TOPIC GUIDES FOR STATUS REVIEWS AND DIALOGUES

THE TOPIC GUIDES

Topic Guides are a useful means for drawing out good practice for national strategies for sustainable development. They can be used to "audit" country contexts to assess the extent to which nssd processes may already be taking place and whether an enabling environment and capacity exists to develop and implement an nssd process. The OECD DAC task force on national strategies for sustainable development has prepared two draft topic guides - short lists of issues/questions as a possible basis for consulting with in-country stakeholders during the status reviews and dialogues.

Topic Guide 1 outlines some suggested issues about process and methodology, information on which would be collated during the status reviews. The information would be used, in preparation for the second phase of the dialogues, to identify acceptable processes and methodologies; key stakeholders and institutions; the state of play of existing/planned strategic processes.

Topic Guide 2: the issues discussed are likely to be influenced by the stage that strategic processes have reached in a country - some of the issues suggested will be more relevant to process and design and others to implementation and impact. Lessons can be learnt from all stages. The debate is likely to explore the extent to which appropriate enabling environments exist but it is equally important that there exists commitment and acceptable mechanisms to encourage wide consultation, participation and representation in the process.

STATUS REVIEWS

The status review in each country/region will be carried out by the in-country lead organisation/team. In summary, it will seek to understand the following key issues:

1. Context - historical and current strategy work in the country.
2. Stakeholders - identifying the real/key stakeholders and the extent to which they been involved in the strategic processes, policy development and decision making.
3. Institutions - responsibilities for strategy implementation, institutional relationships and existing integration. Decision making processes.
4. Political commitment and policy - initial indicators of wider impact. Policy provision for sustainable development.

Through the course of the discussions, key stakeholders, strategic processes, institutions and key documents will be identified until a map of the country's nssd related work is built up. It will also be important to identify key cross-cutting issues which might be used as a analytical tool during the next stage of the dialogues.

The lead organisation/team will provide regular feedback to the in-country steering committee, and present the findings of the status review to key stakeholders, It will then be required to produce a report of the status review of the country's nssd work. This report should include recommendations for the dialogues, including appropriate approach, format, stakeholders and institutions, etc. The co-ordinating organisation (IIED) will liaise with each

in-country lead institution on the emerging nature and structure of each dialogue and share this information with the other countries.

This phase of the project will help to limit the potential for duplication and also strengthen collaboration with other donors. It will be important to identify private sector stakeholders and to bring them on board at this early stage to strengthen the links between government and the private sector.

TOPIC GUIDE 1: STATUS REVIEW

Issues	*Information To Be Gathered*
Current Situation	What strategies/planning processes have been undertaken/are underway/planned (national/local). When initiated and by whom. Time perspective of each (& components). What is the main focus and aims. If more than one strategy, what were they Opportunities for complementarity and integration. Were these planning processes finished. Were there any binding agreements. Was the strategy /process implemented. Was the strategy process monitored. What are the links to the global conventions (biodiversity, climate change, desertification).
Stakeholders	Who is/has been involved and to what extent. What social grouping do they belong to. Who else should be involved. What were the approaches/ forums used for this process. Were alternatives considered.
Institutions	Which institutions were/are involved in the process and implementation. Who is responsible for strategy implementation and management. Are there TOR for the responsibilities. Which sector has led the strategy/process and which has adopted. Where does relative power lie.

DIALOGUES

The dialogues will consist of a series of participatory consultation exercises - the nature and format of which will be agreed during the status review phase. They will bring out lessons learnt from existing strategic processes and identify areas of best practice and common constraints/gaps. The exact nature of these 'forums' will vary from country to country but they are likely to be a mix of workshops, working groups, roundtable exercises, discussions with individual key groups, informal meetings, telephone consultations, and other participatory exercises.

To ensure that the output of the dialogues can be co-ordinated into meaningful guidance, it is proposed that the debates centre round a number of key topics. Topic guide 2 outlines some suggested topics. These can be summarised:

1. Process and participation - Successful approaches (and why). What has not worked. What is acceptable. Correlation between process and success.

2. Institutions & Integration - extent to which issues have been addressed holistically. Institutional capacity. Integration with national planning, policy development and decision making processes. Legal frameworks.

3. Technical - extent of knowledge and understanding of the state of resources, and the social and cultural context. Monitoring progress.

4. Political and policy - commitment and constituency. Policy changes.

5. Role of donors - extent of their involvement. what assistance and approaches have worked/not worked.

Different groups of stakeholders will be involved at various points in the dialogue. The stakeholders are likely to be representative of government, civil society and the private sector. It may be necessary to pay particular attention to the participation of vulnerable, poor, and minority groups, as well as ensure that participation issues around gender and traditional authorities are not undermined.

