

Republic of the Seychelles

**Seychelles National Report
To the World Summit
On Sustainable Development**



July 2002

Ministry of Environment
Government of Seychelles

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Preface (Draft)

Ten years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) met in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. We will now meet once again, this time on the continent of Africa to review our achievements and secure further commitments for the future.

Whilst our assessment of the past tens years is of a mixed nature, it can nevertheless be agreed that there has been progress at national, regional and global levels. But have enough been achieved to reverse biodiversity degradation and the impact of use of fossil fuels? Actions achieved in our environmental management plan (1990-2000) and various other sectoral plans in the Seychelles, today show that the Government of Seychelles has been consistent in its development approach. While it is clear that sustainable development is not about the environment only, the levels of national investments in capacity building, information sharing, environment management, protected area management and infrastructure to handle pollution and wastes has progressively increased, having an impact on the social and economic welfare of the country. In the same manner, several success stories covering areas of conservation, waste management and protected areas have been documented. Non-governmental organizations have also played a very significant role in areas of conservation, social issues such as children and women's rights, family issues, and the fight against drug/alcohol abuse as well as AIDS. The private sector has also provided financial support to many activities organized aimed at the well-being of the society, ranging from conservation, social and sports activities and projects.

This short report is therefore just a snap-shot on what has been achieved to implement Agenda 21 in Seychelles. The Second Seychelles Environment Management Plan 2000-2010, launched in 2000 contains many of the recommendations found in this report, with many being addressed in at least one of the ten thematic areas proposed, should counterpart funding be secured.

Lack of political commitment has been the most serious impediment to progress at regional and international level. Commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and trade in endangered species has for example in many cases undermined our efforts and will probably have negative impacts on our country.

It is therefore concluded that although there has been many national initiatives, many elements of Agenda 21 have been unevenly implemented across regions and also on a global scale. Furthermore many commitments regarding means of implementation have not yet been met and many countries have ignored the precautionary principle aspects of Agenda 21 in favor of 'business as usual'. Finally, it is unfortunate that the constraints developing countries have not adequately been recognized and the situation concerning future financial resources, especially with respect to the Global Environment Facility remains undecided. It is my hope that this document does not become, yet another part of a growing library of declarations for an ailing earth.

Minister of Environment
October 2000

INTRODUCTION

Country Background

Seychelles is a small island state located between latitudes 3' and 7' south and longitudes 45' and 56' east in the South-Western Indian Ocean. It is made up of 115 islands scattered over an exclusive economic zone covering an area of 1.374 million square kilometers. The total land area is 455.3 square kilometres. The archipelago is divided into two distinct groups of islands: the granitic group, 43 islands in all, with mountainous peaks and narrow coastal lands, and the low-lying islands, all coralline or calcareous sand numbering 72.

All the 43 granitic islands are found within a radius of 50 kilometres from Mahe (Figure 1-1). With a land area of 148 square kilometres, Mahe, the seat of the government, constitutes about one-third of the total land area. The two other islands of major importance as regards size and population are Praslin and La Digue, 33.6 km and 48 km from Mahe, respectively. Of the coral islands, Aldabra is the largest and furthest, located 1,150 km to the southwest.

The granitic islands rise from the Seychelles Bank, a sunken micro-continent and shoal area of about 31,000 square kilometres, with depths ranging up to 60 meters. Many islands in the group are characterised by a very narrow coastal plateau, which rarely rises 2m above sea level. The coral islands are generally low-lying, average altitude of 1-6 m above mean sea level.

It was in 1770 that the Seychelles became inhabited. Historical records indicate that the islands were covered by impenetrable forests, supporting large populations of birds and reptiles. Seychelles, up until its independence from Britain in 1976, was sequentially founded and colonised by both the French and the British. The population originates from French settlers, African plantation workers, British sailors, and traders from India, China and the Middle East. There is no state religion in Seychelles. While Christianity is predominant, Hinduism, Islam, and Bahai are also practiced.

Seychelles became a one party socialist state in 1977 and continued as such until December 1991 when a multi-party democratic system was put in place. In 1993 a new constitution was adopted, and Seychelles was divided into twenty-five political districts, each with a seat at the National Assembly. Seychelles has managed its development in a pragmatic way, adapting an ambitious development strategy in the light of emerging problems and opportunities. The underlying philosophy behind this strategy has been the promotion of "equitable growth" through active state participation in economic activity. Before independence in 1976, Seychelles was a tropical island nation operating at or near subsistence level with a GDP less than USD 1,000. Since then incomes have risen almost eightfold, led by a strong tourism industry, which provides 70% of the foreign exchange and employs about a third of the work force. The Gross Domestic Product in 2001 stood at USD 8,000.

The country is guided by a dynamic vision for its growth and future. The country's social welfare system – which includes a good social security system, and strong

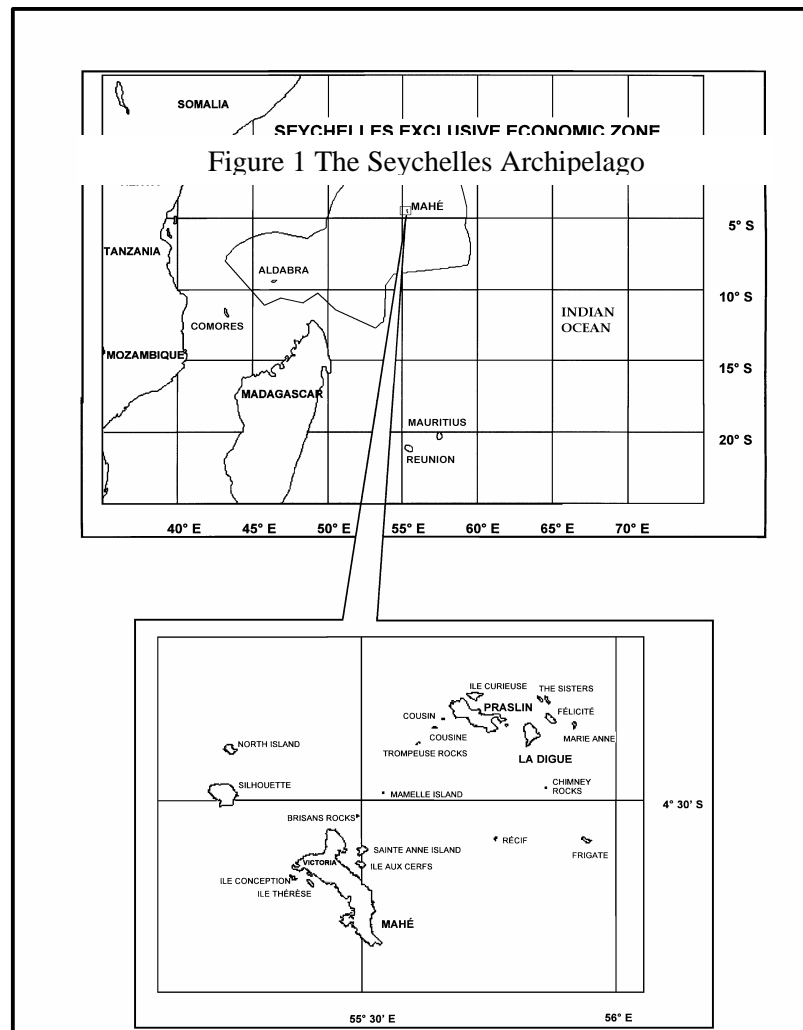
education, health and housing policies – is being gradually reformed and updated, bringing it on par with international trends and developments.

