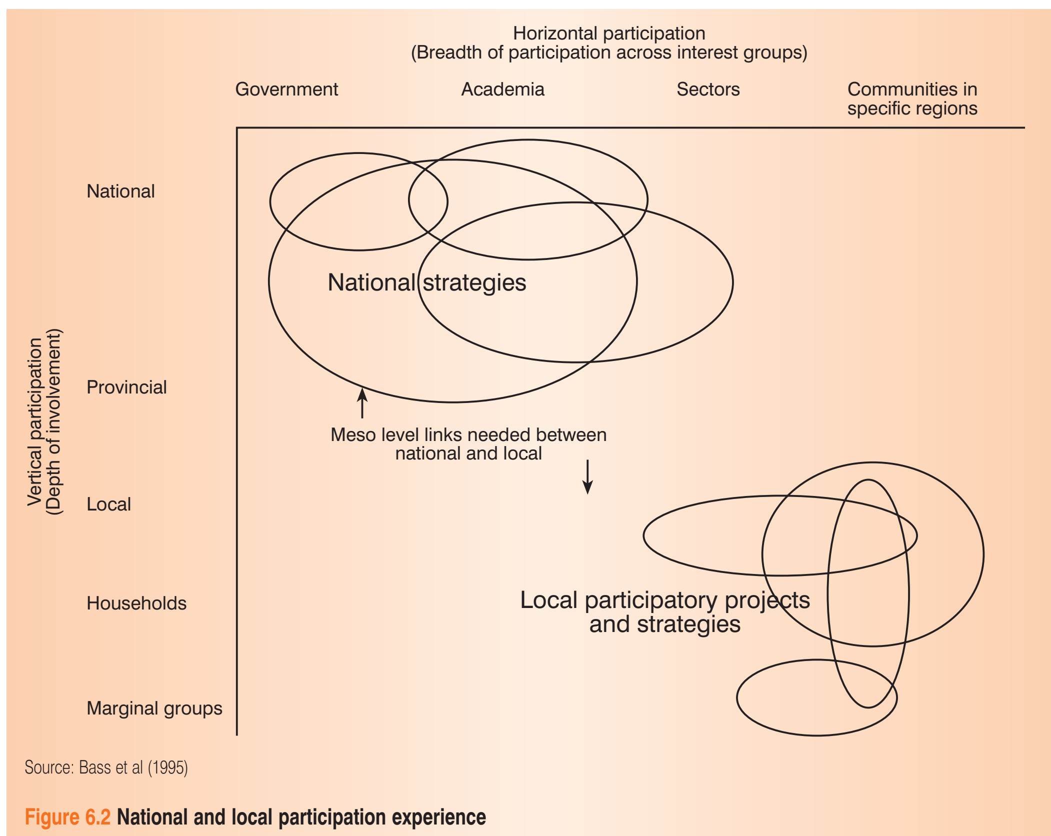
Participation is inadequate if confined to the national level …

In a study of participation in strategies for sustainable development, Bass et al (1995) distinguish between horizontal and vertical channels for participation (see Figure 6.2). Horizontal participation refers to the interactions needed to ensure that issues are dealt with across sectoral interest groups, ministries and communities in different parts of the country. Vertical participation is required to deal with issues throughout the hierarchy of decision-making from national to local levels, or from leaders to marginalized groups. The deeper the vertical participation within a given institution or nation, the better the understanding and support for the strategy is likely to be. Table 6.3 illustrates the wide range of institutions and actors that are likely to be involved in decision-making at different levels and in different sectors. Box 6.5 lists the kinds of structures available.

In respect of recent *national* conservation strategies, any participation at national level has tended to be restricted to government, academics and a few favoured NGO circles. The private sector has generally had a less overt influence – although there may have been significant lobbying and other means of influence. However, even when all views have been sought and consensus achieved, it may remain difficult for politicians to make an honest response and for the establishment to change its ways. This may be because there is no link to local level sustainable development realities.

… or the local level alone …

In contrast to the situation at the national level, there is ample evidence of interactive participation of communities and sectoral interests at the *local* level – resulting sometimes in impressive work on the ground, with generation of much local information and some localized institutional change (eg Box 6.4). Particular progress has been made in:



Source: Bass et al (1995)

Figure 6.2 National and local participation experience

Box 6.4 Community-based Turtle Conservation Programme, Trinidad

Exhaustive government efforts have been made to prevent the slaughtering of turtles and poaching of their eggs on nesting beaches at Matura Bay, Trinidad. In early 1989, frustrated by the failure of these efforts, Wildlife Section Officers began a process of engaging community members to assist in the conservation of this endangered species. There was genuine dialogue between the government and the local community for several months around issues of concern and interest to each group of participants: youth, women, teachers, political activists and ordinary villagers. This was followed by two years of information sharing, education and training which resulted in the formation in 1990 of a dynamic community-based organization (CBO), Nature Seekers Inc. This transformed matters, allowing villagers to develop an ecologically sustainable turtle management programme with strong potential for social and economic benefits for the community.

Prior to formation of the CBO, the government was heavily involved, initially in fostering an understanding of the basics of biological conservation and benefits to be realized from sustainable use of the resource; training the community in ecologically sensitive tour-guiding around turtle nesting sites; facilitating the establishment of a legally designated protected area; developing basic research and resource assessment programmes in collaboration with the community; and fostering buy-in by the wider national and international communities – including encouraging support from scientific, NGO and academic bodies.

After 18 months, the government's direct involvement was reduced to merely responding to community needs for guidance on terms determined entirely by the community, and enabling implementation of new policy measures as they evolved.

Twelve years later, the socio-economic and conservation benefits resulting from effective community participation and their exercise of rights over the use of their resources, continue. Nature Seekers Inc. is now internationally renowned as a successful community-based natural resource institution. Its expertise for guiding similar processes in other countries has been tapped on several occasions by international NGOs and academic institutions.

Source: James and Fournillier (1993); UNDP (2001c)

Table 6.3 Examples of institutional channels for decision-making and action, by sector and level

Levels	Sectors		
	Governmental/ quasi-governmental	**Voluntary/ collective action**	**Private/quasi-private**
International	Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies	Society for International Development	Multinational corporations; external NGOs
National ministries	Central government ministries; parastatals; corporations	National cooperative federation	National corporations; national NGOs
Regional	Regional administrative bodies; regional development authorities	Regional cooperative federation; watershed consultative assembly	Regional companies; regional NGOs
District	District council; district administrative offices	District supply cooperative; soil conservation; educational forum	District firms; charitable organizations
Sub-district	Sub-district council; sub-district administrative offices	Sub-district marketing cooperative	Rural enterprises; private hospital
Locality	Division council; health clinic; secondary school; extension office	Wholesale cooperative society; forest protection association	Businesses in market town; service clubs
Community	Village council; post office; primary school; extension worker	Primary cooperative society; village dyke patrol; parent-teachers association	Village shops; committee for village welfare; religious institutions
Group	Caste; panchayat; ward or neighbourhood assembly	Tubewell users' association; mothers' club; savings group	Micro-enterprises
Household/ individual	Citizen; voter; taxpayer; partaker of services	Member	Customer; client; beneficiary

Source: Uphoff (1992)

- Joint community/business/local government initiatives in urban or peri-urban areas, often facilitated by local governments and NGOs – for example, Groundwork UK, Local Agenda 21s in many local authorities North and South – as well as corporate–community partnerships in farming, forestry and tourism.
- Buffer zones (economic support zones) around national parks, with joint government/community management. There are many well-documented examples: for example, in India, Nepal and Zimbabwe (IIED 1994) and several Man and Biosphere Reserves worldwide.
- Rural development projects based on social organization and/or environmental protection, often at river catchment level, again facilitated or managed by NGOs.

Although most did not start as 'local strategies', many of these successful local projects have had to evolve strategic approaches to thrive – notably linking with national policy and institutional initiatives.

In spite of individual successes, the problem of 'scaling up' such local participatory initiatives and the channels/mechanisms open to them remains plagued by policy and institutional inertia. Often, 'successful' local projects have been identified by the policy actors (or by academics who inform them) with little more than anecdotal evidence, and these are then replicated in other areas, frequently without success. This is

Box 6.5 Structures for 'horizontal' and 'vertical' participation

Horizontal links between sectors/resources/communities

- *Different sectors:* central planning system with associated procedures, for example, planning inquiry, SEA and EIA; local authority development control and environmental health; round tables; environmental core groups; conflict mediation organizations; participatory inquiry groups.
- *Living/working communities (household, work place, neighbourhood):* housewives' associations; neighbourhood associations; commuter groups; unions; participatory inquiry groups.
- *Different claims on the environment and resources:* legal system; local authority planning and development control; lands commission; conflict mediation organizations.
- *Different social groups:* traditional fora; local authority social services; religious groups; conflict mediation organizations; participatory inquiry; NGOs.
- *Supply chains (producers/consumers/sufferers of pollution):* industry associations; trade associations; consumer groups; rights groups; round tables; conflict mediation organizations; certification schemes.

Vertical links between national and local interests

- *Top-down and bottom-up decision-making:* planning and development control systems; decentralization of government, private sector and civil society operations; local authorities; NGOs; fora (local, national or tiered).
- *Party politics:* parliamentary system; party membership and representation.

Source: Bass et al (1995)

because the precise policy, institutional and physical conditions surrounding 'successful' local activities need to be identified and assured before replication is possible. In general, the genesis and implementation of national strategies and local participatory efforts have tended to be separate, and there appear to have been few efforts to unite them to their mutual advantage.

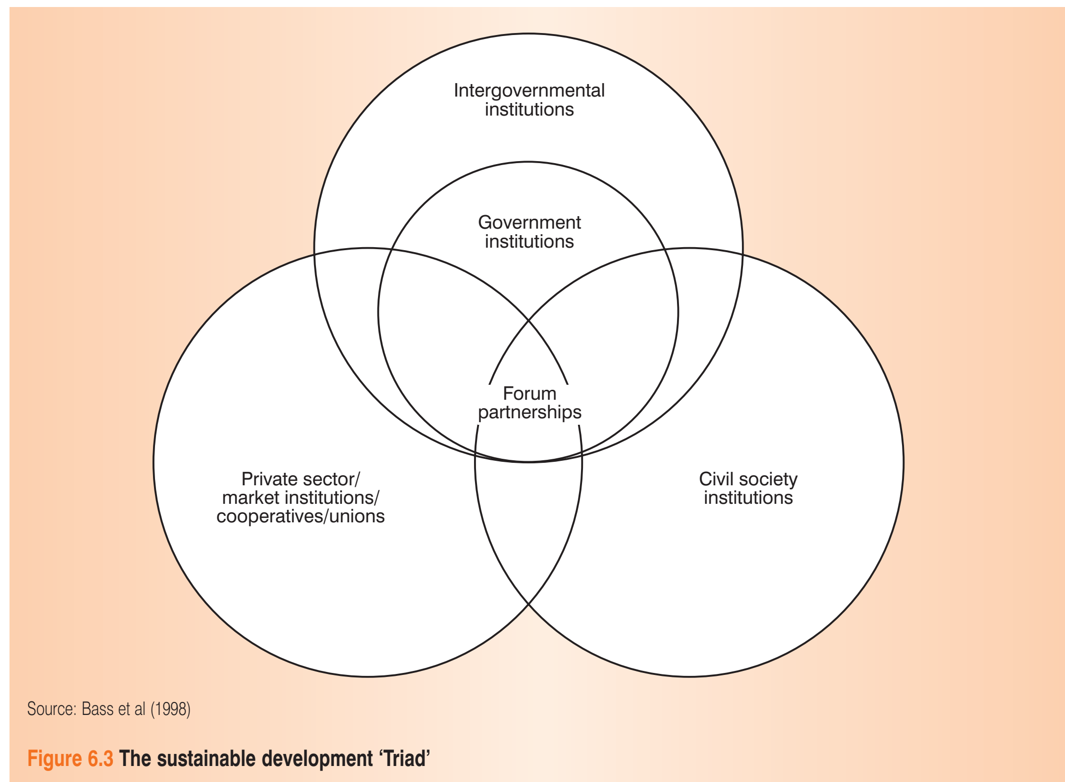
In other instances, government structures cannot deal with participation. It may then be necessary for government departments to sort out their own differences – using interdisciplinary approaches – before embarking on full-scale participation. In the UK, this approach appears to have dominated the first strategy for sustainable development in the UK (HMSO 1994) – different wings of government felt the need to get together to sort things out first, and only limited consultation outside government could be countenanced. In Australia, the very different approaches of federal, state and municipal strategies necessitated a legal Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment to ensure consistency between them; this had the effect of putting the federal strategy in the ascendancy.

A number of approaches have managed to link participation at local levels with participation at national level. For example, Gestion de Terroir, in the Sahel, has always addressed the administrative and legal constraints to local resource management, and gradually builds up a larger, national-level picture. The success of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Northern Pakistan led to a major government-led National Rural Support Programme. AKRSP staff played key roles in the Pakistan National Conservation Strategy.

… Links are needed, so that policy and local realities are mutually informed

Essentially, a good information 'cycle' is needed between local and national levels, driven by participatory exploration of sustainable development needs and options. Key to doing this in future will be:

1. building on existing participatory structures, methodologies and projects, including successful informal approaches;
2. mobilizing many of these at local level to influence national policy;
3. capacity building for participation and partnerships;
4. securing financial flows to support these steps.



Source: Bass et al (1998)

Figure 6.3 The sustainable development 'Triad'

Why participation is needed in strategies for sustainable development

The 'sustainable development triad' of government, business and civil society …

In recent years, the roles and relations of the three 'sustainable development triad' sectors (government, civil society and business) have begun to change significantly (Figure 6.3). For example (Tennyson and Wilde 2000):

- Civil society-led popular movements more or less peacefully overthrowing undemocratic governments in South Africa, the former Soviet Union and central Europe, with many of the civil society activists forming the new governments; and with a subsequent lack of faith placed in centralized government planning systems.
- The South-east Asian so-called 'economic miracle' having come and gone within a decade, reminding governments and international organizations that business investment alone will not bring the needed development they (perhaps naively) hoped it would.
- Many international businesses, previously entirely focused on maximizing shareholder value, rethinking their responsibilities to the societies in which they operate – as the gulf between rich and poor widens and threatens social stability and economic growth.

These and other events have opened up new possibilities for a greater interdependence between sectors and have led to innovation and creative collaboration. So world events have, in a sense, encouraged sectors to work together more closely. Now that they have begun to do so, it is becoming clear that each sector brings to the collaboration different but potentially complementary skills, experiences and attributes:[2]

2 See also Table 6.10

- The public sector (government) is rights-driven – it provides information, stability and legitimacy.
- The private sector is profits-driven – it is inventive, single-minded and fast.
- Civil society is value-driven – it is responsive, inclusive and imaginative.

… works by bringing their different attributes together in partnership

It must also be acknowledged that individuals are often the key catalysts/champions for initiating action within each of these sectors. Individuals are driven by many agendas (personal, community, country) but, once motivated, their energies can contribute effectively to development.

