

THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

NATIONAL REPORT

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF

THE UNITED NATIONS
CONVENTION TO
COMBAT DESERTIFICATION
(UNCCD)

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT
MINISTRY OF LANDS HOUSING AND THE
ENVIRONMENT

26TH APRIL 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION:.....	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:.....	4
1. Strategies and Priorities Established within the Framework of Sustainable Development Plans and/or Policies:.....	7
1.1 Introduction;.....	7
1.2 National Policies, Strategies and Priorities to Combat Desertification:	7
1.3 National Development Plans:.....	10
2.0 Institutional measures Taken to Implement the Convention:.....	11
2.1 Legal and Institutional Frameworks:.....	11
2.2 National Level Implementation Arrangements:.....	12
2.2.1 The National Environment Board:.....	12
2.2.2 The National Focal Point:.....	13
2.2.3 Local Level Implementation Arrangements:.....	14
2.3 Environmental Information Systems:.....	14
2.4 Scientific and Technical Control Activities:.....	15
3.0 Participatory Process:.....	16
4.0 Consultative Process:.....	17
5.0 Measures Taken or Planned:.....	19
6. Financial Allocations:.....	21
7. Review of Benchmarks and Indicators:.....	22

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

BSAP	- Biological Diversity strategy Action plan
CBO	- Community-Based Organizations
CEB	- Chiefdom Environmental Board
COP	- Conference of Parties
DEB	- District Environmental Board
ECBO	- Environmental Community Based Organisation
EIA	- Environmental Impact Assessment
GOSL	- Government of Sierra Leone
IADP	- Integrated Agricultural Development Projects
IPRSP	- Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
MLHE	- Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment
NCB	- National Convention Board
NLTPS	- National Long-Term Perspectives Studies
NEAP	- National Environmental Action Plan
NEB	- National Environment Board
NEP	- National Environmental Policy
NFP	- National Focal Point
NGO	- Non-governmental Organizations
NCS	- National Conservation Strategy
PEB	- Provincial Environment Boards
SAP	- Structural Adjustment Programme
SAPA	- Social Action and Poverty Alleviation
SCANGO	- Sierra Leone Association of Non-governmental Organizations
TFAP	- Tropical Forestry Action Plan
UNCCD	- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the past two decades, policies, programmes and strategies have been developed to address desertification as symptom of land degradation. One of these is the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), which provides a legal framework for cooperation and active involvement of all stakeholders concerned with the environment.

The Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) signed and ratified UNCCD in 1994 and 1997 respectively with the Division of Environment in the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment (MLHE) designated to coordinate and oversee all action plans and strategies to combat desertification. In the ensuing decade, national strategies and policies have been introduced but their successful implementation has remained elusive due to the ten-year internal conflict. These strategies that are clearly spelt out in the National Conservation Strategy, the Tropical Forestry Action Plan and The National Environmental Action Plan call for coordination and stimulation of national environmental management and promotion of environmental awareness.

Institutional reforms have been carried out to empower a government Ministry to carry out environmental responsibilities. The Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment coordinated environmental management until 1996 when the responsibility was transferred to Transport and Communication. An Environmental Protection Section was established and to ensure coordination among line ministries and other bodies, a National Environmental Committee (NEC) was set up, along with a Technical Environment Committee with a mandate to assess specific environmental issues.

To address the underlying causes of environmental degradation, the government formulated and adopted a National Environmental Plan in 1994 and later enacted a National Environment Protection Act in 2000. Although there is at the moment no National Convention Board to address the issue of desertification, there is a National Environment Board (NEB) with diverse membership that is very much influential in policy matters and in the implementation of the environmental legislations. All these

developments provide the legal and institutional frameworks for environmental management, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation and coordination of convention on Desertification. The Director of Environment is the National Focal Point for the implementation of the convention to combat desertification.

The major scientific and technical activities that are in conformity with the principles of the convention include the woodfuel programme, awareness raising of and galvanising public support for sustainable natural resource use and management using environmental education initiatives by Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The scientific community is also gradually establishing and operating a natural resources information and retrieval system and environmental management skills database. This move is in response to the poor environmental information systems in the country.