The small economy of the country is primarily dependent on tourism and fisheries, which provide most of the country's total foreign exchange earnings. The government has been promoting privatisation with a view to increasing domestic investments in the country. The private sector employed 49.5 % of the labour force in 1996, which has now risen to 52.9 % in 1999. To encourage investment, a 1994 Investment Promotion Act offers a wide range of tax concessions for private sector activities.

The fisheries sector is as important as tourism. The export of canned tuna, fresh and frozen fish constitutes about 83% of the value of Seychelles' exports of goods or about 10% of total foreign exchange earnings.

Seychelles has a strong history of conservation and environment activities, which has been heightened over the last 12 years through the development and implementation of environment management plans. The Seychelles is currently implementing its second Environment Management Plan 2000-2010.

Presently some 46% of the archipelago's land and an additional 228 km² of ocean are legally protected in the form of national parks and reserves. An additional 20-25% is classified as being sensitive and may become protected areas in the near future. The Seychelles has more than 1,000 endemic species of flora and fauna. The Aldabra Atoll (which has the world's largest population of a species of giant land tortoise, about 100,000 individuals), and Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve (endemic Coco-de-mer palms, bearing the world's largest nut) were added to UNESCO's World Heritage list in 1982 and 1983, respectively. In spite of numerous constraints associated to its small size, Seychelles can be considered a good example of a country which has embarked on a sustainable development path.



National Processes for Sustainable Development

Policy-making Processes

The Seychelles has a national strategy for implementation of sustainable development principles which enshrined in its recent Environment Management Plan (EMPS) 2000-2010.

The National Vision is constructed from an intensive consultative process involving a very wide group of stakeholders. The vision embedded in the Environment Management Plan of Seychelles for 2000-2010 states:

At the dawn of the 21st century it is the vision of the people of Seychelles that this second generation environment plan, the EMPS 2000 - 2010, will serve as a flexible yet robust vehicle for continued improvement of proactive environmental management excellence, so that by the year 2010 the Seychelles will be firmly established globally as a committed leader in sustainable development.

Consequently the overall goal of the EMPS 2000 - 2010 is:

The promotion, coordination and integration of sustainable development programmes that cut across all sectors of society in the Seychelles in order to attain the above mission.

Both the vision and the goal is guided by a set of 12 principles widely embodied in Agenda 21. These guiding principles in implementing the plan and sustainable development are:

1. Honouring the Seychelles Constitution
2. Meeting the Provisions of Agenda 21
3. Fulfilling International and Regional Environmental Responsibilities
4. Maintaining Basic Ecological Integrity and Controlling Pollution
5. Coordination, Integration and Co-management
6. Transparency, Accountability, Good Governance and Equity
7. Continual Improvement and Programmatic Approach
8. Treating the Environment Holistically
9. Capacity-building, Training and Empowerment
10. Applying the Precautionary Principle
11. Marketing the Seychelles as an Eco-destination
12. Use of Appropriate Technology

These principles are also embedded in the Seychelles Constitution and guided by the sustainable principles stated in the Environment Management Plan of Seychelles, (EMPS 2000-2010). The Seychelles Constitution provides under Article 38, the right to every person to live in and enjoy a clean, healthy and ecologically balanced environment in Seychelles.

To support implementation of this strategy, the Ministry of Environment created an EMPS Coordination Unit, overseen by a multisectoral steering committee, with members across sectors of Government, the private sector and NGO's.

Planning Processes

Planning is done at all levels of Government, but in varying measures and at various scales and levels. While Government has to handle a number of priority actions outside normal planned activities, most Ministries work within consolidated strategic and management plans, many of which are also aimed at mainstreaming environmental issues. Notably, the EMPS 2000-2010 is integrated across all sectors in a manner that enables the consideration of environmental issues within each sector such as agriculture, health, tourism and so on. Likewise, the Education Strategy and Plan 2000-2005 incorporates many issues concerned with sustainable development and its relevance to education. A few NGO's also have strategic and management plans which guide their activities.

The development of national plans of action or management plans, are in most cases as a result of a need to address key sectoral issues and also as a vehicle for funding from both Government and Private donor support. The development of such plans is usually done through a process of stakeholder consultation in the form of workshops and consideration of various drafts of the plan. The strategic process is mainly driven by the policy of Government as well as most topical issues. The inclusion of Agenda 21 principles is done with some measure, but Agenda 21 is not widely known.

The implementation of the plan can be a very daunting task for many agencies, since the capacity required to convert these plans into action on the ground is lacking in some sectors. In many cases, other priority unplanned activities also take place. Coordination of implementation arrangement is often done by steering committees which are setup as a result of a project or management of a specific government programme.

Institutional Aspects

As mentioned above, all of the Ministries within Seychelles Government are involved in the sustainable development process of the country. There are also a number of specialised authorities set-up to implement government policies. These include the Marine Parks Authority, mandated with the management of marine protected areas, the Seychelles Fishing Authority mandated to manage fisheries resources, the Public Utilities Corporation to provide access to water, electricity and sanitation infrastructure, and the Solid Waste and Cleaning Agency, to provide and plan for waste management infrastructure. Government institutions aimed at implementing Agenda 21 have therefore been created and developed since 1992.

Likewise in the NGO sector, at least five NGO's currently function within the environment-cum-conservation area, and about fifty or so focusing on social and human rights issues. Active Environment NGO's include Nature Seychelles, Nature Protection Trust of Seychelles, the Seychelles Island Foundation, Marine

Conservation Society Seychelles. A new NGO, the Island Conservation Society has just been established.

Management capacity within both Government and NGO sector has been a problem, primarily related to the size of the country and also to the number of people trained within the environment sector. Whilst Government has been sending two to three students to obtain graduate degrees in environmental science, they are almost immediately absorbed by the Ministry of Environment, in view of its intensive implementation programme. At present there are over 30 University graduates working within the Ministry of Environment and a number of others working in other sectors. Very few of these graduates possess Master Degrees, and a few are following doctoral studies. Lack of a University or even specialized environment or conservation courses is a serious impediment to long-term sustainable capacity development in the country. In line with Government policy to build local capacity, replacement of expatriates has been successful in many Ministries. Seychelles has a Human Resources Development Plan which includes various key areas for capacity development for sustainable development. For the period 1997 to 2001, Government of Seychelles directly invested over 330 million USD in areas of education and training to implement the plan. This works out at about 5,000 USD per capita.