But there is still a need to define better the respective roles of these three sectors in national processes as well as international negotiations concerning sustainable development. Mechanisms for their effective participation need to be developed. For example, civil society often needs to be enabled to prepare properly for meetings (governments and the private sector can do this as part of their jobs), and supported financially.

Collaboration – fostered through the participation of the three sectors in strategy processes – can draw together and build on the drivers of each sector (rights, profit and values) and can achieve far more than any of the sectors acting alone. Increasingly, successful sustainable development initiatives are resulting from partnership between organizations from two (or all three) sectors in which the organizations commit themselves to working together. Partnerships involve sharing the risks as well as benefits, and reviewing (and revising as necessary) the relationship regularly. Genuinely sharing or seeking to achieve mutual benefits (as opposed to one-directional benefits) are often described as delivering a 'win–win' scenario – perhaps more accurately 'win–win–win' where all three sectors are involved. NSDSs will clearly involve an exploration of different forms of partnership.

However, such collaboration does not necessarily imply equal rights in determining the outcomes. All key stakeholders need to have a role in strategy development and implementation. Some will be involved directly (eg government), while others will be represented through interest groups (eg resource user associations). Limited companies by their nature (ie established to generate profit, operating under limited liability) will have fewer rights and, in any case, their shareholders will be able to represent their views and positions through civil society institutions.

Top-down systems of planning can be efficient, but …

Centralized planning allows for certain economies of scale; for example, professional skills can be 'efficiently' employed and databases maintained. But it excludes or marginalizes many groups. Half a century of professional development planning has demonstrated that plans drawn up by outsiders, with little or no reference to the priorities of the people who have to implement them, are not implemented. Or, if they are implemented, they turn out very differently from what was intended by their architects. The need for greater stakeholder participation in strategic planning is becoming increasingly well recognized – at least it is now well espoused in the literature and development agency documentation. But experience with existing country-level strategic planning frameworks shows that practice still lags behind. The formulation of most national strategies remains dominantly top-down (Box 6.6) or suffers from problems with participation. Essentially, planning structures remain the same but there are attempts to graft on participatory methods.

… a combination with bottom-up systems improves equity, effectiveness and credibility

There are various equity-based reasons for bottom-up components in the strategy process: stakeholder rights of recognition, and equitable sharing of benefits, costs and risks. Furthermore, effectiveness and efficiency can be improved by bringing local knowledge on board, tailoring activities to local conditions and structuring local incentives for sustainability. Credibility can be improved by incorporating the values, ideas and perspectives of the many groups in society – government, non-government, the private sector and the general public.

Participatory planning is now promoted as an alternative to top-down planning – but it still faces problems of undefined lines of authority, a weak information base and an institutional culture both at

Box 6.6 Why existing strategies continue to be mainly top-down

The term 'top-down' implies that a strategy is conceived by an authority (usually government) and is developed by professional staff, with no or limited involvement of those likely to have a legitimate interest or be affected by the outcomes (stakeholders). It also implies goals and approaches which are set by that authority – but which are not necessarily those of stakeholders. Implementation is also typically the responsibility of such authorities. Such top-down approaches to strategies are not restricted to national governments but are also found at decentralized levels. 'Bottom-up' approaches are characterized by the opposite approach and involve the active participation of stakeholders, and are often initiated by them. Top-down strategies persist even today, for many reasons.

- Many of the earlier sustainable development strategies emanated as ideas from *development cooperation agencies*, who are increasingly being held accountable for sustainability dimensions of their interventions – but who find it easier to employ their own frameworks rather than to work through and encourage local frameworks.
- Others have been the result of *international accords* (eg conventions) and tend to assume the pre-eminence of global stakeholders' interests.
- There is often *weak capacity* in governments, the private sector and civil society to articulate interests, build alliances, seek compromises, accept different perspectives, formulate and implement long-term goals and strategies and manage participatory and pluralistic processes (although admittedly, the private sector and civil society are not set up to undertake all these tasks – they are primarily the role of governance).
- *Professional arrogance:* Civil servants and others in positions of authority (often those in the middle ranks) have behaved as if they know best and have seen moves towards more bottom-up approaches as a threat to their status and power.
- *Mechanisms and methodologies* for organizing appropriate participation at different levels and at different stages of the planning cycle often do exist but are not commonly used, supported by laws and policies, or are unfamiliar and unclear to those usually involved, or the transaction costs and time requirements are excessive.
- *It is difficult to achieve effective participation in a single exercise* (eg poor people are forced to emphasize their immediate priorities, and also lack resources, capacity and power to engage in decision-making for the longer term).
- *It is also difficult to ensure continued commitment* and engagement of those outside government, when their past involvement in participatory processes has been shown to be mainly cosmetic and their opinions have not been taken into account.

It is important, however, to note that top-down approaches are not always synonymous with failure, nor are bottom-up approaches always successful.

Source: OECD DAC (2001b)

policy level and within organizations that is not conducive to participatory processes. Generally applicable participatory methods of information gathering (eg natural resource surveys) and planning have yet to evolve. They need both local legitimacy and recognition by central authorities. In many developing countries, public demand for participation has often been ignored. Sometimes such demands have been countered by state repression. In a few cases, as a last resort, the lack of opportunities to further their interests pushes communities to use violence. As Zazueta (1994) notes, 'the costs of violence – in terms of human lives, economic losses, and environmental damage – must be always accounted for when assessing the benefits of participation'.

Zazueta illustrates the negative and costly impact of exclusionary, non-participatory development strategies with an account of the bloody uprising of Indian peasants (of Mayan descent) in Chiapas State in Mexico in January 1994. The peasants rebelled against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) – being officially celebrated at the time – and the process of modernization that had clearly passed them by, on top of the neglect and exploitation that they had endured for over 400 years. The government at first

bombed the area but, on noting the swift and widespread social support for the peasants, it quickly acknowledged their grievances and shifted to a negotiated solution.

Linking 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' has many political implications

The different objectives of society – social, economic and environmental – need to be integrated where possible, and traded-off where they are incompatible (see Chapter 2, page 25). Institutional and individual roles and responsibilities have to change – in government, the private sector and civil society – so that new patterns of behaviour will foster sustainable development. State-dominated policy and legislation for central control needs to give way to subtler mixes with enabling legislation, and civil society and private sector checks and balances. The range of policy instruments developed through sustainable development principles in the 1990s – voluntary codes, standards and certification – as well as new forms of participatory democracy using electronic media, point away from a state-dominated model. A strategy needs to be able to accommodate them. Thus it is clear that strategies should not merely be a technocratic planning process: the political dimensions of strategies are also key (Box 6.7).

It has long been understood that a *multidisciplinary approach* is needed to handle the analysis of social, economic and environmental dimensions and their interactions; and *coordination* is required among the various authorities and interests. And, furthermore, it is broadly agreed that strong *educational efforts* are needed to demonstrate to the various actors the complexities of developmental and environmental issues, and to encourage sustainable responses.

Realization of these needs during the 1980s led to a proliferation of national strategic planning approaches for dealing with environment and development. NCSs and NEAPs, for example, were built around a multidisciplinary, coordinated approach to planning (see Chapter 3, pages 50–52).

Successful strategies have been characterized by their participation …

However, these strategies contained few provisions for *participation*, beyond consultation among a few select groups. The strategies were essentially led by a small group (usually government, and often with a significant donor input in developing countries). Successes were mixed. Even so, people closely involved in preparing and implementing such strategies and plans describe the most practical benefits in terms of, for example: enhanced understanding of sustainable development issues; improved communications and consensus on the main issues, and what to do about them; networks of committed individuals and institutions; agreements on new roles and responsibilities; and greater commitment.

As experience of past strategies shows (page 180 and Chapter 3), the more successful ones appear also to have been more participatory. Conversely, those strategies that appear to be going nowhere, even though the documentation may look good, frequently have been characterized by a lack of participation and consequently resilience, 'ownership' and commitment (Carew-Reid 1997; Wood 1997).

… especially if participation is not one-off, but is continued and refined over time

But a participatory approach is rarely associated with quick decisions. Participation along with ensuring a cyclical approach (ie periodic revision and adjustment to take account of learning from implementation and feedback from monitoring – rather a one-off effort) are two key, linked requirements for effective strategies for sustainable development (Boxes 3.1 and 3.2). In effect, a successful strategy is one in which the capacity is built up to think and work strategically, as a product of all appropriate groups in interaction. Successful strategies and policies have tended to evolve over time. Rarely have they been integrated deliberately in a single, supreme planning effort (although sometimes, perhaps, they should be). Indeed, deliberate strategic planning has always been difficult. Rather, transformations in development patterns tend to have been made through incremental responses to general economic and societal trends, political awareness and public opinion (Grayson 1993). Hence the OECD DAC approach to NSDSs – not a master plan, but a *set of continuing mechanisms that keep sustainable development on the national agenda and are able to deal with change*.

As Bass et al (1995) note:

> *It would be a counsel of perfection to suggest that policies have to be integrated from the outset, since not all possible fields of conflict can be foreseen, nor may it be politically apt to raise potential sources of conflict. It is in implementation that any strains become obvious.*

Box 6.7 The political dimensions of participation

Any significant increase in the degree of participation in strategies is likely to face a number of key political dilemmas (Bass et al 1995):

- the political dimensions of the great structural constraints and inequalities which face sustainable development (local, national and international power structures);
- whether participation is a complement to, or substitute for, political processes of democracy;
- ways of defining values and making societal choices, which are strategy tasks, but also overwhelmingly understood to be in the political domain;
- the corollaries of empowerment and participation.

These dilemmas are perceived variously – a function of which groups are pushing for participation; which groups are threatened by the professional and institutional changes required for a participatory approach; who perceives that they will be the winners, and who the losers, of a sustainable development strategy; and the existing politicization of the issues dealt with by the strategy.

The drive for a greater degree of participation in national sustainable development strategies has come from:

- *Development cooperation agencies*, which have become frustrated with the lack of implementation of past plans; which are convinced – for rural development at least – of the practical benefits of participation generally; and which aim to further foreign policy aims of increasing democratization.
- *Strategy teams* (largely government professionals and administrators and their advisers), which have become aware that technical analyses of sustainable development issues cannot, by themselves, provide an adequate picture of needs; and which have similarly become frustrated with a lack of implementation of their 'top-down' plans.
- *Governments*, particularly of newly independent countries, which are struggling with trying to replace policies and procedures set up by (colonial) authorities with those which are meaningful to the population; and those of ex-communist countries, which are aiming to replace centralized planning with approaches which motivate and sit well with people.
- *Non-governmental and citizen's groups*, which are demanding a greater role in decision-making (generally, as well as for strategies).
- To an extent, the *private sector*, which is identifying a number of opportunities for joint action in sustainable development projects.

Moreover, there are more general societal and foreign policy moves towards democracy and greater human rights, which appear to call for participation. Given the confusion over different meanings of participation, it is not surprising that there is great confusion between participation as a populist political movement and the more functional aspects of participation as applied to a strategy, irrespective of politics. As Dalal-Clayton et al (1994) note, at an ambitious extreme, the long-term goal of an NSDS could be seen as creating an alternative national consensus through the NSDS process. Participation in such a strategy would clearly amount to a political process. It should be clear that the arguments for greater local-level empowerment, and the arguments for participation, have common roots and often the same protagonists, but they are not identical.

It is sometimes held that significant progress towards sustainable development can be achieved only in a democratic society, where stakeholders have reasonable opportunities to engage in planning and decision-making processes (Banuri and Holmberg 1992). However, this contention does not address the issue in its entirety. The answer to the question 'is democracy necessary for a successful strategy?' really depends on how democracy is defined. If it means building on the best and most representative systems for participation, then democracy is certainly needed. However, the answer is 'no' if democracy means the supremacy of an individual's rights to produce and consume irrespective of the effects on others. It may also be 'no' if the electoral cycle means politicians push short-term goals to win votes from individuals with strong aspirations to consume more resources, as opposed to doing what is sustainable in the long term:

> *Current political incentives are such that politicians have to be more concerned with generating policies that secure the short-term goal of re-election, rather than tackling the inevitably fraught transition towards more sustainable development. Ironically, it is probably democracy itself that is the greatest political barrier to a truly sustainable future. (Pearce 1994)*

It is clear that the politics of democracy need to be supplemented by longer-range participatory structures, such as local authorities, interest groups and traditional associations.

Many would argue that more radical change is necessary for sustainable development, because of the prevalent inequality in distribution of resources and in the costs and benefits of their use, and because of entrenched behaviour patterns (at least in the rich North), which threaten social/environment balances. This need for radical change does not necessarily have anything to do with democracy. Indeed, democracy has tended to lead to a slow incrementalism, and is not particularly good at introducing radical change. Furthermore, the *market* has not yet offered a strong mechanism for sustainable development. Alternative means of participation – based on new professionalism, voluntary approaches, participatory methodologies and supportive institutions – are required, at least as a strong complement to political processes. These can be instituted irrespective of political positions.

Party politics, as a relatively narrow value system, should not therefore provide the main forum for strategy formulation. Party politics tends to polarize the issues: sustainable development, in contrast, may be more easily negotiated with a committed 'middle ground' of interest groups.

Source: Bass et al 1995

Science-based decisions cannot handle the value judgements needed for sustainable development

Strategy experience has made it clear that science-based and interdisciplinary approaches are helpful for identifying social, environmental and economic problems and options, but are not sufficient. They cannot address all the issues nor provide access to all necessary and useful information. Much of this is held by individuals and communities. Moreover, the decisions needed are value judgements. They need to be made with the participation of both 'winners' and 'losers', so that some sort of agreement and commitment is reached on the outcome. A people-centred approach is needed as a complement to the science-based approach. Recognizing this, many early conservation/environment strategies built in some elements of participation, albeit often in an ad hoc manner.[3] Even without adequate resources and professional skills, such efforts tend to have paid off (Bass et al 1995; Carew-Reid 1997; Lopez Ornat 1997; Wood 1997), and invariably strategies have recommended greater participation in their implementation and further iteration.

There is, therefore, a clear role for both technical inputs by individual experts and the broader involvement of many people in participatory exercises – but at the same time not overburdening these people, resulting in 'participation fatigue'. It is very important that a balance be struck between these two approaches.

Participation is increasingly enshrined in both international obligations and national laws

The need for the 'widest possible participation' in working towards sustainable development is noted in a number of chapters of Agenda 21 (Box 6.8), although there is little clarity about how to assure it. This is a tremendous challenge, without precedent. National laws (as in Bolivia – Box 6.14) and international conventions (such as the Aarhus Convention – Box 7.1) have been emerging to support a routine participatory approach in key decisions and actions.

It is also important to set participation in strategy processes in an international context. Every year, there are numerous international meetings and conferences organized by UN organizations and other international bodies, which are concerned with a broad range of issues connected to sustainable development. In many cases, these events involve debate and negotiations, which will affect individual countries and even place obligations upon them (ie through conventions, treaties and the like). In some cases, such meetings are concerned with cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary matters. In other cases, they are concerned with single issues or sectoral concerns, but ought to take into account linkages with, and impacts in, other sectors.