A strong participatory process in support of preparation and implementation of Action Programmes is ongoing and coherent. The major actors include NGOs, CBOs, youth groups and women. The Sierra Leone Association of Non-governmental Organisation (SLANGO) is the body responsible for advocacy in coordinating the activities of NGOs and ensuring compliance with national policies, establishing implementation mechanism for programmes and projects that have components in line with the UNCCD obligations. Monthly inter-agency fora take place and SLANGO compiles, collates and submits these reports to the NFP for onward submission to the NEB.

To implement policies at local level, Provincial, District and Chiefdom Environmental Boards are established, though there is need for capacity building for these to function well. Some of the measures taken or planned within the framework of Action programme to address environmental degradation outlined in the sectoral policies objectives include poverty alleviation, reforestation, biodiversity fuelwood exploitation, mining, fisheries and wild life. The plan of action is monitored within the framework of the NEAP. The programmes are geared towards realizing the aims and objectives of the UNCCD at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. The Social Action Poverty Alleviation (SAPA) is mandated to directly address poverty conditions. For example, poor rural farmers and other resource users are provided with micro-credit loans that would enable them to shift from resource utilization and

degradation activities to trade. The development of the Biodiversity Action Plan is in progress. To realize the aims and objectives of the UNCCD at all levels, the Permanent Inter-state Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel and the African Development Bank have all been involved in providing assistance for the Action Plans to evolve. The capacity of the government to finance programmes and projects is limited. As such, the NFP continues to coordinate mechanisms for financial support. It also continues to contact Conference of Parties to promote its national desertification funds. The German Technical Assistance (GTZ) is another possible strong partner in UNCCD activities.

With poor storage facilities and unclear documentation of information, there is a dire need for the setting up of a fully operational Environmental Information Network linked to international information systems.

1. STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND/OR POLICIES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Interminable conferences have been held on desertification and it is now generally accepted that it is largely a combination of human activities with occasional runs of dry years that leads to persistently observed desertification. As a result, desertification is not only confined to arid and semi-arid areas. Depletion of the vegetation cover, by firewood collection, overgrazing and cultivation, has set in insidious processes of land degradation, which in turn is limiting the ability of the natural environment to support the increasing human population levels. Today, approximately 900 million people in almost all regions and continents in the world are affected. Identifying key areas of desertification, the United Nations has estimated that 32% of the African Continent is affected by desertification and must deserve special attention.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) has provided a legal framework for cooperation that calls for active involvement of all stakeholders concerned with the environment. The Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) signed and ratified UNCCD in 1994 and 1997 respectively with the Division of Environment in the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Environment (MLHE) designated to coordinate and oversee all action plans and strategies to combat desertification.

1.2 STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND/OR POLICIES

Since 1980, the Government of Sierra Leone has demonstrated that it attaches significant importance to environmental issues. Strategies and policies have been introduced; the successful implementation of some of these has remained elusive due to the ten-year internal conflict. The main strategies that have been introduced include:

- The National Conservation Strategy (1985)
- The Tropical Forestry Action Plan (1990)
- The National Environmental Action Plan (1993).

The National Conservation Strategy (NCS) was developed in 1985 with reference to the World Conservation Strategy and the Lome III Convention. The strategy identified major environmental problems and those related to environmental policies, laws and institutions. Six pilot projects, a natural resources expertise profile and a donor round table conference were proposed.

The Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) described forest ecology in Sierra Leone along with relevant issues pertaining to population growth and land tenure. This strategy assessed the forestry sector's current status with respect to eight tropical forest areas: forest resources; forest based industries; forestry institutions and legislation; fuelwood sector; methods of forest conservation; forestry in landuse; forest sector economics and policy. Solutions, recommendations and actions relating to management and institutional needs and training were proposed.

