IMPROVING THE COHERENCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FRAMEWORK: PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS FROM THE CASE OF THE ST GEORGE'S DECLARATION[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines a process to review and revise a sub-regional environmental policy in the eastern Caribbean, looking at the rationale behind the review, the process through which it was carried out, and the resulting revised policy. It highlights the value as well as the limits of regional environmental management policies and discusses their fit within national contexts and the rapidly evolving international policy environment. It confirms the usefulness of and problems with employing participatory methods for policy formulation at a regional level, and the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of adapting the tools of results-based management to environmental policy making.

Keywords: environmental policy, sustainable development, regional cooperation, Caribbean

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1.0   Introduction

The year 2007 marked the 20th anniversary of the release of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, commonly known as the Brundtland Commission Report (WCED 1987), which popularised the concept of sustainable development and marked the beginning of an era of intense activity in environmental policy-making at global, regional and national levels.

These changes in global environmental policy have been accompanied and supported by changes in global development policies and by the introduction of new approaches to development planning. In particular, there has been a growing emphasis in recent years on the use of the tools of results-based management, as exemplified by the formulation, in 2001, of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and by the dominant place that they now occupy in development discourses and strategies.

Small island developing states (SIDS) have been very directly involved in these policy processes. At the global level, events such as the 1994 United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS and the World Summit on Environment and Development in 2005 have provided a framework for international policies and actions specifically dedicated to addressing issues faced by small island states in the developing world.

Within individual countries, a similarly wide and important range of processes has been implemented at the initiative of national governments, regional international agencies, civil society organisations, donors and businesses. In twenty years, the policy environment of SIDS has changed radically, from one where little attention was being paid to issues of natural resource management and environmental quality, to one where complex and sophisticated institutional arrangements have been put in place, where the linkages between environment and economic development are far better understood, and where the concern for sustainability has begun to infiltrate all spheres of public policy (Brown *et al.* 2007).

Less critical attention has perhaps been given to the regional level of policy formulation and implementation, where a number of important initiatives in sustainable development have also taken place. Regional groupings and institutions play a special role in island regions such as the Caribbean and Micronesia, because the resources of individual countries are limited, contexts and cultures are similar, and histories, problems and appropriate responses are often shared.

This paper examines a recent process to review and revise an environmental policy for the countries of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), a sub-regional grouping of small island states in the Lesser Antilles that are also part of the Caribbean Community and of the Commonwealth. The grouping is comprised of nine states including six independent countries and three Overseas Territories of the United Kingdom[3]. The paper examines the rationale behind the review, the process through which it was carried out, and the resulting revised policy. It then draws some observations based on the experience regarding:

- the value of regional environmental management policies and their fit within national policy contexts and the wider and rapidly evolving international policy environment;
- the usefulness of and problems with employing participatory methods for policy formulation at a regional level; and
- the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of adapting the tools of results-based management to environmental policy making.

The paper is organised in two main sections, with a presentation of the case study in the first section, followed by a discussion of the main observations made and lessons learned in this policy review process.

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[3] The independent states are Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The Overseas Territories are Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands and Montserrat.

2.0   Case Study

2.1   Background and context

The OECS evolved out of recognition on the part of Caribbean microstates achieving independence from the United Kingdom in the 1970s that their small economies could only be viable through a pooling of resources into regional forms of cooperation (Ishmael 2006). Successful cooperative initiatives dealing with currency, justice and civil aviation led in 1981 to the signing of the Treaty of Basseterre, which mandated the establishment of the OECS.

The OECS is comprised of a Secretariat based in Castries, St. Lucia and a number of institutions facilitating and promoting cooperation in a wide range of areas, including trade, justice, security, health, diplomacy and development. The OECS has also coordinated efforts by Member States to harmonise policies or develop joint policies in a number of areas.

Because regional cooperation is particularly necessary and valuable on environmental matters, given the region's shared natural resource base and common environmental issues, and because of the special relevance of sustainable development to SIDS, the OECS has devoted considerable attention to programmes and policies in these areas. It established a natural resources management unit within the OECS Secretariat in 1986 to provide technical support and advice to Member States on environmental issues, and has undertaken a number of programmes and projects related to environment and development. The Secretariat also established and coordinates annual meetings of an Environment Policy Committee (EPC) comprised of Ministers responsible for environment in all Member States.