Experience shows that, in many cases, those selected to represent their country are ill equipped for the task. Often, they have inadequate knowledge of the subjects being discussed, or are poorly briefed

3 Few strategies, however, have been entirely participatory on the one hand, or completely non-participatory on the other. Most strategies have had to incorporate existing participation structures and methodologies, improve them or even create new ones, to get close to their declared objectives.

Box 6.8 Agenda 21 on participation

Agenda 21 refers to the need for broad participation in various chapters. For example:

In **Chapter 8** (*Integrating environment and development in decision-making*): an adjustment or even a fundamental reshaping of decision-making, in the light of country specific conditions may be necessary if environment and development is to be put at the centre of economic and political decision-making, in effect achieving full integration of these factors.

In **Chapter 23** (*Strengthening the role of the major groups*), Agenda 21 requires, in the *specific context of environment and development, the need for new forms of participation* and notes *the need of individuals, groups and organizations to participate in decisions, particularly those which affect the communities in which they live and work*.

In **Chapter 26** (*Recognizing and strengthening the role of indigenous people and their communities*), active participation is called for to incorporate their 'values, views and knowledge'.

In **Chapter 33** (*Financial resources and mechanisms*): *priorities should be established by means that incorporate public participation and community involvement providing equal opportunity for men and women … In this respect, consultative groups and round tables and other nationally-based mechanisms can play a facilitative role.*

In **Chapter 37** (*National mechanisms and international cooperation for capacity-building*): *as an important aspect of overall planning, each country should seek internal consensus at all levels of society on policies and programmes needed for short- and long-term capacity building to implement its Agenda 21 programme. This consensus should result from a participatory dialogue of relevant interest groups and lead to an identification of skill gaps, institutional capacities and capabilities, technological and scientific requirements and resource needs to enhance environmental knowledge and administration to integrate environment and development.*

It is notable that Agenda 21 calls, effectively, for participation in all the elements of a strategy cycle.

Source: UNCED (1992)

beforehand about them. Sometimes (particularly in small or poor countries), staff resources are so limited that a particular individual finds him or herself having to cover an array of responsibilities and tasks, and therefore to represent their country at many international conferences and meetings – even though they may lack sufficient understanding of the issues concerned, or of the domestic relevance and consequences of agreements reached. In other cases, they might be a delegate because no one else is available, or perhaps just because it was merely their turn to travel. As a result, countries (particularly poor ones) are not able to participate effectively in international meetings, or represent and defend their country's interests during debate.

Local participation can also improve a country's ability to involve itself effectively in international processes

An effective strategy process will involve debate about the international dimensions of development (eg the impacts on the country of globalization and its possible responses, regional concerns, harmonizing commitments under treaties and conventions, etc). This will enable countries better to prepare for participation in international fora. It will help those charged with attending such meetings to be more conversant with, and better prepared on, a wide array of linked issues concerning the sustainable development of their country and the international dimensions of the issues concerned. Participation in strategy processes will also indicate those individuals who might be the most able and appropriate persons to attend particular international events.

Ensuring effective participation – issues and planning requirements

Scoping the basic requirements

Requirements will depend on the scope and goals of the strategy and the likely participants, as well as on political and social circumstances. In general, the needs are:

- *Agreed principles for participation*. These need to be the subject of early discussion, based on the diagnostic of previous and existing strategies (see Tables 5.12 and 5.13). They are likely to include: promotion of diversity, equity, representation, transparency, learning, time to consult and inclusiveness (see also Boxes 6.10, 6.16 and Box 3.1 on principles). National legislation and international conventions may offer further principles.
- *A proper understanding* of all the strategy stakeholders – those with a legitimate interest in the strategy – with a considered and concrete approach to include the more vulnerable and disenfranchised among them.
- *Catalysts for participation*, for example NGOs and local authorities, to start participation and to link decisions that need to be taken centrally with those appropriate to more local levels.
- *Specific activities and events* – around which to focus participation.
- *A phased approach* – that is, start modestly, building on existing participation systems; then deepen and focus participation with each iteration of processes.
- *Appropriate participatory methods* for appraising needs and possibilities, dialogue, ranking solutions, forming partnerships, resolving conflicts and reaching solutions.
- *Adequate resources, skills and time* – effective participation tends to start slowly and requires early investment; it becomes more cost-effective with time.
- *Learning environments*, for example policies, laws and institutions that encourage, support, manage and reward participation in the planning/development process – including specially formulated groups where appropriate institutions do not exist – and which allow participants and professionals to test approaches. Their presence will greatly support the above requirements.
- *Demonstrable results and benefits, especially in the early phases* – stakeholders need to be convinced that their investments of time and other resources will have impact.

Consideration of costs and benefits of participation

Stakeholders need to talk through the costs and benefits of participation …

In principle, all who have a stake in the strategy, or the outcomes that flow from it, should be part of the processes relating to its development and implementation. This would realize some of the benefits of participation noted in Box 6.9. But this potentially means the whole population of a country. However, very extensive participation is clearly neither possible nor necessarily desirable – it would be extremely costly. Injudicious or excessive participation will help no one, and may engender reactions against participation. Box 6.10 sets out the financial and other costs of participation. In addition, in any country or situation, there will be a range of constraints to participation, as illustrated by the case of Joint Forest Management in India (Box 6.11).

In designing a strategy, the benefits of high or low degrees of participation need to be weighed against the associated costs and weaknesses. Equally, the means to overcome the weaknesses should be identified, as summarized in Table 6.4.

Clarity of expectations

… so that they can be clear on expectations

Involvement in a broad-ranging process such as an NSDS is likely to raise expectations, as it deals with so many issues and takes so much effort: involving people in setting targets and agreeing social objectives uses

Box 6.9 The benefits of participation in strategies

Strategy information and analysis tasks:

- Basing the strategy on a broad knowledge base and spread of opinion; offering the best informed judgement on issues, trade-offs and options in the time available.
- Improved communications within and between interest groups.
- Increased debate, mutual education, understanding of major issues both within and between different groups.
- Tackling issues that cannot be identified, properly defined or dealt with by any other means (eg changing values, local conditions, rights and claims and lifestyles, and particularly issues such as poverty which otherwise may be submerged).
- Application of the potentials of group dynamics.

Strategy policy formulation and planning:

- Application of consensus-building and conflict-resolution potentials to major societal decisions.
- Practicality and realism of objectives, targets and standards, which are negotiated so that they are locally acceptable, meaningful and practicable; this avoids the risk of 'imposing' approaches, or blanket solutions.
- 'Ownership' of, and commitment to, the strategy can be built up by groups actually working on it (essential if the strategy is to result in social mobilization).
- Political credibility of the strategy is higher than when it is just a product of technicians and bureaucrats.
- Accountability and transparency – people can see what 'government' does.
- Greater equity. Every policy or market decision has a redistributive effect (involving who gains and who loses, over time, space or social group); participation can link decision-making back with groups that have become marginalized through previous decisions and so help an equitable definition of trade-offs.

Strategy implementation and monitoring:

- Increased, and more relevant, capacity (learning by exposure and debate; learning by doing).
- More extensive networks for tasks, such as monitoring.
- Through utilizing networks, others buy into the process.
- Efficient mobilization and management of resources and skills.
- Greater likelihood of change to more appropriate behaviour by different groups.
- Greater likelihood of self-mobilization for sustainable development.

Source: Bass et al (1995)

their time and energy, which can leave them with high expectations of rewards for the results of their labours. Most 'raised expectations' should be welcomed – they are generally a driving force for people's motivation and capabilities for organization and collaboration.

However, if improperly managed, participatory processes can result in expectations being raised too high among certain groups. And the increased diversity of participation makes conflict more likely. For example, there can be expectations (that cannot be necessarily met) that:

- whatever problems or issues are raised will automatically become priorities for action or can be solved in the very near future;
- all stakeholders will be required to agree completely (full consensus) before the process can move forward;
- tangible rewards or incentives for participation will continue through all stages of the iterative process;
- things will change rapidly or an immediate boost to development will come to a particular locality (eg development projects, new or revamped infrastructure or services, investment and new jobs);

Box 6.10 The costs of participation

The value of participation in strategic planning and decision-making is now generally accepted. However, it is sometimes assumed that the maximum participation of all of the people all of the time is necessary and a good thing. It is not. Complete participation may actually lead to complete inertia, due to the costs involved and practical difficulties such as transportation, reaching a quorum, time and energy. The costs of participation depend on various factors (below). However, while initially high, the costs can reduce with each iteration of the strategy as the scope, purpose and methodologies for participation of each group become clearer and better focused.

Cost of communication and providing access to information: If people are to be actively involved in strategic planning, they need to have a thorough understanding of the process as it unfolds and decisions that are being made. This requires effective and timely feedback, the sharing of reports and a recognition of the contribution of different groups and individuals. The many institutions and individuals engaging in debate will need to have access to – and understand – key information important to the issue(s) being discussed. This requires communication through the medium appropriate to the groups in question (telecommunications, mass or traditional media, various fora) which has cost implications (Chapter 7).

The cost of raising expectations: Participation may generate considerable excitement, and expectations may be raised. If there is no follow-up to early discussions, disillusion may set in and jeopardize people's willingness to continue to participate. This can be minimized by cautious initial discussions that focus on problem identification and provide all stakeholders with clear ideas of what is possible and what is not, given the resources that are available (see page 193).

The costs of specialist skills. Skills in participatory enquiry, communications, education and media activities are all essential in order to establish the right linkages and ensure quality of participation and communications. Open and frank discussions over key issues (eg resource allocation and use) can lead to conflict that needs to be addressed through specialist skills.

Transaction costs of developing and maintaining institutional mechanisms for local participation, including the non-market costs involved in conflict resolution, time spent in meetings and time spent on resource management. There are also costs for food and accommodation, and the potential of political and social disputes that surface or are generated by the intervention of outsiders.

The costs to stakeholders of being actively involved: The costs of participation depend on the types and numbers of participants, their location and the opportunity costs of their participation. Many stakeholders will be able to engage through their existing jobs and roles. Others will 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). Some women may find it particularly difficult to engage in participatory processes due to the multiplicity of tasks they otherwise perform. So ways of compensating for this, or for providing assistance, may need to be found if they are to participate effectively. The example of New Zealand is outlined in Box 6.25.

Time requirements – it takes time to establish trust, especially at some local levels, and a framework within which people may be encouraged to collaborate with outsiders. It has often taken between 18 months and five years to set up and undertake the more comprehensive participation exercises associated with national strategies.

Source: Adapted from IIED (1998c)

- government officials and politicians will always be available and supportive, even when recommended actions or outcomes are not politically expedient or palatable;
- sufficient effort will also be devoted to lower group priorities which are nonetheless important to a minority of stakeholders;
- respect for the views of grass-roots participants, and the levels of trust achieved during the initial stages of participation, will be ongoing;
- all stakeholders will be involved in every stage and activity of the strategy process;
- the same stakeholder groups will be represented at all activities of the strategy process.

Box 6.11 Key constraints to participation: the experience of Joint Forest Management, India

- *In the initial phases, participation requires considerable time and extra effort in development of human resources*, for which few incentives are provided. Individuals, institutions and programmes may feel constrained in making such investments, as they are currently evaluated primarily by the criteria of achievement of physical and financial targets.
- *Participation requires major reversals in the role of external professionals*, from a 'management' role to a facilitating one. This requires changes in behaviour and attitudes, and can only be gradual. To do this will entail significant retraining for which, usually, inadequate resources are devoted.
- *Participation threatens conventional careers*; professionals feel a loss of power if they have to deal with local communities as equals and include them in decision-making. This discourages professionals from taking risks and developing collaborative relationships with communities.
- *Participation and institutional development are difficult to measure*, and require quantitative and qualitative performance indicators together. Existing monitoring and evaluation systems cannot measure these well. Thus, physical and financial indicators, which are easier to measure, dominate performance evaluation and impact analysis.
- *Programmes tend to retain financial decision-making powers for themselves.* While many programmes initiated by external agencies tend to use participatory methods for planning, they do not make corresponding changes in resource allocation mechanisms to local institutions. This hampers the growth of local institutions and leads to poor sustainability of the programmes.
- *Participation is a long, drawn-out process and needs to be iterative in the initial period before being scaled up and replicated.* Most development programmes tend to blueprint the process of participation and institutional-building in the early phases, without enough experimentation and iteration. The institutional form thus evolved is ineffective.
- *Participation is also directly linked with equity, which threatens elites.* This political dilemma is addressed on pages 178–186.

Source: Bass and Shah (1994)

If these expectations are not managed, it can lead to disillusionment and anger. It is important, at the outset, that the strategy participants know just how far up the decision-making 'hierarchies' their recommendations can and will reach. One of the failures of participation has been disillusionment resulting from unrealistic expectations about how far-reaching, and how quickly, the results of participation will make a difference to policies and plans.

One solution is to openly debate the costs and benefits (above). Further, to ensure continuing good communication and willingness to develop collaboration between stakeholders. This helps get expectations and realities out in the open, and allows realistic goals, standards and targets to be hammered out with key stakeholders. Other ways to deal with unrealistic expectations include (Higman et al 1999):

- At the outset, *clarify what might be possible* in the short-, medium- and long-term.
- Hire/work with *people who understand local issues.*
- Ensure that key strategy staff have *a consistent picture* of the scope of the strategy. Widely differing views among staff will lead to confused perceptions among other stakeholders.
- *Respect different positions* and keep communication channels open.
- Maximize *regular face-to-face contact* with stakeholders.
- Ensure *continuity of approaches* and stability of staff in positions which involve collaboration with stakeholders.
- Try to *solve problems while they are still small.*
- Give consultation processes *plenty of time*, and get stakeholders to focus on priorities.
- In developing initiatives aimed at improved stakeholder benefits, *start with small experiments* in one area first, ensuring that stakeholders are part of the plan.
- *Allow adaptation and flexibility* in operations involving stakeholders.

