Introduction to Best Practice on Environmental Policy in Asia and the Pacific

Where do policies originate? What environmental policy trends and issues are receiving the greatest attention globally? What makes environmental policies successful or unsuccessful? Who should be involved in designing and implementing them? How do policies pass from one country to another? How should they be chosen, and what should be in them? These are some of the questions that the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) seeks to answer.

This issue of the *International Review for Environmental Strategies (IRES)*, attempts to answer some of these questions.

Starting in 2001, IGES conducted a three-year research project entitled Research on Innovative and Strategic Policy Options I (RISPO I), under the Long-term Perspective and Policy Project (LTP). This project was supported by the Ministry of the Environment of Japan. RISPO I aimed at (i) developing knowledge-based reference tools such as a good practice inventory and (ii) proposing strategic policy options that would help policymakers seek better solutions for the challenges of sustainble development. The basic assumption was that if we collected so-called good practices observed in various parts of Asia, analysis of these would enable us to identify and develop strategic policy options for policymakers in various countries to consider. As an interim output, out of 100 good practice cases, we developed 50 strategic policy options. These were categorized into eight distinct groups: (i) innovative financing for renewable energy development, (ii) creation of inter-boundary markets for recyclable materials, (iii) improving the environmental performance of small and medium-sized enterprises, (iv) development of environmentally sustainable transport systems in urban areas, (v) promotion of biomass energy through innovative financing, (vi) protected area management using community-based tourism, (vii) promoting environmental education by non-governmental organizations (NGO), and (viii) promoting local/indigenous knowledge-based sustainable resource management.

IGES has developed several good practice databases apart from RISPO I, however—as was highlighted in a series of peer reviews during 2003—not enough analysis has been conducted on the collected data. After the RISPO I study, there was a strong belief in IGES that the more than 100 good practice case studies we had gathered and documented could be analyzed again to draw out success factors for effective promotion of a sustainability agenda. After numerous intensive discussions among LTP staff, we decided to use a common analytical method to draw out success factors in four integrated sectors: (i) policies for a post-fossil fuel era, (ii) policies for industrial efficiency and recycling, (iii) policies for environmentally sustainable transport, and (iv) policies for participatory management of natural resources.

The reason LTP undertook this additional analysis was mainly to respond to the constructive criticisms of IGES's peer reviewers. The degree of success remains a question, but at least a comprehensive analysis was conducted to draw lessons more systematically from the RISPO I good practices.

This new study combined a textual pattern-matching technique (looking for occurrences of selected key words or phrases in the text) with analytical assessment of the individual case studies. This methodology was used to seek answers to some key questions about environmental policymaking, particularly to see what actors, policymaking processes, and policy content—individually and in combination—were characteristic of successful environmental policies.

The following series of eight linked articles describe the research and its findings. In chapter 1, Peter King and myself trace the development of environmental policy, both internationally and in Asia and the Pacific.

Chapter 2 and 3, by the same authors, looks at the processes and underlying principles that determine how environmental policies are selected, adopted, and adapted by different countries, followed by a brief description of the research methodology used.

Chapter 4, by Akira Ogihara and three other researchers, seeks transition strategies from fossil fuel-based energy to a renewable enegy society. They found that appropriate market development and wider stakeholder involvement are effective among different policy options. They also conclude that a leapfrog approach for off-grid areas will enable developing countries to move directly to renewable energy and should be encouraged.

Chapter 5, by Taeko Takahashi and others, looks at resource efficiency and stresses that small and medium enterprises are the key, but often difficult to reach through national environmental policies. They further identify the means to achieve resource efficiency as good supply-chain linkages, industry clusters, producer associations, voluntary agreements through public-private partnerships, good technical support, and the underlying threat of increased regulation if voluntary approaches fail.

Chapter 6, by Naoko Matsumoto and others, examines transportation policy and its implementation in different cities. Contrary to common assumptions that environmentally sound policies are only developed in the North and then adopted by the South, they found some innovative transportation policies have evolved in cities of developing countries and were then emulated by other cities, both in the South and in the North.

Chapter 7, by Puja Sawhney and four colleagues, observes the growing participation of civil society in natural resource management and decision making. The paper stresses that natural resources, whether a forest or a coastal fishery, cannot be managed sustainably by government or civil society alone. It also highlights the important role played by the NGO sector creating environmental awareness which is also important for the management of natural resources. Increased participation proves to be more resource efficient and cause less conflict.

Chapter 8 sums up the entire study by drawing together the findings of the earlier chapters. Its broad message is that environmental policy is undergoing rapid change, and thus having appropriate, scientific and up-to-date findings and environmental policy option tools available is vital for policymakers in Asia and the Pacific. Looking into the policies that have been tried in the past—not just good practices like those presented in the RISPO I case studies, but also cases of failure—will help to point the way forward in environmental policy for sustainable development.

This report is a product of teamwork, and I would like to thank all of those involved in it for their commitment and hard work. First, special thanks go to Dr. Peter King, who joined the LTP team as a senior policy adviser. He facilitated discussions, had the analytical framework agreed, and helped to identify specific points discussed in each chapter of this RISPO I report. I would like to thank all the other staff involved for taking this additional challenge seriously and completing this report. Lastly I would like to thank the staff of the RISPO I partner institutes, who originally developed the good practice case studies together with IGES.

I sincerely hope that this first attempt can contribute to further discussions to promote the sustainable development agenda in Asia and the Pacific.

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