



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE:

APPLYING AN INTEGRATED
APPROACH IN LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN

POLICY NOTE

OBJECTIVES OF THIS NOTE

A transition to more sustainable development models is required if we hope to achieve greater prosperity and social equity, while respecting the environment. This is nothing new, but today it has become crucial and more urgent. The core challenge for the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) is how to visualize, initiate, and maintain this transformation.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, initiatives have been implemented proving an impact on the three dimensions - economic, social, and environmental - of sustainable development, have been implemented. Progress on the application of an integrated approach is complex but possible. This note presents experiences and tools that have been successfully used in Latin America and the Caribbean to help decision-makers and policymakers

achieve results toward sustainability. This selection is the result of a review of over one hundred experiences, of which 28 were exhaustively analyzed.

After looking at the links between these initiatives and the seventeen SDGs, this note also offers practical information for making headway on their implementation. Although most of the documented experiences were not necessarily formulated to specifically support the 2030 Agenda, they effectively helped further implementation of two to eight of the SDGs.

To this respect, the note identifies points of entry and concrete methodologies that have ensured effective bridging of several SDGs and thereby advance faster and more practically on applying an integrated approach that maximizes the synergies between them. The

note presents, among others, several articulation models with replication potential in the region.

In particular, it exemplifies how integrating the environment as one of the dimensions of sustainable development catalyzes better health and quality of life and often helps break the vicious cycle hindering economic growth and poverty eradication, thus advancing several of the SDGs. Including the environment as an integrated aspect of a more holistic approach also results in enhanced resilience and mitigation of environmental risks, which in turn reduces the impact of climate change and disasters, making development achievements more sustainable. This has been recognized internationally for decades, but today it has become a key challenge, both locally and globally.

KEY MESSAGES: DERIVED FROM THE ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCES



KNIT THE NETWORK

Participation, dialogue and alliances for better integration.



DATA IN PRACTICE

Driving informed decisions with a long-term perspective.



TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL INNOVATION

Source of new solutions and funding mechanisms.



BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN THE SILOS

Towards a new vision for sectors and stakeholders.



TRANSFORM REALITIES

Necessary leadership and political commitment for continuity.



WIN-WIN PERSPECTIVES

Environmental dimension as an opportunity for integration.

01. POLICY INTEGRATION

FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

“An integrated policy is one that maximizes benefits to the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – not as a sum, but each in its own right.” (UN DESA, 2016, p. 1)

Stakeholders in the Latin American and the Caribbean - civil society, academia, communities, governments and private sector have been successfully implementing sustainable development initiatives for several decades. Many of these are noticeably advancing with integrated approaches. Although widely diverse, the analyzed experiences share several common characteristics, including the following:

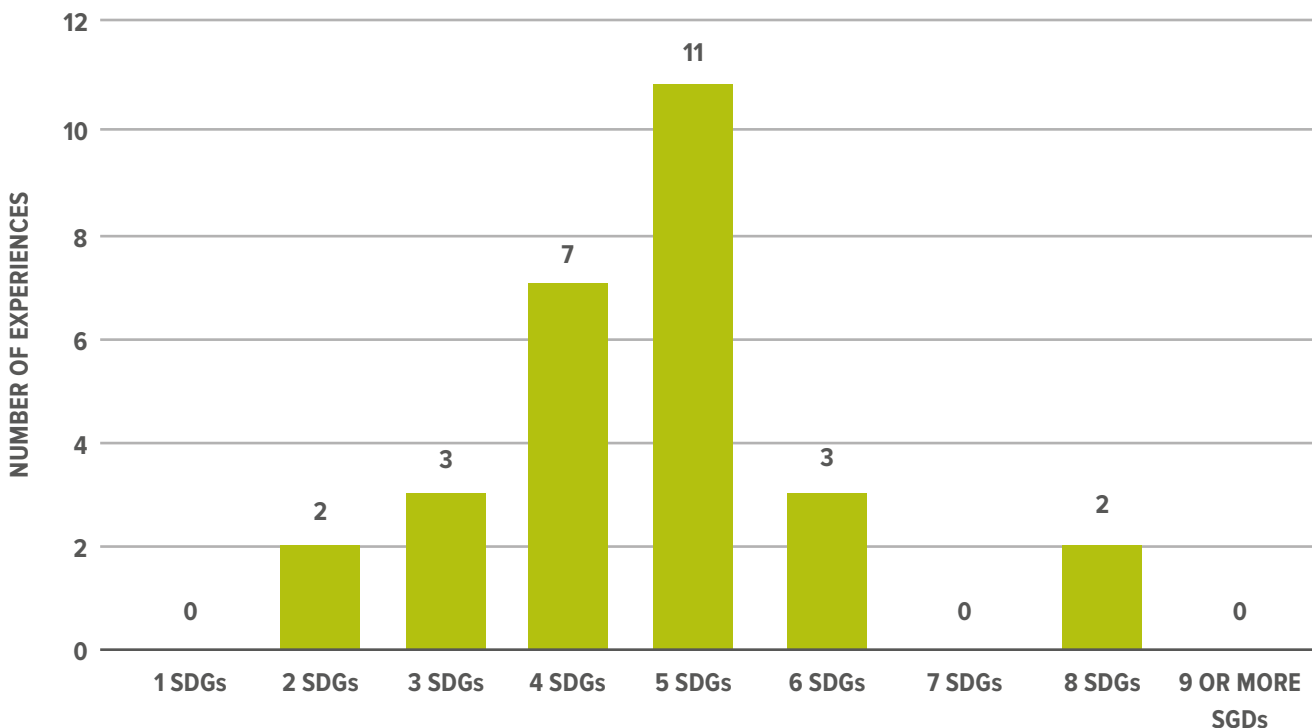
1 They are long-term processes aimed at true transformations for sustainability, which include some degree of innovation and long-term vision.

40% of the experiences used new technologies as the base to generate changes towards greater sustainability.

The average duration of the compiled initiatives is of **9-10 years.**

2 They go beyond the classic, linear version of cost-benefit analysis, using a complex systems approach and multidimensional problem analysis. An example of this is that every experience helps advance four to five SDGs, on average.

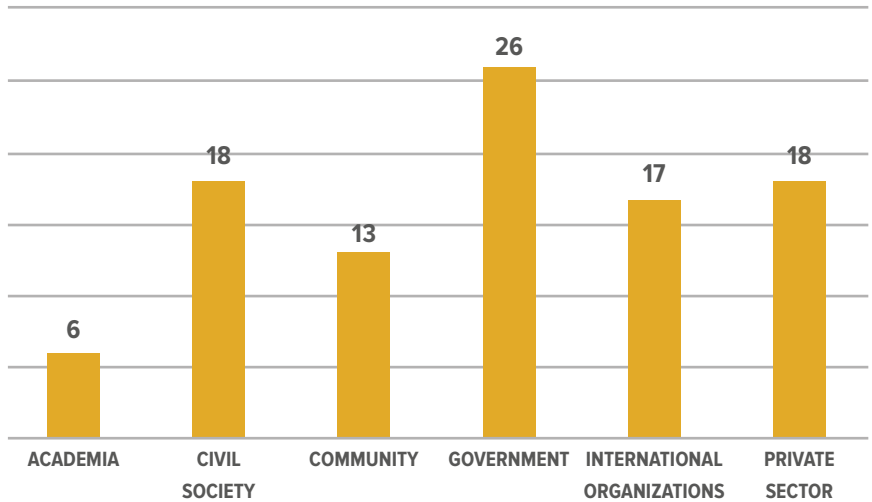
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SYSTEMATIZED EXPERIENCES AND SDGS (Number of SDGs to which they contribute)



3 They reconcile the diverse interests and viewpoints of the different stakeholders while ensuring their long-term engagement and shared responsibility. Most of the experiences involve government, civil society and private sector institutions.

4 They have the positive leadership of an institutional or private stakeholder or a group of social organizations with a clear vision, aimed at attaining substantial, long-lasting outcomes and able to mobilize other partners.