Seychelles has one of the most diverse set of environment-related laws and regulations, however, many are very old and need to be updated to reflect current priorities and gaps. Although the first Environment Plan has a component on environment legislation, most of the new legislation have been oriented towards environmental management, such as pollution control and environment impact assessments, rather than conservation-related. In 2000, an initiative to draft a new Biodiversity Act was started and the work is in progress in view of the complex nature of the exercise. On the other hand, enforcement capacity is also a serious issue at all levels and presents one of the most challenging actions in implementing Agenda 21 in Seychelles.

Seychelles is also Party to a number of international conventions. These include the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (signed 1977); the Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD (signed 1992); the Nairobi Convention (signed 1985), the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes (signed 1993); the MARPOL Convention (signed 1990); the Montreal Protocol and its amendments (signed 1994), United Nations Law of the Sea (1982); United Nations Convention on Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (signed 1992). In June 2002 Seychelles ratified the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPS) and will soon ratify the Kyoto Protocol under the UNFCCC, and the Beijing Amendment under the Montreal Protocol, and the Cartagena Protocol under the CBD.

Although, Seychelles is a small country it endeavours to participate in the negotiations of various decisions under these conventions, and is primarily recognized for its role played in the CBD, UNFCCC, the Montreal Protocol and the POPS convention. Lack of capacity and ability to participate fully in all the meetings is a serious constraint. Implementation of various conventions in the Seychelles is done through various national forums, such as the National Climate Change Committee

with participation from both Government and private sector. The Ministry of Environment has also established an International Conventions Unit to co-ordinate international convention issues.

Impacts of the National Process

Quantitative measurement of the impacts of the activities implemented under the first environment management plan from 1990 to 2000, and other associated activities has been difficult to evaluate primarily due to the lack of verifiable indicators. However, in terms of visible results, the EMPS 1990-2000 was successfully implemented, with about 90% of the projects identified under the plan implemented. A total of 235 million USD was invested, with Government contributing about 175 million USD (a combination of overhead and project capital funds) and about 65 Million USD from other donors. It is therefore evident that without a strong Government financial support and investment much of the activities to implement Agenda 21 would not have been possible. The preparation of the EMPS 1990-2000 involved the active participation of NGO's and also the civil society. Therefore, the first environment management plan has been significant in advancing sustainable development in Seychelles. Examples of the visible impacts include:

- The development and growth of the Ministry of Environment, as the prime body for the management of the environment and all its complex interactions.
- The increased role of NGO's in the management of protected areas, environmental education and awareness and in advancing conservation knowledge in Seychelles.
- The committed and consistent budget allocation of the Government of Seychelles for environmental matters.
- The enactment and implementation of key regulations such as the Environmental Impact Assessment process. Some existing and old regulations will also need to be reviewed and re-evaluated for effectiveness.
- The improvement in the management of the marine protected areas, including reducing the risk of extinction of critically endangered species.
- The human resource capacity for environmental management has consistently increased, with the Government of Seychelles sponsoring two students a year for graduate studies in environmental sciences and related disciplines.
- Seychelles is probably the highest per capita investor in environmental management, although donor funding has considerably decreased over the last five years.
- Knowledge development and sharing is on the increase, breaking the traditional approach of information hoarding and removing the barriers for effective communication and exchange.

- A number of activities are now better coordinated through the various multisectoral bodies, which provide more opportunities for the exchange of experience and also guidance in the implementation of Government policy.

Recommendations

In the strictest sense, the Seychelles does not have a dedicated sustainable development mechanism, but rather an ensemble of processes and institutional linkages, which reflects the complexity of issues, addressed as well as commitment of each sector to take on sustainable development in a manner which enables flexibility and conserves the entire vision.

1. Address the issues of reduced donor support and interest in Small Island States development. Efforts to increase donor sensitivity to the issues and their relevance to the global interest may need to be emphasized.
2. Gain recognition for the limited human capacity of Small Island States to implement international conventions which are integrated.
3. Increase capacity building across all sectors to improve implementation of Agenda 21 and the principles of sustainable development.
4. Address the issue of enforcement capacity to explore various mechanisms of compliance through voluntary actions, environment management statements, ISO framework and so on.
5. Evaluate and monitor effectiveness of environmental education and awareness programmes.
6. Improve approaches for stakeholder consultation and develop strategy on how to improve involvement of such stakeholders in the decision-making process.
7. Develop capacity to conduct periodical 'State of the Environment' reports to assess progress and implementation of the Environment Management Plan 2000-2010.

Integration and Participation

The importance of stakeholders in the national process for sustainable development has also been supported at political level, however, the approaches to stakeholder involvement and the extent of participation have been somewhat inconsistent across the sectors, especially when the NGO and Private Sector participation in the sustainable development process in Seychelles is considered.

The achievement of the goals of sustainable development has to be seen in the context of the specific country. Seychelles whilst seen as an African state in the UN geopolitical groupings does not share many of the concerns of its continental counterparts. Seychelles is, in many respects, well ahead of its continental colleagues in the pursuit of Sustainable Development. This reflects the size of the country and the relative manageability and scale of the problems faced as well as the sound basis and national stability established by a long-serving administration which has pursued effectively issues such as, poverty eradication, proper housing and free education and health care for its populace. This has laid the foundation for the country to face the next stage of the sustainable development challenge and also to focus on new and emerging challenges.

The Participation and Impact of Government Agencies

The Seychelles Government is made up of a cabinet of 14 ministers, whose portfolios are all relevant to sustainable development in the Seychelles. Whilst some may have a strong focus on development of the economic sector (e.g. Ministry of Industries and International Business, Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources), others address human and social needs (such as the Ministry of Education and Youth, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment). The management of the country's natural resources is however bestowed upon the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Land Use and Habitat and the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources. Since the work of each Government Ministry is not independent of the other, it follows that policy and decision-making is done in a manner which involves all Government Ministries.

Recently, Government organized a national visioning exercise to review the role and impact of Government in its policy and activities. This exercise which involved a number of focus groups with the civil society culminated in a high-level visioning meeting in the presence of the President of the Republic. This exercise resulted in a National Vision which contains, among other issues, a very strong emphasis on sustainable development and management of the country's resources in the most sustainable manner.