Table 6.4 Illustrative comparison of strategies with high and low intensities of participation

Low participation	High participation	Overcoming participation weaknesses
Participation only up to level 3 of Table 6.2; that is, listening, giving information and consultation only	Participation up to Level 5 of Table 6.2; that is, also participation in agenda-setting, analysis and consensus	
Few groups involved	Many groups involved	
Pros	Cons	
■ Low costs of participation	■ Higher costs	■ Share costs among actors
■ Few local expectations raised	■ Can raise expectations	■ Phase participation process
■ Relatively quick	■ Slower (depends on systems used)	■ Quick first iteration; then deeper
■ Technical detail	■ Less technical detail	■ Bring in expertise (eg in participatory inquiry)
■ Technical rigour	■ Trustworthiness problems	■ Framework for judging
■ Clear leadership of process	■ Shared/changing leadership	■ Institutionalize this
■ Strategy management easy	■ Complex strategy management	■ Hire personnel with experience
■ Gives strong directions	■ Directions more devolved	■ More monitoring and coordination
■ High involvement at top	■ Less control at top	■ Strengthen top–bottom links
■ Few conflicts during preparation	■ Many conflicts exposed	■ Deal with them in phases
■ Understood by donors	■ Difficult for donor cycles	■ Focus donors; flagship projects
■ Can be quick political impact	■ Political impact slower/surer	■ Major, phased strategy events
■ Done with routine procedures	■ Incentives needed to participate	■ Incentives early in participation plan
	■ Participation fatigue in actors	■ Only appropriate participation
	■ Participation skills needed	■ Hire and train early
Cons	Pros	
■ Limited understanding by public	■ Strong public understanding	
■ Limited 'energy source' for ideas	■ Release much energy for ideas/inputs	
■ Limited commitment to implement	■ Strong implementation commitment	
■ Have to 'sell' to implementers	■ Strategy not a surprise to actors	
■ Undue influence of external experts	■ External experts used appropriately	
■ High (cross-sectoral) technical skills needed	■ Does not depend on high science; participation offers analogues	
■ Much relevant information missing	■ Uncovers information that matters	
■ Analysis/policy may not reflect reality	■ Analysis/policy checked with reality	
■ Weak processes for sustainable development trade-offs	■ Strong processes result	
■ Judgement of a few 'experts' only	■ Gives best informed judgement	
■ Only government implements	■ Much more local/private implementation	

Source: Bass et al (1995)

Consideration of scale and links

A strategy process is likely to require several strands or layers of stakeholder collaboration. This might involve, for example, core groups surrounded by larger 'sounding boards' and groups who (initially) address separate parts of key issues. Provision also needs to be made to enable additional stakeholders to be invited

into the process if gaps become clear. Feedback loops between different levels (local to national, and international) and between different strategies (such as sectoral strategies for biodiversity and forestry and the NSDS) can help to inform dialogue and decision-making. In identifying options and models for implementing outcomes, the involvement of groups likely to be involved in actual implementation is critical.

Representation, selection and intermediaries

The proper *selection of participants* is perhaps the most critical step in establishing a strategy process. The composition of participants will determine both the legitimacy of the strategy and its ability to develop new ideas, insights and consensus for action. Issues of representativeness, sampling and appropriate degrees of participation are important. A balance needs to be struck between involving as wide a range of participants as possible to forge a broad-based and durable consensus, and avoiding overloading the facilitating and managerial capacities of those who are organizing the strategy process.

Early efforts to ensure wide, balanced representation – especially redressing power imbalances …

It is very important to establish *transparent criteria by which to identify relevant stakeholder groups*, and to select bodies to invite to represent such groups in the strategy process. Information about these criteria should be provided to all participating and non-participating stakeholder groups as well as the general public. Key criteria include:

- the degree to which representatives identify primarily with the group in question (rather than with other interests);
- the legitimacy and accountability of stakeholder representatives within and towards their own defined interest groups;
- equitable arrangements within the represented stakeholder interest groups concerning the participation of their representatives; for example, democratic processes to elect/appoint representatives and requirements to report back;
- the expertise that particular bodies/individuals can bring to the process;
- commitment to the strategy process;
- track record of involvement in multi-stakeholder processes.

Communities have a fundamental right to self-determination, which needs to be respected. In cases where a potential agreement affects the future lives of a stakeholder group, they need to have the right to say 'no' even if they are in the minority. They should, however, hear all arguments and actively participate in discussions before they make a decision.

It is very important to ensure the inclusion of service user *representatives*, and representatives of interest groups who are traditionally under-represented in planning efforts. In its planning guide for Local Agenda 21s, ICLEI (1996a) suggests a matrix exercise to help in the identification of partners for stakeholder and working groups (Figure 6.4) and a checklist to verify that representation is inclusive for effective sustainable development planning (Box 6.12).

The representativeness and legitimacy of stakeholder representatives has been the focus of considerable discussion. As UNED Forum (2001) notes, attention has tended to focus on NGOs:

> *many of which, particularly those collaborating in NGO networks, have been developing mechanisms of self-governance to ensure democratic, transparent and truly participatory processes as a basis of their mandate. Certification schemes would be another option; yet the question of who should govern or control certifying bodies remains unsolved. One should keep in mind, however, that these questions not only apply to NGOs but other sectors of civil society as well, such as the business community, trade unions, local authorities, women, and so on.*

Potential partners	Components of sustainable development		
	1.Community development ■ Housing ■ Social services ■ Public safety	**2. Economic development** ■ Transportation ■ Employment ■ Tourism	**3. Ecosystem development** ■ Pollution control ■ Green space ■ Waste management
A. Community residents ■ Special groups of people (women, youth and indigenous people) ■ Community leaders ■ Households ■ Teachers			
B. Community-based Organizations ■ Coalitions ■ Church groups ■ Formal women's groups ■ Special interest groups			
C. Independent sector ■ NGOs ■ Academia ■ Media ■ Political parties ■ Trades unions and workers' organizations			
D. Private/Entrepreneurial sector ■ Environmental service agencies ■ Small business/ cooperatives ■ Banks			
E. Local Government and Associations ■ Elected officials ■ Management staff ■ Field/staff operations ■ Regional associations			
F. National/Regional Government ■ Planning Commission ■ Utilities ■ Service agencies ■ Financial agencies			

Source: Adapted from ICLEI (1996)

Figure 6.4 Identifying partners for stakeholder and working groups

Where particular stakeholder interest groups are not organized, one approach to ensuring their involvement is through *intermediaries or surrogates*. Surrogates may be any group, organization (eg an NGO) or individual that has close links with the concerned stakeholders and is capable of representing their views and interests during the strategy process. For example, in Nigeria, female extension agents served as surrogates for farm women at a national planning workshop on women in agriculture (World Bank 1996).

A key issue is the *voluntary participation* of stakeholders. It is vital that stakeholders are informed adequately, and sufficiently early, to enable them to make a decision about participating. Such information should include the role that they can play in the strategy process or in a particular group, the amount of

Box 6.12 Checklist for partner selection in Local Agenda 21s

Ensure representation of:

1. under-represented groups;
2. service-users – those people who use and are affected by services;
3. service providers – those people who control and manage services or service systems;
4. parties with a particular expertise related to the relevant services or issues;
5. parties whose interests are affected by the service and the service system.

In selecting partners, consider:

1. the scope of work to be undertaken by the partners;
2. the need to develop a critical mass of organizations and individuals who have the political will to take action;
3. the degree of inclusiveness it is hoped to achieve;
4. the skills, knowledge, and experience that different individuals or organizations can contribute;
5. the inclusion of parties who will need to be involved in the implementation of any plan;
6. the inclusion of organizations or individuals with credibility within their own constituencies.

Source: ICLEI (1996)

time they will be expected to commit and the amount of work, travel and so on involved. They should have the right to decline if they are unhappy about arrangements (see Box 6.13).

Often it is only during the process of raising awareness during the advocacy stages of strategy formulation that potential partners become aware of their stake in the process. This is illustrated by the case of Guyana's National Biodiversity Action Plan when, during its formulation stage, potential partners were made aware, in concrete terms, of their potential interests and role in biodiversity conservation and realized that they too had a stake in biodiversity conservation (Table 6.5).

… will be rewarded with a credible, enduring strategy process

The legitimacy of a strategy process is strongly associated with clarity among stakeholders on the strategy's purpose and scope, how they will be involved and how they will interact. It will suffer if key stakeholders distance themselves from the process, if they are marginalized or if they *feel* marginalized. If this begins to occur, it might be better to review the design of the process and/or to carefully work out what kind of legitimacy it can claim, and conduct it clearly within those limitations.

Box 6.13 Transparency in the selection of stakeholder representatives

Stakeholder groups need to be transparent about their procedures of selecting representatives to the strategy process, within and without the process itself. Stakeholder groups should also be transparent to others about their elections or appointment criteria, and about criteria being used to identify individuals with expertise on the respective issues at hand. The process of identifying individuals to represent groups is helped by regular election or appointment processes within stakeholder networks and associations – eg caucus coordinator elections among NGOs, appointments of representatives to particular processes by stakeholder groups such as industry, trade unions, and so forth. Other participants should be allowed to bring to the floor any problems they might have with criteria other stakeholders are using.

It is important to balance the numbers of participants from each stakeholder group, and, in some cases, with regard to which views they are likely to represent. Stakeholder groups should be required to meet certain balance criteria within their delegations, such as regional and gender balance. Preferably, representatives of stakeholder groups should remain the same persons over the course of a strategy cycle. If representatives have to be replaced, they need to be briefed and be introduced to the group.

Source: UNED Forum (2001)

Table 6.5 Stakeholder interests and roles: the case of Guyana's National Biodiversity Action Plan

Stakeholder group	Interest in biodiversity	Role in biodiversity
General public	As part of national patrimony biodiversity is an asset to each citizen	Taking action at the local and other levels to conserve and wisely use biodiversity; support various actions in the Plan
Natural resource public agencies	Granting of access to biodiversity and other resources that affect biodiversity	Conservation of biodiversity resources; minimizing impact of use activities on biodiversity; national level planning
Environmental regulatory agency	Monitoring impact of development activities on biodiversity; regulating access; developing policy, legislation, and administrative mechanisms; promoting public awareness	Establishing framework for sustainable biodiversity use and conservation; improving public knowledge and attitudes towards biodiversity; national level planning
Regional and local administrative authorities	Maintenance and use of biodiversity resources	Conservation of biodiversity; local and regional planning; promotion of public awareness
Private sector entities	Utilization of biodiversity and other resources; supporting research and planning	Implementing conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; supporting various actions in the Plan
Local communities	Subsistence and commercial use of biodiversity	Conservation of biodiversity; provision of information and sharing of knowledge
Academic community	Research, training and public awareness on biodiversity	Providing scientific information on biodiversity; improve public awareness
Funding agencies	Conservation, research and sustainable use of biodiversity	Providing financial and technical support for biodiversity action
Media entities	Information on biodiversity as natural resource and national patrimony	Improving public awareness on biodiversity
Non-governmental organizations	Promoting action towards conservation and use of biodiversity; public awareness	Supporting action on biodiversity; conservation advocacy; improving public awareness

Source: GEPA (1999)

Infrastructure, organization and legal framework for participation

For effective participation, the basic infrastructure of involvement needs to be in place (see pages 186–194).

Where participatory structures are weak, several emerging new types of approach can be tried

Use of existing structures: The more well developed and regularly used the existing participation structures and mechanisms (see Table 6.6), the more cost-effective they are likely to be. If managerial capacities are weak and participatory mechanisms are poor, the number of participants may be limited at first – but this should be increased with the development and reiteration of specific strategy tasks.

However, where such participatory structures are lacking, weak or ineffective, it has usually been found necessary to establish new structures – even if informal or one-off. In practice, if they work, they are likely to survive into subsequent cycles or iterations of the strategy. Examples include:

- special committees;
- focus groups on particular subjects/issues;
- round tables to discuss specific common or cross-sectoral issues;
- core groups to take issues forward;

Table 6.6 Examples of likely existing structures/institutions and methodologies for participation

Participation structures/institutions	Participation methodologies
■ Planning system	■ Participatory learning and action (PLA)
■ Traditional structures, eg village-based systems, religious systems	■ Resource surveys
■ Education/academic system	■ 'Green' audits
■ Extension system	■ Planning methodologies, environmental impact assessment, etc
■ Arts/theatre	■ Consensus-building and negotiations
■ Media	■ Traditional methods, eg of conflict resolution
■ Political system	■ Communications and information techniques, eg 'phone-ins' and e-mail networks
■ National Councils for Sustainable Development	■ Participatory dialogue
■ Discussion forums (formal/informal, professional, etc)	■ Focus groups
■ Women's' groups	■ Roundtables
■ Unions	■ Seminars/workshops/working groups
■ Cooperatives	■ SEA and SEAn (see pages 149–152)
■ Formal multi-country political bodies or negotiating machinery	

- sectoral and professional associations, for example, agricultural or horticultural societies, or associations of engineers or planners.

A legal framework for participation may already be in place …

The legal framework for participation is fundamental to all the above. Public participation rests on the principles of free speech, and rights to a healthy environment and secure livelihood. A clear legal framework is needed within which to exercise such rights. It tends to be more fully developed within the urban and rural planning systems of most countries, and in some EIA legislation. Specifically, the legal framework needs to sanction: public access to information held by public authorities; participation in decision-making processes; and involvement in judicial and administrative review. Such sanctions, if they are to be more than symbolic, require backing up by effective procedures, notably the requirement of prior informed consent, due notice of impending decisions, and channels to object and make appeals. Successful strategies tend to have developed ad hoc procedures where legislative procedures are absent or not fully exercised (REC 1994b).

… or can be developed – perhaps through the strategy process itself

Recognizing that participation must be assured, some countries have introduced laws to actively promote greater participation, particularly of those groups often marginalized from decision-making. In recent years, many developing countries have introduced participatory mechanisms in decentralizing their planning systems (see Box 6.21). For example, the Popular Participation Law in Bolivia promotes decentralized government and aims to allow municipalities and their citizens (particular in remote areas) greater control over social services and basic infrastructure (Box 6.14).

An innovative and useful approach adopted by member states of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) benefited from the synergies of intergovernmental collaboration. OECS member states are all small, and suffer limitations of human resource and institutional capacities. In a very involved and lengthy participatory process spanning a period of over three years, the OECS fashioned a legally binding Eastern Caribbean Environmental Charter formally adopted in 2001 which enshrines commitment

Box 6.14 The Popular Participation Law, Bolivia

Prior to 1995, 42 per cent of the Bolivian population, all of them indigenous groups or peasants, lived in dispersed rural communities, without any official mechanism of governance, and without access to the resources necessary to meet basic human needs. Besides those residing in these isolated communities, many more Indians and peasants had moved into urban areas, principally La Paz, Santa Cruz and Cochabamba, where they faced overwhelming unemployment and poverty, often receiving little or no support from municipal governments.

The Popular Participation law (1994), implemented in 1995, is a decentralization programme that divided the country's provinces into 314 sections, each with a local-elected municipal government. Many of the municipalities had to be created from scratch. They were given control over the physical infrastructure in their jurisdiction (eg health, education, culture, sports, local streets and local irrigation efforts). To ensure greater possibilities for participation than occasional elections, the new law formally recognizes in each community a grass-roots organization to represent civil society (*Organización Territorial de Base*, OTB) and affords these OTBs specific rights and obligations within their municipalities (Table 6.7). The members of the OTB must be representative of a given community, and each OTB must elect one representative to serve on the municipality's *Comité de Vigilancia* (surveillance committee). The latter elaborates proposals from the villages and controls the municipal budget and is thus planned as a form of 'social control' of 'good governance' of municipal government.

Table 6.7 Rights and obligations of OTBs

Rights of OTBs	Obligations of OTBs
1 Propose, control and supervise the delivery of public services in accordance with the needs of the community	1 Identify, prioritize, participate and cooperate in the execution and administration of public works for the collective well-being
2 Participate in and promote actions related to the growth and preservation of the environment, the ecological equilibrium, and sustainable development	2 Contribute to the maintenance and protection of public, municipal and community goods
3 Represent the community in forcing the modification of actions, decisions, public works or services undertaken by the municipal governments	3 Make available to the communities their records regarding their actions in the territory
4 Propose the removal or ratification of education and health authorities within the municipality	4 Introduce administrative and judicial resources in defence of the rights they have under the law
5 Have access to information regarding the resources destined for popular participation efforts	5 Promote equitable access for women and men to the various levels of political representation

The law includes allocation of 20 per cent of the republic's revenues to the municipalities (85 per cent for projects and 15 per cent for administration) on a per capita basis, so that the 42 per cent of the population living in remote areas now have more control over social services and basic infrastructure (previously large cities received most of the government disbursements).