Perhaps the most ambitious and important OECS initiative on environment and sustainable development emerged out of the 1999 meeting of the EPC, which requested the Secretariat to prepare an "OECS Charter for Environmental Management" and a strategy to guide environmental management in the region. The resulting policy documents included a Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability in

the OECS, signed at St. George's, Grenada in 1981 and generally known as the St. George's Declaration (SGD), as well as a regional Environmental Management Strategy for its implementation.

The SGD was developed by the OECS's natural resources unit (now known as the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit - ESDU) through a process of widespread consultation with Member States. It encompasses 21 Principles (see Box 1), under each of which are listed specific actions that Member States agree to undertake (OECS 2001). The regional strategy prepared the following year (OECS 2002) linked each Principle to a desired result and identified specific actions that could be taken at national, regional and international levels to achieve those results.

Following the preparation of the regional strategy, ESDU provided assistance to each Member State to prepare a National Environmental Management Strategy (NEMS) identifying the actions it would aim to undertake to meet its commitment to the SGD. Following the completion of their NEMS, Member States were expected to report annually on progress towards their implementation.

At a regional policy level, the SGD was an important and powerful statement of shared commitment to "improved environmental management to enhance the quality of life for all members of society" (OECS 2002). For the OECS, the Declaration and strategy became useful programming tools, guiding efforts in support of Member States. At a national level, the SGD's profile and influence varied. Some countries made their NEMS the primary programming framework for environmental management, while others found the strategies less useful and difficult to implement (Renard and Geoghegan 2005). Few countries were able to produce timely, accurate and useful reports; thus it was difficult for ESDU to assess the SGD's effectiveness. The problems countries had with reporting were compounded by national obligations to monitor and provide reports on a number of other conventions, treaties and agreements related to the environment, overwhelming the limited capacities of national environmental management departments.

Box 1: Principles for Environmental Sustainability in the OECS

Principle 1:   Foster Improvement in the Quality of Life

Principle 2:   Integrate Social, Economic and Environmental Considerations into National Development Policies, Plans and Programmes

Principle 3:   Improve on Legal and Institutional Frameworks

Principle 4:   Ensure Meaningful Participation by Civil Society in Decision Making

Principle 5:   Ensure Meaningful Participation by the Private Sector

Principle 6:   Use Economic Instruments for Sustainable Environmental Management

Principle 7:   Foster Broad-based Environmental Education, Training and Awareness

Principle 8:   Address the Causes and Impacts of Climate Change

Principle 9:   Prevent and Manage the Causes and Impacts of Disasters

Principle 10:   Prevent and Control Pollution and Manage Waste

Principle 11:   Ensure the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

Principle 12:   Protect Cultural and Natural Heritage

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Principle 13:   Protect and Conserve Biological Diversity

Principle 14:   Recognise Relationships between Trade and Environment

Principle 15:   Promote Cooperation in Science and Technology

Principle 16:   Manage and Conserve Energy

Principle 17:   Negotiate and Implement Multilateral Environmental Agreements

Principle 18:   Coordinate Assistance from the International Donor Community towards the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Region

Principle 19:   Implementation and Monitoring

Principle 20:   Obligations of Member States

Principle 21:   Review

In response, ESDU carried out a review to identify the main issues constraining the ability of Member States to monitor and report on the SGD and NEMS and to make recommendations for overcoming them, including through the development of a new reporting instrument. The review, undertaken in 2005, concluded that one of the major obstacles to reporting was the form of the SGD itself, because of its broad scope and the difficulty of linking its rather general Principles to specific actions and outcomes. The Technical Advisory Committee guiding the study therefore concluded, in accordance with the 21st Principle of the SGD, which calls for a review of the SGD within three years of its coming into force, that the Principles should be thoroughly reviewed, with an aim of making them more strategic, focused and relevant to the current regional and international policy context.