Achievements in implementing Agenda 21

Due to its strong national vision and political commitment for environmental issues, the Seychelles Government has been able to lead environmental progress in a number of key areas such as pollution control, impact assessments, coastal management, and

protected area management, which now accounts for over 47% of its total land areas, among the highest in the world. The notable achievements are:

- The national vision has been largely driven by the first environment management plan and the recognition that both the fisheries and tourism sector depend upon Seychelles unique natural resources, which need to be utilised in a sustainable manner.
- Access to sources of external funding also provided the drive for counterpart budget commitment from government in key areas such as building the capacity of the then small department of environment, education and awareness of environmental issues, conservation activities and heavy investments using both donor and loans in basic infrastructure such as solid waste management and sewage treatment.
- Through donor support, many protected areas are now better managed and there is a growing in-country capacity to undertake this. Many protected areas also have management plans and some are under NGO management as well.
- Development of new legislation and strengthening of Seychelles' role in international conventions is also a significant strength. For example, over the last decade the new Constitution of Seychelles introduced certain basic rights with respect to environment and sustainable development, key legislation to manage the environment and development was put in place and capacity built to implement it. Some legislation are also being reviewed using a stakeholder approach.
- The strengthening of the current Town and Country Planning Authority (whose mandate is to oversee all development projects) and its relationship with the Environment Impact Assessment Regulations has provided a significant basis for improved management of development, and a related reduction in population density in many sensitive areas.
- Through the support of the Seychelles Bureau of Standards and the Ministry of Industries and International Business, a number of environment quality standards are currently in force, especially the effluent, air and noise pollution standards. The Seychelles is in the process of implementing the ISO 14000 series within all sectors, both government and the private sector to ensure better accountability of environmental impacts.
- The number of environmental programmes has consistently increased over the last decade, and currently environmental news is featured almost every week on national television, radio programmes are aired every fortnight, and there is a weekly page in the national newspaper.
- Projects developed within the tourism sector, has allowed Seychelles to develop a unique approach to beach tourism, whereby tourism infrastructure has blended within the immediate environment through good architectural design and in some instances observed set-back from the coastline.

- Government is increasingly developing its capacity to consult NGO's, the private sector and other members of the Civil Society on almost all issues relating to the environment, development and the economy. Several consultation workshops are organized throughout the year, primarily aimed at obtaining views of stakeholders.

Constraints in implementing Agenda 21

A number of constraints and weaknesses hamper the further implementation of Agenda 21 in Seychelles:

- Although many management plans are in place, the capacity to implement those is still a considerable priority, as sustainable development progress is dependent upon action on the ground. In some areas sectoral coordination is not very strong, mainly as a result of lack of adequate capacity.
- The lack of land use plans at national and local level often makes environmental planning difficult. In fact the Environmental Impact Assessment Process is often faced with the dilemma of assessment of appropriate land use. Unplanned areas usually generate a number of conflicts among the local people with diverse interests, and also with the private sector which is often made to operate commercial operations within residential areas leading to noise and other conflicts. Poor planning in some areas has also affected drainage and increased flood risks.
- The active involvement of other groups, besides Government, in the national process of decision-making is hampered by various notions on how this should be done. Whilst there is extensive consultation on the part of Government in an attempt to explore ways to involve other non-governmental bodies in its decisions, this is always met with suspicion and dismissed as 'fait accompli', although this may not necessarily be the case in the majority of opportunities offered.
- A serious lack of enforcement capacity severely impedes implementation of the various laws enacted. One of the most difficult is the surveillance of poachers especially on the remote islands of the Seychelles.
- Technology transfer and options for handling environmental issues arising from a consumer society on an island state is one of the most controversial subjects. Approaches to options for solid waste management were discussed for many years before a decision was taken, and even today, the option of incineration is still a matter of debate. The capacity to facilitate technology transfer in Seychelles is growing, but other support services such as environment technology clearing-houses are not accessible.
- Lack of funding aimed towards further research and specific conservation work is also lacking, primarily due to Government budgetary constraints and also general lack of private sector funding support. As a result research is done

in a piece-meal manner and focused on popular species. In the same manner, analysis and publication of research when done is not easily accessible.

The Participation and Impact of Non-Governmental Organisations

The NGO sector in Seychelles is relatively young and in the process of development. NGOs in Seychelles are in fact still pioneers breaking new ground and finding and establishing their rightful place and role in society. Changes in Government's approach moving towards being more facilitative created a number of opportunities and also some difficulties for NGOs. Difficulties mainly arose from a lack of a clear framework for interaction of NGOs within Government's planning process as well as their accountability as they seek to become implementers. A lack of a wide base of local capacity for NGO's to take up implementation activities has also been a serious impediment. The process of greater involvement of NGOs needs to be continuously developed in a transparent and accountable framework, within which both NGOs and Government are aware of one another's roles in the drive towards sustainable development.

A major landmark in the development of NGOs in the Seychelles was the formation, in 1989, of the Liaison Unit for Non-Governmental Organisations (LUNGOS). LUNGOS was set up to facilitate and where appropriate coordinate NGO activities without in anyway undermining the essential independent nature of such organizations. LUNGOS also provides the sector with a coordinated and hence more authoritative voice with which to communicate with civil society or Government. LUNGOS currently has no recurrent budget and functions as a volunteer-based organisation and hence shares similar capacity problems with the organisations it represents. Steps to improve NGO-Government relations were taken at a workshop held in 2001.

LUNGOS operates internally through meetings and dissemination of information between partners and has also established a code of conduct for members. To enable coherent and focused action a system of "commissions" has been established which focus upon particular areas of activity such as children, youth, women, environment and HIV/AIDS.

In terms of public awareness and communication with civil society, NGOs have made efficient and effective use of the media outlets to be found in the country. In this regard the limited nature of outlets, i.e. just one television channel, only three radio channels, has ensured that substantial proportion of the population can be reached by at least one form of communication. Other forms of communication, such as the internet, are becoming very popular as an alternative means of obtaining information. Locally –based internet materials is very low, however.

Achievements in Implementing Agenda 21

- On the national basis NGOs have played a major role and in some cases achieved leadership.

- Within the health sector, several NGO's have been very active in promoting HIV/AIDS awareness.
- Through the action of several NGO's there have been significant campaigns to improve healthy living and surroundings, address problems of drug abuse and delinquency in young people, as well as the welfare of children.
- Gender-based violence and other gender issues in the home and in work places have also been actively promoted by several NGO's. The focus has been especially with respect to rights issues, the importance of fatherhood for a prosperous society, and improving the recognition of women in the workplace.
- NGO's targeting the youth are also active, with the most successful ones focusing on sports and environment. Numerous activities are organised
- Within the environment sector, all NGO's are active, primarily in the area of conservation and environment education.
- A globally threatened endemic species recovery programme started in the Plan period, initiated and coordinated by an NGO, and implemented in partnership with the Government of Seychelles and private island owners, has rescued the critically endangered Seychelles Magpie Robin from immediate danger.
- Another NGO has been involved in the management of an island reserve for over twenty years, building a research database which is vital for future management of not only the island concerned but other sites.
- A marine conservation NGO's is currently undertaking pioneering work on whale sharks ecology, an area not covered by existing conservation programmes. It is expected that important conservation knowledge and capacity will be generated from this study.
- NGO's have also played a very catalytic and important role in advancing conservation education in the Seychelles, with the production of various teaching aids, manuals and information leaflets. The NGO sector has access to the national media and uses it frequently and effectively.

