

Janet Strachan and Constance Vigilance

Introduction

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Brundtland Commission Report, *Our Common Future*

Human beings are at the centre of concerns of sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.

Principle 1 of the Rio Declaration

The idea of human responsibility for sustaining our natural environment goes back a long way, but often gets pushed into the shadows. More than ever today, development that respects the value of the natural environment is necessary, especially for those beset by poverty and whose natural resources are being degraded by the adverse impact of current patterns of economic and social activity and lack of protection from natural disasters.

This book, the latest in a series from the Commonwealth addressing issues of sustainable development for small states and islands, is about bringing policies and programmes for sustainable development from the shadows into the mainstream of decision-making at all levels of governance and in all sectors. The overall theme of this book came from brainstorming sessions of a consultative group consisting of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM) and Indian Ocean Commission, as well as representatives from the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and from small island developing states (SIDS) themselves.

The thrust of this book is to bring thematic areas of action towards sustainable development in small island developing states, which were set out in the 2005 Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI),¹ into the mainstream of national action by public and private sectors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Through this mainstreaming, sustainable development concerns in key sectors will be integrated within the normal processes of planning, institutional and human capital development, finance and political and operational management processes. This means that national budgets will address the thematic areas of the MSI, including identifiable actions to be taken and having a formal political reporting mechanism for tracking progress. This concept contrasts with the traditional manner of sidelining themes for action to particular ministries, or sectors making extra effort during crises.

The publication is designed as a handbook to assist practitioners currently engaged in policy-making and management of development activities in small and island states. It covers eight of the twenty issues that have been outlined in the Mauritius Strategy as being important for the sustainable development of SIDS – disaster management, marine resources, freshwater resources, land resources, energy resources, tourism resources and trade. The publication brings together best practices, policy options and development prospects that small states can actively pursue in order to achieve real progress in these fields. The text also covers the progress and experiences of

countries in the Caribbean, Pacific and the Atlantic Indian Mediterranean States (AIMS) regions in their implementation of sustainable development in these areas. Further, the publication fills the gap in the literature on sustainable development and provides a useful point of reference and stimulus to policy-makers and their supporting colleagues from all sectors.

This introduction summarises the main themes and conclusions of the chapters of this book and provides insights into the key drivers of sustainable development at the international level through the Commonwealth and the United Nations, as well as at the national level through national sustainable development strategies.

About the chapters

The chapters of this publication explore the principal ways in which sustainable development concerns are being integrated within the areas of disaster management, marine resources, freshwater resources, land resources, energy resources, tourism resources and trade.

Mainstreaming in this text is addressed from various angles. The first chapter looks at mainstreaming in terms of the development of national sustainable development councils and strategies. The chapter on disaster management looks at countries and regions addressing the key areas of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) on disaster risk reduction and disaster management. For ocean and marine resources, mainstreaming is better addressed through regional frameworks and an ecosystem-based management approach at the national level. With regards to water resources, the importance of the regional role, as well as international advice and finance, is essential in mainstreaming this area, given national capacity constraints in many small states. Consultation with all stakeholders is an essential element in mainstreaming sustainable development of land use resources. Renewable energy and energy efficiency can be mainstreamed through a number of areas including fiscal policies and public and professional education. Tourism resources can be mainstreamed through the implementation of a number of standards, including Green Globe standards and ISO 14000 environmental management standards. Regional agreements and regional approaches in trade are essential to address sustainable development concerns in this area.

Chapter 2 by Saki Hirano recounts the adaptation of the principles of sustainable development through the formulation of national strategies in SIDS. It provides a wide-ranging picture of the problems and the progress made. She emphasises that such strategies should be seen as 'living documents', which are the outcome of a continual iterative engagement of all sectors. SIDS vary markedly in their needs and opportunities for development. One strategic solution does not fit the needs of all small states and SIDS, despite the problems they have in common. These problems arise from their small size, limited resources, weak institutional capacity, small markets, openness, dependence on imports, remoteness, fragmentation of communities, and their economic and environmental vulnerability to external shocks. Nonetheless, such countries also differ in many ways, not least in their local political and social culture, their leadership, their perceived priorities, their capacity for effective responses, and their commitment to independence in governance. Thus, viable strategies are adapted to local circumstances and emerge from a local process, influenced but not determined by external ideas and forces.