In parallel, the Education Reform Law specifies eight different 'popular participation mechanisms' or councils, which the municipalities create and control. Two of them are directly created by OTBs, giving these civil society representatives access to the planning, development and supervision of educational activities and services. Other councils, made up of private citizens, government representatives and educational professionals, are charged with ensuring that the goals of the reform process are met. There are even councils of Indian groups to oversee the introduction of bilingualism and multiculturalism into the education system. These mechanisms ensure that, within national guidelines for standards and objectives, the new education system in each municipality will be built and monitored by a partnership between citizens and local governments.

The municipal councils are functioning, but in many municipalities it has been the town elite who have been elected as councillors and they do not represent the majority of the rural population. The surveillance committees are functioning sub-optimally in many municipalities. Distances are great so that it is difficult for members of the surveillance committees to meet. But, more importantly, they are an artificial construction that have little to do with realities in many rural areas and have no natural role to play – there are long-standing councils of authorities at the village level (elected village councils). These commonly operate by consensus, so it is not unusual for all members of the council of authorities to turn up at meetings of the municipal council, the members of which are town dwellers and get annoyed by the villagers' presence to ask for particular projects/actions to be taken, and they invoke the law to conduct their operations. The difference between the two social systems shows.

The Popular Participation Law intended to change national and local power structures and, in theory, acknowledge the indigenous rural population and its social organizations which had been marginalized for centuries. The new law has yet to achieve its goals. The political parties are still the main power holders in Bolivia, nationally and locally, and this still tends to exclude the indigenous population.

Source: Andersson (1999); IADB (1996)

to introduce participatory planning systems and structures (Box 6.15). Participants included all ministers with responsibility for environmental policy and management of each member state, governmental and intergovernmental institutions, NGOs and donors. They collaborated under the mandate of the OECS Ministers of the Environment Policy Committee (EPC).

Obligations by each member state are explicit and implementation is monitored at EPC meetings. This sub-regional approach enabled eight countries with limited legal infrastructure and other resources to fashion an instrument that can be adapted easily to suit national conditions. Using this strategy OECS countries are seeking to achieve collectively what would have been difficult or impossible (for some member states) to achieve individually.

The state of government–civil society relations helps or hinders participation

Government-civil society relations will determine what kinds of participation can proceed in practice, and how much participation will achieve. Where relations between government and civil society are good, the conditions for effective strategies for sustainable development are good. The converse is also true. It is vital that the interaction between government and non-governmental groups be strengthened – the strategy process itself can gradually improve this. Also central to the pursuit of sustainability is the need to strengthen a country's democratic institutions and elected bodies, particularly parliamentary assemblies.

The strategy secretariat should coordinate the participation processes …

The NSDS secretariat (Chapter 4) or others organizing meetings, events or other gatherings need to consider and make known information about meeting times and locations, transport, and even arrangements for such matters as childcare and access for the handicapped, etc. There are always likely to be barriers to the effective participation of some stakeholders, whether for cultural, religious or other reasons, and special activities may be required if their inputs are to be assured. The secretariat should avoid taking unilateral decisions that limit the range or number of participants or compose groups in certain ways. Rather this challenge should be referred to the steering committee, which should be representative of the main stakeholder groups involved.

Planning for participation in strategies

… including planning for participation

Experience of strategic planning over the past two decades indicates a number of requirements for effective participation (page 193). All of these requirements will need to be well planned if the benefits of participation are to be realized. Otherwise, interest groups can be left out of the process, the complex organizational tasks of participation can be underestimated, and the many prerequisites required may not be in place in time. This entails various tasks, which might be coordinated by the NSDS secretariat with a broad proto-group of stakeholders:

(a) *Mapping out the themes* that may need to be worked on during the strategy process and by different groups of stakeholders: for example, sectoral, cross-sectoral or comprehensive sustainable development issues.

(b) *Identifying the main levels* at which policy and institutional changes will be needed to address the above themes/issues – usually: national, provincial and local.

(c) *Stakeholder analysis:* (see page 120) to determine representativeness, interests, dynamics and power relations.

The initial definition of strategy themes, levels and stakeholders (tasks a, b and c) can be tackled together. For effective participation, this should not be done entirely by a government department or a development cooperation agency. It is important to get the local 'ownership' right, for tasks a, b and c will determine the choice of participation structures and methodologies, and incentives required for participation.

Box 6.15 Enshrining participation in legislation: principles of the Eastern Caribbean Environmental Charter

Several of the Charter's principles bind member states to enshrine participation in domestic legislation:

Principle 4: Ensure meaningful participation by civil society in decision-making

Each Contracting State agrees to:

1. establish, strengthen and promote institutional structures and procedures for the broad participation by civil society in the design, implementation and evaluation of decision-making processes and programmes;
2. uphold the right of everyone to seek, receive and disseminate clear and timely information on environmental matters, and on all development plans and activities in which they have an interest, and which are likely to affect their lives;
3. guarantee the right of everyone with an interest, to transmit comments on proposed activities to the competent authority, before any formal decision is taken;
4. provide opportunities for the expression of ideas, and the exchange of information and traditional knowledge on environmental management between organizations, communities and individuals, as well as facilitating their effective participation in the formulation, adoption and execution of decisions affecting their lives.

Principle 18: Implementation

Each Contracting State agrees to:

1. adopt the Eastern Caribbean Environmental Management Strategy (hereinafter called the ECEMS) of the contracting states to guide the implementation of the Principles contained in this Charter;
2. cooperate in good faith with each other to achieve optimal results from their environmental policies and actions relating to the use of transboundary natural resources, and in the effective prevention or abatement of transboundary environmental problems;
3. communicate timely and relevant information on all aspects of the Charter's Principles to other interested States and persons likely to be affected by planned or actualized development activity;
4. undertake to apply equal standards at all times, in respect of addressing issues concerning the impact or adverse effects of transboundary natural resources, on the environment;
5. work concertedly together to implement the Principles enunciated in this Charter;
6. ensure that the requisite actions outlined under the heading of Commitments, and contained in the annex to this Charter, are strenuously pursued.

Principle 19: Obligations of Contracting States

Each Contracting State shall recognize the objectives, commitments and the interrelated Principles enshrined in this Charter, and shall take the necessary steps to adopt such legislative or other measures as may be necessary, to give effect to the provisions of this Charter.

Source: OECS (2001)

(d) *Choice of participation structures and methodologies.* The precise participation structure or methodology used at any time within a strategy will depend upon:

- the *specific strategy task* (information collection, analysis, decision-making, implementation, monitoring, etc);
- the *maturity of the strategy* (the number of cycles or revisions the strategy has been through);
- the nature of *horizontal/vertical* links and the actors involved.

Box 6.5 lists some *participatory structures* that are often best suited to specific groups. Based on experience so far, for most strategy tasks, the promising participation structures appear to be: the planning system; traditional structures (eg village-based systems, religious systems); the existing avenues for people's participation in specific sectors (eg public health, adult education, agricultural extension); and specially

Table 6.8 Examples of participatory methodologies for strategy tasks[4]

Tasks	Methodologies
Survey, analysis and monitoring	Participatory enquiry, including participatory resource surveys and 'green' audits
Decision-making	Consensus-building, negotiations and traditional methods, eg of conflict resolution
Implementation	Voluntary agreements (eg covenants) and joint management
Communications, information, education and monitoring	Seminars, workshops, interviews, phone-ins, websites, e-mail networks, exhibitions and plays

constituted committees, round tables and other groups formulated to take advantage of group dynamics. For communications, information, education and monitoring tasks, the useful structures so far have been: the education system, extension system, workshops and conferences, the arts/theatre and the media.

It is likely that the government planning and administration structure, and the political system will largely determine how a strategy for sustainable development can use both strategic planning frameworks and other local initiatives, and how far it can use existing decentralization structures. It will also partly determine what kind of mix of participatory and multidisciplinary approaches can be taken.

Some useful *participation methodologies* are listed in Table 6.8, and are described on pages 207–224. In most countries, the use of many of these methodologies in strategic planning processes will be relatively new, and skills in using them will be limited. So planning for capacity building will be important.

(e) *Communications, information and education*

The participatory aspects of a strategy require an ethically motivated, educated and socially aware public. However, in many areas, the public may not understand, or simply may not be interested, in the issues of 'sustainable development' as currently discussed in many national-level fora. Clearly, a two-way process of education and consultation is needed so that the sustainable development concept is understood in local terms. Chapter 7 discusses the considerable challenge of communicating 'sustainable development', and effective processes of communication, information and education which are essential complements and precursors to participation in a strategy.

(f) *Phasing and coordination*

Participation takes time, and government agencies may need to participate among themselves first before being able to interact with others

It is inevitable that a strategy process will be slower with participation than without, but experience shows that a participatory process is likely to be much better (Bass et al 1995; Carew-Reid 1997; Lopez Ornat 1997; Wood 1997). We should expect an NSDS to progress in a manner and over a timescale set by the main participation processes, and by the pace at which stakeholders consult with their constituencies and reach agreements. Consensus building and conflict resolution can take a considerable time; and past experience indicates that these processes usually have to be phased to deal with the *least* contentious issues first.

Sustainable development will entail quite radical changes in institutional roles. In some circumstances, governments might best focus on integration across ministries and departments first, before going on to a

4 A good resource book on methods of participation geared for use by corporate clients is provided by Spencer (1989). It critically examines the technology of participation and offers useful guidance at the practical level.

Box 6.16 Sectoral collaboration for environmental management in Trinidad and Tobago

The Environmental Management Authority (EMA) is required to facilitate cooperation and to manage the environment in a way which fosters participation and promotes consensus. It has signed over 30 Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with a range of governmental and parastatal agencies that have environmental functions. Routine meetings with designated sectoral Environmental Officers (EOs), and special reporting requirements enable formal cooperation and collaboration within the official sector. EOs have been appointed as representatives of those agencies which have signed MOUs and act as the liaison between the agency and the EMA.

Much of the work of the EMA is done through advisory and other committees, the composition of which is drawn from various sectors as well as from NGOs and community-based groups.

Source: Trinidad EMA Annual State of Environment Reports; http://www.ema.co.tt/main.htm

wider, participatory process with many civil society and private sector stakeholders. This may well be the case for government systems, which recognize the risks of moving from centralized, sectoral norms towards more experimental, integrated, participatory modes of operating. For example, Box 6.16 summarizes the situation in Trinidad and Tobago, where formal memoranda of understanding have been signed between the coordinating body and sectoral agencies to formalize collaboration.

It follows, therefore, that a phased approach to participation will be required, beginning with the use of participation structures and methodologies with which the majority of participants are familiar, and which are acceptable scientifically and politically. It will probably not be possible to both focus and get adequate detail from all the stakeholder groups in the initial strategy cycle. As with the scope of the strategy, it can be best to build up to greater ambitions in participation. The capacity for participation can be built throughout the process – indeed, it is participation capabilities that have been the subject of much of the capacity building of many successful (local) strategies.

Methods for participation in strategies

Participatory learning and action

It is difficult to uncover diverse stakeholder perspectives and needs …

The natural sciences have developed a wide range of objective methods to gather and analyse data. But the situation is different when it comes to management, social issues and determining opinions: you can't stick a meter into a farmer to find out what he thinks.

Social scientists have usually used *extractive* techniques such as household surveys and questionnaires, where large numbers of people can be surveyed and statistical techniques can be applied to determine the reliability of the results. However, these methods do not reveal local complexities: many of the contextual grounds for understanding the data are systematically removed or ignored, there is a tacit assumption that the respondent and researcher hold the same values, and cultural divisions affect the types of response. Multiple perspectives are lost. Gill (1993) has captured a real problem with interview and questionnaire approaches:

> *The stranger then produces a little board and, clipped to it, a wad of paper covered in what to the respondent are unintelligible hieroglyphics. He then proceeds to ask questions and write down answers – more hieroglyphics. The respondent has no idea of what is being written down, whether his or her words have been understood or interpreted correctly ... The interview complete, the enumerator departs and is probably never seen again.*

Box 6.17 Principles of participatory learning and action

The term *participatory learning and action* (PLA) is now used to encompass a suite of techniques for diagnostics, planning, implementing and evaluating development activities. The key principles are:

- *Cumulative learning by all the participants.* Interaction is fundamental to these approaches and a visual emphasis enables all people to take part on an equal basis.
- *Seek diversity* rather than attempt to characterize complexity in terms of average values. Different individuals and groups make different evaluations of situations, which lead to different actions. All views of activity or purpose are laden with interpretation, bias and prejudice. Therefore there are many possible descriptions of any activity.
- *Group learning.* The complexity of the world will be revealed only through group enquiry and interaction which requires a mix of investigators from different disciplines, from different sectors, outsiders (professionals) and insiders (local people).
- *Context-specific.* The approaches are flexible enough to be adapted to suit each new set of conditions and participants, so there are many variants.
- *Facilitating role of experts.* The goal is to bring about changes that the stakeholders regard as improvements. The role of the 'expert' is to help people in their particular situation carry out their own study and make their own plans.
- *Sustained action.* The learning process leads to debate about change. Debate changes the perceptions of the participants and their readiness to contemplate action. Action is agreed, so implementable changes will represent an accommodation between different views. The debate and/or analysis both defines changes which would bring about improvement and seeks to motivate people to take action to bring about those changes. This action includes strengthening local institutions, so increasing the capacity of people to initiate action on their own.

Source: Pretty et al (1995)

… but PLA approaches are filling the gap; they are strongly compatible with NSDS principles

There are alternatives to extractive techniques that have won wide acceptance and considerable credibility. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a blossoming of participatory approaches – accompanied by a babel of acronyms. Some focus on problem diagnosis; for example, AEA (agro-ecosystems analysis), DRR (diagnostico rural rapido), RRA (rapid rural appraisal) and MARP (*methode acceleré de recherche participative*). Others are oriented towards community empowerment; for example, PAR (participatory action research) and TFD (theatre for development). Some facilitate on-farm or user-led research, such as FPR (farmer participatory research). Others are designed simply to get professionals in the field listening to resource users; for example, SB (*samuhik brahman* – joint trek). Some have been developed in the health context, for example RAP (resource assessment procedure); some for watershed development, for example PALM (participatory analysis and learning methods); some in government extension agencies and others in NGOs. The diversity of names, derivations and applications is a sign of strength because each variation is, to some extent, dependent on its local context. However, they are underpinned by some common principles (Box 6.17), principal among which is the new learning path that needs to be followed.