NUMBER OF EXPERIENCES LINKED TO POSSIBLE STAKEHOLDERS



75% of the experiences involved 4 or 5 of the 6 types of stakeholders considered in the analysis.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING



02. CHALLENGES AND TOOLS

FOR INTEGRATED PROGRESS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Development challenges increasingly reflect complex problems that defy traditional analyses. Efforts to overcome this challenge, are frequently poorly coordinated and limited by complex bureaucratic and political processes, diverging interests, and inefficient resource allocation. They often lead to unexpected, inefficient outcomes which, depending on the stakeholders involved in the analyzed regional experiences, could be minimized by tackling the following challenges:

1. Build trust among stakeholders.
2. Overcome resistance to change.
3. Go beyond individual interests.
4. Make public information available for effective participation.
5. Make technical information available for decision making.
6. Transcend the short-term benefit viewpoint.
7. Overcome sectoral silos and achieve policy consistency.
8. Attain the institutional and political will for continuity.
9. Procure economic and financial sustainability.
10. Make public planning and project financing more flexible.

There are already lessons learned and concrete tools available for overcoming these challenges.² In fact,

the analyzed experiences followed paths and adopted solutions which, despite the different contexts, problems and issues, coincided on the following set of guidelines:

WEAVE A NETWORK OF PARTNERSHIPS

The participation and cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders results in: 1) more appropriate, balanced proposals; 2) more strategy ownership and sustainability; and 3) shared responsibility and mutual accountability. Moreover, a culture of dialogue and team work builds capacities for peaceful conflict resolution.

Common tools used for this include multi-stakeholder coordination schemes. For example, coming up with a nationally appropriate climate change mitigation action (NAMA) for the Costa Rican coffee industry, required the creation of technical and policy committees to ensure participation of national institutions, the private sector, farmers, international technical cooperation organizations, and civil society.

This confluence of wills of a wide range of stakeholders shows that results can be achieved when based on structured processes – that is, processes with mutually agreed goals, milestones, indicators and responsibilities, as

well as sufficient human and financial resources. As an additional example, to reduce air pollution levels in Santiago, Chile, it was not enough to issue various industrial and transportation regulations. Private sector, local government, national authorities, and citizen efforts had to be coordinated to achieve simultaneous transformations along several fronts.

Association networks are another specific tool successfully used in the region. For instance:

In Bolivia there are more than 200 indigenous community associations with ties to 11 regional organizations which are in turn grouped together in the National Indigenous Forest Association (AFIN). Approximately 2 million hectares are managed sustainably with this mechanism to the benefit of more than 6,000 families.

In Costa Rica, the Conservationist Association of Rural and Alternative Community Tourism (ACTUAR) joins together 36 non-profit associations, foundations, companies and cooperatives, including almost 1,000 community entrepreneurs, most of whom are women.

INFORMATION FOR DECISION MAKING AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

Production and access to relevant information is essential. Several experiences use innovative tools to help with decision making. The Dominican Republic introduced a *Vulnerability to Climate Hazards Index* as one criterion for focusing its social policy, in recognition of the vicious cycle between vulnerability, poverty and disasters. Another example is the *Ecological Flow*, basis for the identification and prioritization of a water reserve network in Mexico, the purpose of which is to ensure a sustainable water supply. In the eastern Caribbean, the online information system, *CaribNode*, permits easy access to data on local marine resource management and coastal community wellbeing.

Making local information available that permits prioritizing and assessing policy impact is just as important as using this data to make sure the agreed goals are being met. This is the case, among others, of the Santiago air quality monitoring system in Chile, the local economic development information system of the Salvadoran Los Nonualcos region, and the geographical information system which monitors forest cover used by Bolsa Verde in Brazil for families who keep their commitments to protect the forest.

25%

experiences used a new tool for measurement, monitoring and evaluation.

INNOVATE FOR FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The financial component is essential for initiatives to continue and achieve their expected impact. The experiences have used various alternatives for this, notably the following: 1) innovative long-term financial mechanisms such as trusts; 2) diversification of funding sources with other partners, especially public-private partnerships and international cooperation; 3) push for new national and/or local fiscal tools that ensure sustained income; and 4) implementation of mechanisms ensuring continued allocation of public funds.