3.0 SGD Review

The review, which began in October 2005 and ended in mid-2006 with the preparation of a revised text for the SGD, was guided by the earlier study, which concluded that:

1. The Principles and agreed actions remained fully relevant; it was therefore not necessary to rewrite the document, merely to reorganise it to make it more strategic and focused, while retaining its focus on environmental sustainability.
2. The main need was for the Declaration to be more results-oriented, through the use of a results-based management structure and the inclusion of specific targets and indicators.
3. The policy also needed to be realigned to the current policy context, particularly by being more consistent with the language of the Millennium Development Goals and other international commitments, without losing its grounding in local realities.
4. In order to increase its visibility and influence, it needed to be made more concise and communicable, and to be linked to the larger process underway to revise the 1981 Treaty of Basseterre.

The process involved initial workshops to develop the basic outline and contents of the revised text, preparation of a series of drafts that were circulated for review, and a final consultation in the form of a workshop to present and critique the draft text in each Member State. The final text (OECS 2006) restructured the original 21 Principles into one overall aim and four goals (Box 2), with desired outcomes, targets, regional indicators and supportive actions noted for each. The targets under each goal are time-bound, with their 2010 target date linked to the next scheduled review of the SGD. The revised document also includes a section on implementation and a section on reporting and review.

Box 2: Goals of the Revised (2006) St. George's Declaration

Overall Aim:	Foster equitable and sustainable improvement in the quality of life in the OECS Region
Goal 1:	Build the capacity of Member States and regional institutions to guide and support processes of sustainable development
Goal 2:	Incorporate the objectives, perspectives, resources and talents of all of society in environmental management
Goal 3:	Achieve the long-term protection and sustained productivity of the region's natural resource base and the ecosystems services it provides
Goal 4:	Ensure that natural resources contribute optimally and equitably to economic, social and cultural development

The revised SGD was accepted by Member States at the November 2006 meeting of the Environmental Policy Committee, re-affirming each country's commitment to sustainable development. Over the past year, ESDU has developed a new instrument for national

reporting and a communication strategy for the SGD, and has introduced both in a series of national and regional workshops.

4.0 Discussion

The value of a regional environmental policy

The study of reporting procedures and requirements (Renard and Geoghegan 2005) that preceded the review and revision of the SGD concluded that the Declaration is a useful and relevant policy statement, especially because it is an indigenous statement, formulated and owned by the region. But it also noted that such a regional policy must be seen against the background of, and must be linked to, what prevails at both the global and national levels, where the context and conditions have changed quite rapidly over the past two decades.

On the international scene, the main changes that have taken place since the release of the report of the Brundtland Commission twenty years ago are reflected in the entry into force of the three so-called Rio Conventions[4], the adoption by the United Nations of the Millennium Declaration (United Nations General Assembly 2000) and the MDGs (United Nations General Assembly 2001), and the adoption of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002 (UN DESA 2002). In addition, SIDS have been the focus of another UN-led process, with the convening of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of SIDS in 1994, resulting in the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action (UN DESA 1994), and the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States which was held in 2005 in Mauritius, leading to the adoption of the Mauritius Strategy (United Nations 2005).

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[4] The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Diversification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

This new global framework for environmental policy and the events that have paved the way towards its development have been useful in many respects, especially because they have helped to formulate a global consensus, preliminary agreements and implementation instruments to address some key issues that require international commitment and cooperation. But this new framework has also had negative impacts, which are particularly visible in small island states with limited resources and weak institutional capacities. While small island developing nations wish to behave as responsible members of the international community and while they are and will be, in many respects, among the first and main victims of a global environmental crisis to which they have contributed very little, the reality is that international agreements and commitments place a significant burden on these small countries, and at times distract them from the priority issues that they should focus on. The number of reports and meetings related to international environmental conventions and agreements has reached a scale that precludes an adequate level of response and participation from small states with limited staff capacity.

The international environmental policy context is therefore both an incentive for and an obstacle to good and effective environmental management in small island states, and the evolution of national policies and institutional arrangements has in many respects happened independently to these international processes. Over the past two decades, these countries have become aware of the direct relationship between environmental quality and socio-economic development, largely because of the dependence of their economies on natural resources; they have experienced catastrophic phenomena that may be attributed to climate change; and they have realised the need for alternative development strategies that would help them respond to the changes caused by globalisation and their increased economic and political marginalisation.