Constraints in Implementing Agenda 21

In general NGO's face many constraints in operating in the Seychelles, amidst a complex institutional environment where Government has taken leadership on a number of issues, and also due to the presence of a very small private sector and hence limited market from which it can generate revenue.

- Access to funding for NGO's is not always forthcoming especially to undertake activities in their areas of competence. As a result, NGO's have tended to change orientation to meet the requirements of international donors.

Competition for the handful of local donors is also very high, and often not sufficient to run a comprehensive programme.

- Primary amongst these is the lack of institutional capacity. The vast majority of NGOs do not have permanent paid staff or facilities with which to support a substantive operation. This in part also reflects the lack of funding available to NGOs both nationally and internationally, and the lack of national approach to developing a donor “package” for NGOs. This problem also affects their ability to be adequately represented in national forums or consultation committees. On the other hand, volunteering is historically not part of the culture, but this is changing, especially among young people and those that have retired.
- These constraints of institutional and financial capacity are further exacerbated by the lack of a coherent and established legal framework for Government/NGO coordinated planning and implementation of programmes and activities that are aimed at an holistic approach to and pursuit of sustainable development. Some NGO’s have MoU’s with Government Ministries.

Recommendations

1. Although there has been an attempt to make the EMPS the platform for sustainable development in Seychelles, it is inadequate in a number of areas, for example it’s linkages with other sustainable development issues such as gender rights and HIV/AIDS impacts. It is therefore imperative to ensure other processes and strategies get a similar emphasis at national level. This will be the essence of the National Plan of Action on Social Development which will also integrate environment issues.
2. A framework within which NGO’s and Government can interact transparently and cooperatively is indeed lacking and needs to be addressed urgently. Noting that NGO’s face a number of difficulties it is vital that a more enabling environment is created so that they can participate more substantively in decision-making processes of government and also be able to interact within the forum of international negotiations.
3. Government needs to develop and disseminate clear sectoral policies by which confidence can be established for NGOs to operate within these frameworks in a predictable working environment. This will further enhance both Government and NGO accountability in each domain and provide NGOs rights of recourse if and when such policies are not applied.
4. A more consistent and transparent approach needs to be developed to provide funding to NGO’s so that they can become more proactive. Specific support for LUNGOS needs to be identified.

The Participation and Impact of the Private Sector

The private sector in Seychelles constitutes all commercial enterprises having a business license to operate in the Seychelles. Although there are no heavy industries in the Seychelles, there are few large manufacturing companies and some medium sized manufactures, but the majority is small businesses operating in trading, semi-industrial, or professional services.

One of the oldest NGO in the Seychelles, the Seychelles Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), is a body under which most of the private sector businesses can become members. One of their aims is to foster greater entrepreneurship and competition in the industry sector, through support and assistance to its members. One of the most important roles is their representation at key government intersectoral committees where their participation is active, for example, at the Town and Country Planning Authority and the EMPS 2000-2010 Steering Committee. The SCCI communicates with its members through a newsletter, but it also has a secretariat headed by an Executive Secretary. The SCCI on many occasions has challenged the policies of Government vis-à-vis the economy, and joint meetings are now held with the respective government bodies to ensure their views are considered and discussed. Another smaller organization, the Small Business Association, was created to cater for the needs of small entrepreneurs, and the Seychelles Hotels Association to represent the views of the hotel and tourism industry. The diversity of sectors in which entrepreneurs are involved sometimes makes the work of the association difficult.

Further collaboration with and growth in the private sector comes as a result of the very little trust that exists between the Government and the private sector. The latter because it feels that Government has not and is not doing enough to allow the private sector to flourish. The Government on its part does not believe that the private sector is interested in long- term development and is distrustful of its motives. The way forward would be to organize small but proactive meetings between Government and members of the private sector, especially the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Employers Federation and other private bodies to start developing this spirit of working together. The Seychelles Industrial Development Corporation (SIDEK) created by Government to advance the development of industry development in Seychelles, may be able to provide a suitable framework for breaching this divide.

Achievements in Implementing Agenda 21

The private sector has played a very important role in the sustainable development of Seychelles, as summarized below:

Many private sector businesses provide long-term and seed funding to environment or related projects. Often such sponsorship are tied in with some form of promotion of the particular company, or the involvement of its own staff in the activity. It is mostly the larger companies that provide the majority of funding for environmental issues.

The creation of the environment trust fund as a vehicle for private sector support for environment projects has worked in some cases, especially when Government offered 200 % tax break on all donations. This has now been reduced to a 100% tax break.

Some companies have also implemented changes in their management process to become more environmentally acceptable. Many companies have made investments for pollution abatement, water recycling and energy conservation.

One particular company introduced refundable deposits on its bottles, and this is thought to have led to a lot of savings in solid waste management costs. This strategy has proved useful during periods where new bottles were not available due to import restrictions. On average the bottles are used up to six times.

Another company has invested in camouflage to ensure its infrastructures are not an eyesore, especially in the Seychelles.

Constraints in implementing Agenda 21

The problem of land scarcity increases conflicts between public and the private sector, especially for heavy-equipment based companies. Industries located within residential areas also face numerous conflicts such as noise, air pollution, toxic and hazardous wastes. It is therefore vital that a more long-term and planned approach for industrial land is undertaken to reduce those problems and at the same time address in an integrated manner the resulting environmental problems.

The existing conservation policy and regulations needs a thorough analysis especially in the light of intellectual property, resource management trade, information on distribution, the effects of direct human impacts and the socio-economic benefits of industries that depend on such resources.

The weak relationships between the policy makers, the supplier and the end user have to be improved not only for addressing the needs of industry, but also for the formulation and implementation of policies for the conservation of resources in order to obtain environmental benefits. The inter-institutional linkages between policy-making bodies and the users are also very weak and needs to be strengthened to ensure consistency among government policies and also effective involvement of the private sector in planned activities.

Recommendations

- Increase the linkages and exchange between policy makers, producers and the end user to address not only the needs of industry, but also for the formulation and implementation of sound policies for the conservation of resources in order to obtain environmental benefits. Improvements in the dialogue between the Private Sector and Government should be ensured, especially through a streamlining of existing key committees.

- In view of certain limits to access some resources, government and the private sector must decide together what those limits are and what is the optimum way of exploiting these resources sustainably.
- Where feasible, the private sector must be given the right to compete on an equal footing with government owned entities. This will improve the quantity, quality and reduce the costs of goods and services available to the consumer.
- The government must use every possible forum to send home the message that decisions made in the larger developed countries has immediate and serious impacts on other Small Island States. The private sector can help by joining its voice to that of the government in spreading this message through joint participation in meetings or otherwise.
- Costs and lack of information, especially about technology, hinders development of the private sector. Efforts to reverse this trend need to be explored.
- In the Seychelles, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA's) must be mandatory for all large projects. An approach to adapt it to smaller contexts must be explored as the current arrangement is expensive and may discourage investments by the private sector. Efforts to obtain meaningful public comments should also be ensured through an improvement in the public review process.