One example of these instruments – of which 18 more exist in the region – is the Water Protection Fund (FONAG) in Quito, a public-private partnership to ensure the water supply through conservation of its sources in high mountainous areas. The experience has achieved financial sustainability through a trust and a local fee for water distribution. In fact, in several countries in the region some twenty-odd trusts are ensuring sustainable funding aimed at the protection and sustainable use of protected spaces across the region, such as in the case of the Ecological Trust Fund of Panama (FIDECO).

Along this same line of public-private partnerships, the BANCO2 Colombian initiative enables farm and indigenous families who conserve their forests to receive direct payment from individuals and companies to offset their ecological footprint. This would

not be possible without the direct involvement of a bank to ensure the financial inclusion of rural families through access to its services.

In Chile, the “green taxes” are part of a longer list of measures designed to improve air quality in the Santiago metropolitan area, fund a decontamination program, and encourage a low-carbon economy in the medium and long term.

This long-term vision is at the core of several government programs that have achieved sustainable resource allocation, such as the *Agua Doce* programme in Brazil, or the Strategic Food Security Program that has been part of Mexico’s national development policy since 2007 and receives congressionally approved federal funding.

BUILD INTERSECTORAL BRIDGES

Different governmental processes and structures exist to ensure development policy consistency and overcome sectoral “silos” and weak coordination between central and local levels. In general, the analyzed efforts take advantage of synergies for formulating long-term national visions or strategies for specific issues with multi-sectoral implications such as climate change and energy.

They demonstrate the importance, of the efforts of any particular sector being able to “attract” others to solve specific problems. Some initiatives are led by one sector (health, forestry, water, agriculture, social protection or energy) but adopt an integrated approach to achieve results.



FONAG, 2016. Water fund in the upper basin of the Guayllabamba river.

Examples include the Mechanized Family Agriculture Program in Paraguay, which combines the goals of improving food security and agricultural productivity with the sustainable use of natural resources and the fight against poverty. Another is the Safe Hospital programme, which in addition to ensuring essential disaster relief services, promotes chemical, waste, and water management. In Brazil, *Bolsa Verde*, complements a conditional cash transfer program aimed at alleviating poverty with prevention of deforestation.

Many of these initiatives with specific outcomes in the field also need strengthening of vertical coordination. In the case of the Brazilian *Agua Doce* programme, the

mechanisms include a clear emphasis and specific tools for institutionalizing national, state, local, and community organization coordination.

WILL FOR TRANSFORMATION WITH LONG-TERM VISION

Political engagement and leadership, along with a longer-term vision, are key factors for promoting structural transformations for sustainability. These factors were essential for Uruguay's energy transition to an energy matrix deriving largely from renewable energy sources. Public-private partnerships and a national policy with adequate incentives were also crucial for creating an attractive investment environment

and for changing the behavior of both energy market players and the general public.

This permanent, long-term support could also come from stakeholders outside of government structures. The social and production transformation achieved by sustainable management of the Quesungual agroforestry systems in Honduras, for instance, would not have been possible without an alternative technique offering clear benefits in the field and, above all, a consolidated critical mass of local leaders and residents against burn-offs.

The following table shows a correlation between the identified key challenges and some of the systematized tools, for the analyzed experiences:

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	HOW	SOME EXISTING TOOLS
<p>Build trust among stakeholders.</p> <p>Overcome resistance to change.</p> <p>Go beyond individual interests.</p>	<p>Knit a network of partnerships.</p> <p>Have multi-stakeholder participation mechanisms in place.</p> <p>Define shared responsibilities for implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies and mechanisms for natural resource governance in the Model Forests. CHILE, COSTA RICA. • Inter-community committees and indigenous associations for sustainable forest management. BOLIVIA. • Guide for key stakeholders: • Empowering women farmers in the Caribbean in the framework of the green economy. BARBADOS, GRENADA, JAMAICA. • Empowerment of Caribbean women farmers in the framework of a green economy. BARBADOS, GRANADA, JAMAICA. • Methodology for social management of water desalination systems, with environmental management and agricultural production, including management agreements signed by community representatives and municipal, state, and federal government authorities. BRAZIL. • State nuclei and executive groups for the coordination of stakeholders and implementation of the Agua Doce Programme. BRAZIL. • Association of Los Nonualcos Municipalities, Economic Development Council, and Association of Inter-municipal Committees for Local Development. EL SALVADOR. • Methodology of community participation in the analysis of vulnerability and definition of climate change adaptation measures. PERU. • Tools for strengthening tourism associations and guide to rural community tourism. COSTA RICA.
<p>Make public information available for participation.</p> <p>Make technical information available for decision making.</p>	<p>Generate relevant, accessible information.</p> <p>Have monitoring systems in place.</p> <p>Innovate in measurements with a multidimensional approach (indicator systems, indices, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System for monitoring progress on the fight against poverty, taking into account social, economic, and environmental indicators of families, communities and geographical areas. BRAZIL. • Vulnerability to climate hazards index for integrating poverty, environment and climate change variables into development planning. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. • Collaborative economy matrix (4D) for visualizing resources in the environmental, social, financial and cultural dimensions of sustainability. ARGENTINA. • Air quality monitoring network and pollutant measurement methodologies. CHILE. • Model Forest monitoring and evaluation standards. REGIONAL. • Coral reef assessment tool for monitoring the marine environment, assessing management and monitoring coastal community wellbeing. ANTIGUA AND BARBADOS, DOMINICA, GRANADA, ST. KITTS AND NEVIS, SAINT LUCIA, SAINT VICENT AND THE GRANADINES. • Hospital Safety Index Guide for Evaluators in the event of disasters. GLOBAL.

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME	HOW	SOME EXISTING TOOLS
<p>Procure economic and financial sustainability.</p>	<p>Innovate fiscal tools and financial mechanisms.</p> <p>Diversify funding sources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital platform for calculating the ecological footprint and paying selected rural families for protection of forest areas. COLOMBIA. • Scheme of bank service networks in different rural areas. COLOMBIA. • Green tax reform including air quality tax on mobile and fixed sources. CHILE. • Environmental funds such as the Ecological Trust Fund of Panama, long-term funding mechanisms for protected areas. PANAMA / REGIONAL. • Uruguayan Energy Savings and Efficiency Trust (FUDAEE). • Support fund for coastal community sustainable livelihoods and improved protected marine area management. EASTERN CARIBBEAN. • Water Protection Fund (FONAG) as a financial economic mechanism. ECUADOR. • Rural development agencies as key local promoters of the Special Programme for Food Security (PESA). MEXICO.
<p>Overcome sectoral silos and achieve policy consistency.</p> <p>Attain the institutional and political will for continuity.</p>	<p>Build intersectoral bridges.</p> <p>Formalize continuity of actionst.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable production and consumption plan and sustainable public procurement scheme. BRAZIL. • Uruguayan 2030 Energy Policy and Law 18.597 of 2009 on efficient energy use. URUGUAY. • Chilean atmospheric decontamination strategy and decontamination plans. CHILE. • Carbon neutral country program and agricultural NAMA (nationally appropriate mitigation actions) in the coffee sector. COSTA RICA. • Coastal infrastructure program. BARBADOS.

UN Environment. Artisanal fishing for a blue economy in the Caribbean.



03. THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

AS AN ENTRY POINT FOR INTEGRATION

Environmental sustainability
for the Sustainable Development
Goals in the 2030 Agenda

⊗ = related goal



Environmental issues play a leading role in sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda thus recognizes the need for greater and more inclusive prosperity, respecting the environment. Eighty-six of the one hundred

sixty-nine SDG targets include specific references to environmental sustainability linked to other development priorities. Taking environment into account in policies, programs and projects helps create a ripple effect with

impact on the economic and social dimensions in an integrated approach.

The analysis of the region's experiences clearly shows this, as shown in the graph on the previous page.



UNDP/UN Environment. Recycling Cooperatives.



Asociación Forestal Indígena Nacional - AFIN. Community Forest Management.

1 The territorial approach and local work as planning axes are points of entry to specify consistent sustainable development strategies in specific contexts. Several existing policy instruments for environmental management and putting integrated approaches into practice at the local level – already widespread in the region – can be gleaned from the analysis of experiences undertaken. Such is the case of land management plans, local or sub-regional development plans, integrated rural development strategies, and watershed management plans, for example. Hence the importance of civil society and local and sub-regional government participation as a foundation for effective mechanisms to ensure consistency of local sectoral and territorial goals.

