

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

COUNTRY REPORT ON NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME SAINT LUCIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Saint Lucia is a small island developing state lying within the Antillean Archipelago or garland of Eastern Caribbean Islands, and is situated near latitude 14 degrees north and 61 degrees west.

The island has two (2) climatic seasons based on rainfall; a wet season that extends from June to November and a dry season occurring between December to May, though in recent times the distinction between the seasons has not been clear-cut.

The effects of land degradation have been reflected in the apparent progressive dwindling, over the last decade, of the island's water resources generated from thirty-seven (37) major watershed areas. This has been largely attributed to the adverse effects of agriculture and industry, and human settlements expressed in the form of degrading lands in key watersheds.

On July 2, 1997, St Lucia signed the Convention to Combat Desertification (Land Degradation). The island has since participated in four (4) regional and two (2) international activities related to the Convention. At the local level, several activities towards implementation of the Convention have also been undertaken, including the formation of a National Coordination Committee (NCC) and the development of a framework for the National Action Programme (NAP) generated from national consultations and a national awareness seminar.

This second National Report serves to inform the Parties to the Convention of the situation in the Country with regard to progress made towards the implementation of the UNCCD at the national level.

The key country strategies and priorities are centred around issues of sustainable development, integrated development planning and poverty reduction. The Government of St. Lucia continues to promote sustainable development and as such strategies within the development plans of the various sectors are focused in that direction, with particular regard for environmental sustainability. The approach of integrated development planning is ardently being promoted and is progressively gaining momentum. The Government of St Lucia being fully cognizant of the nexus between environmental (including land) degradation and poverty has focused on poverty reduction as a deliberate strategy and through a number of external funded projects have commenced measures to improve the economic environment.

There has also been a deliberate refocusing from protection strategies to more conservation/preservation and rehabilitation strategies.

Several institutional and policy measures, though not specifically targeted towards the direct implementation of the Convention are being undertaken at the national level, and are expected to impact on issues related to land degradation. One key endeavour is that of the national land policy initiative, which is expected to culminate in the preparation of a holistic policy that will establish the basis for the integrated and coordinated use, management and administration of land in the wider context of sustainable development. The enactment of a new Physical Planning Act and associated Building Code and Guidelines as well as the ongoing activities of the PROUD Unit, established to address the regularization of land tenure and improve the poor infrastructural and housing conditions prevalent in unplanned (i.e. squatter) settlements, will serve to support initiatives aimed at combating land degradation. Further, the recently drafted national water policy, and the evolving forest sector and wildlife policy will also serve to promote an integrated approach to land management and thereby support initiatives towards implementation of the Convention.

The National Focal Point for the Convention has begun to explore areas of synergy in activities with NFPs of other environmental Conventions including the Biodiversity and Climate Change Conventions, with a view to optimizing the use of funds for activities under these Conventions. The Ministry of Agriculture is also in the process of establishing a Convention and Agreements Committee to foster inter-ministerial collaboration and obtain synergies in implementation efforts. The country's involvement in the regional environmental programmes of OECS-NRMU and CEHI, the latter having direct involvement in implementation of the UNCCD, also ensure linkages and synergies with environmental conventions and national development strategies.

The participatory process remains focused on the primary stakeholders including Government, policy makers, private sector and the general public, particularly rural communities. To date the main thrust has been sensitization and awareness building, which has been carried out largely through consultations and some mass media programmes. The community based water catchment groups continue to assist in managing six (6) degraded priority water catchment areas. The activities of the Talvern Water Catchment Group are now being used in a demonstration site and are being evaluated for future use in other degraded watersheds, for combating land degradation.

The consultative process is ongoing at both the national and community level. Following on subsequent consultations, since the first report, the first National

Awareness Seminar was convened where a framework for the National Action Programme was developed. Other national awareness seminars are to be convened in other locations around the island to elaborate on the Programme.

The Department of Forestry has continued the consultative process by convening a first meeting of an adhoc working-group to assist in refining the NAP through a series of working sessions. The composition of the adhoc working groups will vary to facilitate the integration of the programmes developed under the UNCCD into wider country programmes.

Despite the fact that the National Action Programme is still to be completed, several measures have been taken or are being planned within the framework of the national action programme generated from the National Awareness Seminar in June 2001. Some of these measures include rehabilitation of degraded lands, stabilization of riverbanks, public awareness and capacity building, particularly at the community level and the establishment of early warning systems for flood and drought mitigation.