The changes in the national policy contexts are far from perfect and complete, but they are significant. They are reflected in more explicit statements of environmental policy (several OECS countries have a formal National Environmental Policy and most have a NEMS), in

similarly explicit statements of policy in key sectors that have a strong environmental dimension (e.g. coastal zone, land and water), in new institutional arrangements (most governments have a Ministry responsible for the environment, and Grenada has a Sustainable Development Council) and in the design, adoption and use of suitable instruments (impact assessment, standards, laws and regulations, participatory planning processes, co-management agreements).

Against this background, it would be legitimate to ask whether a regional policy statement such as the St. George's Declaration is required and useful. Does it contradict, or duplicate, the instruments available at global and national levels? If countries that are part of a formal regional grouping are already signatories of all the major international conventions and agreements, and if participation in these already represents a significant investment of limited resources, do they need a regional policy statement and instrument? What are the benefits to be gained from adding what seems like just another layer in the policy framework, especially when there are other policy instruments and agreements that cover the Caribbean region[5].

On the basis of the experience gained since the St. George's Declaration was first developed and the information, feedback and guidance received during the formulation of the revised Declaration, it seems possible to conclude that a regional policy instrument has its place in the overall framework, for four main reasons.

First, national policies alone are unable to deal with shared resources and issues. This is the rationale for an instrument such as the Cartagena Convention, which covers the wider Caribbean region, but the Eastern Caribbean has specificities that justify the use of a policy instrument to serve this small sub-region. Geographic (small size of islands, shared marine ecosystems and biological diversity), socio-

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[5] The most important among these is undoubtedly the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, known as the Cartagena Convention, that covers the entire Caribbean Sea and that has been ratified by most of the countries that border it.

economic (historical linkages, similar economic structures) and political (tradition of cooperation and existence of common institutions in several sectors) factors are responsible for this specificity, and provide the rationale for an instrument such as the SGD.

Regional policy also creates a framework for pooling and exchanging technical expertise and experiences, as illustrated by the proposed monitoring system that is described later in this paper. In small island states, skills and capacities are limited, and a joint policy instrument is one of the mechanisms by which these can be shared and enhanced. In this instance, the Declaration's commitment to focus efforts over the next four years on completing the design and establishment of the national policy and institutional frameworks (Goals 1 and 2), with very specific targets to be achieved in a relatively short period of time, provides a unique opportunity for the countries involved to share their expertise and varied experience to accelerate this process.

The experience of the SGD also suggests that a regional policy statement validates and supports national policy and gives it more weight on the international scene. It is indeed interesting to note that the SGD is often cited by international agencies and donors when describing and justifying interventions in the eastern Caribbean. Without doubt, the voice of nine small islands will always be louder than the voice of one, especially when they speak in harmony on the issues that impact on their present and future development.

The fourth reason why it can be useful to develop strong regional policy instruments is that the international policy framework is not always relevant to the conditions and needs of small island states and is often insufficiently specific. The example of the MDGs can illustrate this, as this process to review the St. George's Declaration made every effort to create linkages and ensure consistency between the Declaration and this dominant policy instrument. But it soon became clear that while MDG 7 ("Ensure environmental sustainability") is fully applicable to the Eastern Caribbean, the targets and indicators agreed by the international community in order to achieve, and measure the achievement of, this goal are not entirely applicable:

- MDG Target 9 actually includes two separate ideas, one being to "integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes" and the other being to "reverse the loss of environmental resources". Both ideas have been included, but separately and in more appropriate forms, in the revised Declaration.

- MDG Target 10 ("Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation") and MDG Target 11 ("By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers") are not relevant to the conditions and needs of the "middle-income" countries of the OECS region, and it was thus decided that they should not be used in this regional policy statement. New targets, including two that relate specifically to water and sanitation, were incorporated in the revised SGD.

- Following the rigorous progress of selection of indicators that is described briefly later in this paper, the revised SGD retained approximately half of the environmental indicators originally developed for the MDGs, and developed additional ones that were considered more relevant and applicable to the situation of the region.

One of the main conclusions of this process, therefore, is that regional policy instruments that focus on common contexts, problems and needs and that help countries to assess the relevance, and meet the obligations, of international agreements and initiatives, can be of considerable value to countries, in the context of an increasingly complex international policy environment.