Although Sierra Leone is to develop an Action Plan to combat desertification, the Government in collaboration with the World Bank supported the production of a National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) in 1993. This plan, which has been approved calls for coordination and stimulation of national environmental management and promotion of environmental awareness.

In order to achieve the objectives of the NEAP, the strategies identified include the following:

- a) To establish and/or strengthen environmental protection standards, monitor changes in and publish relevant data on environmental quality and resources use;
- b) To make prior Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of proposed activities which may significantly affect the environment or use of a natural resource and to provide relevant information, in a timely manner to persons likely to be significantly affected by a planned activity and to grant them equal access and due process in administrative and judicial proceedings;
- c) To promote environmental management through the creation of administrative and infrastructure support with appropriate financial backing;

- d) To cooperate in good faith with other countries and agencies to achieve optimal use of trans-boundary natural resources and effective prevention or abatement of trans-boundary environmental protection. Some of the projects and programmes for implementation include Environmental Education, training and information dissemination. This would take place at all levels; non-formal and formal education and for professional bodies especially the mass media and opinion leaders. This would help the major stakeholders in poverty reduction and also to combat desertification. Another Investment Programme is Natural Resource Management. Consequently, the projects included here are geared towards the natural resource management problems and recommended policies and strategies to address them. Other project proposals include; Empowering Women for Environmental Management and Women's Commercial activities Study. These projects combat desertification, as they are geared towards improving the living standards of the rural poor and creating environmental awareness amongst them.

With the creation of the Environment Division (ED) within the Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment, sub sectoral strategies and priorities within the framework of sustainable development have been established and summarized as follows.

- **Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP):** This strategy sets out government's economic and social objectives, and strategies for reducing poverty. Through the Social Action and Poverty Alleviation (SAPA) Government is providing micro credits to the rural poor and groups that are highly dependent on the forest resources with the intention of encouraging them look for other alternatives for survival.
- **National Population Policy:** The goal of the National Population Policy for sustainable development is to reinforce and enrich national development, especially human resource development, improve the quality of life of the people and enhance welfare and dignity. The specific goals are:
 - a) "to make development planning and policy comprehensive and effective by the incorporation of the demographic dimension;

- b) to achieve a rate of growth of the population that would be sustained by the economy;
- c) to contribute towards meeting the basic needs of the people and enhancing the quality and utilisation of the nations' human resources;
- d) to promote the health and welfare of the people, especially those in the high risk groups, i.e. mothers and children.
- e) to moderate initially the expected rise in and later to reduce progressively population growth rates through the spread of voluntary family planning and small family norms so as to facilitate the attainment of national economic and social development targets;
- f) to guide rural-urban migration, so as to minimise socio-economic problems and to optimise benefits to migrants and non-migrants alike in rural as well as in urban areas”.

The Government considers the present fertility and mortality rates to be unacceptably too high. Consequently the population policy provides that:

- i) Women should be encouraged to have a small family say, 3-4 children;
- ii) Age at first pregnancy should preferably be 16 years or higher;
- iii) The birth interval should preferably be 24 months or more.

Primarily, this is to improve the health of mothers and children in Sierra Leone.

1.3 NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The first National Development Plan (1974/75 – 1978/79) recognised environmental degradation as a serious concern. The plan states, “a sound economic development strategy requires the national management of natural resources as opposed to their wasteful utilisation. Ecological principles should be applied to the exploitation of these resources. As a developing nation, Sierra Leone is particularly well placed to benefit from the lessons of the disastrous past experience of many developed countries with natural resource depletion and environmental pollution caused by inadequate attention paid to the ecological aspects of development”. The thrust of the agricultural policy in the plan was to achieve self-sufficiency in food and to maximise agricultural output. Consequently, many projects such as the Integrated Agricultural Development Projects (IADPs) of the 1970s and 1980s were set up. These projects attempted to improve the agricultural sector; but regrettably, none of them considered sound environmental management as spelt out in the National Development Plan.