National Policy and Institutional Barriers

The Cabinet of Ministers, constitutes the highest government decision-making body in the Seychelles. The Cabinet of Ministers, besides providing government with its politically-endorsed plans, also reviews and endorses all proposed policies prepared by the individual government ministries. Some categories of development projects, such as hotel development and industries are also approved by Cabinet to ensure they meet national sustainable development principles, with a view of optimising economic return, be socially acceptable and shown due concern for the conservation of the environment.

At other levels of Government, a number of coordination committees exist, which are aimed at facilitating policy co-ordination and implementation. For example, the Ministry of Tourism has a Vision 21 Focus Group, with representation from both government and private sector. The Ministry of Environment has several multisectoral committees, for example the National Environment Advisory Council tasked with advising the Minister on Environmental Issues, the Environment Plan Steering Committee, which oversees the implementation of the EMPS 2000-2010. The Ministry of Social Affairs and employment coordinates a multisectoral Population Group, among others.

It has been suggested that there are too many committees, and several exercises are ongoing to eliminate some of them, but considering the number of issues to be

discussed and addressed within environment and sustainable development, many of these committees are inevitable if focus and progress is to be maintained and recorded. In view of this proliferation of committees, NGOs and the Private Sector are overwhelmed and often cannot participate actively in those forums.

Lack of co-ordination among some of the government bodies also constitutes a barrier to implementation of Agenda 21. Although many issues will sometimes be controversial, for example seeking a uniform agreement on land use in certain areas, it would be useful that such issues are discussed and some form of consensus is reached so that all stakeholders can have clear guidance on the position of Government on certain issues. Lack of specific information and data for informed decision-making is also a key barrier to implementing meaningful action on the ground.

The lack of a suitable framework for Government and NGO interaction is one of the most significant barriers affecting Government-NGO relationship. As indicated before, a number of issues may remain unresolved until such a system is put in place.

Sustainable development is progressively being seen as a process of change in which the citizens of a country make decisions about the future development of their nation, in terms of inter-generational equity and access. However, in carrying out various forward-looking and participatory exercises, there is always the problem of balancing powerful voices and those that are weak. Also moving from consultation to action can be a problem. This barrier is related to the existing institutional set-up, the culture of Seychelles as well as the issue of empowerment, which needs to be addressed.

National Critical Issues

Threats to Biodiversity and Conservation Capacity

Threats to biodiversity in the Seychelles arise from a combination of both direct and indirect human impacts, and are further complicated by the indirect effects of global climate change. Most pressing are immediate threats through direct human impacts on Seychelles fragile habitats. Due to poor understanding of the linkages between these effects and the consequent need for a more integrated approach to environment management, sustainable management of natural resources has not been achieved yet in the Seychelles. Some of the direct threats and root causes, including what is being done to resolve those issues is presented as follows:

1. The lack of site specific conservation strategies and management plans reduces the long-term effectiveness of many of the actions by Government and its partners. For example, few of the islands have environment management plans, which seek to address threats to biodiversity and ecosystem health in an integrated manner. Mechanisms for coordination of different conservation activities are missing, activities are often concentrated on single species or issues and most take a reactive approach without addressing root causes. Financial assistance is being sought from the GEF to address some of these strategic issues, and also approaches to capacity building at local level.
2. Invasive species constitute the largest threat to terrestrial ecosystems in the Seychelles due to their geographic isolation of about a 1,000 miles from the continental landmass and evolutionary isolation of over 70 million years. Invasive species have resulted from uncontrolled, sometimes intentional, sometimes unintentional, often well-meaning introductions of exotic plants and animals. Invasive animal species are a serious problem which has a grave impact on endangered bird species recovery programmes. Wetlands, rivers and the forests of the Seychelles are also affected by numerous invasive plant species. Root causes of this threat include (i) lack of awareness amongst both the general public and even amongst the professional and conservation communities, (ii) lack of good socio-economic analyses of the circumstances, (iii) lack of integrated policies/laws for screening and controlling the problem, (vi) lack of strategic analysis and planning for invasive species prevention and control and (v) lack of specialized institutional and human resource capacities for invasive species management. Several important activities such as habitat restoration, cat/rat eradication programmes have been successfully implemented by both Government and NGO's in the Seychelles. However, much more work needs to be done, especially the capacity to ensure successful restoration of impacted habitats and recovery of wildlife populations.
3. Forest fires also constitute a serious, and perhaps growing, threat to terrestrial ecosystems. The biodiversity of Seychelles' humid tropical forests is very poorly adapted to survive and to recover from forest fires. It is likely that forest fires will become more common with climate change. The fire threat is

aggravated by the lack of strategic analysis of the causes of fires and the lack of professional strategies for fire prevention and suppression. A project aimed at training and procurement of basic equipment has already been implemented. Future issues to be addressed is to increase the forest fire surveillance and early response, as forest areas are very small and fires may threaten entire habits within hours of starting.

4. Fragmentation is a major threat to the biodiversity as none of the islands are large. Basic principles of island biogeography make it inevitable that forest encroachment and fragmentation will have very negative impacts on biodiversity conservation. Severe habitat modifications since colonial times, primarily clearing for agriculture, are a direct cause of fragmentation and species range restrictions. Although the rate of urbanisation and encroachment on forest areas is not as high as in many parts of Madagascar and Africa, the current impacts of development in Seychelles are wide ranging, especially as the construction boom overtakes current environment management efforts. An exercise to properly demarcate the boundaries of all the protected areas is ongoing, and in some areas land is being purchased for conservation purposes. However, capacity to manage land use is still developing and needs to be further supported.
5. Range restrictions also occur on the islands and in fragmented habitats. Various efforts to translocate or re-establish bird population on several areas and islands have been successful. There have also been some failures, especially resulting from poor island management.
6. The existing network of terrestrial protected areas (PA) was not designed to ensure efficient/optimal biodiversity conservation. Conservation priorities have been identified by species status and habitat type, but the adequacy of the coverage of the existing PA network and how they relate to other activities, such as tourism, has not been clearly developed. Whilst considerable efforts are made to make management of protected areas financially sustainable, not many can cope since there has to be a limit to eco-tourism activities within sensitive areas. The issue of logistics and transport costs also aggravates any attempt at managing these outlying islands.
7. Poaching is also on the increase. Isolated islands are often the victims of poachers using fast boat and sophisticated communication equipment. The main causes of these problems are the lack of workable enforcement mechanisms, poor coverage in surveillance terms, public education and involvements, as well as a sustainable human presence on some of the outer coral islands.
8. Crosscutting needs for policy development involving stakeholders, capacity building at all levels; public awareness and education, appropriate legal development and enforcement are all key areas of weakness that needs intervention at all levels of society to ensure further the spirit of sustainable development in the Seychelles.

