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BRIEFING
NOTE

LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY IN **SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**



Pacific
Community
Communauté
du Pacifique



Land Degradation Neutrality in Small Island Developing States

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LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY IN **SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**

KEY MESSAGES

- ⑨ **Land degradation exacerbates the unique vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** to environmental challenges, such as climate change, flash floods, soil erosion, lagoon siltation, coastal erosion and sea level rise, undermining their economic potential.
- ⑨ **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in SIDS, preserving biodiversity and increasing resilience to climate change.** Land degradation has a strong negative impact on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture, water resources management and coastal zone management. SIDS face a potentially greater strain on these sectors due to their high susceptibility to natural disasters, which often reverses their economic and social improvements. Land-based solutions contribute significantly to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, as well as on the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.
- ⑨ **By setting voluntary LDN targets, SIDS have demonstrated strong political leadership.** SIDS are strongly committed to the transformative nature of land-based solutions, with a focus on the sustainable management of forests, agriculture and land use planning. The national LDN working groups, established by each country to guide the LDN target setting process, played a central role in the formulation of the science-based LDN targets based on the LDN response hierarchy (Avoid > Reduce > Reverse land degradation).



- ④ **The LDN Target Setting Programme contributed to filling data gaps in the SIDS countries supported by the programme.** From the Barbados Programme of Action to the SAMOA Pathway, SIDS have underscored the lack of data for planning, monitoring and evaluation. One of the major contributions of the LDN Target Setting Programme was the provision of high-resolution data to SIDS, and the provision of technical support to build their data capacity through partners such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The national assessment and identification of LDN indicators on land cover, land productivity and soil carbon content have contributed to establishing science-based LDN targets; the development of an LDN knowledge e-platform to capture spatial data to continuously monitor both LDN and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements is planned.
- ④ **Building partnerships is key to ensuring big actions for small islands.** SIDS have some of the best examples of strategic global and regional cooperation and integration for achieving the SDGs (such as The Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management in Caribbean SIDS; PISLM). Going forward, action-oriented coalitions focused on deliverables and on enhancing institutional and data capacities should be further strengthened to translate political commitments into actions.
- ④ **Investment in land will be important for SIDS to drive transformational change.** National mainstreaming of the LDN targets, including mid-term frameworks and budgets, is critical to ensure positive synergies across all sectors. The right policy framework and enabling environment will be important for private sector partnerships to reach their full potential.
- ④ **SIDS are progressing towards translating LDN commitments into actions.** The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), in close cooperation with implementing partners, is supporting SIDS with the development of early-stage project or programme concept notes with built-in social, environmental and economic co-benefits, which can be further developed into complete project proposals and would ensure gender-responsive LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes in SIDS.

THE UNIQUE VULNERABILITIES OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES AND THEIR ENGAGEMENT IN THE LDN TARGET SETTING PROGRAMME

SIDS are maritime countries with common development challenges, such as small but growing populations, limited resources, remoteness, susceptibility to natural disasters, vulnerability to external shocks, an over-dependence on international trade and fragile environments. The unique and particular vulnerabilities of SIDS make preserving the productive potential of their limited land resources increasingly important and urgent, especially considering the potential of land to deliver high-quality nutritious food, cultural services, resilience to environmental change and shocks, and other ecosystem functions and services.

SIDS face the dual challenge of limited land resources and ever-increasing development pressures due to globalization. Economic diversification to create greater economic independence and resilience is critical for SIDS, but this a significant challenge given their narrow resource base and relatively limited range of economic activities.

The 2014 Samoa Pathway reaffirms “the need to achieve sustainable development by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing

inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion and promoting the integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems that supports, inter alia, economic, social and human development while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration, restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges.”¹

At the twelfth session of the UNCCD Conference of the Parties (COP 12) in 2015, Parties to the Convention endorsed SDG target 15.3, which includes the concept of LDN, as a strong vehicle for driving the implementation of the Convention. Soon after, the multi-partner LDN Target Setting Programme was set up by the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD to assist countries in formulating voluntary targets to achieve LDN.

More than 120 countries have been supported by the programme to set LDN targets using the four building blocks (see Figure 1). So far, 24 SIDS² have committed to establishing LDN targets and baselines, and identifying and mapping leverage opportunities and LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes.