In response to a new strategy for planning of African countries, the Government of Sierra Leone in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is in the process of formulating and articulating the “Sierra Leone vision 2025”. The main objective of the National Long-Term Perspectives Studies (NLTPS) is “to formulate a shared vision and to design broad strategies for long-term national development leading to a better Sierra Leone by 2025”. The strategy acknowledges the importance of the fact that development is not only concerned with positive changes in the economy but with other areas such as political, cultural, environmental and technological. This policy objective of the government provides the basis for all sub-sectoral policies and strategies that are relevant to natural resources utilization and desertification.

2.0 INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION

2.1 Legal and Institutional Frameworks

Since 1985 institutional reforms have been carried to empower a government ministry to carry out environmental responsibilities. The ministry of Lands, Housing and Country Planning thereafter renamed Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment (MLHE) was to be cognizant of the responsibilities of line ministries and agencies carrying out functions related to the protection of the environment, (including forestry, agriculture, fisheries and water supply) in carrying out its environmental responsibilities. In order to carry out its functions, MLHE originally established an Environmental Protection Section which was mandated to: (i) establish and coordinate working groups to study specific environmental problem (ii) formulate environmental legislation; (iii) promote environmental education; (iv) monitor, control and enforce environmental legislation; and (v) implement national environmental policy. In order to ensure coordination among sectoral agencies, a National Environmental Committee was established comprising representatives from almost all sectoral ministries including agriculture, energy and power, mines, tourism, health, Social services, foreign affairs as well as housing and environment. In addition, a Technical Environmental Committee was established to assess specific environmental issues, in particular the occurrence of toxic materials on land or in marine locations. According to the report prepared for the United Nations Conference

on Environment and Development (UNCED), the institutions are not effective for numerous reasons, including low staff morale and lack of financing and logistical support.

The National Environmental Policy (NEP) that was established is designed “to achieve sustainable development in Sierra Leone through sound environmental; management”. Among others, the NEP focuses on securing a healthy environment for the people; conserving and using natural resources for the benefit of present as well as future generations; restoring, maintaining, and enhancing ecosystems; preserving biodiversity; and raising awareness and promoting understanding of essential linkages between environment and development (World Bank, 1993)”. Setting up environmental institutions has been influenced by political commitment, internal conflict, human and financial resources. However different measures to incorporate environmental institution within the overall decision-making process have been adopted.

2.2 National Level Implementation Arrangements

2.2.1 The National Environment Board

Although there is at the moment no National Convention Board (NCB), there is the National Environment Board (NEB), with diverse membership that is very much influential in policy matters and in the implementation of the environmental legislations). The body has the following responsibilities:

- (a) facilitates coordination, cooperation and collaboration among government ministries, local authorities and other governmental agencies in all areas relating to environmental protection;
- (b) reviews national and sectoral environmental policies and make such recommendations or proposal it may think necessary to the Environment minister;
- (c) reviews Environmental Impact Assessment prepared pursuant to Environmental Protection Act and make appropriate recommendations to the Director of Environment;

- (d) investigates any activity, occurrence or transaction which it considers likely to have or result harmful consequences to the environment;
- (e) advises on measures necessary to prevent or minimize such consequences;
- (f) advises the Environment Minister on areas of environmental protection and control requiring special or additional measures, indicating the priorities and specific goals to be achieved;
- (g) undertakes specific studies and research aimed at developing strategies for the protection of the Environment and make appropriate recommendations to the Environment Minister; and
- (h) considers any other matters which may be referred to it by the Environment Minister and makes appropriate recommendations or proposals thereon.

The President through an initial recommendation by the Director of Environment (NFP) nominates these NEB members. The presidential nomination is based on the experience of each of the candidates in the environmental management sectors in Sierra Leone. The status of resources within the NEB is meagre. The NEB Secretariat only has the human resources with scientific and technical know-how. The secretariat has inadequate logistics and financial resources for them to function efficiently.

2.2.2 The National Focal Point

The Director of Environment is the National Focal Point for the implementation of the convention to combat desertification. He/she is autonomous in terms of decision-making as to how to use resources obtained from the government budget or monies from the National Environment Fund as spelt out in the Environment Protection Act 2000. The Director (NFP) can take independent decision in respect of implementing the National Environment Action Plan.

