

# **Strategic Elements in Implementing the 3R Platform**

**UNEP's Contribution**



United Nations Environment Programme

## **I. Background**

**T**he issue of 3R has become a significant policy approach for sustainable development with the priorities placed on it by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and one of its key outcome documents – the '10 Year Framework Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production'. Also, Para 22 of the WSSD Joint Plan of Implementation specifically endorses the 3R policy approach as a means to achieve sustainable consumption and production.

The 3R approach, focusing on reduce, reuse, and recycle, essentially aims to set up a sound material cycle society within the concept of a life-cycle economy, where consumption of natural resources is minimized and the environmental load is reduced, as much as possible.

A 3R policy typically calls for an increase in the ratio of recyclable materials, further reusing of raw materials and manufacturing wastes, and overall reduction in resources and energy used. These ideas are applied to the entire lifecycles of products and services – from design and extraction of raw materials to transport, manufacture, use, dismantling/reuse and disposal.

Various activities are being planned as a part of the follow-up to WSSD and the 10-Year Framework Programme for Sustainable Consumption and Production (the 'Marrakech Process'). Activities such as Sustainable Consumption, Cleaner Production, and the Life Cycle Initiative, are at the heart of UNEP's contribution to the Framework.

The G8 developed an initiative on the 3R approach, launched by the Government of Japan. It was endorsed at the G8 Summit held in June 2004 at Sea Island, USA. The 3R Initiative calls for the (1) promotion of 3Rs at the national level, (2) reduction of barriers to the international flow of recyclable goods and materials, (3) cooperation among different stakeholders in the public and private sectors, (4) promotion of science and technology for 3Rs, and (5) cooperation with developing countries.

As a follow up to the G8 endorsement, the Government of Japan organized a 3R Ministerial Conference in Tokyo from 28 to 30 April 2005. The Conference was a starting point for pursuing globally, a sound material-cycle society through the "3Rs" of reduce, reuse and recycle. Participants included ministers responsible for 3Rs from G8 and other invited countries, and representatives of OECD, UNEP and the Basel Convention Secretariat.

UNEP's Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building, aims to strengthen the capacity of governments at all levels and provide systematic, targeted, long and short-term measures for technology support and capacity building.

For example, strengthened efforts to include waste prevention into sustainable consumption and production strategies of all stakeholders - business, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, civil society (awareness raising and providing recycling facilities for households) and governments themselves (national and local sustainable procurement, 'green' and waste-free events and premises at international governmental levels) is part of the ongoing regional consultation process on the regional priorities for the Marrakech process.

## **II. Scope of the Document**

**A**s a contribution to the 3R Ministerial Meeting of April 2005, UNEP launched the "3R Platform" as an implementing mechanism for the 3R initiative in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

The platform provides support for concrete 3R activities, such as demonstration projects and institutional strengthening exercises, building on experiences in Japan and other countries, and tailoring them to the needs and specific conditions of each country

This document is intended to outline the strategic elements that can guide the activities implemented under the umbrella of the 3R Platform. It outlines the key areas and themes that need to be focused on in implementing the 3R approach.

## **IV. Prerequisites and Barriers to Implementing 3R**

**W**ith national and local governments, the private sector and civil society entities placing increasing emphasis on sustainable development, the 3R Approach can be an effective tool to support their efforts towards achieving the goals of sustainable development.

A number of factors are critical in influencing the effectiveness of the 3R Approach. These include enabling policy framework; education and raising awareness of all concerned stakeholders; and capacity building and technology support, including human resources, technology, finance and other inputs.

A critical aspect that cuts across the above three factors relates to the acceptance and implementation of the 3R concept and related policies by countries and entities adopting the 3R Approach.

A number of problems exist in facilitating the smooth uptake of 3R policies and strategies. Key among them is the gaps in information and practical application of solutions - access to appropriate and useful information, and of translating problems faced by industry into research priorities (and vice versa – implementing innovative research outputs on the ground).

Barriers to concrete implementation of 3R policies and strategies also exist, which will hinder broader application. These barriers are related to policy, information, capacity building, financial and socio-cultural issues.

Ways and means to overcome the barriers will have to be identified, using enabling measures to increase the application of 3R policies and strategies.

## V. Strategic Elements for Future Activities

The success of 3R policies and strategies will largely depend on the right mix of policies and programmes implemented at the local level. As the Japanese experience has shown, the key spheres of action will revolve around governance, education, technology and finance.