5.0   Participation in the Formulation of Regional Policies

One of the many changes that have taken place at the global level since the 1980s is the almost universal acceptance of participation as a requirement for effective and fair processes of policy formulation and

implementation. But while the need for and alleged benefits of participation are professed by many, including most of the international and bi-lateral development agencies that are active in the Caribbean, experience has shown that the practice of participation can be particularly challenging, and that processes that present themselves as participatory often fail to involve stakeholders effectively in decision-making or to contest the *status quo* of power relations (Pimbert and Wakeford 2001).

The challenges to effective and equitable participation in policy formulation include the need to identify and involve a wide range of stakeholders with different backgrounds and interests, the complexity of incorporating and managing competing expectations and positions, the difficulty in creating favourable conditions for participation (e.g. access to information, provision of incentives to participate) and the need for time, resources and flexibility in the design and conduct of such processes. In addition, it remains a dominant reality throughout the world that the individuals and social groups that hold the power to formulate public policy are often reluctant to share such power (Pimbert and Wakeford 2001).

In the case of a regional policy process such as the one described here, participation can pose additional challenges, especially because of the number and diversity of institutional actors. In the eastern Caribbean, the complexity of the institutional landscape is indeed extreme, when one considers that all the independent territories of the OECS have a full range of ministries and national institutions, that the Overseas Territories also have ministries and institutions in most sectors except external relations, that there are a large number of regional institutions with various geographic scopes and coverage, and that there also exist a diversity of organisations in the private sector and civil society at local, national and regional levels. Also, geographic distance is a hindering factor, as travel within the region is expensive and time consuming, in spite of short distances.

The initial phase in the process to review the St. George's Declaration was informed by these challenges and realities, but it also revealed that all the countries of the OECS sub-region had previously

been engaged in a wide range of consultative and participatory processes in a number of sectors related to environmental management. While these processes may not have been perfectly participatory, they all involved some degree of consultation, with the involvement of most key stakeholders in the formulation of these policies. This would have been the case, for example, when these countries developed their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans under the auspices of the Convention on Biological Diversity, or when they formulated national policies in important sectors such as water or land use. In light of this, the OECS concluded that a broad consultative process for the purpose of revising the SGD would not be necessary, but that it would be important to build on and to use the products of all these national processes.

Two main instruments and channels were therefore used to capture the essence of these earlier processes. One was the constitution of a regional working group comprising representatives of both regional and national agencies, as well as ESDU. The other was the convening of national consultations aimed at bringing together representatives of all the main national agencies involved in environmental policy and environmental management in government, the private sector and civil society. In addition, consultations were organised with the region's main donors and with international and regional organisations, in order to incorporate their views and to ensure policy coherence. Taken together, these consultations involved all the sectors concerned, and therefore provided opinions that are representative of the various perspectives and interests.

The quality and usefulness of the national consultations varied from country to country, depending on the level of mobilisation that organisers were able to secure, but several of these sessions proved very useful in generating feedback and formulating policy recommendations for inclusion in the revised Declaration. This is primarily due to the fact that these consultations were conceived and run as working sessions, with participants being involved in a page-by-page review of a draft text and given the opportunity to make very precise recommendations. The fact that many of these participants had themselves been leading, or involved

in, national processes of environmental policy formulation also ensured that the outcomes of these processes would contribute to the regional review.

Throughout the process, the OECS used the service of a small team of consultants who conducted the research and facilitated the various steps. In these tasks, the consultants acted less as policy advisors and more as facilitators, providing guidance to each activity and helping the various partners to identify policy issues and options and to come up with their own conclusions and recommendations. This experience confirmed that facilitation is an indispensable ingredient of participation, and that such facilitation is more effective when it is perceived as independent.

6.0   Challenges and Benefits in Applying a Results-based Approach

6.1   Choosing a results-based approach: background and rationale

Results-based management (RBM) is an approach to public management that emerged in the 1980s out of concerns in many industrialised countries regarding public sector accountability and efficiency. The approach is based on the articulation of institutional goals and expected results, the setting of time-bound targets for achieving results, the definition of indicators of effective performance, and the creation of complex systems of accountability through various types of audit procedures.