Through its regional offices, the Environment Division has continued to foster productive dialogue, and encouraged increased collaboration between different stakeholders in the environmental sector with the aim of identifying environmental research policy and management priorities through seminars, workshops and periodic fora which bring together stakeholders (government departments, NGOs, research institutions, private sector agencies and local community organisations) and facilitating networking and other forms of continued contact between them.

2.2.3 Local Level Implementation Arrangements

At regional levels, the district and chiefdom environment boards work through the regional/environment board for the elaboration and the implementation of the action programme. These bodies work together to organise meetings and prepare report that are submitted to the national focal point for review.

2.3 Environmental Information Systems

Over the years scientists have utilized much of their knowledge to collect, analyse and publish work on the human and natural environment in Sierra Leone. Much of this environmental information remains unknown to potential users like the NEB and the public at large. Reasons include the poor storage facilities and unclear documentation of libraries and documentation centres and lack of a medium that establishes communication among researchers, NGOs, the media, policy makers and international donor agencies. Given the rapid spread in the use of the internet, there is therefore a need for an improved coordination that will enhance the collation and distribution of information on a regular basis. Examples of such information system include: details of environmental professionals; details of environmental training activities; Environmental Impact Assessment legislation, regulations and guidelines etc.

Finally, there is need for the NFP and NEB to promote and support networking of experts and stakeholders in order to facilitate the sharing of experiences and exchange of information and expertise.

2.4 Scientific And Technical Control Activities

The key activities that are in conformity with the principles of the convention and the National Action Plan include:

- **The Woodfuel Programme:** This is stream of technical activities that has swept through the country as early as 1980s that is having profound impact on environmental management. For example, in addition to tree planting activities, the production of the “wonder stove”, which maximizes the energy output and reduces the quantity of woodfuel use for cooking is gaining nationwide acceptance.
- **The Role of NGOs:** There is a strong NGO sector in Sierra Leone responsible for creating public interest in environmental affairs. These are increasing public awareness of, and galvanising public support for sustainable natural resource use and management using environmental education initiatives (involving for example, radio/television campaigns; information dissemination at agricultural field days/shows, collaborating with farmers associations, youth groups, professional guilds/unions in promoting environmentally – focused literacy programmes).

Other specific activities of NGOs that are fostering closer links with the rural communities include: campaigns for the protection of wild life, parks and sanctuaries through education, advocacy, and research, promotion of human ecology through education and dissemination of environmental information through the mass media and promotion of sustainable development through technology.

- **The Role of the Scientific Community:** The scientific community including the University of Sierra Leone is gradually establishing and operating a natural resources information and retrieval system and environmental management skills data base with the aim of providing detailed, reliable and up to date information for policy making, programme/project design and management, applied natural resources and environmental research.

The review and analysis of the existing mechanisms for coordinating and harmonizing actions to combat land degradation at national and local coordination and implementation of those programmes has been strengthened. There is a need to build the capacity of the various institutions/stakeholders, which can improve and enhance performance. The NEAP is coherent with other national and social development and environmental protection plans. This is manifested in the country presentation to the Third United Nations Conference on the least Developed Countries. The NEAP is considered as a strategic framework for action to address almost all environmental issues. The NEAP has been successful in national economic and social development and environment protection planning systems both at local and national levels especially in areas where programmes and projects are to be implemented for sustainable development although a greater part of the nation has been under siege due to the ten-year civil conflict. Hence implementation of most identified programmes has not come to reality. Therefore, even though Government has officially adopted the NEAP, the only financial commitment being made for its implementation is in the area of sensitization and education.

3. PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES

Though there is yet to be an Action Programme for the Convention, there was strong participation in the processes leading to the development of the NEAP.