Impact of Climate Change

Natural habitats and biodiversity, the coastal zone and human settlements, agriculture, water resources, fisheries, human health, disasters and insurance are the key socio-economic sectors that will be impacted by climate change. Some of these issues are considered below:

1. Climate change will impact biodiversity: The Seychelles, which consists of a complex assemblage of ecosystems typified by high species endemism, is at serious risk from climate change. Most habitats are expected to be severely modified by the changing climate, with some being more vulnerable than others. An increase in sea level would flood the mangrove areas, most of which on the granitic islands are located behind the sand dunes and often below the sea level. An increase in sea temperature, as evidenced in the 1997 El Nino event, will have varied impacts on the coral reefs. The Seychelles is also an important destination for migratory birds. Climate change could severely affect their migrating patterns.
2. Climate change will impact on human settlements and key economic sectors: About 85% of human settlement and infrastructure in the Seychelles are located along the coast. A rise in sea-level will result in the displacement of a large portion of the population. Coastline recession will also adversely affect infrastructure which supports the tourism and fisheries industries, the two key economic drivers of sustainable development. Water resources are also expected to be affected both in terms of quality and quantity. Climate change is expected to result in changes in rainfall pattern, evaporation, river runoff, groundwater recharge, and water quality in the Seychelles. These could have significant implications for the water resources in the country.
3. Coastal systems are economically and ecologically important and are expected to vary widely in their responses to climate change and sea level rise. Global warming will influence ocean-atmosphere interactions, altering ocean currents, and hence the delivery of nutrients into the euphotic layer. This could result in changes in reproductive patterns, migration routes and ecosystem relationships of marine organisms, including fish.

Coastal Development

Mahe, with a total area of 148 square kilometres, has a coastal population density in excess of 400 persons per square kilometres. With over 47% of the island (mainly the medium-to-high altitude forests) under conservation protection and management, and a number of other areas (at least 10%) declared as sensitive areas, the conflicts arising from land use and development are numerous. The Government has, on the other hand, also pursued a policy of providing every needy family with housing. In particular, recent reclamation activities over the East Coast of Mahe were undertaken as a trade-off to curb encroachment into the forests of Mahe. As a result such problems have prompted the country to undertake four major land reclamation works off Victoria and the East Coast of Mahe from 1973 to date. The Government of

Seychelles has, despite pressure for encroachment on forest and sensitive habitats maintained its conservation policy towards land use and natural resource utilization. This is in part due to the early recognition that our natural resources are available in limited quantities, and that resource is best spent in maintaining a sustainable approach to tourism development as proposed in the Tourism Vision 21. Some of the main critical issues are:

1. Impact of reclamation on marine ecosystems has been increasingly minimized since the first reclamation project, but nevertheless entails negative impact on the east coast of Mahe. Reclamation and land use change particularly threatens mangroves, mud flats, seagrass beds, and coral reefs.
2. Urbanisation and coastal development constitutes the largest threat to coastal ecosystems on the granitic islands, in terms of direct habitat loss for housing and other support infrastructure such as roads. These types of development are the source of the majority of conflicts in the coastal zone primarily due to poor capacity for enforcement of development regulations as well as lack of consistent local land use plans, which provide a long-term and consensus-based approach to land management.
3. Pressures for coastal tourism development are also increasing as many hotel developers seek to modify the natural environment to meet 'destination ideals'. Activities such as beach and wetland modification and destruction of coastal vegetation are two key problem areas. Whilst developers prepare Environment Impact Assessments which address those issues in detail, the monitoring of EIA implementation is in need of support and capacity.
4. Non-point sources of pollution continue to constitute a major threat to the watershed and coastal environment, although the Government has made some heavy investments in waste water treatment in the main urban areas. Root causes of this threat include lack of a specific long-term integrated coastal management strategy and programme, no local land use plans, shortcomings of EIA's in assessing cumulative and long-term effects, as well as poor capacity for integrated coastal management. Improvements in policy, coastal zone management and sustainable use of land resources within an integrated ecosystem concept will improve land use planning and construction techniques and consequently allow this threat to be reduced.

Recommendations

1. Seychelles continues to maintain its very focused and strategic approach to the management of its biodiversity resources. Financial assistance and investments in capacity building are the two major areas needed to support continued improvement within that critical area.
2. As a small island state, the Seychelles is most vulnerable to climate change, and efforts to provide support for adaptation should be strengthened and meaningful, a role which many developed countries have failed to play even until today.

3. The problem of land use and availability will likely become more contentious in the near future as the population increases and the economy grows. Capacity and resources to better manage this limiting resource is vital to address this critical issue.

Education Training and Awareness

Integration with National Planning

At national level several processes and bodies interact to provide a framework for education, training and awareness. The main bodies include the Ministry of Administration and Manpower and the Ministry of Education and Youth. A Human Resources Development Plan of Seychelles (HRDP) 1994-2000 is available which proposed a number of areas for human resource development. With a budget of over 15 million USD, the HRDP sought to improve human capacity in Seychelles in terms of (i) replacement of expatriate labour; (ii) enhancement of productivity; (iii) create job opportunities, and also invest in vocation training. Unfortunately, it did not address in any great measure capacity needs for sustainable development, especially the opportunities created through the implementation of the environment management plan. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education and Youth has recently launched its National Education Strategy and Plan, which in fact contains several elements reflecting the need to integrate sustainable development issues within school curriculum. How this would be done and when is still not clear.

A number of other institutions are also involved in education, training and awareness, and they come from both government and NGO agencies. From the government side, the Ministry of Environment, specifically the Environment Education and Information Section, collaborates with other institutions at the level of an Environment Education Committee, which brings together representatives from Government and NGO's to discuss environmental education programmes. The Section formulates and implement the Ministry's policy to promote public awareness of the need to protect, preserve and improve the environment through internal and external communications, schools and adult education, exhibitions, publishing, guiding, design and photography. A Green Line was established in 1998 to enable the civil society to communicate with the Ministry and report events of poaching and mismanagement of the environment.

The Ministry of Education and Youth has been working towards the further development and integration of environmental education in the National Curriculum at all levels of the formal education system. As part of this process, as early as 1997, two important documents were produced: (i) the Environment Education Policy outlining the Ministry's commitment to the further development of environment education at the level of teaching/learning materials and capacity development of staff and (ii) the Curriculum Guidelines for Environment Education detailing a series of environment education objectives to be considered/ included in the teaching/learning experiences.

The Ministry of Education and Youth policy document 'Education for a Learning Society' published in 2000, under the principle of global participation states that 'sustainable development will be enhanced through an education that promotes our tradition as a society, sensitive to the environmental issues and committed to policies emphasising the social/human aspects of development'.

The WildLife Clubs of Seychelles, an NGO, was established in 1993 with the objective of promoting conservation action and awareness among the young people. Mostly school children are members of the WildLife Clubs, which organise many activities aimed at building knowledge and capacity within schools and communities for conservation action. A full-time coordinator has been recently recruited. All clubs are based in the schools and run by teachers.