While RBM initially was introduced to improve the performance of public agencies accountable to their citizens, its methods were eventually absorbed into the development assistance programmes of the industrialised countries and the international development agencies dominated by them. Within a few years, RBM tools such as the logical framework were in widespread use in development assistance planning. While there was initial resistance to these approaches in many developing

country institutions, technical assistance from sources such as the World Bank eventually assured the spread of an RBM orientation to most developing country public sector agencies (Binnendijk 1999).

Until the beginning of this century, however, RBM approaches were not well known or widely used in sustainable development and environmental management circles, where discussions were dominated by natural resource management, non-governmental, intergovernmental and academic circles rather than the public sector. While the science and technology-based approaches of the past had been effectively complemented by the use of participatory approaches, sustainable development and environmental management were still conceived as processes of continuous improvement and adaptation rather than through a results-based perspective.

That changed in 2001, when the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the result of a classic international consensus-building process, was translated into the MDGs[6], with their results-based targets and indicators. Suddenly virtually every country in the world, including all the OECS Member States, had signed up to a results-based approach to all aspects of development, including, through MDG Goal 7, environmental management.

This background explains the contexts in which both the initial 2001 version of the SGD and the 2005-06 revision were developed. While, as noted earlier, the 2001 version made considerable use of participatory approaches, in that pre-MDG period, RBM methods had not yet infiltrated the world of environmental management and the original SGD was not influenced by them. On the other hand, by the time the SGD was reviewed in 2005, the MDGs, and with them RBM methods, had become the predominant influence on development discourse and practice. Results, targets and indicators had become the

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[6] The MDGs were developed by the United Nations with the assistance of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), three of the major international promoters of RBM approaches.

fashion, and the countries of the region had signed on to many of them through international agreements and conventions.

RBM has gained such prominence and universal acceptance, and is so grounded in the rules of logic, that it is sometimes difficult to imagine that it is only one of many possible approaches to management. Yet its actual effectiveness in improving management performance continues to be debated, and many of its attributes have been criticised, particularly when it is used as a tool for development planning (Gasper 2000; Kilby 2004; Eyben 2005). A number of critics have asserted that the unbounded nature of development processes make them impervious to the levels of certainty and causality implicit in the instruments of RBM. The rigidity of its tools, such as the logical framework, and the difficulty of adapting them to more flexible institutional contexts and cultures than those found in industrialised country public sector agencies have also been noted. Finally, and of particular importance to those who believe in the value of participation and of adaptive management, there are criticisms regarding RBM's emphasis of results over process, and the lack of instruments for assessing outcomes and impacts that have not been pre-defined.

These criticisms are not trivial and are highly relevant to the use of results-based tools such as targets and indicators in a regional environmental management policy that seeks an integrated and continuous improvement approach to the way in which the environment is managed and used rather than a specific set of results or outcomes. A results-based approach was nonetheless used as the basis for revising the SGD, for a number of reasons. First, in the changed post-MDG context, any development policy instrument taking a different approach, or failing to incorporate the environmental management targets that countries had already signed on to and the indicators that were already being tracked, would be susceptible to criticism and marginalisation. In addition to that pragmatic consideration, there are some characteristics of environmental management in the region that make an RBM approach to policy reformulation quite suitable, for example:

- The countries of the region have many good policies, often the result of discrete projects, but are much shorter on

mechanisms for their implementation (sometimes because there is insufficient project funding for follow-up). By focusing on the results those policies seek to achieve, the emphasis is placed on the steps required to make policies real.

- Even where good policies are accompanied by appropriate actions, there are few systems for monitoring their impacts. The countries therefore have no way of evaluating their policies and actions.

- While structures and institutions exist, to a greater or lesser degree, to bind public servants to agreed policies and priorities in the OECS countries, politicians have different channels of accountability and the ability to override administrative decisions. "Political interference" is a particular concern in the context of environmental management, which is sometimes characterised in political discourse as a constraint to economic development.

- Politicians are also often reluctant to set targets against which performance can be measured, but public opinion leaders and electorates in the Caribbean are increasingly demanding commitments expressed in measurable targets.

- Relations between the governments of the region and civil society organisations, while generally amicable, can also be marked by distrust and a sense on the part of civil society that government agencies are not carrying out their mandates effectively; this has at various times been the case between governments and environmental organisations. Improved systems of monitoring and evaluation would help identify the areas where governments are performing well, as well as assist civil society partners to assess where their involvement is most needed.