Participatory learning and action is the antithesis of teaching and technology transfer, both of which imply transfer of information from one who knows to one who does not know. Its assumptions are completely different from those of conventional surveys, and have grown more distinct as the techniques have evolved. For example, early work in farming systems analysis and rapid rural appraisal was essentially extractive. Researchers collected data and took it away for analysis. There has been a significant shift towards investigation and analysis by local people, who then share their insights with outsiders. Methods such as participatory mapping, analysis of air photos, matrix scoring and ranking, flow and linkage diagrams, and seasonal analysis are not just means for local people to inform outsiders. Rather, they are methods for local people to undertake their own research (Chambers 1992). Local people using these

Table 6.9 Techniques of participatory learning

Group and team interaction	Sampling	Dialogue	Visualization and drawing
■ Team contracts ■ Team reviews and discussions ■ Interview guides and checklists ■ Rapid report writing ■ Energizers/ activators ■ Work sharing (taking part in local activities) ■ Villager and shared presentations ■ Process notes and personal diaries	■ Transect walks ■ Wealth ranking and well-being ranking ■ Social maps ■ Interview maps	■ Semi-structured interviewing ■ Direct observation ■ Focus groups ■ Key informants ■ Ethnohistories and biographies ■ Oral histories ■ Local stories, portraits and case studies	■ Mapping and modelling ■ Social maps and wealth rankings ■ Transects ■ Mobility maps ■ Seasonal calendars ■ Daily routines and activity profiles ■ Historical profiles ■ Trend analyses and time lines ■ Matrix scoring ■ Preference or pairwise ranking ■ Venn diagrams ■ Network diagrams ■ Systems diagrams ■ Flow diagrams ■ Pie diagrams

Source: Bass et al (1995)

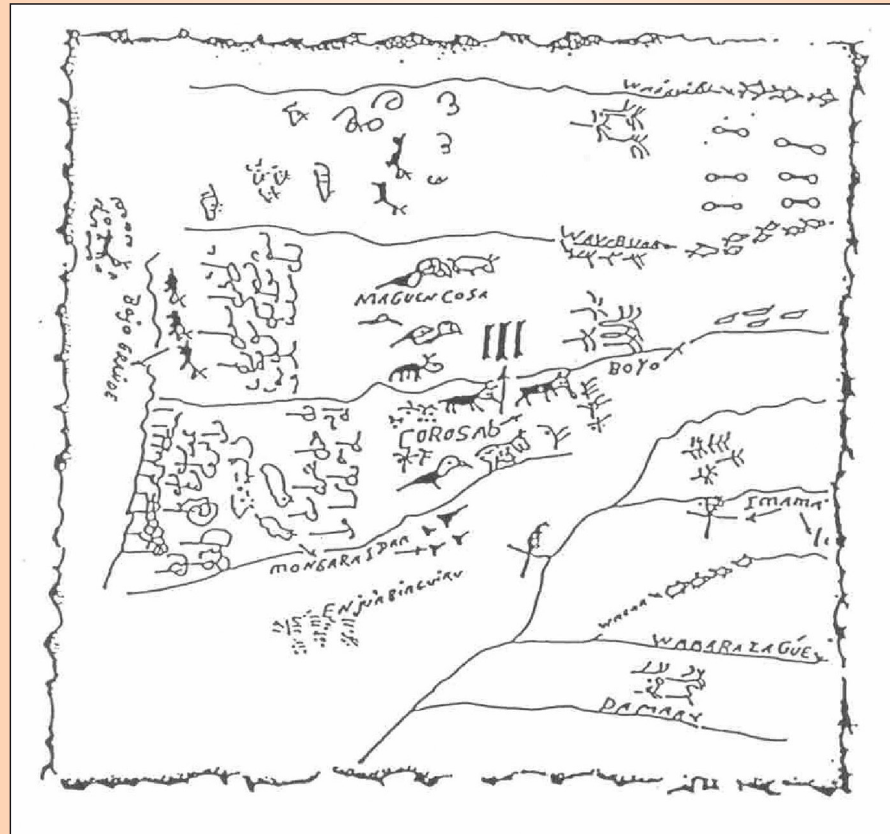
methods have shown a greater capacity to observe, create concepts and undertake analyses than most outsiders had expected and are, also, proving to be good teachers (see, for example, Box 6.4 on community turtle conservation in Trinidad).

The techniques of participatory learning fall into four groups (Table 6.9): group and team interaction, sampling, dialogue, visualization and drawing. One of the strengths of participatory learning has been the emphasis on pictorial techniques. By creating and discussing a diagram, model or map (see, for example, Figure 6.5), all who are present – both insider and outsider – can see, point to, discuss and refine the picture, sharing in its creation and analysis. Non-literates are not excluded; everyone who can see has visual literacy which allows them to participate actively – although, admittedly, not everyone may be able to speak up in such gatherings.

Early approaches (notably rapid rural appraisal) emphasized speed, and the label 'quick and dirty' has sometimes been applied. As the discipline has evolved, the emphasis has moved from quick exploitation of local people's labour or knowledge (to push through projects or facilitate research) towards sharing over a longer period, with contributions from both sides and patient iteration (Box 6.18).

This avoids some of the biases of rapid rural appraisal: spatial (emphasis on valuable land or sites undergoing construction), personal (led by leaders, entrepreneurs, professionals, English-speakers, males), often undertaken only in the dry-season (when access is easiest/possible), politeness and timidity (eg outsiders not shown the worst conditions and will not ask searching questions).

It is not simply the techniques themselves, but the combination and sequence in which they are used, that makes PLA particularly useful for understanding the myriad issues and values at the local level. For example:



Source: Denniston (1995)

Figure 6.5 Land use map made by an indigenous surveyor and villagers of the Marwa sub-region, Panama

Box 6.18 RRA and PRA compared

Among the various approaches of participatory learning and action, perhaps the best known are rapid rural appraisal (RRA), which emerged in the late 1970s and evolved a decade later into participatory rural appraisal (PRA).

RRA developed as a response to a growing awareness that conventional planning approaches failed to meet the needs of the rural poor. It was introduced as a planning approach to help minimize existing investigation biases, to provide an alternative to the limitations of questionnaire surveys, and to give timely information for externally driven planning.

PRA built on the principles and methods of RRA but placed added emphasis on empowering local people to undertake their own appraisals, to analyse and act on them, and to monitor and evaluate local changes.

Both approaches use similar methods (see Table 8.3) but differ in their purpose and process. RRA is used mainly to collect information and enable 'outsiders' to learn. By comparison, PRA is more relaxed and creative and places emphasis on facilitating local processes of learning and analysis, sharing knowledge and building partnerships among individuals and interest groups for local-level planning and actions. Consequently, it is a much longer and open-ended process.

Source: Guijt and Hinchcliffe (1998)

- Social mapping and well-being ranking can identify diverse socio-economic groups within a community, enabling data collection to be better targeted, to understand how wealth and social aspects affect people's dependence on resources.
- Seasonal calendars and timelines can be used to understand how the use and importance of natural resources varies over time.
- Maps, models and transects can be used to locate and appreciate the spatial relationships of particular resources. When developed with elders, these can aid understanding of historical changes in resource status.
- The values of natural resources can be elicited using a variety of matrix scoring and ranking techniques. These reveal not only how valuable different resources (eg tree species) are to different people, but also the ways in which they may be important, including non-financial values, and their relative importance compared with other resources and activities.
- Product flow diagrams and tenure maps can be used to understand how resources and access to them are controlled, and to clarify who is and is not involved in their use and management.

The usefulness of participatory learning approaches is also determined by the attitude of mind and behaviour of the professionals towards the people with whom they work. Success comes from rapport, dialogue and fair sharing of information and ideas – which means that the professionals too must have attractive 'trade goods' and must appreciate what they are getting in return.

Community-based resource planning and management

Progress on the ground seems to occur best where there is an equal and long-standing partnership between local land users, planners and technical (natural resources) specialists. In a review of experience of rural planning in developing countries, Dalal-Clayton et al (2000) provide examples of a range of approaches to community-based participatory planning (Box 6.19), many of which can be built on in developing local strategies for sustainable development.

Community-based programmes have used many purposeful participatory approaches; these also can be strong contributors to NSDSs

Such initiatives have usually been most successful when they have supported local capacity utilization and development, stakeholder organization, information and education. They share the characteristic of being strongly outcome-oriented; that is, participation helps to achieve agreed local ends, rather than being treated as a (political) end in its own right.

Brown (1997) describes how the authority of state agencies to control coastal and marine resources was devolved to community stakeholders in St Lucia. This resulted in more efficient management of these resources. Mechanisms to address conflict and competition were developed with full participation of all stakeholders. Problems remain, but there is genuine community commitment to engage in the multi-stakeholder process formalized within the framework of the Soufriere Marine Management Area.

One community-based methodology for participation in planning offers several lessons for strategies. In Planning for Real in the UK (Box 6.20), communities are involved fully in interactive participation for neighbourhood planning. The tendency for outside professionals to dominate is held in check by several agreed norms for group behaviour. These norms take time to develop, and are critical for successful participation and collaboration.

Participation in decentralized planning systems

It is often only at the local level that a people-centred approach to sustainable development becomes truly evident – for at this level, decisions are taken daily by individuals and groups of people that affect their livelihoods, health and often their survival. Concepts have to become realities. In a local context, individuals

Decentralized planning systems offer new opportunities for participation

Box 6.19 Some examples of participatory rural planning

Local-level resource planning

- community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) initiatives such as CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe (see PlanAfric 1997);
- Aga Khan Rural Support Programme in India and Pakistan (see World Bank 1995b);
- Participatory reforestation in Baruch District, South Gujarat, India (Shah 1995)
- Village-level planning, for example, the HIMA programme in Tanzania (Kikula et al 1999)

Attempts to scale-up and link bottom-up and top-down planning

- the Regional Rural Development (RRD) approach (GTZ 1993);
- rapid district appraisal – a broader-scale application of RRA used in Indonesia (see Kievelitz 1995);
- participatory approaches in large-scale projects (eg North Western Province Dry Zone Participatory Development Project, Sri Lanka, see Backhaus and Wagachi 1995);
- the catchment approach to soil and water conservation in Kenya (Harding et al 1996);
- water catchment planning in Zimbabwe (PlanAfric 2000);
- the *Gestion de Terroir* approach to land use planning in francophone West Africa (Winckler et al 1995);
- responsibility for planning and programme implementation delegated to independent sectoral organizations, as in the Mexican Programme for the Protection of Tropical Forests (PROAFT) (Zazueta 1995);
- community forest programmes, for example, in Nepal (Fisher 1995);
- The community-based Landcare movement in Australia, concerned with conservation and management of land (Campbell et al 1996; Lockie and Vanclay 1997).

Case studies of these and other approaches to participatory rural planning are provided in Dalal-Clayton et al (2000).

Box 6.20 Planning for real: neighbourhood planning in urban Britain

In community development, there is a need for all views to be accounted for, yet the talkers nearly always win. At public meetings and consultations, local planners tend to sit on a platform, behind a table, maintaining their superiority. When only a few people turn up, and only a few of them speak up, they blame local indifference. Planning for Real attempts to bridge this gap, to identify local needs and resources, and to do it without endless talk.

The focus is a physical model of the neighbourhood. Unlike an architect's model, this should be touched, played with, dropped and changed around. At the first meeting, the neighbourhood model is constructed, using houses and apartment blocks made from card and paper on a polystyrene base. The model then goes into the community (to the launderette, the school foyer, the local shops, etc) so that people see it and learn about the second consultation. At the second meeting, the objective is to find out: 'have we got it right?' There is no room for passivity, not many chairs, no platform, with the model in the middle of the room. People spot the landmarks, discuss, identify problems and glimpse solutions. They move around, and can put down pieces of paper with suggested solutions written on them at particular locations. They are permitted to put more than one on the same place – so allowing conflicts to surface. Often, people who put down an idea wait for others to talk first about it. The process permits people to have first, second and third thoughts – they can change their minds. The model allows people to address conflicts without needing to identify themselves. It depersonalizes conflicts and introduces informality where consensus is more easily reached.

The professionals attend too. The local planners, engineers, transport officials, police, social workers and others wear a badge identifying themselves. *But they can only talk when they are spoken to.* The result is that they are drawn in, and begin to like this new role. The 'us and them' barriers begin to break down. The priorities put on the model have 'disagree' written on the reverse side. Anyone can turn these over, again remaining anonymous. The priorities are assessed as Now, Soon or Later, and also on the basis of whether they can be done solely by local people (with the help of outsiders, with some money and advice) or only by outsiders. Obligations are negotiated and made explicit. People are able to negotiate compromises.

The next stage is a local talent survey conducted by local people. The form is pictorial and does not look like a government form. The human resources are documented, and planning can then capitalize on these hitherto hidden resources. Participation in this alternative planning process acts as a demonstration of local capacity, from which larger things can grow.

Source: Gibson (1991)

and communities are best placed to identify the major trends, challenges, problems and needs, and to agree their own priorities and preferences and determine what skills and capacities are lacking. Hence, some strategies are now beginning to concentrate particular issues at the most appropriate level; for example, the approach followed by the Ministry of Planning in Bangladesh in the early 1990s to develop the Participatory Perspective Plan, or the emerging 'hierarchy' of strategies in Pakistan – Box 4.12.

A combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches is emerging in district planning in some countries. For example, in Tanzania, ward planning in Rungwe District involves top-down decisions on certain matters (eg setting ward bank rates) but stakeholder participation is encouraged on other aspects of development (eg education, agricultural production and communication).

Strategies need to consider which *mechanisms* can achieve this balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches. The new planning systems in a number of countries provide examples of how decentralization can contribute to this (Boxes 6.21 and 3.21). Such balance needs to be accompanied and supported by mechanisms that ensure good dialogue, ongoing monitoring information flow and learning within and between all levels. The challenges of decentralization are discussed on pages 20–22 and examples of sub-national strategic planning approaches are provided on pages 63–66.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

Increasingly, multi-stakeholder partnerships are being used to address development issues and to negotiate solutions. But, as with participation, the term 'partnership' can be used to mean different things (Box 6.22).

An NSDS itself is, primarily, a multi-stakeholder partnership

A recent review of multi-stakeholder processes by UNED Forum (2001) describes them as being:

> *akin to a new species in the ecosystem of decision-finding and governance structures and processes … [that] have emerged because there is a perceived need for a more inclusive, effective manner for addressing the urgent sustainability issues of our time.*

The review notes that such multi-stakeholder processes include a broad body of approaches:

> *The term multi-stakeholder processes is used to describe processes which aim to bring together all major stakeholders in a new form of decision-finding (and possibly decision-making) structure on a particular issue. They are also based on recognition of the importance of achieving equity and accountability in communication between stakeholders, involving equitable representation of three or more stakeholder groups and their views. They are based on democratic principles of transparency and participation, and aim to develop partnerships and strengthened networks between stakeholders. MSPs cover a wide spectrum of structures and levels of engagement. They can comprise dialogue (statements, exchange and discussion), or grow into processes encompassing consensus-building, decision-making and implementation. The exact nature of any MSP will depend on the issue, the participants, the time-frame, etc.*

It suggests a range of key principles of such processes (Box 6.23) – which are entirely consistent with those for strategies for sustainable development given in Box 3.1.

A good example of a multi-stakeholder partnership at the national level is the Canadian *Projet de société* – one of the most participative national strategy processes to have been undertaken (Box 6.24). Many such multi-stakeholder processes include special efforts to involve particular groups; for example, the development of New Zealand's Resource Management Act (Box 6.25).