Hirano puts special emphasis on the value of intergovernmental regional institutions in supplementing national weaknesses in development capacity. She cites, for example, the role of the Pacific Forum in promoting national processes of strategic development in the widely dispersed SIDS of that region.

She identifies two vehicles for national strategic support: national commissions or councils for formulating and implementing strategies. However, she recognises that even if established, without effective leadership and real teeth, these bodies can become ineffective and marginalised in the national political process. She stresses the importance of specially adapting international indicator systems, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), for monitoring national progress in SIDS in order to meet their peculiar needs.

Chapter 3 on disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change, by Rowena Hay, Chris Hartnady and Dylan Blake, covers the process of policy and programme response to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) on disaster risk reduction across the three SIDS regions.

The Pacific islands have developed Comprehensive Hazard and Risk Management (CHARM) with a strong focus on dialogue between policy-makers and scientists for the protection of water resources against the impacts of climate change.

The Caribbean has the Caribbean Hazard Mitigation Capacity Building Programme (CHAMP). This gives special attention to critical public infrastructures, using hazard mapping and the process of Probable Maximum Risk Assessment. These reviews are used as a basis for planned investment in prevention to secure vital services such as power generation, water and sanitation, waste management, transport, government buildings, emergency services, education, social and health services. The assessments then lead to investment programmes to reduce risks and provide planned response through public and private partnership and insurance. The Caribbean region is adopting a 'no regrets' risk reduction approach, which features action on high priority areas, especially flood preparedness and water security.

The Indian Ocean offers examples of the National Adaptation Programme of Action in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) such as the Comoros islands, as well as the policies of private sector 'pay to preserve' and 'willingness to pay' for reduced risk and protection being developed in Mauritius.

The chapter asserts that the increasing risk of natural disasters arising from climate change will not only carry costs through damage to life and property, but will have an increased adverse impact on developing countries, by diverting resources otherwise invested in economic and social development programmes, to hazard mitigation. Nonetheless, it reassuringly cites World Bank sources on the cost-effectiveness of disaster risk reduction methods in saving life and the protection of property.

The authors observe that development practices in SIDS have themselves increased the risks of natural disasters, making coastlines more vulnerable to erosion, by eradicating mangroves and by urban-style development on coastal plains and wetlands. This has destroyed habitats that would have provided some natural protection against climate variation, sea level rise and increases in the frequency and severity of natural hazards such as storms, sea surges and flooding.

The chapter emphasises the importance of strategic flexibility in disaster risk management, which should embrace assessment, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, in specific relation to the most vulnerable people and property. While the protection of water resources is a key issue for all SIDS, the chapter provides a comprehensive multi-sector table identifying appropriate areas for action for each of the principal elements in the Hyogo Framework of Action.

Chapter 4 by Padma Lal outlines the challenges faced by Pacific islands in managing ocean and marine resources and the solutions that can be had through ecosystem-based management. The vast coastal and marine resources of the Pacific are a source of subsistence, as well as commercial

activities. The large exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and very high sea to land ratio means coastal and marine resources are the main source of gross domestic resources for all Pacific countries. In addition to the same challenges as other small states, Pacific island countries face further challenges of poor transport and communication infrastructure, because of the many islands scattered across the large sea. The sustainable development issues concerning ocean and marine resources are how to ensure economic livelihoods from these resources, while at the same time conserving biodiversity and natural ecosystems.

The chapter shows that challenges are experienced with overfishing, including with regard to the sustainability of tuna resources, and that there are threats to the coral reefs and other habitats from coral bleaching and wind and wave actions caused by extreme weather events.

The management of ocean and marine resources is being carried out both at a national and regional level in the Pacific. At the national level, management of these issues has often been sectoral in nature, using a top-down regulatory approach. Regional agencies, such as the Forum Fisheries Agency and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, have played a major role in the region. Support at the regional level has focused on research, capacity development and developing regional strategies. Regional strategies include those envisioned by the Pacific Regional Plan.

The chapter also shows that Pacific island countries are using ecosystem-based management that integrates biological, social and economic factors into a comprehensive strategy aimed at protecting and enhancing sustainability, diversity and productivity of the region's natural resources.