- As happens everywhere, many factors affect the health of the environment, and the causes of negative impacts are not always obvious or easily disentangled. Some, like natural disasters or climate change, are impervious to human

intervention; others may be the unintended or indirect consequences of actions in very different spheres or economic sectors. Establishment of baselines and systems of monitoring helps demonstrate links between actions and events and their consequences that might not be otherwise obvious, and so can point to the need for policy shifts or new interventions.

6.2   Employing a results-based approach: selecting targets and indicators

While the reorganisation of the text of the SGD into a small number of goals, each accompanied by a set of desired outcomes and actions aimed at achieving them, was very much influenced by the strategic logic of the results chain, it is with the identification of targets and indicators that the SGD most emphatically takes an RBM approach. The trick was to find ways of employing these tools that would allow maximum flexibility and responsiveness by the countries and institutions employing them.

As noted earlier, targets have gained increased international prominence through the MDGs, and target-setting has become an essential part of virtually every international process. Countries are thus expected to sign on and demonstrate their commitment to an ever-increasing number of targets covering all aspects of development and governance. However, like RBM more generally, the use of targets as a tool of management has been subject to a number of criticisms, many stimulated by their newly central role on the international development agenda as a result of the MDGs (Clemens *et al.* 2007). One important concern has to do with the processes used to set targets, which may be controlled by the most powerful actors, often not themselves directly affected by the actions employed to meet the targets. The MDGs, for example, were developed by the United Nations in consultation with the international development banks and the OECD, without formal input from the countries or stakeholders most central to their achievement. The

result of such high-handed target-setting from above can be covert resistance or apathy on the ground.

Targets are also criticised for their narrow results-oriented focus, which diverts attention from the broader impacts and side-effects of actions, as well as from the ways in which those actions are connected and carried out (Maxwell 2003). For example, actions to reduce the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water might include privatisation of water resources, thereby forcing the poor to make trade-offs between water and other basic needs, or closing off access to water supplies considered unsafe, thus reducing the options available to some poor people.

Concern has also been expressed regarding the variable relevance of international targets, and especially those of the MDGs, to local priorities and situations. Fundamentally, the MDGs are global goals that have been translated into global targets and indicators for the purpose of directing and measuring the progress of the global community towards the achievement of the goals. But too many countries and organisations have simply transposed these global benchmarks to a national scale without realising that they were not necessarily applicable. And no set of targets that might make sense for, say, Chad or China could possibly be entirely applicable to Grenada or Guatemala. As noted earlier, because the main objective of the MDGs is to improve the lives of the world's poorest, several of their targets are particularly unsuited to the context of middle-income countries like those comprising the OECS.

Nonetheless, the OECS countries were keen to include targets in the revised SGD, including targets that would reinforce some of the international commitments they had made. But in preparing the revised Declaration, it was important to be sure that the targets included in it were not ones that the countries were merely asked to accept, but ones that they were fully committed to as reflected in their laws, policies and institutions. In other words, the targets in the SGD had to be ones that fit national policy objectives and priorities, rather than the other around. By seeking out targets already accepted by Member States, or finding agreement on priority areas for which the countries wished to commit

themselves to setting targets, the revised SGD avoided the problem of bias towards powerful external interests.

Another question regarding targets had to do with the setting of dates. Here the revision was influenced by two considerations. The first, raised by a number of people in the national consultations, was that the time frame for targets should be short enough to hold politicians currently in office accountable for them. There was a concern that, for example, a ten-year time frame would allow politicians to blithely sign on to the document while leaving the meeting of its targets to their successors. The second consideration stemmed from concerns that given the high levels of uncertainty in the field of environmental management, and the associated need for continual reassessment and adaptation, the setting of longer-term targets could cause countries to stay on a single course when another, more promising, one might emerge. On the other hand, targets that remained within the timeframes of discrete strategies or initiatives would actually encourage regular evaluation and reassessment as they were met and new ones needed to be set. These considerations led to the agreement on a four-year time frame for most SGD targets.