Figure 1 The LDN target setting building blocks



Source: GM-UNCCD, 2016

Small Island Developing States came together to discuss opportunities for Land Degradation Neutrality

The SIDS Ministerial Breakfast on Opportunities for LDN was organized by the UNCCD and FAO during the UNCCD COP 13 in 2017, to discuss the opportunities that had arisen as a result of the LDN targets set by the SIDS, and on the way forward for SIDS to achieve their targets.³ The meeting was attended by seven international partners and delegates from 24 SIDS. Some of the key opportunities identified in the meeting that address the common challenges facing SIDS include:

- Promoting sound land use planning to address high competition for land;
- Increasing resilience to natural disasters and climate change;
- Enhancing national capacities and mobilizing innovative financing mechanisms;
- Improving the availability of LDN data and knowledge management; and
- Promoting sustainable agriculture.

Objective and target audience

During COP 13, the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD and FAO strengthened their collaborative efforts to support SIDS to set national targets to achieve LDN. The purpose was to identify lessons learned from the LDN target setting process in SIDS in order to generate recommendations to policy makers and interested stakeholders on future actions and to consider cross-cutting issues and linkages between emerging and existing challenges and priorities.

This briefing note considers certain areas of particular relevance to SIDS, owing to their unique and particular vulnerabilities, including:

- Fostering policy coherence by integrating national priorities and other commitments (such as the Bonn Challenge, Reducing Emissions from

Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)) into the LDN targets, interlinking them with other SDGs such as improving livelihoods and reducing poverty (SDG 1), food and water security (SDGs 2 and 6), and climate change mitigation and adaptation (SDG 13).

- Preventing migration and conflict (SDG 16) and safeguarding life on land (SDG 15). This further aligns with commitments of particular relevance for SIDS, including the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the UN Habitat Principles for Urbanization and the Samoa Pathway.



ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY TARGET SETTING PROCESS IN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

Ensuring multi-stakeholder engagement and leveraging with Land Degradation Neutrality

Multi-stakeholder engagement was secured through LDN working groups, which in the case of SIDS comprised mainly of members from the public sector, especially ministries or agencies involved in the environment, natural resources, forestry, agriculture, infrastructure, transport, mining, tourism, coastal management, central planning and finance, as well as ministerial advisory groups/councils and statistics offices. Some working groups included non-public sector stakeholders from civil society organizations (usually environmental) and the donor community. A few countries also included indigenous organizations

(for instance in Guyana) and private sector representatives (such as in Mauritius). In general, around 20 to 30 stakeholders were involved in the LDN working group in each SIDS country, with scope to further enhance the participation of women and increase the diversity and representation of non-governmental stakeholders.

The benefits from leveraging LDN were achieved through the sharing of knowledge and data and the alignment of targets and common objectives with current national strategies and programmes. As a result of the increased co-ordination and synergies, government budgetary allocations to address land degradation will be streamlined, and land degradation will be less isolated from discussions on economic growth.

Guyana aligned LDN with its national development priorities

In Guyana, land degradation has been occurring in sporadic areas due to the unsustainable use of natural resources and recurring natural disasters. The country's coastline is prone to erosion, while saltwater intrusion and the loss of arable land due to floods and droughts are serious problems. Guyana's economy is dominated by the agriculture, forestry, fishery and mining sectors, with forests accounting for 85% of the country's land cover, covering 18.5 million hectares, 12.6 million hectares of which are allocated for timber harvesting. The country has set strong LDN commitments and on-the-ground measures to combat land degradation and to support corrective actions, including the promotion of sustainable land management (SLM) practices.

Guyana has successfully aligned LDN with its national development priorities via a *green economic pathway, achieved through the "Green State Development Strategy" of the overarching country development framework*. By integrating LDN, there will be enhanced opportunities to improve livelihoods and contribute to food security, as well as to improve the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and the population's economic well-being, particularly those living in affected areas.

The strategy takes into consideration the need to integrate and strengthen existing national policies and planning frameworks for sustainable development and the role of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local communities and civil society in its implementation. Some of the opportunities to leverage financial resources that would assist in achieving LDN could come from the Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund and the Guyana Protected Areas Trust Fund.

In Timor-Leste, the LDN working group brought together the government, civil society and the private sector

Timor-Leste is facing land degradation due to deforestation, illegal logging and firewood collection, unsustainable agricultural practices, (e.g., cultivation on steep slopes, slash-and-burn, and uncontrolled grazing without incorporating soil conservation measures), and recurring forest fires. The Government of Timor-Leste, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) and other mandated ministries, is developing a long-term plan for forest conservation, improving land quality and productivity, and promoting sustainable agriculture and land and water conservation.