Chapter 5 on sustainable water management by Marc Overmars and Allison Woodruff begins with the examination of the principal thematic issues of sustainable development in small states and islands by exploring water resources. They underline the advantage of a regional process for promoting better water and sanitation services, using the progress made in the Pacific region as a model. They also attribute sustained progress to improvements in strategy and co-ordination promoted by support from UN agencies, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Health Organisation (WHO), the UN Commission for Sustainable Development, Global Environment Fund (GEF) funding and bilateral aid from developed countries in the region.

The chapter stresses the importance of sound water and sanitation services as a necessary condition for social and economic development, poverty alleviation and environmental security. Islands present special problems for the development of these services. They have poor natural storage (especially on the atolls), vulnerability to saline intrusion and sea level rise, with intense competition for land use and often-complex systems of land rights. Management of wastewater and industrial discharge on SIDS is constrained by their small land areas. Moreover, many islands lack the technical capacity to build up the necessary institutional, human and financial support on which integrated development depends.

The chapter explores the reliability and robustness of indicators of service provision, technical definitions for national reporting and standards of measurement and implications for reporting progress.

The chapter strongly promotes the importance of the regional role, international advice and finance, and the bilateral support from developed countries in the Pacific region, notably Australia and New Zealand, as being essential features for achieving sustained development in this technical field.

Chapter 6 by Padma Lal looks at land use, with specific emphasis on agriculture. She notes that access to land is limited not only because of the limited endowments in many small islands, but also because of institutional constraints. In the Pacific, a dual system of traditional communal land and landownership exists. In national assessments carried out for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, many countries acknowledged that they have limited capacity to implement land management. She posits that each country should have to define its own solution to land issues, based on common principles that are sensitive to local customs.

Due to the varying nature of Pacific islands land, from the relatively large Melanesian islands to the land-poor atolls, the chapter shows that agricultural sector challenges in the Pacific are multi-faceted. The chapter also demonstrates that to realise its agricultural potential, each country's agricultural sector planning and development needs to be integral to its national development efforts, as well as to reflect an ecosystem-based management approach. This requires knowledge, foresight and innovation.

Chapter 7, by David Barrett, examines renewable energy options and energy efficiency goals for small states, as part of a strategy for promoting energy security and environmental protection. Progress has been mixed, with progress being made mainly in large countries such as Japan and Cuba. There has also been some progress in a few small states, such as Jamaica.

Small states tend to lag behind in the use of renewable energy and in exercising energy efficiency goals, despite their heavy dependence on fossil fuel imports and opportunities for exploitation of available renewable sources such as solar, biomass, hydro, geothermal, wind and even ocean thermal energy. Barrett stresses the inhibitions to such developments in small states, which arise from lack of political leadership, a shortage of technical expertise, the need for reform of administrative and financial systems, and an inertia in public sector utilities, favouring the status quo rather than research and development.

The chapter identifies examples of best practice emerging in certain Pacific islands and in the Caribbean, and prescribes the need for a route map for development and a menu of factors to promote progress. These include reforms of fiscal policies and accounting methods to favour the substitution of renewable energy sources and new technology in existing installations, public and professional education, mandatory building codes for increasing energy efficiency, emissions trading, regional technical development support, and triple bottom line evaluation methods (embracing trading balances with transparent presentation of the social and environmental impact).

Chapter 8, by Deirdre Shurland, identifies the principles for mainstreaming tourism as part of sustainable development in small states. The chapter notes the global upward trend in tourism, which promotes increasing employment, income and investment in the sector, while at the same time adding to pressures on the vulnerable environmental quality in small states upon which much of that tourism depends. In particular, such growth creates increased demand for coastal land, water resources, energy, waste management and stress on preservation of indigenous natural and cultural resources.

Through the Mauritius Strategy, small states have become engaged in initiatives to promote a more sustainable approach to tourism, with long-term strategies embracing environmental, economic and social dimensions. These strategies have in some cases adopted quality management models. The author proposes the adoption of a Japanese car manufacturing quality model, to provide one framework for assessment of plans for improving the tourism sector within the mainstream of macro economic and social planning. Other examples used include the adoption of quality

models through accreditation schemes, such as the European Union (EU) Blue Flag scheme and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) heritage sites programme. Complementary quality mechanisms cited in the chapter include tourism zoning, tax incentives for achievement of conservation standards, and the establishment of multi-sector task forces or standing committees for planning and implementation of sustainable tourism strategies.