2 Added to these policy instruments, there are methodologies that are already being implemented and that apply an integrated approach. These can be observed for different topics, as grouped and described in the following table. They include, notably, a few that come from international commitments (such as the ones deriving from Rio+20). The undertaken analysis also identified incipient policy instruments and methodologies with potential, which, due to their initial status, do not yet permit to draw solid conclusions, but which are worth highlighting. For example, ecosystem-based adaptation has been extensively piloted locally in many countries on different scales and in widely diverse settings, such as the case analyzed for the Peruvian high-Andean area.

The same occurs with integrated watershed, coastal, or disaster risk management. At any rate, their scale of application needs to be expanded if they are to become core components of integrated development strategies.

- **Ecosystem-based** climate change adaptation.
- **Sustainable consumption** and production.
- **Mainstreaming of the poverty** and environment perspective.
- **Sustainable ecosystem** use and management.
- **Integrated disaster** risk management.
- **Integrated watershed** and/or coastal zone management.
- **Sustainable** livelihoods.
- **Inclusive** green economy.
- **Food** - water - energy nexus.

3 Climate action is another way to promote synergies, given the cross-cutting nature of both mitigation and adaptation. Especially relevant is the connection with food security, production, water management, ecosystem conservation, resilience, infrastructure and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in all economic sectors, and, above all, energy and transportation. National, sub-national or local climate change plans have great potential, for continuing to incorporate an integrated approach.

4 Solving environmental issues not only opens opportunities for social dialogue but also

According to the analysis, several topics generate the most synergies and appear in integrated initiatives:



permits and encourages the participation of vulnerable groups. One example of this is the case of the Quito Water Fund, which involves vulnerable rural communities from the upper watershed areas in consensus-building processes on water use.

As for the connection with excluded populations, the recycling cooperatives for selective waste recycling in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Peru and other countries support urban sustainability, health and sustainable production, but more than anything else, pave the way for social and productive inclusion of marginal groups. Other examples along this line include initiatives centering on indigenous communities, such as the Indigenous Forest Association of Bolivia, which encompasses community improvement, economic empowerment, and organizational

capacity-building. Even strategies for the fight against poverty adopted integrated and more sustainable approaches when they go beyond the idea of minor achievements in social protection and tackle community livelihoods, resilience, and political and economic empowerment - as seen in programs such as the ones in Paraguay or Mexico.

5 **The different crises in the region have played a relevant role in implementing sustainable development processes.** As a case in point, the food and environmental crisis of the 80s, aggravated by drought, generated the necessary commitment to seek alternatives to the existing production model in Honduras. In El Salvador, it was the post-2001 earthquake

reconstruction that triggered the formation of the municipal associations which today have taken on a local integrated development agenda linking together a wide range of stakeholders. In these cases as well as others, environmental issues have been at the core of development proposals to ensure its long-term viability.

6 **Special mention should be made to the efforts of local initiatives that identify unsustainable development patterns.** There are communities in the region implementing viable alternatives to local sustainable development through initiatives such as the Santa Cruz Green Market social enterprise in Trinidad and Tobago or the Akapacha ecological village

in Argentina. The existence of regional networks for experience exchanges of this type demonstrates a trend for community engagement that could very well escalate and replicate itself with more structured support in order to impact the region's sustainable development on a larger scale.

To complement this, local communities in Latin America and the Caribbean characteristically have solid knowledge systems as part of their cultural traditions. Traditional knowledge includes subsistence technologies, environmental management, and adaptation to weather change, all of which facilitates widespread citizen support, as in the Qesungual experience in Honduras, which combines traditional practices with new technologies.



UNDP/UN Environment. High Mountains Ecosystems based Adaptation.

04. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

DERIVING FROM THE ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENCES

CHALLENGES

The analysis shows that the promotion of an integrated approach is crucial for sustainable development in areas where strategic gaps currently exist. Specific challenges identified in the analysis of the experiences include:

Most efforts towards an integrated approach come from either the social sector (social development, health, and protection) or the environmental sector (e.g. conservation of biodiversity, water, and energy). Nevertheless, **progress in economic sectors (finance, economy, and trade) is more limited** and usually refers to the integration of a single dimension (either the social or the environmental one) into economic and trade policies, and not specifically to an integrated approach.

Greater **involvement of the education sector is also essential** in order to lay the foundations for the cultural transformations needed to embrace more sustainable lifestyles and train a new generation of professionals.

Aside from the executive branch, the integrated approach has still not permeated the public sector in the same way in the judicial and legislative branches.

Distinct opportunities still exist for **integrating civil society** and vulnerable and excluded groups and populations to a greater extent in public decision making processes. Their participation is quite often superficial and occasional, rather than based on legal mechanisms for accessing information and making decisions. A more structured assurance and compliance of these citizens' rights is needed, in addition to both technical and financial support for the strengthening of social organizations to ensure their participation and leadership.

The private sector could play a major role, given the incentive of new market opportunities inherent to the transformation toward sustainability, such as eco-innovation, bio-trade, new green technologies, and others. Indeed, there has been notable headway made towards "greener" enterprises and social responsibility in some of the analyzed experiences. However, there is still much room for fostering an integrated approach in extractive industries and technological and production operations (such as mining, inclusive green enterprises, monocultures, etc.).

OPPORTUNITIES

All in all, the analysis identifies the following short- and medium-term opportunities:

1 Integrated initiatives facilitate the implementation of SDGs by maximizing their synergies. The 2030 Agenda states the need to ensure that the many interconnections between economic, social and environmental changes are taken into consideration. The Latin American and Caribbean region has a collection of experiences contributing to the achievement of several SDGs and the implementation of their specific targets. In each the respective fields, there is evidence of the efficiency of integrated actions and show a practical conceptual basis that identifies points of entry for their application on a larger scale in the region.

2 Integration of the environmental dimension provides an early window of opportunity to ensure sustainable alternatives that do not translate into natural resource exhaustion, environmental degradation, and destroyed livelihoods. In addition, the environmental agenda also serves to bridge together several SDGs and has been shown to generate interest and engagement among different stakeholders, as the basis for building consensus on development.

Accordingly, the contributions made by environmental policies, programs and projects to inclusion

and social welfare goals as well as economic progress and peaceful and participatory development governance need to be materialized and highlighted.

3 Regional and international cooperation acts as a platform for replication of best practices which can trigger impacts on a bigger scale. Working towards goals with a global scope is an enormous task that underscores the importance of initiatives which have already produced results in different contexts. The

region has already undertaken co-operation processes in which the different stakeholders (government and non-government) support each other in replicating best practices.

Through South-South and triangular cooperation, international partnerships will continue to play a major role. International technical institutes, development banks and bilateral cooperation agencies (including those of the region’s governments) have been shown to be critical in implementing innovative actions and assuring support for complex medium- and long-term

multi-sectoral processes. Continuous strengthening of this is needed for taking advantage of the lessons learned and experiences of Latin America and the Caribbean.

25% of the experiences have already been replicated in the region.

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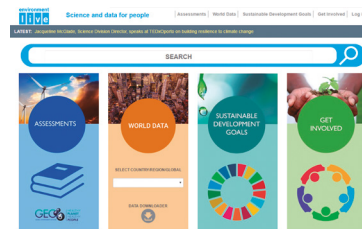
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3



Available on:
<http://uneplive.org>

Environment Live Information Platform.

UN ENVIRONMENT AND AGENDA 2030

The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) generates information and knowledge for integrating environmental, social and economic considerations in decision-making

on development. It provides technical assistance and support for environmental governance and integrated laws and policies, supports efforts for information access and citizen participation, transparency

and accountability, and works for partnering with key stakeholders to create coalitions and platforms for sustainable development action.

Prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean team in the framework of the "Integrated Approach for Environmental Sustainability in Development Planning" project. Published by UN Environment, April 2017.

This study has been funded by the Government of Brazil, although the viewpoints expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Brazilian government.

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MINISTÉRIO DO
MEIO AMBIENTE