Other NGO's also take a very active role in education, training and awareness, some of which have very focused programmes such as those focusing on HIV/AIDS, anti-drug campaigns. From time to time NGO's also organize environment rallies around the city of Victoria to encourage awareness among the civil society. A number of NGO's are also behind several publications targeting the youth in schools.

Achievements in the implementation of Agenda 21

- Essential human capacity is enhanced by decentralisation and sharing of environment-related activities, such as marine conservation, avian conservation, and coastal resource management.
- A high proportion of Government budget is committed towards tertiary education, and in-service training and capacity building.
- Seychelles actively sends participants to regional workshops and other forms of international training, especially in areas that will benefit the local setting.
- Many employees from Government as well as NGO institutions have undergone project management training. There has also been a shift in top-down management to a much more team and consensus-based approach to management in many institutions. This has led to considerable strengthening of networking within and among institutions.
- Some institutions, including NGO's have now developed the capacity to undertake a wide variety of activities such as management of protected areas, publication of educational materials, conduct stakeholder workshops and sensitization campaigns.
- Human resource development continues to develop, especially in areas of environmental management at graduate level. For the last five years, at least two persons have graduated from University per year in subjects related to the environment and sustainable development.
- The Public education activities have increased, with the showing of two environment TV programmes a month on national TV, aside from the various other media activities organized.
- Since the early eighties, the Seychelles government has placed a strong emphasis on the environment in the national curriculum from kindergarten all

the way to Polytechnic/Secondary school levels. Seychellois students interact with sustainable development issues within a range of subjects such as science, English, art, French, Creole, and geography. Extra-curricular activities such as environment clubs are also very active in schools. A variety of indoor and outdoor activities and workshops are developed to help teachers and children learn and participate in conservation projects.

- The private sector has also shown a great interest Environment Education. For example, one of our main sponsors of the national TV Public Awareness Programme “*Planete Seychelles*” produced by the Ministry of Environment and the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation has been a Telecommunications Company.

Constraints in the Implementation of Agenda 21

- The capacity of institutions to implement activities related to sustainable development is still not strong, although some short courses have been organised.
- The lack of tertiary level of education in Seychelles, primarily related to the very small size of the population, has also been a disadvantage in building local capacity in research and teaching development. The establishment of specific research institutes, such as in the coastal and marine fields, equipped with specialized education mandates can play a vital role in addressing this constraint.
- Whilst Government undertakes at Ministry level training needs assessment on a yearly basis, this is done on the basis of award or courses available and not necessarily address organizational needs. Capacity to implement the environment management plan has not been done in a comprehensive manner.
- Inclusion of environmental education in the school curriculum has been uneven primarily due to lack of capacity and also key support for teachers in curriculum implementation. Monitoring of such programmes will also need to be done, so that implementation effectiveness can be measured.
- The evaluation of the effectiveness of training and education is also another area where there is a lack of support. The primary causes of this constrain is the lack of skills as well time and resources to undertake such evaluations.
- Being a small island states, the most cost-effective mode of access to environmental information is through the internet. Efforts to build internet capacity in the schools is ongoing, however, home ownership of information technologies is still in its infancy due to the high local cost of computers, despite Government’s tax of only 5%.
- Funding for capacity building, education and training activities are often linked to project, and thus does not address capacity in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

- The national media is also weak in terms of investigating and reporting environmental issues. Sensitisation and training of journalists to understand the approaches to information dissemination on sustainable development issues is lacking.
- Materials and resources available to teachers is also a serious constraint, which can avoid 're-inventing the wheel'. Sharing and exchange among countries is a significant step to address this issue and also assist in the development and promotion of more locally-made educational resources.

Recommendations

1. A national plan to address capacity issues related to sustainable development needs to be developed and implemented.
2. The evaluation of effectiveness of environmental programmes, probably through a 'State of the Environment' report should be integrated into other assessments so that impacts of policies and measures can be measured and corrective action taken.
3. Improve access to materials and information resources all over the world, which may be useful to teachers, trainers and used by young people in their environment education activities. The development of information technologies such as the internet will need to be consolidated.
4. Strengthen the role of NGO's to ensure sustained approach to training. A much more consistent and measurable education and sensitisation programmes should be organized.

The Way Forward

A review of the main issues raised in the preceding chapter emphasizes a number of major challenges that would need to be considered to ensure future implementation of Agenda 21 in the Seychelles. This report also shows the number of activities geared towards national planning, especially the Environment Management Plan 2000-2010, the Tourism Vision 21, the National Health Programme, the National Education Strategy, and among others the Social Development Strategy beyond 2000. However, as a small island state, the Seychelles faces several major challenges, as listed below.

These major challenges are:

1. Seychelles is classed as a highly vulnerable small island state due to its very small economy, remoteness from major markets and limited resource base. This vulnerability is seriously undermined by the threats of long-term climate change, and also the recent impacts of El Nino events.
2. Although politically stable, the country is highly vulnerable to external economic fluctuations in the market. For example, the Gulf War in 1991 caused tourism to decline by 13.7%. Seychelles has consistently argued its special situation in relation to globalization and trade, especially its dependence upon imports and distance from international markets.
3. There has recently been a sharp decline in official development aid because of its 'misleading' high per capita GDP. This has suddenly resulted in a difficult financial burden on Government's ability to deliver its ambitious development, environment and social programmes. In most cases, commercial loans have been secured to undertake these developments, albeit with consequences listed above.
4. Although progress in human development is high in comparison to other countries in the region, human resources in terms of numbers and skills continue to be a serious constraint, making the country uncompetitive in terms of continental markets. Entering niche and specialised markets for tourism, fisheries, and international business and trade has dominated government policy.
5. Some of the serious environmental pressures so common elsewhere, such as slash-and-burn, dynamiting of coral reefs, toxic wastes and strong sewage discharges, are virtually non-existent in Seychelles. However, other pressures such as invasive species, forest fires, coral bleaching, encroachment by urbanisation, and diseases pose very serious threats to Seychelles' fragile ecosystems.
6. Decreased donor support in supporting environment and conservation project, despite an increase in the effectiveness of funding provided for conservation activities in Seychelles. Efforts to develop sustainable financing approaches are not always feasible, considering some areas are under strict protection and

therefore cannot accept high levels of visitors or eco-tourists. Similar efforts to address the environment management of the outer islands are not always donor friendly.

7. Address the imminent problems associated with climate change such as extreme weather events, sea-level rise, coastal flooding, and proliferation of invasive species, coral bleaching and increase frequency of dry seasons.

Overall, the political commitment and institutional basis is in place to implement those plans, and push Seychelles into another era of sustainable development- post Johannesburg 2002. The Seychelles Government is confident that the path chosen can only go forward, that is to become a global leader in implementing sustainable development at all levels.