Activities under the LDN Target Setting Programme for Timor-Leste were led by the MAF in collaboration with the mandated ministries. The country's LDN working group successfully involved a broad spectrum of stakeholders involved in environmental protection and land management, from national and international civil society organizations and private sector entities. This included Permacultura Timor-Leste; Santalum; Halarae; Care International; Concern; Oxfam; the Cooperative Café Timor of the National Coffee Business Association; Hivos; Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA); World Vision Timor-Leste; and the Global Climate Change Alliance – Timor-Leste.

Key priorities to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality in SIDS

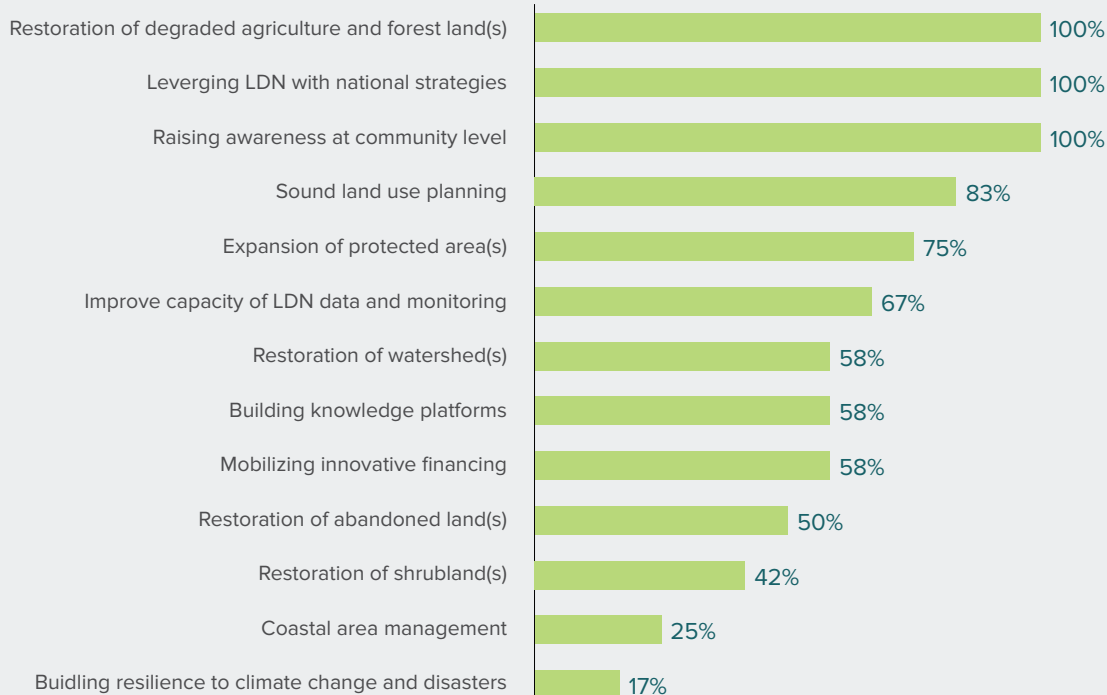
By establishing national voluntary LDN targets, SIDS have defined their ambitions and key priorities to address land degradation. For the first time, the LDN target setting process allowed national stakeholders to systematically analyse the causes

and effects of land degradation and to come up with evidence-based decisions on what is desirable and feasible to avoid, reduce or reverse land degradation by 2030. Based on an assessment of the actions and priorities identified by SIDS in their national LDN target setting country reports, the key priorities to achieve LDN in SIDS are summarized below:

Figure 2

Priorities to achieve LDN in SIDS

(based on a preliminary assessment of LDN target setting national reports)



Frequency (% of SIDS participating in LDN Target Setting Programme)

Assessment of land degradation trends

SIDS assessed land degradation trends, drivers and hotspots using the three sub-indicators of land degradation as detailed in the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN⁴, namely:

- Trends in land cover;
- Trends in land productivity; and
- Trends in carbon stock above and below ground.

An assessment of land degradation trends, coupled with an analysis of the drivers behind these trends, proved an essential step for SIDS to understand the current conditions of land degradation, reveal anomalies and identify degraded areas, and provided an evidence-based overview of areas that are particularly exposed to land degradation (known as "hotspots"). Notably, several SIDS indicated that the

identified land degradation hotspots were consistent with previously-identified disaster-prone areas (see Figures 3 and 4 on Mauritius and St. Lucia, taken from their LDN target setting reports). This indicates that there could be a strong correlation between land degradation and other environmental challenges.