The various initiatives outlined have been largely financed by grant funds with some loan funds, from international and regional agencies.

Currently benchmarks and indicators for assessing status and measuring progress are being discussed at the national level. Several indicators have been proposed for monitoring land degradation and it is expected that the agreed indicators would be consistent with the systems utilized by the various agencies for monitoring and assessment.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BNTF	Basic Needs Trust Fund
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CCST	Caribbean Council for Science & Technology
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CEHI	Caribbean Environmental Health Institute
CEXU	
EMS	Environmental Management Systems
EU	European Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GOSL	Government of Saint Lucia
MPDE&H	Ministry of Planning, Development, Environment & Housing
NAAC	National Agricultural Advisory Committee
NAO	National Authorizing Officer
NAP	National Action Programme
NAS	National Awareness Seminars
NCC	National Coordination Committee
NFP	National Focal Point
OAC	
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
PRF	Poverty Reduction Fund
PROUD	Programme for Regulation of Unplanned Development
SFA	Special Framework of Assistance
STEP	Short Term Employment Programme
SIDS-POA	Small Island Developing States – Programme of Action
STURF	Settlement and Tenantry Upgrading Revolving Fund
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (Land Degradation)
WASCO	Water and Sewerage Company

I. INTRODUCTION

Saint Lucia is a small island developing state lying within the Antillean Archipelago or garland of Eastern Caribbean Islands, and is situated near latitude 14 degrees north and 61 degrees west. The island is separated from Martinique to the north by a channel approximately 32 km (20 miles) wide and is 40 km (25 miles) from St. Vincent to the south. It occupies an area of 616 sq km (238 square miles) and is roughly 43 km (27 miles) long and 22 km (14 miles) wide. The island is of volcanic origin and comprises many relatively flat coastal river valleys and a mountainous interior. The population and most of the economic activities are concentrated along the narrow coastal strip.

The island has two (2) climatic seasons based on rainfall; a wet season that extends from June to November and a dry season occurring between December to May. In recent times the distinction between seasons has not been clear-cut.

The effects of land degradation have been reflected in the apparent progressive dwindling, over the last decade, of the island's water resources generated from thirty-seven (37) major watershed areas. This has been largely attributed to the adverse effects of agriculture and industry, and human settlements expressed in the form of degrading lands in key watersheds. Land degradation occurs in agricultural areas mainly due to indiscriminate deforestation, shifting cultivation and inappropriate soil and water conservation. Though the primary stakeholders in the issue of combating land degradation are farmers and farming communities, other custodians of land have an important role in sustainable land management given the implications for other sectors and the overall national wealth.

On July 2, 1997, St Lucia signed the Convention to Combat Desertification (Land Degradation). The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, acting as the legal authority for the Government of St. Lucia assigned the responsibility for implementing the obligations of the Convention to the Department of Forestry, with the Chief Forestry Officer to act as the National Focal Point for the Convention. Saint Lucia has participated in four (4) regional and two (2) international activities related to the Convention. At the local level, several activities towards implementation of the Convention have also been undertaken, including the formation of a National Coordination Committee (NCC) and the development of a framework for the National Action Programme (NAP) generated from national consultations and a national awareness seminar.

The main purpose of this second national report is to inform the Parties to the Convention of the situation in the country with regard to measures taken towards the implementation of the UNCCD at the national level.

II. STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

The current priority strategies established within the framework of sustainable development plans and/or policies are defined below.

Sustainable Development

The Government of St Lucia continues to promote sustainable development and therefore strategies within the development plans of the various sectors are focused in this direction. In this regard, cognizance is taken of the SIDS-POA and the OECS Environmental Charter – St George’s Declaration of Principles for Environmental Sustainability in the OECS, to which the Government is a recent signatory.

Integrated Development Planning

A new approach to planning in the form of integrated development planning, initiated by the MPDE&H, is progressively gaining momentum. It seeks to foster development through addressing in a coordinated manner, economic, social, environmental and technological considerations.

This approach has been furthered through the current initiative between the GEF funded Coastal Zone Management Unit and the EU funded Water Resources Management Unit in the Ministry of Agriculture, seeking a collaborative approach to the management of the island’s fresh water resources.