Chapter 9 Veniana Qalo and Derrick Akintade examine the integration of labour and fisheries into trade agreements by the countries in the Pacific region. With high youth unemployment and a high level of population growth, as well as the vast Pacific Ocean, labour and fisheries are prime areas for trade agreements between the Pacific small states and other countries. As with other small states, Pacific countries experienced an erosion of trade preferences to developed markets and thus a decline in the value and quantity of goods traded. The chapter cites three free trade frameworks as being relevant to Pacific SIDS – the agreement between Pacific Forum island countries and Australia and New Zealand under the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER Plus); the free trade area agreement among the 14 SIDS in the region, referred to as the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA); and the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations between the 14 SIDS and the European Union. The Pacific Plan also endorses a number of areas where regional co-operation and action on trade-related matters is deemed to warrant priority attention.

Remittances are a large percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) for many countries within the Pacific region. The chapter shows that many Pacific countries are advocating labour mobility arrangements, such as the Tuvalu and Kiribati seafarer's schemes. In 2006, the New Zealand government launched the Regional Seasonal Employment Scheme, which allows for the employment of unskilled workers from Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The chapter also examines the feasibility of caregivers from Solomon Islands working in Canada.

In terms of fisheries and economic integration in the Pacific, the authors examine the importance of fisheries to the Pacific region, an industry that is worth approximately US\$3 billion annually. Sustainability of existing stocks and species has recently become an important issue, especially given declining stocks of certain species of fish, such as tuna. A number of countries from outside of the region pay access fees to Pacific SIDS to fish within their EEZs.

The chapter outlines a number of the challenges that remain in the areas of labour and fisheries. The authors show that for temporary migration schemes to be successful, there will need to be strong, transparent and enforceable criteria and regulations. In the case of fisheries, the authors identify one of the essential keys to success as being an ecological approach to fisheries management.

The Commonwealth and small states

The Commonwealth Secretariat, with more than a third of its members classified as small states, has been strongly committed to policy support and advocacy for these countries. The issue of the vulnerability of small states was first given formal expression at the 1977 Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting in Barbados. Having noted the special characteristics of small states – in particular, their reliance on trade, high dependence on capital inflows and, in some cases, their lack of natural resources – the ministers urged the international community to adopt a more flexible approach to the requirements of these countries, as well as special measures to assist them. In response, the Secretariat designed a programme to assist small states in overcoming 'the disadvantages of small size, isolation and scarce resources which severely limit the capacity of such countries to achieve their development objectives or to pursue their national interests in a wider international context'.

Commonwealth leaders meeting in New Delhi in 1983 expressed their belief that the problems of small states 'deserved consideration on a wider basis, including that of national security'. A Commonwealth Consultative Group was thus commissioned to carry out such an examination. Its report, *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society*, published in 1985, was the first to highlight the inherent vulnerability of small states to external interference. In reasserting the vulnerability of and threats to small states, and outlining economic and foreign policy measures to mitigate these, the report was important in raising the political profile of small states in international forums.

Following this publication, the Ministerial Group on Small States was formed to continue the discussion of issues of importance to small states. At their second meeting in 1995, ministers recognised that the international context faced by small states had changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War. This led to the creation of a Commonwealth advisory group of eminent persons, whose report, *A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability*, was published in 1997.

In 2000, the seminal report of the Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank Joint Task Force on Small States, *Small States: Meeting Challenges in the Global Economy*, concluded that small states required effective domestic policy, regional co-operation, assistance from multilateral and bilateral development institutions, and improvement in the external environment to support their development. It highlighted four areas of special relevance to successful development in small states: tackling volatility, vulnerability and natural disasters; transitioning to the changing global trade regime; strengthening capacity; and benefiting from the opportunities and coping with the challenges of globalisation. It also recommended an Annual Small States Forum, where international donors report on their activities in small states. Small states have garnered additional support and attention from international donors as a result, but more remains to be done: a 2005/06 review of the Task Force report established that small states are still vulnerable and continue to face a number of development challenges associated with their size.

The Mauritius Strategy

The characteristics that shape the sustainable development concerns of small island developing states (SIDS) were recognised in 1992 by the international community when it agreed Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 – one of the key outcomes from the Rio Earth Summit. Agenda 21 notes that SIDS face special challenges in planning for sustainable development, and agreed a Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. This conference took place in Barbados in 1994 and adopted the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA), which is the principal international framework for addressing the special challenges and constraints faced by small island developing states in their implementation of sustainable development. The BPOA addresses 14 major themes, ranging from climate change through coastal and marine resources to tourism and human resources development.