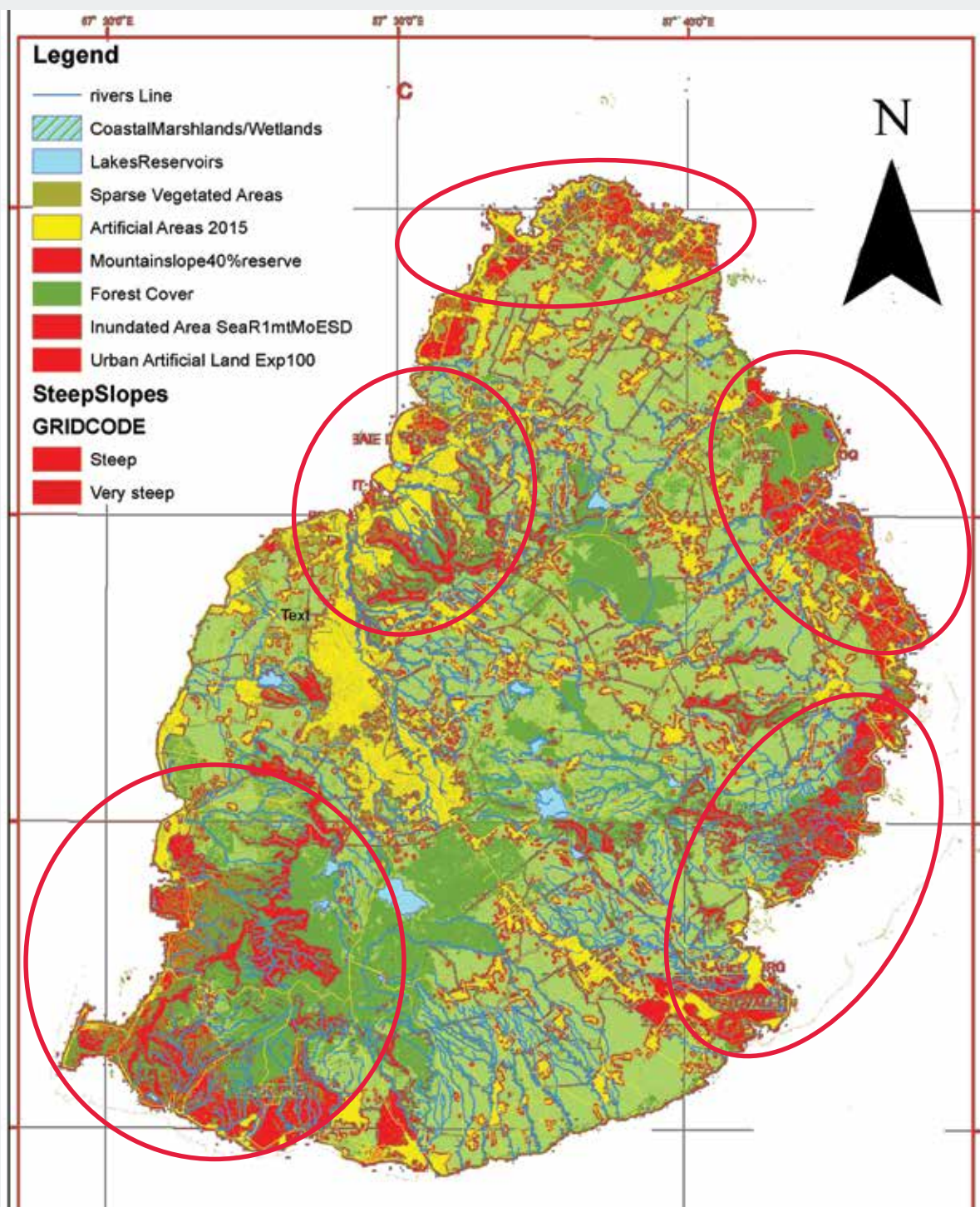
LDN data and monitoring

SIDS appreciated the support of the LDN Target Setting Programme in strengthening their capacities for LDN monitoring. SIDS are challenged by their limited data processing capacities that are key to monitoring LDN and to report on the SDGs and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements. With the special support provided to the SIDS by the programme, the countries were able to successfully established a land degradation baseline using the three LDN indicators.