Beleaguered with the ten-year conflict, the participation during the preparatory process enhanced collaboration in the formulation and implementation of the National Action Programmes by local authorities, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), the private sector, the University and other academic institutions, youth groups, women and other groups in a national consultative conference and regional conferences. This participation of all sectors is still on going and coherent. Government could sustain this by providing more incentives in the form of training and logistics to motivate these actors to be devoted and committed.

The criteria used for the selection of these actors include; involvement in the process of natural resource exploitation, power structures involved in natural resource management, qualification, experience in the field of environmental management and leadership. Therefore, status representatives from environmental Community-Based

Organizations (CBOs), representative from environmental NGOs were used. However these criteria did not encourage equal representation at all levels since most institutions cannot fulfil all the stated criteria. Nevertheless, efforts were made to involve all at equal representations to ensure equity.

With the establishment of regional, district and chiefdom boards, efforts are made to initiate sets of activities at the grassroots level through consultations designed to sensitize the local communities on the provisions of the convention and the causes and effects of land degradation.

The traditional knowledge system is been used in a manner that every stakeholder in the community exchanges information through community meetings at the local level and through community leaders to the national level. The modalities for designating representatives at various social and institutional categories is based on leadership qualities, qualification and these representatives are nominated by their groups or institutions through a method of arriving at a consensus or voted for in a free and fair election.

4.0 CONSULTATIVE PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES AND PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS WITH DEVELOPED COUNTRY PARTIES AND OTHER INTERESTED ENTITIES.

There has been formal cooperation and collaboration with the international partners, in the preparation and implementation of NAPs. These include: The African Development Bank (ADB), European Union (EU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In addition, The World Bank supported the Government in the development of the National Environment Policy (NEP), the National Environment Action Plan (NEAP) and the National Environment Legislation (NEL). The United Nations Development Programme resident UNEP Desk Office coordinated the development of these documents and was in the process of setting up a project on capacity building for the Environment Department when the legitimate government was overthrown in 1997 and the civil conflict escalated. However, with the post war era condition the government aims to reactivate the UNEP Desk Office which has been dormant over the years. The UNEP Desk Office acted as a task force in

harmonizing government policy with donors, national and international NGOs in the environment. At national level, The Sierra Leone Association of Non-governmental Organizations (SLANGO) is the general body responsible for advocacy in coordinating the activities of NGO's and ensuring compliance with national policies, establishing implementation mechanism for programmes and projects which have components in line with the UNCCD obligations.

The NGOs and international agencies report at the monthly inter-agency fora and SLANGO compiles, collates and submit these reports to the NFP for onward transmission to the Board. The National Environment Board at the helm of environmental management in the country facilitates coordination, cooperation and collaboration among government Ministries, local authorities, international NGOs and other agencies. The NFP acts as the secretariat for the Board therein effectively acting as the middleman between SLANGO, donor agencies and the Board. The Board updates these reports and recommends actions on projects or sanctioning of new interventions.

The NFP will establish Provincial Environment Boards (PEBs), District Environment Boards (DEBs) and Chiefdom Environment Boards (CEBs) to implement policies at the local level. Hence decentralization is entrenched in the management processes. However, these institutions and the NFP in particular still require capacity building to function effectively. Considering the war burden and the economic situation the GOSL cannot alone provide the logistics and other necessary inputs to create an effectively functioning environmental management system. The availability of logistical, financial and technical assistance at this juncture would strengthen the operations of the NFP, the Board and other stakeholder actors and further lubricate the consultative mechanisms set to achieve the UNCCD's obligations.

5.0 MEASURES TAKEN OR PLANNED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES, INCLUDING MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT, TO CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES AND PROMOTE THEIR SUSTAINABLE USE, TO IMPROVE INSTITUTIONAL ORGANISATION, TO ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE ON DESERTIFICATION AND ITS CONTROL, TO MONITOR AND ASSESS DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT.

In addition to the convention to combat Desertification (UNCCD) Sierra Leone is a contracting party to several conventions relating to the environment. To implement its commitments to these conventions the following sectoral policy objectives and strategies have been developed.