A ten-year comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action took place in Mauritius in January 2005. The summit involved about 2,000 participants, including 18 presidents, vice-presidents and prime ministers, the UN Secretary-General, and around 60 ministers, and representatives of UN agencies and intergovernmental organisations. This international meeting led to the adoption in January 2005 of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, which includes 20 thematic areas such as climate change and sea level rise, natural and environmental disasters, and energy resources.² The Mauritius Strategy notes that for successful implementation, SIDS require effective human, institutional and technical capacity development; effective

monitoring and co-ordination, including through SIDS regional organisations; and support of the international community, particularly through financial and technical backing. The meeting also adopted the Mauritius Declaration, a political statement which reaffirms the continuing validity of the Barbados Programme of Action, adopts the Mauritius Strategy and makes a commitment to its timely implementation.

National sustainable development strategies

The Brundtland Commission notes that economic growth, social equity and protection of the environment are the three principal components of sustainable development. The complex relationships between these three principal elements are at the heart of operationalising sustainable development. For example, economic growth must take place without compromising the natural environment and creating negative social consequences. Mitigating negative impacts and establishing trade-offs are therefore essential to the implementation of national sustainable development strategies. As a result, sustainable development strategies involve far reaching policy and institutional reforms, as well as the involvement of all sectors. Such strategies involve dealing with immediate concerns, while at the same time addressing long-term issues. UNDESA defines sustainable development strategies as ‘a co-ordinated, participatory and iterative process of thoughts and actions to achieve economic, environmental and social objectives in a balanced and integrated manner at the national and local levels. The process encompasses situation analysis, formulation of policies and action plans, implementation, monitoring and regular review. It is a cyclical and interactive process of planning, participation and action in which the emphasis is on managing progress towards sustainability goals rather than producing a “plan” as the end product’.

From the experiences of developing and developed countries, UNDESA³ concludes that the underlying principles of effective national sustainable development strategies include:

- Country ownership and commitment
- Integrated economic, social and environmental objectives across sectors, territories and generations
- Broad participation and effective partnerships
- Capacity development and an enabling environment and
- Outcomes and means of implementation focus

Ensuring sustainable development requires four critical processes to harness the skills, values and energies of countries. These processes – political, participatory, technical and resource mobilisation – have in common the need to involve the key stakeholders and the need to focus on major issues. As with any strategy, the avenue to success is to have an implementation strategy as well as monitoring and evaluation. This would include clarifying respective roles and responsibilities, public communications, assessments, institutional reflections and learning. An added element of the implementation strategy for national sustainable development is the role of the international community in the successful implementation of sustainable development in small island developing states. The role of the institutions and bilateral donors that form this community includes technical and advisory support, and especially resource mobilisation. This is because a lack of financial resources is often identified as one of the greatest impediments to the successful implementation of sustainable development.

After reading the chapters of this book, policy-makers in small states will have been provided with significant signposts, such as the essential standards required for sustainable tourism and the

importance of regional agreements in assisting small states on the path to achieving sustainable development.

Notes

1. The Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the sustainable development of small island development states was agreed by the international community in January 2005.
2. The complete list of the 20 thematic areas included in the Mauritius Strategy is as follows:
 - i. Climate change and sea level rise
 - ii. Natural and environmental disasters
 - iii. Management of wastes
 - iv. Coastal and marine resources
 - v. Freshwater resources
 - vi. Land resources
 - vii. Energy resources
 - viii. Tourism resources
 - ix. Biodiversity resources
 - x. Transportation and communication
 - xi. Science and technology
 - xii. Graduation from least developed country status
 - xiii. Trade: globalisation and trade liberalisation
 - xiv. Sustainable capacity development and education for sustainable development
 - xv. Sustainable production and consumption
 - xvi. National and regional enabling environments
 - xvii. Health
 - xviii. Knowledge management and information for decision-making
 - xix. Culture
 - xx. Implementation
3. United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Guidance in preparing a national sustainable development strategy: managing sustainable development in the new millennium. Background Paper No. 13 – DESA/DSD/PC2/BP13.