Poverty Reduction

In addition, the Government of Saint Lucia fully cognizant of the nexus between environmental (including land) degradation and poverty has, through a number of externally funded projects, commenced the implementation of measures to improve the economic environment. Projects such as the Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF), Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) and the Short Term Employment Programme (STEP) have sought to assist affected communities around the island to physically address degradation issues as well as in identifying alternate and sustainable livelihoods to improve economic well being while managing the environment.

Conservation, Reforestation and Land Zoning/Classification

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries through its Department of Forestry is the primary agent for implementing the Convention. The recently endorsed 10-year Forest Management Plan features mainly areas of watershed management and land degradation, areas that have been recognized as re-emerging areas of concern over the last few years.

The Ministry of Agriculture has taken the issue of watershed management even further by championing a strategy for agricultural land zoning. The current strategy involves the use of land information systems to determine land quality with a view to recommending appropriate land management practices, as well as assist in the identification of under-utilized lands and lands for rehabilitation. Soil and water conservation continues to be a key strategy for improving land productivity while combating land degradation. The Ministry's strategy to decentralize land management activities is aimed at promoting more involvement of community groups and private landowners in the development of appropriate alternatives for more responsible and sustainable land use.

Land Bank Initiative

This initiative is considered to be of a high priority, supporting agricultural diversification efforts within a sustainable land management framework. It seeks to address the need to maintain productive, arable land, both Government and private lands, which still provide yields in accordance with natural potential, as well as obtain optimal use from currently under-utilized lands.

Environmental Conservation/Preservation

The tourism sector, with a renewed environmental consciousness, in pursuing its strategy to promote a sustainable tourism product has commenced an initiative under the Nature Heritage Programme, to implement Environmental Management Systems (EMS) at all tourism sites/attractions. Operations at these sites/attractions often impact on land quality and it is expected that the introduction of EMS at these sites/attractions will minimize the negative impacts with regard to land management, and by extension, land degradation.

A key strategy to be pursued in the short term is the modification of policies in the banking sector to promote environmental conservation in development and enterprise.

Regulation for Development/Housing

Recently, a new Building Code to address construction issues with regard to environmental impacts was endorsed by the Ministry of Planning. Land degradation, promotion of water storage in building code, etc.)

National Environmental Education Programme

A number of agencies, including the Departments of Fisheries, Agriculture and Forestry and Environment have, over the years, undertaken environmental education and awareness activities aimed at helping to change public attitude and behaviour towards the environment. Currently efforts are afoot to improve coordination and collaboration between these multiple agencies involved in such activities.

III. INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES

Several initiatives, though not specifically targeted at implementation of the Convention are being undertaken at the national level to address issues related to land degradation and are therefore viewed as supporting implementation of the UNCCD obligations. Many of these are outlined below.

Domestic Legislative and Institutional Frameworks or Arrangements

The Focal Point for the Convention resides in the Department of Forestry of the Ministry of Agriculture. This responsibility is still that of a single individual with plans however, the NCC has recognized the need to establish a national secretariat to support the work of the NCC. The coverage of the NCC has also been extended through a mechanism of adhoc working groups.

The creation of the appropriate legislative framework to facilitate the implementation of the Convention is largely a Government responsibility and strong policy support is evident from government's commitment to several initiatives to develop the appropriate legislative and policy frameworks to guide national development. The following initiatives will impact favorably on the issue of land degradation and thus contribute to efforts at meeting obligations under the UNCCD:

(i) National Land Policy Initiative

This process, coordinated by the MPDE&H is expected to culminate in the preparation of a holistic policy that will establish the basis for the integrated and coordinated use, management and administration of land in the wider context of sustainable development. Key issues to be addressed include ownership, access and tenure, institutional arrangements, protected areas and public awareness and education.

(ii) The Physical Planning Act of 2001 replaces the Interim Development Control Act of 1971. It attempts to make the physical planning and regulatory process more responsive to the needs of the public as well as government policy. It makes specific provisions for *inter alia*, Environmental Impact Assessments and the preparation of development plans, to guide development initiatives.

(iii) Building Code and Guidelines are in an advanced stage of preparation. They seek to foster better building practices within the country and provide technical and regulatory instruments to guide the construction and related sectors. Many of the standards contained therein (drainage, etc) will have implications for land management.