The main strategic issues that need to be addressed are:

1. *Governance* issues include policy instruments such as laws, legislation, rules and procedures, and developing an enabling environment where market-based instruments can also facilitate uptake of the 3R concept. These issues are primarily the responsibility of governments at the national and local levels.
2. *Education and awareness building* issues among all concerned stakeholders, and the need for comprehensive networking among them at the local level. These issues focus on the provision of appropriate and timely information to decision makers, targeting stakeholders in the public and private sectors, but also communities and consumers alike. These issues are primarily the responsibility of universities and research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and citizens and community groups.
3. *Capacity building and technology support* issues are important to ensure that the appropriate solutions are used in industrial, manufacturing and market activities, and technologies used have a minimum impact on the environment, producing the least amount of wastes possible. These will also include building human resources, decision-making capacities and structures, and other inputs. These issues are also primarily the responsibility of business associations, business intermediary organizations and professional institutions.

In partnership with a number of local partners, UNEP is implementing a plastic waste management programme for the city of Nairobi based on the '3R' principles. The project proposes to establish a comprehensive plastic bag reuse/recycle programme through civil society – industry partnership supported by key policy and economic instruments.

As a part of the 'Life-cycle Initiative' UNEP has promoted dialogue among governments, industry entities and consumer organizations to share information and exchange experiences on key life-cycle issues.

UNEP has implemented a number of activities to develop capacities in cleaner and safer production at national and regional levels. For example, training packages on environmental management for industrial estates, hazardous waste management, CP-MEA integration, Cleaner production – energy efficiency etc. have been developed and delivered to a number of Cleaner Production Centres .

4. *Financial* issues will be critical as well, in developing innovative financing schemes that promote investment in 3R implementation, easy access to 3R dedicated funds etc. These issues are the responsibility of banks and financial institutions.

With funding from Norway, UNEP implemented a four-year project on Cleaner Production Financing which aimed at enabling National Cleaner Production Centres in five countries to convert technical CP options into bankable proposals.

In developing a comprehensive 3R programme, it will be important to enable different organizations and institutions (with different kinds of resources and working on different issues), to carry out activities within their respective niches, but achieving together common 3R goals of a life-cycle economy.

In partnership with UN-DESA, UNEP has been facilitating the Marrakech Process among national governments to further the objectives of the 10-Year Framework on Sustainable Consumption and Production, which emerged as a key outcome of the WSSD.

Considering the broad nature of 3R policies and strategies, the focal areas and activities of different partners will have to be understood.

Inter-governmental organizations, including UN organizations, have a critical cross-cutting and supportive role to play in partnering with a wide range of entities such as governments, business and industry and civil society organizations, to carry out their activities, and at a broader level, to lend credibility to the 3R concept by providing accurate and timely information access. Activities implemented under these responsibilities include pilots and demonstration projects, capacity building, information sharing and knowledge transfer.

The 2002 UNEP Governing Council review of international environmental governance identified the need for an intergovernmental strategic plan for technology support and capacity building to improve the effectiveness of capacity building, and to address the gaps identified by assessments of existing activities and needs. The resulting document, the **Bali Strategic Plan**, calls for provision of systematic, targeted, long and short-term measures for technology support and capacity building.

For national governments, the 3R focal areas could be:

A UNEP project in Vietnam focuses on resource augmentation by using environmentally sound technologies to tap renewable resources and to utilize waste by rainwater harvesting, greywater reuse and converting organic waste into a resource.

- To build capacity and commitment through knowledge management
- To develop an enabling policy framework to further the 3R concept including economic and market based instruments
- To satisfy MEA obligations and national/international commitments, as a part of their sustainability efforts
- To facilitate and provide accurate and timely access to information to all stakeholders

A UNEP project currently underway in Lesotho calls for the integrated management of municipal wastes generated in the capital city, Maseru.

For business, trade and industry partners the strategic elements that could guide their commitment and contribution to the 3R concept are:

UNEP has worked with business and industry entities and local governments in cities in the Asia Pacific region to develop eco-towns in order to facilitate environmentally sound industrial development, focused on the 3R concept.

- To facilitate economic development by creating markets around 3R policies

- To provide resources (technology, finance, and market) for facilitating the implementation of 3R policies
- To interact and network with other entities undertaking 3R activities, including end-users and consumers, and find new business opportunities
- To ensure proper implementation of available resource efficient technologies
- To develop leading edge technologies and products
- To support corporate 'green' trends and commit to a sustainable future

A UNEP project in Uganda aims at demonstrating techniques and technologies for water conservation and reduction of pollution load in wastewater from brewery industries.

UNEP resource - 'Cleaner Production Companion' provides information to facilitate understanding of what different stakeholders can do to continuously apply integrated and preventive environmental strategies .

For civil society entities, a number of strategic elements will guide their activities:

- To influence market trends by making sustainable and green choices in their everyday lives
- To support development and implementation of policy frameworks by local and national governments
- To lead a sustainable lifestyle with minimum ecological footprints

The UNEP's project, 'Youthxchange' aims to promote sustainable consumption patterns among young consumers all around the world. It has developed kits on how to explain sustainable lifestyles to a young audience.

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