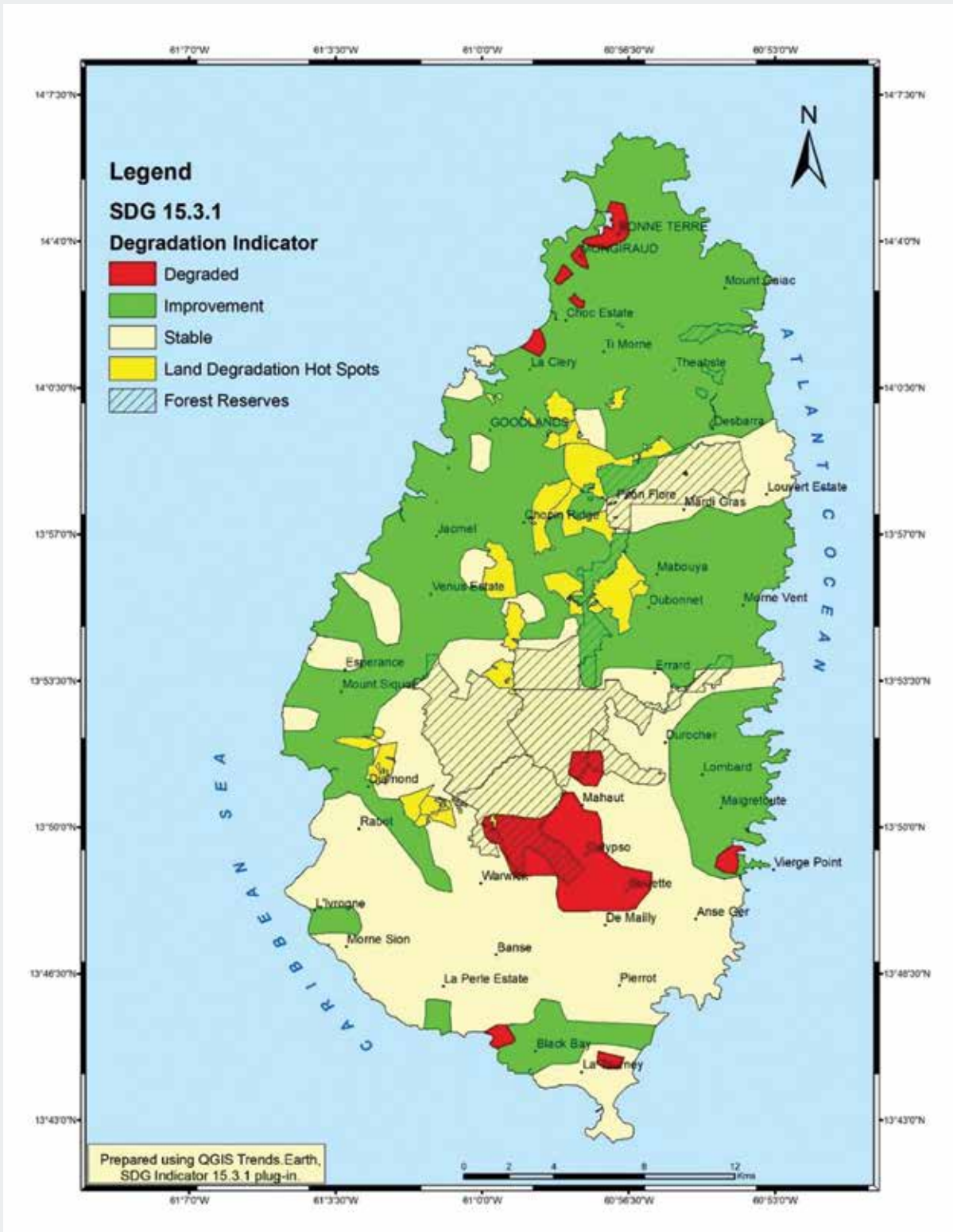
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Figure 3 Land degradation hotspots in Mauritius (red spots)



Source: Mauritius LDN target setting report, 2018

Figure 4 Status of land degradation in Saint Lucia and indications of landslide hotspots



Source: Saint Lucia LDN target setting report on baseline Indicators (2018)/ECLAC (2010).