- POVERTY ALLEVIATION

One of the indirect causes of the desertification in Sierra Leone is Poverty. In a bid to provide domestic energy, building poles coupled with the traditional method of shifting cultivation, the rural population continues to deplete forest resources, which in turn is leading to land degradation. GOSL therefore has recognized the need to give full support, both financially and politically, to the UNCCD by ratifying the convention and locating the NFP in the Environment Department. It is also cognizant of the fact that the successful implementation of UNCCD would constitute a major vehicle for alleviating poverty.

Although the initial objective of the establishment of the Social Action and Poverty Alleviation (SAPA) Programme by GOSL in 1993 was to address the negative consequences of structural adjustment, its mandate was reviewed in 1996 to directly address poverty conditions. Poor rural farmers and other natural resource users are now provided with soft micro-credit loans that would enable them switch to other trades and or activities that tend to reduce deforestation and land degradation.

- REFORESTATION

The role of the forest sector lies primarily in the supply of energy for household use, commercial harvesting of timber and the intrinsic value of the biodiversity of

the forest. The Forestry Department through the Forestry Act of 1988 is mandated to effectively manage and rationalize the utilization of the country's forest resources. The policy objective is to ensure that our forests are managed and protected based on forest management principles. There is also a Reforestation Fund into which fees are paid. The proceeds of this fund are used to finance national reforestation schemes, which have largely contributed to increasing the land area under forests. Also, Protected areas including the Gola forests, Western Area semi-deciduous closed forest and Kangari hills have been delineated.

- **BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

The conservation of the nations biological diversity is clearly addressed in the NEAP. The NEAP stresses the incorporation into existing projects like Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) and biological diversity conservation. The NEAP's investment proposals further identifies the development of a National Biological Diversity Action Plan. As part of the implementation process of United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the development of Biological Diversity Strategy Action Plan (BSAP) is in progress. Synergy could be created below this convention and UNCCD.

- **FUELWOOD EXPLOITATION**

The main source of energy is fuel wood and is mainly used in domestic and cottage industries. Thermal electrical power supply is available in the capital city and other regional headquarters of Bo and Kenema are supplied, by hydropower plants. The major investment in the Hydro-power sector is the Bumbuna project that is currently under construction. Other measures undertaken within the framework of action programme include: Community based tree planting programme; Protection of National Parks, Sanctuaries wild life; Community based bush fire control and Fuel wood and pole plantation schemes.

- **MINING**

Mining activities have negative impacts on the environment. The increasing concern over these issues has resulted in the passing of a new mining policy and Mining Legislation, which make provisions for the rehabilitation of mined out

areas. For the major mining activities, the governments goal is to ensure “that prospecting, exploration, mining and processing of mineral resources proceed in an environmentally sound manner”. The mining code requires that large and medium scale mines submit an Environmental Impact Assessment prior to the application of a mining licence; and that appropriate stops are taken for mitigation of damage caused by mining activities including land reclamation and revegetation.

The NEAP programmes, actions and policies are geared towards the realizing the aims and objectives of the UNCCD at the national, sub regional and regional level. At the sub regional and regional levels the Permanent Inter-state Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) has been involved in encouraging development of a NAP and presentation of this report. The Africa Development Bank has been very influential in providing technical assistance in the form of training and capacity building for the NFP and other related organizations. There are also possibilities of having bilateral programmes to address transboundary UNCCD issues, particularly between Guinea and Sierra Leone where the Savanna vegetation is gradually degrading into grassland.

6. FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS FROM NATIONAL BUDGETS IN SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION AS WELL AS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION INCLUDING THEIR INFLOWS, PROCESSES TO IDENTIFY THEIR REQUIREMENTS, AREAS OF FUNDING SETTING PRIORITIES.

According to the Environmental Protection Policy and Act, 2000, the National Environment Fund makes finance more accessible to local actors. The fund makes available resources to local authorities, and NGO's to carryout environmental management, promote research and encourage local environmental initiatives. The Director of Environment manages and controls the fund and is accountable to the minister. The Director of Environment after receiving proposals for a local support initiative will forward it to the Board for screening and approval. Funds will then be apportioned from the National Environment Fund for the implementation of the support initiative.