A number of issues also had to be confronted in developing indicators for tracking progress on the goals of the SGD. Indicators are a key element of RBM, and as its sphere of influence has grown, robust indicators are being demanded for an ever-increasing range of applications. Once largely employed to detect changes in a particular physical environment (for example, through the use of indicator species to measure changes in an ecosystem), they are now being used to track changes in attitudes, behaviours, performance, policies, and so forth. In fact, the demand for indicators has greatly outpaced the research required to craft useful ones, and processes of indicator selection are often carried out essentially "in the dark".

Even when indicators have been well tested for robustness, they have limitations as they are only designed to detect and measure change, not to determine why or how the changes have occurred, or what implications the change might have on factors besides the indicator itself. Systems of monitoring and evaluation therefore cannot be entirely

dependent on indicators, particularly if they are interested in understanding the factors that have contributed to any change or learning about the processes through which change has occurred.

Indicators also need to be used with caution because, like targets, they can reflect the values and biases of those who have selected them. For example, the MDG environmental indicator "ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity" has been criticised for reflecting the biases of powerful international conservation interests and ignoring the interests of people living in areas of high biodiversity or the range of ways, besides protected areas, by which biodiversity can be sustainably managed (and which might be more appropriate in the context of, for example, densely populated SIDS) (Roe 2003).

A third, pragmatic, issue regarding indicators is that they require systems for monitoring them, and such systems can be beyond the financial, technical or human capacity of many developing countries. In fact, much of the data required for tracking various indicators of progress towards the achievement of international goals is either unavailable or seriously out of date for many of the countries whose progress is of highest priority. While the smallest change in maternal mortality in Canada can be spotted immediately, trends in Haiti may remain in the realm of guesswork from one decade to the next. Monitoring capacity within the OECS countries lies somewhere between these two extremes.

All these problems became apparent in selecting a set of indicators for the SGD. For some aspects of the Declaration, quantitative indicators have already been established and are in use, for example trends in extent of forest area have long been tracked by the FAO, and the Caribbean Energy Information System monitors trends in national energy consumption. It made sense to incorporate these indicators into the SGD. It was also possible to agree on some new quantitative indicators for which data were being collected although no systems were in place for monitoring trends.

However, there are a number of core elements of the SGD for which no single indicator exists or can be easily selected because the changes needed are qualitative rather than quantitative in character. What,

for example, might be the best approach to tracking the effectiveness of environmental regulations or the extent and impact of environmental education programmes? In these cases the recommendation was to seek expert assistance in developing assessment tools that would probe more deeply than simple quantitative indicators, to uncover evidence of causation and process. It will take some time to develop such instruments, but the effort that goes into crafting them should pay off in the longer term.

In order to maximise the value and scope of the SGD indicators, the emphasis must be not on the data itself, but on their interpretation and analysis within the larger context of national and regional development. While there is limited data analysis capacity at national levels in the OECS, as noted in a recent OECS discussion paper (Chase and Mathurin 2006), considerable expertise resides in the network of regional organisations and regional programmes of international agencies. The cooperation and support of these institutions will be critical to assuring that the set of tools represented by the SGD indicators can provide a useful picture of regional progress towards improved environmental management.

7.0   Summing Up and Looking Ahead

Despite the construction of an increasingly elaborate global policy framework related to environmental management, the St. George's Declaration illustrates the value of regional-level policy processes, particularly in the context of small states with many shared characteristics and a need to pool scarce human, technical, and financial resources. It also illustrates how processes at this level can involve a significant number of stakeholders and reflect a wide range of perspectives, something that is often not possible at the global level. A policy developed within a small region such as the OECS can therefore truly be said to be an indigenous policy, reflecting regionally-specific characteristics, priorities and needs.

The OECS region can benefit from a more strategic approach to all aspects of development, including environmental management, and

results-based approaches are one way to move in that direction. The criticisms of these approaches and the tools that comprise them are nonetheless valid and important. In adapting RBM to environmental policy formulation, a more modest and nuanced concept is required. The key to the use of RBM in the context of a policy such as the SGD is to keep it flexible and especially to understand that even with the most careful and logical *ex ante* planning, it is not possible to accurately predict results. Regular qualitative appraisals that include the participation of all stakeholders, the reassessment of priorities and the adjustment of targets must therefore be an integral part of policy implementation. The final part of the review of the St. George's Declaration was therefore the development of a process and instrument for national monitoring and reporting, which was tested in several countries before being adopted region-wide.

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