Box 6.21 Decentralized planning systems

Bolivia introduced a decentralized, participatory planning system in 1994 with the adoption of the Law on Popular Participation and Administrative Decentralization (Box 6.14). This transferred significant political and economic power to regional and local levels. Twenty per cent of national tax revenue is passed directly to 314 municipalities and is allocated according to their five-year development plans. These municipal plans are developed under the guidance of the five-year Global (ie national) Plan for Economic and Social Development and on the basis of priorities identified by territorial organizations representing communities in particular areas. In addition, accountability committees, comprising municipal officers and civil society representatives, have been established to monitor the activities of municipal governments and their adherence to development plans. In parallel, regional government departments receive 40 per cent of national revenue allocated according to regional five-year development plans developed on the basis of the national indicative plan and municipal plans.

Nepal. The 1998 Local Self-Governance Act transferred power and responsibility to development committees in districts, municipalities and villages – these now undertake participatory planning and the sustainable management of resources in their areas. The district planning committees are seen as autonomous bodies, responsible for bringing stakeholders together and for harmonizing/balancing local needs and national policies.

Thailand. In the past, all projects and budgets for local and provincial authorities were set by central government. Now, stakeholders, through participatory planning processes, produce information, ideas and proposals – which are channelled to the Budget Bureau. This is responsible for financial allocations to local, municipal and provincial authorities. Under the new law on decentralization, government authorities at these levels are allocated a fixed percentage of the total government budget to enable them to implement the plans and projects determined by stakeholders.

For decentralized planning in **Ghana**, see Box 3.21.

Source: OECD DAC (2001a)

Stakeholder energies can be united by discussing major trends and searching for desirable 'futures'

One of several methods to promote participation in policy-making is the 'future search conference', a multi-stakeholder forum introduced by the Australian systems thinker Fred Emery (Emery and Emery 1978). It has been used throughout the world for a wide range of purposes: for example, to help develop a nature tourism strategy in the Windward Islands (Box 6.26), Pakistan's National Conservation Strategy and Colombia's energy sector policy. As described by Baburoglu and Garr (1992):

> *The conference [usually 35–40 participants, 2–3 days] uses a systematic process in which groups design the future they want and strategies for achieving it. The 'search' is for an achievable future. This may be a future that is more desirable than the one that is likely to unfold if no action is taken, or a future that is totally unexpected. Designing a future collectively*

Box 6.22 Partnerships – a loaded term

Like 'participation' nobody will disagree that 'partnerships' are a good idea – but this agreement in itself will not change players' relationships overnight. Indeed, some argue that working in partnership is a deeply unnatural form of behaviour. The word can imply 'business partners' and/or the more difficult 'partners as equals'. Taking the notion of a business partnership beyond its origin in the private sector, and using it to mean a relationship which allows the business at hand to be dealt with, it begins to make more sense. Taking it a step further, the term 'deal' may be more useful for 'business transactions', which are mutually acceptable (or bearable) to the parties. Striking such deals within an NSDS may or may not move the relationship towards a partnership of equals – but it will at least engender the need for 'give and take' to build partnerships that can address some of the NSDS's core concerns. Partnerships may start as small catalytic actions by a couple of people or partner organizations, demonstrating something tangible and attracting others to join the action.

Source: Adapted from Mayers et al (2001)

Box 6.23 Principles for multi-stakeholder processes

These principles are based on experience and common lessons from a detailed review of a wide range of national and international multi-stakeholder initiatives. They reflect those characteristics of the processes that have been effective and represent best practice. They show close links with the principles of participatory learning and action (Box 6.17) but are distinct.

Accountability: Employing agreed, transparent, democratic mechanisms of engagement, position-finding, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Effectiveness: Providing a tool for addressing urgent sustainability issues; promoting better decisions by means of wider input; generating recommendations that have broad support; creating commitment through participants identifying with the outcome and thus increasing the likelihood of successful implementation.

Equity: Levelling the playing field between stakeholder groups whose 'traditional' lobbying activities largely depend on their resources and are therefore imbalanced; applying principles of gender and regional balance; providing equitable access to information.

Flexibility: Covering a wide spectrum of structures and levels of engagement, depending on issues, participants, linkage into decision-making, timeframe and so on.

Good governance: Further developing the role of stakeholder participation and collaboration in (inter) governmental systems as supplementary and complementary vis-à-vis the roles and responsibilities of governments, based on clear norms and standards.

Inclusiveness: Allowing all views to be represented increases the legitimacy and credibility of a participatory process.

Learning: Taking a learning approach throughout their design; requiring participants to learn from each other.

Legitimacy: Requiring democratic, transparent, accountable, equitable processes in their design; requiring participants to adhere to those principles.

Ownership: People-centred processes, allowing ownership for decisions, thus increasing chances of successful implementation.

Participation and engagement: Bringing together the principal actors; supporting and challenging all stakeholders to be actively engaged.

Partnership/cooperative management: Developing partnerships and strengthening networks between stakeholders; addressing conflictual issues; integrating diverse viewpoints; creating mutual benefits (win–win rather than win–lose situations); developing shared power and responsibilities; creating feedback loops between local, national or international levels and into decision-making.

Societal gains: Creating trust through honouring each participant as contributing a necessary component of the bigger picture; helping participants to overcome stereotypical perceptions and prejudice.

Strengthening of (inter) governmental institutions: Developing advanced mechanisms of transparent, equitable and legitimate stakeholder participation strengthens institutions in terms of democratic governance and increased ability to address global challenges.

Transparency: Bringing all relevant stakeholders together in one forum and within an agreed process.

Voices, not votes: Making voices of various stakeholders effectively heard.

Source: UNED Forum (2001)

Box 6.24 The multi-stakeholder approach of Canada's *Projet de société*

The Projet de société recognized several necessities: that the transition to sustainability is a collective responsibility of all Canadians; that all levels and sectors of society must be engaged in identifying and implementing the necessary changes; and that new institutional models and processes are needed to achieve a common purpose and course of action. These involve partnerships and networks.

Five Canadian organizations came together to organize a First National Stakeholders meeting in November 1992: the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME); Environment Canada; the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD); the International Development Research Centre (IDRC); and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE). Representatives from over 40 sectors of Canadian society attended the meeting, including business associations, community organizations and indigenous peoples.

Each of the five 'sponsoring' organizations, acting as a Working Group, contributed Can$50,000 to establish a secretariat and hire a research director. Two sub-committees (Documentation and Information; and Vision and Process) assumed responsibility, respectively, to analyse Canadian responses to Rio, and to draft a concept paper on sustainability planning. The NRTEE facilitated and chaired the process and provided the secretariat. Most of the tasks were undertaken by volunteers and committees which met monthly. There were those who wanted to 'develop strategic plans' and others who wanted 'do specific projects'. It was therefore decided to do both.

A progress report and recommendations were presented to a Second National Stakeholders meeting in June 1993. At the Third Assembly in December 1993, the NRTEE was asked to assume a larger management role for the next phase of the Projet, rather than merely acting as a facilitator, and to move towards preparing a draft strategy. The NRTEE worked closely with a volunteer working group to develop, revise and critique a strategy document. A draft was tabled at the Fourth Assembly in November 1994, entitled 'Canadian Choices for Transitions to Sustainability'. Minor changes were suggested and the document was endorsed. A revised document was published in January 1995. The NRTEE then organized a series of 12 meetings across the country to determine how useful such a document might be in engaging various constituencies in discussions about sustainability. A final revised draft, based on the feedback received, was published in June 1995. The Working Group, which had been reconstituted in early 1995, in addition to completing the strategy document, developed a work plan involving, among other things, the compilation of a directory of sustainability tool kits for communities. Sustainable livelihoods was selected as a focus for Working Group activities, with a forum on this subject in 1996.

Principles of the Projet de société:

- The process was designed to be transparent, inclusive and accountable.
- Each partner and sector was encouraged to identify and take responsibility for its own contribution to sustainability.
- Dialogue and cooperation among sectors and communities were key elements of problem-solving.
- A shared vision and agreement on key policy, institutional and individual changes were seen as necessary for the transition to sustainability.
- It was stressed that strategy and action must be linked, and must build on previous and ongoing initiatives.
- Canada's practice of sustainable development and its contribution to global sustainability should be exemplary.

Sources: Projet de société (1993, 1994, 1995)

> *unleashes a creative way of producing organizational philosophy, mission, goals and objectives enriched by shared values and beliefs of the participants. This process is especially useful in times of social, economic and technological turbulence [characterized by unexpected changes, uncertainty, unintended consequences and complexity].*

In recent years, periods of upheaval in social and political conditions have provided fertile ground for forging tri-sector (government, civil society and private sector) partnerships for change. For example, in South Africa, the ANC government has established the National Economic Development and Labour Council with a membership drawn from business, government and civil society, and with labour organizations effectively making up a fourth sector. This forum is charged with making multilateral decisions to impact on policy, economic growth and social equity (Box 6.27). In Grenada, the Prime Minister chairs a regular tri-partite forum involving representatives from government, business and labour.

Box 6.25 Involving the public, and particularly Maoris, in developing New Zealand's Resource Management Act

The resource management act (RMA) was a major piece of reforming legislation, which aimed to rationalize severe inequities in the way environmental management operated across different sectors, to integrate national planning and decision-making, to address the plethora of legislation that dealt with natural resources, and to provide a single objective – namely, the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. In developing the act, a massive attempt was made to involve the public through meetings, seminars, free phone-ins and written submissions. All papers submitted to government on the RMA highlighted where stakeholder views accorded or differed from proposals being made. A special stream for Maori consultation was established. This involved traditional-style meetings (*hui*) with Maori organizations throughout the country to explain the RMA process and to secure views and opinions. Funds were made available to enable NGOs to engage in the process and some NGOs undertook commissioned work.

Source: Dalal-Clayton (1996)

The benefits of the tri-sector partnership to individual partners may differ, but can still be complementary (Tennyson and Wilde 2000):

Sustainable development partnerships bring different advantages to each partner

- Public sector partners are viewed as more responsive and accessible through their engagement with the partnership.
- Private sector partners become more stable and successful, and therefore profitable.
- Civil society partners gain a wider reach and have greater impact.

Each sector can bring its own set of resources to the partnership, and these are not just money (Table 6.10).

Focusing on consensus, negotiations and conflict resolution

The early establishment of consensus on key issues such as the purpose of the NSDS and, subsequently, its vision and priorities, is a source of strength – both for the strategy's durability and for its ability to lead to change for the better. Consensus is a best-bet principle for strategies, but particular issues will also need negotiation and conflict resolution. These decision-making tasks depend on sound participation. They are considered in detail in Chapter 8 on decision-making (pages 270–276).

Table 6.10 Potential resources from organizations in the development triad

Public sector	Private sector	Civil society
■ Access to information ■ Skilled staff with a public interest focus ■ Surplus of accommodation and transport capacity ■ Authority to mobilize resources from other public sector sources ■ Budget process ■ Stability	■ Management and technical skills ■ Equipment ■ Dissemination and distribution capacity ■ Contacts and sphere of influence ■ Innovation ■ Financial resources/rigour ■ Fast-acting	■ On-the-ground know-how ■ Development experience and knowledge ■ People skills ■ Imaginative, low-cost responses to challenges ■ Social mobilization and public advocacy skills ■ Associated credibility ■ Values-driven

Source: Tennyson and Wilde (2000)

Box 6.26 Search conferences and nature tourism strategies in the Windward Islands

Search conferences were held in four Windward Island countries in the Eastern Caribbean during 1991/92 as part of a process to develop nature tourism strategies. The stimulus was the threat to banana exports in the face of an impending change in trade relations with the UK in 1992. This was expected to lead to increased economic dependence on tourism. Limited potential for expanding traditional tourism resulted in a growing interest in nature tourism (also called ecotourism).

The search conference process was initiated by senior officials in government agencies with a direct interest in tourism (planning/economic development, tourism and forestry). The Canada-based 'Adapting By Learning Group' acted as facilitators. In each country, key stakeholders were brought together by the government body acting as the lead agency – either tourism or planning. Stakeholders included: government agencies (economic development, planning, tourism, agriculture, fisheries, finance, forestry), environmental and heritage groups, community organizations, women's and youth groups, farmers' cooperatives and private business. Their initial task was to form National Advisory Groups to direct the process.

The search conference process allowed the political implications of nature tourism to be addressed by the full range of interests involved: for example, environmentalists examining the validity of nature tourism as an economic development strategy; hotel associations incorporating environmental conservation into tourism strategies; and finance officials working with agricultural ministry personnel to support small businesses in the provision of local produce for tourist consumption.

The objectives of the conferences were to:

- develop comprehensive national perspectives on nature tourism;
- examine the potential of an integrated nature tourism strategy as a basis for future economic development that is environmentally sustainable;
- discuss the planning, design and management needs of such an approach;
- connect this alternative approach to existing tourism initiatives;
- advise on ways in which the search conference initiative could assist in creating an integrated and ongoing planning capacity both nationally and regionally.

Each conference involved alternating plenary and small group sessions with presentations (by local participants with special skills and experience) to provide a basis for discussions. The small groups generated issues and concerns, which were reported in plenary. Key issues were selected to focus subsequent group sessions, during which constraints and opportunities were identified. Ideas and concerns were then integrated into a set of recommendations for action, and submitted to the National Advisory Groups to be carried forward into further planning and implementation.

Source: Franklin and Morley (1992)

Working in groups

A majority of strategy tasks depend on the quality of group work

Strategies will need to employ a variety of approaches to engage different stakeholders. Many approaches involve group work (in meetings, seminars, focus and cross-sector groups, collective analysis, workshops, round tables, etc). For example, in many Local Agenda 21s, a working group:

> *is typically a small body of 10 to 20 stakeholder representatives who have a particular interest or expertise in a specific issue or problem … Working groups undertook the distinct tasks of issue identification, problem analysis, technical research, priority setting, action planning and impact analysis, implementation and monitoring, and evaluation and feedback. Some structures were used to collect and analyse information or to develop action proposals; others were used to integrate action proposals; others were used to develop performance indicators and to evaluate progress in achieving targets* (ICLEI 1996a).

Box 6.27 National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), South Africa – an example of a public sector-led partnership initiative

History

NEDLAC had its origins in the struggle against apartheid and unilateral decision-making, as well as in calls from all sectors of society for decisions to be taken in a more inclusive and transparent manner. It is a statutory body established under the NEDLAC Act, 1994, and was launched by President Mandela in 1995. NEDLAC provides a unique forum for multilateral decision-making to impact policy, economic growth and social equity in South Africa. It is an agreement-making body, not an advisory organization. Administrative costs are met by government.

Objectives

The NEDLAC Act enshrines the following objectives for the Council:

- Promote economic growth, participation in economic decision-making and social equity.
- Seek consensus and reach agreements pertaining to social and economic policy.
- Consider all proposed labour legislation.
- Consider all significant changes to social and economic policy.
- Encourage coordinated policy-making on social and economic matters.

Structures

National summit – (annual meeting of 300 people from all sectors) – receives inputs from and gives feedback to the affiliated organizations.

Executive Council – meets quarterly with up to 18 delegates from each 'constituency' (sector). Reviews progress, reaches consensus and concludes agreements.