(iv) The Programme for Regularization of Unplanned Development (PROUD) is one component of the GOSL Shelter Development Project. The main objective of the project is to initiate a process that will systematically improve the shelter conditions of low-income households on a sustainable basis. The Project is intended to improve the overall quality of life of targeted households by facilitating greater access to affordable housing credit, serviced plots of land, housing and upgraded facilities in squatter settlements. Under the project, PROUD I is referred to as the Settlement and Tenantry Upgrading Revolving Fund (STURF) component. This component of the project seeks to improve the poor infrastructural and housing conditions prevalent in unplanned (i.e. squatter) settlements. A critical element of this programme is the regularization of land tenure. The target areas for the programme have been largely communities in the northern and southern tips of the island as well as some communities in the

central part of the island. The scope of activities under this programme involves the implementation of planned land developments, rationalization of squatted areas, relocation of residents and the establishment of mechanisms for land transfer. The implementation agency, the PROUD Unit, functions as part of the Ministry of Planning, Development, Environment and Housing. PROUD I is still in the implementation phase with funding for PROUD II intended as the continuation of PROUD I with some amendments, is still being sourced.

(v) Sustainable Energy Plan

The Government of St. Lucia adopted a Sustainable Energy Plan in 2001. This plan seeks, *inter alia*, to promote the use of renewable energy and foster greater energy efficiency in the power generation and transportation sectors. These and other measures are in an effort to achieve St. Lucia's goals of making its energy sector more sustainable. This is deemed necessary for economic, social and environmental reasons (including the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions which might contribute to global warming). The Plan sets a number of clear targets, especially with regard to the introduction of renewable energy technologies.

(vi) National Water Policy

The island has recently concluded a series of consultations from which has emerged a national water policy to guide watershed management initiatives. The objective of the policy includes strengthening the capacity of the country to implement an integrated approach to the management of water resources, including watersheds and coastal areas. Consequently, several land management and land degradation issues will, by extension, be addressed under this policy.

(vii) Forest Sector Policy and Wildlife Policy

The Forest Management Plan of the Forestry Department is now 10 years old. The Department is therefore in the advanced stages of development of a Forest Management Plan for the next 10 years, which will focus on a broader Forest Sector Policy to govern the

management and preservation of the country's soil, water, wild life and biodiversity. One of the areas to be pursued under the new Plan is the establishment of an Environmental Commission.

- (viii) A legislative and institutional environmental review commissioned by the MPESD is in progress and will address the rationalization of environmental management agencies on the island, as well as strengthen linkages among institutions dealing with environmental issues, including land degradation.
- (ix) National Conservation Act to govern the management and use of parks and beaches.

The Act, enacted in 1999, established a body, the National Conservation Authority functions were to implement a primarily community based "Greening Project". The objective of the project is to plant indigenous plants and forest species on hillsides, to stabilize slopes, conserve the soil and beautify the environment. The Project uses the mass media as well as community meetings to sensitize the public and stakeholders.

While beaches were the primary area of focus of the work of the Authority over the last few years, there is now increased focus on conservation of the island's natural resources and in particular land conservation.

Linkages and Synergies with Other Environmental Conventions and National Development Strategies

Initiatives to foster inter-ministerial collaboration have commenced and at the level of the Ministry of Agriculture a Convention and Agreements Committee has been formed to develop linkages with the Ministry of Planning and other institutions and agencies to obtain synergies in implementation efforts for meeting requirements of conventions and agreements, and in particular the Biodiversity and Climate Change Conventions.

The National Focal Point for the UNCCD has also commenced talks with NFPs of the other conventions and the EU National Authorizing Officer (NAO) to explore potential areas of synergy in activities to ensure a more effective use of funds.

There is particular interest in developing stronger linkages between UNCCD and Climate Change and Biodiversity initiatives.

The Ministry of Agriculture has also re-activated the National Agricultural Advisory Council (NAAC), an inter-sectoral body, to facilitate the incorporation of a wide range of input into agricultural development policies and strategies.

The re-invigorated National Council for Science and Technology is being positioned to assist with national research initiatives, which are expected to support various areas of implementation of the Convention.

At the regional level, the efforts of the St Lucian based Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI) are expected to support the efforts on the domestic front. CEHI has undertaken responsibility for the implementation of several components of the Convention as well as other environmental initiatives at a Caribbean level. The organization will thus facilitate linkages with other environmental related initiatives.

The OECS Watershed Management Dialogue held in St Kitts in February 2002 defined issues and strategies to be pursued for effective watershed management at the national level. These strategies are expected to impact favorably on initiatives to combat land degradation.