The government's capacity to finance development programmes and projects is very limited, as the civil war has greatly reduced the country's revenue base. Government's actual contribution to the development budget over the years has been a mere 3 percent, on the average. Consequently, Government's budgetary allocations for Environmental management is extremely low and only very vital programmes could be financed from this source. However, the Department assists local indigenous initiatives such as an environmental firm to construct a mud stove called "Wonder Stove" that efficiently burns minimal coal and thus reduces woodfuel consumption. The return on this investment has been properly re-invested to ensure financial sustainability.

With the development of the NAP and integration with Sub-Regional Action Plans (SRAP's) and Regional Action Plans (RAP's) the NFP will coordinate with the Global Mechanism, for financial support and orientation in the preparation of an inventory of relevant cooperation programmes, for advice on innovative financing methods and for sources of financial assistance. The NFP will contact Conference of Parties (COP) to promote its national desertification funds and other mechanisms for directing funds to the local level. Recently, it has contacted the German Technical Assistance (GTZ) a possible strong partner in UNCCD activities for technical cooperation in the areas of technical, scientific, NGOs, and CBOs integration and capacity building. Institutional strengthening and capacity building form a major of crux of this technical assistance. Other assistance in the form of the provision of laboratory equipments, training of laboratory technicians and experts in EIA procedures is highly required.

7. REVIEW OF BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORSS UTILIZED TO MEASURE PROGRESS AND ASSESSMENT.

Sierra Leone is handicapped by a weak database. Documentation and information on the national and international environment are spread amongst various documentation centres operated by some government Departments, Embassies and High Commissions, United Nations Agencies, the Library Board, the University etc. Environmental information database in Sierra Leone is widely dispersed among many sectoral agencies and are not easily accessible. Many institutions are reluctant to share information, which they may consider insensitive. The setting up of a fully

operational Environmental Information Network established with links with national and international information systems such as INFORTERA GEMS, GRID etc is thus a priority project in the NEAP's investment programme. The system will effectively enhance efficient information dissemination and networking at the national level. It will further boost the ability of the NFP to collect, analyse and process information and produce impact indicators to measure the processes and dynamics of land degradation, assess the rate of resource degradation and set up early warning system to forestall the effects of drought and desertification.

Through donor influence, the government of Sierra Leone has undertaken the process of developing operational mechanisms that will facilitate an inventory, assessment, and management of the nations natural resources. The long-term objectives of the process include:

- Strengthening and building capacities to collect, analyse and process data, and to produce impact data.
- Protecting the quality of all life forms
- Monitoring and implementing the NEAP
- Promoting public awareness on environmental issues.

A host of other issues are also taken into consideration.

- Inclusion of current post-war rehabilitation schemes in the NEAP
- Public awareness and participation, especially of women in the NAPs.
- Commitment of government to provide adequate funds for the setting up or revitalization of environmental monitoring and observation capacities.
- Procurement of computers and appropriate software for the establishment and maintenance of relevant databases that facilitate access to important information on various aspects of the Sierra Leone environment.

REFERENCES:

1. Government of Sierra Leone (1974)
National Development Plan 1974/75 – 1978/79.
2. Government of Sierra Leone (1987)
Sierra Leone: Programme for Rehabilitation and Economic Recovery:
Vols – 11 Project Profiles
3. Government of Sierra Leone (1988)
The National Population Policy for Development, Progress and Welfare.
4. Government of Sierra Leone (1993)
The National Environmental Action Plan. Vol. 1. First Draft
5. Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment (MLHCPE) (1992)
National Report of Sierra Leone for the United Nations Conference on
Environment and Development, Freetown.
6. World Bank (1994)
Sierra Leone: Initial Assessment of Environment Protections: Report No.
11920 – SL.
7. Government of Sierra Leone (1998)
National Integrated Community Based Environmental Management
Programmes – 1998/1999 – 2003/2004