The consultation exercises will be facilitated and reported on by the lead organisations/teams. However a country may also decide that different members of the steering committee participate in the consultation exercises to take advantage of the opportunity it presents for feedback and communication.

The representation on the Steering Committee will include a broad cross-section of representatives from government, civil society and the private sector and the donor. The Committee will be made up of people able to influence the strategy work within their organisations and are able to assume a role for the longer term donor-partner collaborations.

TOPIC GUIDE 2:   IN-COUNTRY DIALOGUE

Topic	Issues to be explored
Political and institutional enabling conditions:	Is there **political commitment** to the objectives, processes, plans and budget requirements of all strategic initiatives concerned with SD? In what political for a? Is the political commitment partisan or broad-church? What are the sticking points? Is it clear where **responsibilities** lie for building on existing strategies and their activities, for formulating new strategies where relevant, for implementing them, and for monitoring them? Do the institutions concerned have sufficient **rights, resources and effective relationships** to undertake this? [The 4Rs] Is there effective **co-ordination:** - between these institutions? - between strategic initiatives e.g. NCS, social action plans, etc.? - between these institutions and those central to planning and investment? - between institutions and donors? How do national local and regional strategies relate to each other and how do existing strategies link into the planning and decision making systems? What cross-boundary issues have been considered?
Quality of analysis:	Is there adequate **understanding of the state of resources**, trends in their quality and quantity, and the pressures upon them? Is there adequate analysis of the **state of the main sectors and livelihood systems,** their interactions with resources (as above), and consequent winners and losers? Has full use been made of **existing studies on poverty and environment,** and the opportunity taken to strengthen the body of knowledge in concerned areas?
Quality of participation:	Is there **continuing identification and participation** of concerned stakeholders - including government, civil society and market players at different levels, and representatives of global environmental interests - in strategy preparation, planning, implementation, monitoring and review? Do the fora and mechanisms suit the stakeholders? Does representation meet

	acceptable criteria of identity-with-group and accountability-to-group?
	Have **pro-active mechanisms** been used to engage otherwise-marginalised stakeholders in the above processes - such as women and landless poor groups
	What role did public awareness campaigns have in encouraging stakeholder involvement in the process and how has the process strengthened people's participation in, and influence over, the decision making process?
	How were difficulties and problems addressed and consensus reached.

Quality of policies and plans:	Have clear **policies, plans, principles, standards and/or targets** been derived from the strategy, in forms which can best elicit positive responses from those various institutions (government, market and civil society) which are supposed to implement the strategy?
	Are there **systems for defining priorities** in environmental, economic and social terms, so as to keep the number of strategy objectives (at any one time) manageable? And are these systems compatible with those for analysis and participation?
	Have **opportunities for win-win** activities supporting poverty alleviation, economic growth and environmental conservation been well-defined with those institutions best placed to act on them? For example, have conservation and poverty alleviation strategies been brought together?
	Are there **systems for addressing the hard trade-offs** - identifying them, debating them, planning action or compensating for the costs of inaction?
	Has there been **early and tactical implementation of promising initiatives** which will both help build support for the strategy process and test its principles and ideas?
Effectiveness of regulations and incentives:	Do fiscal and regulatory frameworks **internalise social and environmental costs** in order to correct for market failure, and open doors to best-practice investment?
	Are these frameworks efficiently **monitored and enforced**, by government or private bodies as appropriate?
	Have measures been included to ensure **compliance with international** environmental and human rights agreements?
	Are measures taken to increase public awareness of sustainable development and thus encourage the development of

	consumer- or civil society-driven incentives?
Nssd process management and effectiveness of capacity	What key factors assisted the development of the strategy (e.g. a past strategy; public pressure; government commitment) and what were the key issues to resolve (land tenure; resource depletion; poverty)? From what perspective has the process been driven (environmental, economic, interdisciplinary)? What tools/methodologies were useful in enhancing understanding (e.g. poverty assessments; SEA). How is progress being monitored? Is capacity being efficiently and equitably utilised, and improved, to: • develop strategies with strong local ownership? • co-ordinate existing sectoral or issues-based strategies to improve their coherence and efficiency in achieving SD? • encourage institutions to make their responses to relevant strategies? • implement strategy-related activities, in a way which is consistent with the broader strategy goals ? • monitor the impact of strategic processes and activities? • maintain the 'big picture' of strategy evolution? • review and continuous improvement of the strategy?

Evidence of Impact	What areas do stakeholder believe are being influenced - positively or negatively - by the strategy? • ecological processes conserved? • biodiversity conserved? • resource quantity/productivity maintained? • economic efficiency improved? • poverty and inequity reduced? • pollution prevented? • human health improved? • culture conserved?
Donors	What has been the role of donors in these processes and was their role useful? Is there effective co-ordination between government and donors?