Management Committee – meets monthly to oversee and coordinate activities.

Chambers – are issue-based (eg trade and industry; public finance and monetary policy; labour market and development). They meet frequently with six delegates from each constituency/sector to draft reports and make recommendations to the Executive Council.

Secretariat – supports all NEDLAC's activities and has 19 staff members.

Intermediary or partnership promotion role

A partnership of business, government, labour and civil society, NEDLAC acts as an intermediary between the partners, in addition to promoting partnership and consensus as its principal operational focus.

Main activities

NEDLAC focuses on building consensus between all constituencies/sectors in formulating policy for the South African government. All recommendations are presented in parliament and become the basis for new or revised legislation. Secretariat activities include:

- building the capacities of the representatives from each constituency to negotiate effectively;
- supporting the different structures (see above) in their work;
- making links with other public bodies;
- conducting research and undertaking investigations to ensure that all parties are kept informed of national and international developments in social and economic policy;
- drafting NEDLAC's annual report – tabled for discussion in parliament;
- communicating all agreements, reports and findings to the general public;
- monitoring implementation.

Source: Adapted from Tennyson (1998)

Box 6.28 The dynamics of group work

Some general observations:

- Groups generally produce fewer ideas than individuals working separately, but they often generate more appropriate ideas as each is discussed and thought through more deeply.
- Groups are more likely to identify errors of judgement before action is taken.
- Discussion stimulates more careful thinking and leads to consideration of a wider range of ideas. Rather surprisingly, good groups tend to take more adventurous decisions than the individuals comprising them would have done if acting independently.
- Groups that are too cohesive can also create their own problems. Religious sects, military groups, sports teams and political groups all show a tendency towards a dominant group identity. In extreme cases, the individual's conscience and principles are sacrificed for group loyalty, harmony and morale.
- Full consensus is not always desirable (see 8.3.3).
- Seeking a consensus at all costs can bring the group into a blind spot when it becomes highly selective in the facts it sees, sorts and accepts.
- Maintaining an open agenda, creating a sense of self-critical awareness and preventing secrecy within these types of groups is essential if group 'delusions' are to be prevented.

Stages in group functioning:

Several people brought together to work on a single research or development activity do not necessarily make a productive *team* of investigators (Handy 1985). Before a group of people can function well as a team, they tend to pass through a series of stages.

First, various individuals come together, sometimes as strangers, sometimes as colleagues, to create a new group for some stated purpose. In this early *forming* stage, they are still a collection of individuals, each with his or her own perspectives, agenda and expertise, and little or no shared experience.

As these individuals become more familiar with one another, the group will enter a *storming* phase. There is a good reason for giving this name to the second phase of group formation, because it is during this stage that personal values and principles are challenged, roles and responsibilities are taken on and/or rejected, and the group's objectives and mode of operating will start to be defined more clearly. If there is too much conflict and discord within the group, it will collapse. If, however, some common ground can be found, the group will gain greater cohesion and a sense of purpose.

As the group members begin to understand their roles in relation to one another and establish a shared vision or goal, they will develop a clearly discernible identity and group-specific norms of behaviour. At this *norming* stage, the group has settled down. People know each other better, they have accepted the rules and probably developed subgroups and friendships.

Once these norms have been established, the group will be ready for action and will enter into the *performing* phase. It is in this phase that they will work most effectively as a team. This team has a life of its own; its power to support learning may be considerable. The confidence level of the team members will have reached the point where they are willing to take significant risks and try out new ideas on their own.

It is important that the secretariat and facilitators are skilled in managing the dynamics of group working (Box 6.28). For a group to perform effectively, achieve its goals and build consensus, the individuals present should contribute to a wide mix of roles and functions (eg some individuals will be creative and spark ideas; some practical and able to turn ideas into practical actions; others more sober and analytical and capable of deep analysis, etc). They should also be reasonably compatible (although some conflict between members can avoid complacency).

It is worth investing in good facilitators to kick off the strategy – and then spreading facilitation capacity through the strategy process

FACILITATION

Facilitation skills are a basic requirement to ensure active participation and meaningful exchanges during workshops and other group activities (Box 6.29). Facilitators should have been involved in the strategy design process (where possible) or at least be fully briefed to ensure their full understanding of the process and their commitment to how it was decided to conduct the process.

Box 6.29 Facilitation skills

The **key role** of a facilitator is to:

- ensure the effective flow of communication within a group so that the participants can share information and arrive at decisions;
- pose problems and encourage group analysis;
- provoke people to think critically and motivate them towards action;
- not change or ignore any decisions reached by the participants through consensus;
- be sensitive, to both the verbal and the non-verbal communications that occur in the group;
- be sensitive to the feelings, attitudes, culture, interests and any hidden agenda that may be present in a group.

To **resolve conflict(s)**, a facilitator should be able to:

- sense where agreements should be explored;
- sense where disagreements should be respected;
- identify any irrelevances so that the focus will be on reaching an agreement;
- in exploring differences, ask problem-solving questions, not judgmental ones – and encourage all participants to do so.

A **good facilitator** will:

- have a good grip of the subject(s) being discussed (so as to keep things moving and to the point);
- closely track the direction and flow of discussion, noting everybody's contributions to draw out aspects of common ground when summarizing what has been said at regular intervals;
- when summarizing, state differences clearly, and not allow pressure to conform;
- be prepared with contingency plans (eg in case a speaker does not turn up);
- encourage an open atmosphere, conducive to learning and sharing ideas, making everyone feel welcome, important and recognized as part of the group;
- encourage everyone to speak freely, share and participate (including drawing out quieter participants);
- know his or her own limits and assess those of participants;
- have an idea of what is achievable and what is not;
- be sensitive regarding issues on which participants will need to consult with their constituencies;
- be aware of the condition and contribution of participants: who is responding, who is sleepy, who is not listening or frequently leaves the room, etc; this will signal when to change or adjust the discussion;
- manage the available time effectively, keeping to agreed timetables and speaking times – which need to be the same for everybody (with obvious exceptions for participants operating in another language and the like); Ttis means balancing being too tight or rigid and being too lax or liberal;
- be flexible and responsive to different situations (hence, they need considerable diagnostic skills to enable them to assess a given situation correctly);
- use creative approaches and techniques to encourage participation;
- judge when to call a halt to discussion, wait or carry on;
- be humble, respectful and recognize everyone's contributions;
- make sure the participants evaluate/assess the meeting, to provide feedback (whether formally or informally, quantitatively or qualitatively, orally or in writing – as appropriate).

Ways of working

- The group needs to agree on how to deal with possible substantive contributions from the facilitator. Alternating the role of the facilitator is an option.
- In some cases, it might be worth considering working with special facilitators to be the link into particular stakeholder groups.
- Using flip charts, meta-plan or other facilitation techniques is recommended in order to transparently keep track of what is being said, enable summarizing and help decision-making. Other group work techniques are worth considering and experimenting with. These include scenario workshops, future labs and citizen juries (depending on the situation, the issue, the cultural context and the group).

Source: Walker and Daniels (1997); UNED Forum (2001)

For guidance on facilitation and managing group meetings, see Pretty et al (1995).

Facilitators can help participants to avoid arguing for their favourite proposals but to make innovative suggestions; challenge them to be creative and integrative; not allow them to agree just to avoid conflict; and highlight differences as helpful. When decisions become stalled, the facilitator can point out where there is agreement to build on. When it is not possible to reach agreement on an issue, it can be agreed to revisit it at a later stage.

PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

It is also important for participants to agree on, and observe, some basic ground rules if group work is to be effective. Box 6.30 suggests some based on a recent UNED survey of successful approaches.

RAPPORTEURS

Rapporteurs (persons responsible for reporting on the group's activities) need to be agreed by the group and assigned at the outset of meetings, as does the documentation process (minutes, reports, etc). Rapporteuring needs to be done in the most neutral fashion possible, reflecting the breadth and depth of discussions. It should usually concentrate on recording group-generated or -endorsed findings, ideas and decisions – rather than statements attributed to individuals.

Box 6.30 Illustrative ground rules for group working

From a recent survey, the following rules have proved to be effective tools in group working:

1. During discussion, participants must make every effort to be as frank and candid as possible, while maintaining a respectful interest in the views of others. An atmosphere that cultivates directness, openness, objectivity and humility is important.
2. Participants need to be honest and trustworthy.
3. Participants should refrain from personal attacks.
4. All participants and their contributions should be treated equally.
5. To help understanding and clarify perceptions, participants and facilitators should be encouraged to restate one another's views in their own words ('active listening').
6. Participants should refrain from presuming motives of others and rather be encouraged to ask direct questions.
7. Participants are asked to address the group as a whole, while showing concern for each point of view, rather than confronting and criticizing individuals.
8. Participants must argue on a logical basis, giving their own opinion while seeking out common ground as well as differences.
9. Brain-storming can be helpful: conducting a session of putting forward ideas and collecting them without judgements for later discussion can create a larger pool of ideas. When an idea is put forward, it becomes the property of the group.
10. Participants should consider conducting a learning exercise, to draw out the success of other processes and agreements and use the outcomes to deepen the pool of ideas.
11. All participants need to be open to change when embarking on a communication process as outlined above. A true dialogue cannot be entered into with the goal of 'getting one's way'.
12. Allow space and time for various modes of communication, socio-emotional as well as strictly task-oriented.
13. If participants feel that others are not playing by agreed rules, they need to put that to the group and the group needs to address the problem.

Source: UNED Forum (2001)

MEETING AGENDAS

The possibilities for the programme of any working group meetings or workshops are many and include:

1. Introductory activity:
   - participant introduction, giving names, organizational backgrounds, brief expectations of meeting outcomes (taking care not to take too much time);
   - scene setting – by local people (if in a particular locality) and/or the organizers;
   - summary of key issues – from different perspectives;
   - objective-setting exercise, to clarify the agenda.

2. Group work:
   - in sector groups;
   - in focus groups (perhaps each group discussing a different theme or issue);
   - in task groups (each group taking a specific task);
   - using perhaps 1–3 questions per group.

3. Plenaries:
   - feedback/presentation of group work to all participants;
   - case studies – national, from a particular locality or even from other countries;
   - presentations on problems or options from specialists;
   - audio-visual input;
   - outcomes from any background research.

4. Planning action and closing:
   - summary of the outcomes of the workshop/event;
   - proposed enhancements to existing policies, institutional arrangements, investments, programmes or projects, and so on;
   - identified new policies, institutional arrangements, investments, programmes or projects;
   - agreement on priorities;
   - creation of an action plan in small groups or together with all participants, ending with an agreement on who/what/when;
   - resource commitments in support of further action.

5. Appropriate breaks:
   These are essential for a variety of reasons – to:
   - enable group participants to get to know each other on a more personal level;
   - reduce/diffuse rising tensions;
   - foster opportunities for sub-group negotiations;
   - reduce boredom;
   - re-energize participants with refreshments;
   - avoid physical fatigue and emotional overloading.

Facilitators must be sensitive to group dynamics and should be sufficiently flexible to introduce breaks even when not timetabled.

Box 6.31 suggests a model timetable for a cross-sectoral workshop.

Box 6.31 Example timetable for a cross-sectoral workshop

Session 1 Welcome and introduction to workshop agenda

- Outline of workshop objectives
- Introduction to organizers and facilitator

Session 2 Sectoral groups

Separate sector discussions on:

- strengths and weaknesses of the sector;
- views of other sectors;
- benefits to each sector of cross-sector partnerships.

Break

Session 3 Plenary session

Brief feedback on each question in turn from each sector, followed by reactions and discussion

Session 4 Core value/principles

Identification of core values/principles underpinning any potential partnership initiative

Break (lunch)

Session 5 Case studies/issues

Guest speaker presentations of relevant examples of successful partnerships (local, national, regional or international as appropriate)

or

Key issues for the group – brainstorm on general sustainable development issues (eg developing integrated planning processes, building capacity for cross-sector partnerships) or a specific theme (eg youth unemployment, crime, enterprise development)

Session 6 Task group on action planning

Mixed-sector discussions on development of parallel aspects of the planning process

Session 7 Plenary session

- Brief feedback on action planning and implementation of integrated development strategy
- Agreement on who will do what

Feedback

- On how the workshop process was conducted
- On how happy participants feel about the outcomes

End

Note: This timetable can be spread over 1 to 3 days

Source: Adapted from Tennyson (1998)

Market research, electronic media and other remote methods

Telecommunications and the internet are providing ever-greater channels to elicit participation of the general public, as well as special interest groups. Strategy development by the UK's Forestry Commission, for example, has frequently made use of telephone surveys of the public's perception of forest values and their own needs. The UK and Belgian NSDSs received significant reactions to draft strategy papers placed on websites. But such 'market research' is not confined to the richer countries. It is being used in many countries where planners are becoming aware of the power of stakeholders to encourage change towards sustainable development, as in Grenada (Box 6.32).

The internet can keep participation going at little cost and high convenience to many stakeholders

Box 6.32 Market research clinches participatory forest policy, Grenada

In Grenada, a small nation in the Eastern Caribbean, a new era in forest policy – a participatory one –emerged in the late 1990s. To concerned individuals, the increasingly evident failure of previous forest policies – based on the preoccupations of foresters, politicians and foreign consultants – made it clear that a turn-around was needed, linked strongly to stakeholders' values. A consultative process was designed locally, reaching every parish.

However, the Grenadian Forest Dept (FD), which organized the process, was constrained by the fact that there were few traditional or governmental systems for consultation and participation. Indeed, 'participation' was a concept that had been strongly associated with the previous Communist regime.

Hence, the participatory methodologies used for the process had to be specially introduced: strings of meetings of various types, one-off studies linked to consultative groups, questionnaires, radio phone-ins and school lessons. While written material often had less impact than expected, meetings, workshops and interviews (many questionnaires were filled in through structured interviews eg with farmers) and other oral means worked well. Senior FD staff became alert to the fact that few women had been attending the local meetings, and responded with a meeting for representatives from women's groups. Building on the national predilection for TV and radio, a mix of awareness-raising broadcasts, phone-ins and surveys was carried out.

Most revealing (indeed of a very wide range of opinions) was the newspaper-based market research. This public opinion survey of the public's 'forest priorities' may be an artificial construct – a nation-wide view from the more highly educated classes rather than the specific local views of *different* groups. But its quantitative results were very significant in changing policy: the public ranking of forest priorities was almost precisely the reverse of what the FD had been doing – soil and water conservation and recreation coming top of the list, instead of wood supplies.

This was such a stark contrast that the FD had no choice but to: (a) thoroughly revise policy; and, perhaps more significantly, (b) make policy implementation a continuation of the participatory approach. The next stage of the forest strategy will be identifying and strengthening the local forms of governance, such as community, social and resource-user groups, as a basis for future planning, implementing and monitoring policy.

To sum up, much is revealed by the contrast between the previous FAO-supported Tropical Forest Action Plan (which was neither widely known, nor accepted as valid by those who did know it) and the new participatory policy. The new policy has been perceived – including by the Prime Minister – not only as a milestone towards a more viable and equitable use of forests, but also as a model for all country-driven policy development in Grenada.

Source: Bass (2000)