IV. THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

The participatory process remains focused on the primary stakeholders including Government, policy makers, private sector and the general public, particularly rural communities. To date the main thrust has been sensitization and awareness building, which has been carried out largely through consultations and some mass media programmes.

The first in the series of National Awareness Seminars was held on June 25 - 26, 2001 at the Indies Conference Room in Gros Islet, St. Lucia, under the guidance of Dr. Richard Cox, of the UNCCD Secretariat in Bonn, Germany, with financial support from the UNCCD Secretariat. The main purpose of the NAS was to seek broad representation within groups to allow for new ideas to emerge in the development of the NAP.

The specific objectives were to:

- i. develop a framework to lead into the development of the NAP;

- ii. set up a desired organ to drive the implementation of the NAP;
- iii. ensure an understanding of the NCC's functions and objectives;
- iv. seek to legitimize the NCC to secure a mandate;
- v. identify urgent problem areas in the country and what is required to address these areas.

A total of thirty-seven participants attended the first National Awareness Seminar with fourteen female participants. (Figure 1 describes the gender distribution of participants at the NAS.) In addition, a concerted effort was made to ensure an adequate distribution of females among the small working groups.

Figure 1. Gender Distribution of Participants at National Awareness Seminar



Participants represented a broad range of civil society, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations including:

The main output of the NAS was a draft framework for the National Action Programme, which is to be further refined from outcomes of other national awareness seminars involving other stakeholders around the island. (Refer to report on NAS).

The community based water catchment groups continue to assist in managing six (6) degraded priority water catchment areas. The activities of the Talvern Water Catchment Group are now being used in a demonstration site and are being evaluated for future use in other degraded watersheds, for combating land degradation.

V. THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS

This process is ongoing both at the national and community level. Following on subsequent consultations, since the first report, the first National Awareness Seminar was convened where a framework for the National Action Programme was developed. Other national awareness seminars are to be convened in other locations around the island to elaborate on the Programme.

The Department of Forestry has continued the consultative process by convening a first meeting of an adhoc working-group to assist in refining the NAP through a series of working sessions. The composition of the adhoc working groups will vary to facilitate the integration of the programmes developed under the UNCCD into wider country programmes. Presently, one such working group has been convened to consider appropriate benchmarks and indicators for assessing status of land degradation.

Resource Mobilization and Coordination

The primary purpose of convening adhoc working groups is to further the awareness and sensitization of the various agencies involved in land management, particularly with regard to their contribution towards implementation of the Convention. It is expected that areas of synergies will be agreed upon through these meetings and that these agencies would influence the mobilization of their resources to complement the work of the NCC.

The NFP continues to foster partnerships with other developing countries and has commenced an exchange programme between technical and community watershed groups between St Lucia and St Vincent. The exchange programme funded by the OECS/NRMU comprises mainly field studies and practical work.

VI. THE MEASURES TAKEN OR PLANNED

Measures for the Rehabilitation of Degraded Land

The Department of Forestry has been the primary agency in implementing measures for rehabilitation of degraded lands. Several ongoing activities in the Department have been considered within the framework of the national action programmes to address obligations under the Convention.

Riverbank Stabilization

Six (6) communities have been targeted through the Forestry Department's public sensitization on the importance of water catchment areas, in the districts administered by the department, to assist in the management of degraded priority water catchments. Currently two of the groups are still vibrant. One, the Talvern Water Catchment Group is engaged in active management of the watershed. This group is presently engaged in a riverbank stabilisation program using vegetative wattles and geo-textiles in the Talvern watershed. The other, Thomazo Water Catchment Group, is active in community mobilization and education. These community-based programmes are being considered for developing as case studies.

The ongoing community based initiatives in the Talvern and Thomazo Water Catchments have as the primary objective the mitigation of land degradation activities and are utilized to educate farmers on land management issues on a one-on-one basis and facilitate community access to appropriate technology, such as geo-textile technology, for land management.

Public Awareness and Capacity Building

Water catchment groups have also been sensitized and trained by the Forestry Department in the areas of legislation, group dynamics, communication skills training and project development and preparation. In addition, with the help of the Fisheries Department, (under the auspices of the French Mission Project) the groups have also been trained in monitoring river water quality by use of biological indicators.

The degraded Vielle Litre watershed in the south of the island has been acquired by the Government and a process of reforestation commenced. The improved site has been proposed for a new water dam as part of the series of small dams being established around the island.

The Water Resources Management Unit in the Ministry continues to conduct public sensitization activities to educate the public on the importance of management of our water resources. Such activities are being done via mass media programs. The Unit is also in the process of engaging a Public Relations Company to further its activities in this regard, particularly at the community level.

Measures to Establish Early Warning Systems

Recent initiatives undertaken by the Department of Meteorological Services within the Ministry of Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities to establish early flood warning systems have taken into account areas of synergy with systems for monitoring parameters to assist in drought mitigation. The current World Bank funded initiative involves the establishment of four automatic weather stations across the island for storm forecasting to support early warning systems for floods and landslides. The system will, as far as possible incorporate equipment to facilitate data gathering in real time, on parameters that can also be used to measure and assess drought related indices. This project is one that facilitates access to new and appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how;

In addition, the various agencies involved in water resources management have commenced a process to arrive at a standard definition for drought within the national context, to ensure that monitoring and measurement efforts are consistent among the agencies.

Other Measures

(measures to improve the economic environment, to conserve natural resources, to improve institutional organization, to improve knowledge of desertification)

The European Union funded Water Resources Management Unit in the Ministry of Agriculture is spearheading a joint initiative with the Ministry of Planning and other relevant agencies, for the purchasing of satellite imagery to determine the current status of land use. Measures for continuous monitoring land use are to be implemented as part of this initiative.

The Ministry of Agriculture, the primary agency for implementing the Convention, has undertaken an institutional restructuring exercise from which has emerged a Land Resource Management Unit. The land resource management initiative in the Ministry of Agriculture intends to utilize demonstration farms to display concepts and conservation practices that are to be promoted by the Ministry.

Further, under the soon to be established Banana Recovery Unit (BRU), there is a special land evaluation programme for lands under bananas, with a view to developing appropriate measures for conserving or rehabilitating those lands, where necessary.

The Ministry of Planning in collaboration with the Government Department of Statistics is developing a compendium of environmental statistics for all sectors. This will serve to improve knowledge on land degradation and inform decision making in this regard.

VII. FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS

Resource Mobilization and Coordination: both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements;

The island has through funding from international bodies such as GEF/OAC/CCST mobilized resources for the development of a Water Policy. Several watershed and coastal area management initiatives are funded under CEXU, while the Biodiversity enabling activity project in the Ministry of Agriculture is funded from the GEF.

European Union funding has also been secured for irrigation and drainage initiatives to improved agricultural productivity. This will promote improved land management and assist in curbing land degradation.

Several of the other initiatives outlined above have been financed by the EU, more particularly under a Special Framework of Assistance (SFA) for displaced farmers and farm families as a result of declining fortunes in the banana industry.

The PROUD I component of the GOSL Shelter Development Project is being jointly funded by the GOSL and CDB.

Funding for some key activities to facilitate more direct implementation of the Convention obligations is still required. These include:

- Assistance for completion of the National Action Programme and implementation of rehabilitation and restoration projects;
- Public awareness programmes;
- Establishment of the national secretariat – procurement of equipment and tools, etc.;
- Strengthening CBOs and empowering of conservation groups in rural communities;
- Development of successful interventions (Talvern & Thomazo watercatchments) as Case Studies.

VIII A REVIEW OF THE BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS

Currently benchmarks and indicators for assessing status and measuring progress are being considered at the national level and will comprise the benchmarks and indicators used by the various agencies/institutions for monitoring environment and climate variability.

For example, a system of data management for collection of data on freshwater resources is in the design phase and parameters measured under the system will be utilized as indicators for assessing the island's water resource status. In addition, performance indicators for monitoring and assessing the impacts of the various interventions are to be identified.

An initial listing of proposed indicators for monitoring for land degradation includes but is not limited to:

- Reduction in soil organic matter content
- Loss of topsoil
- Changes in soil pH
- Changes in water quality
- Decline in coral reefs
- Loss of biodiversity

The systems to be adopted for monitoring and assessment will as far as possible take advantage of new and up-to-date technology that is compatible with local requirements and conditions. For example, the equipment to be procured under the World Bank funded early warning systems will be determined by experienced international consultants based on technological advancements in the field.

Other social and socio-economic indicators are under consideration by the aforementioned adhoc working group and will be further addressed following the convening of the workshop to be coordinated by the UNCCD Secretariat on benchmarks and indicators scheduled for later this year.