Building data capacities to monitor LDN in Cape Verde

In Cape Verde, a Collect Earth workshop was organized on 17-21 July 2017 to validate the LDN baseline and identify areas of interest for LDN. A group of some 20 participants were trained to use Collect Earth and to collect data related to land use and land use change, Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) trends, and erosion indicators based on freely-available satellite imagery through Google Earth (using very high-resolution imagery) and the Google Earth Engine (Landsat, MODIS⁵ and Sentinel-2).

During a high-level segment discussion at COP 13, the Minister of Agriculture and Environment of Cape Verde praised the initiative from the FAO, the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD and the Government of Luxembourg for providing the higher resolution imagery.

Increasing Saint Lucia's capacity to monitor Multilateral Environmental Agreements implementation and sustainable development

In 2018, Saint Lucia's Department of Sustainable Development launched a National Environmental Information System to monitor the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and sustainable development, through the coordination of existing data and the collection of new data on the state of the environment, an integrated action that will promote LDN if all sectors effectively and efficiently participate.

In this regard, a grant has been received from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to address issues related to environmental information management under the project "Increase Saint Lucia's Capacity to Monitor MEA Implementation and Sustainable Development." This initiative aims to support the development of the country's environmental information management systems, improve coordination and the sharing of existing knowledge and generate new information on the state of the environment.

Drivers of land degradation

The drivers of land degradation and measures to achieve LDN in SIDS are summarized as below:

- Rapid urban expansion and increases in impervious layers (artificial areas);
- Increased conversion of agricultural land to built areas and for infrastructure development;
- Unsustainable agricultural and farming practices, resulting in severe land degradation due to open grazing and intensive livestock farming activities;
- Increased deforestation, logging activities and forest fires resulting in the loss of native forests and biodiversity;
- Land mining and rock quarrying;
- Changes in land drainage patterns, causing soil erosion;
- Climate change-induced disasters and the invasion of alien species;
- Indiscriminate tourism development (which encourages intensive or inappropriate land use and contributes to coastal zone degradation);
- Limited range of possible options for the sound management of waste; and
- Conflicts.

ACHIEVING LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY IN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

- Restore mangroves and coastal forests as coastal erosion measures against storm surges and the effect of sea level rise;
- Promote groundwater recharge through water-sensitive urban design to channel storm water to replenish water tables and wetlands and to reduce saline water intrusion;
- Restore native uplands/mountain forests in watershed areas, by managing invasive alien species to mitigate long term droughts, forest fires and other climate change effects, to enhance biodiversity and the quality of forest canopies, and to maintain a carbon sink;
- Restore degraded/abandoned croplands, maintain soil carbon content and mitigate climate change (carbon sequestration), thereby reducing food and water shortage risks;
- Expand protected area networks by restoring vegetation cover along river reserves, natural storm drains, mountains and steep slopes to act as buffers against potential flash flooding disasters;
- Adopt coastal zone management measures and promote sustainable tourism to protect nearshore marine resources;
- Encourage participatory and integrated land use planning to manage competing land uses; and
- Adapt to ecosystems and ecosystem-based adaptation.

RESTORING FOREST AND AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Restoration of forest and agricultural lands is a priority for SIDS to address land degradation.

All SIDS have set strong commitments to scale up restoration efforts on forest and agricultural land. At the same time, they have highlighted the ongoing challenge of managing forests and agriculture, which is complex due to weak or limited governance and incentives, unclear land tenure systems, resource allocation conflicts, poverty, and the failure of markets to capture the value of forests and provide sufficient economic incentives against land conversion and alternative forms of land use.

Data assessments reveal an increase in unsustainable agricultural practices (such as shifting cultivation and use of chemical fertilizers) and the conversion of croplands to artificial areas. The loss of vegetation cover is in turn leading to the loss of fertile topsoil and decreases in the infiltration capacity of the soil. This disturbs the water cycle, decreases groundwater levels and increases run-off (especially after torrential rains), causing soil erosion, landslides and rock falls.

Linking LDN with forestry in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea is experiencing land degradation due to the impacts of forest exploitation for commercial logging, oil palm production and Special Agriculture Business Leases (SABL). The Ministry of Environment and Conservation, through the Conservation and Environment Protection Authority, together with relevant stakeholders, mapped the ongoing forest-related activities to be brought under the umbrella of LDN:

- The Papua New Guinea Multi-Purpose National Forest Inventory, implemented by the Papua New Guinea Forest Authority;
- The National Land Use Policy, implemented by the Department of Agriculture and Livestock, the National Department of Lands and Physical Planning, the Climate Change and Development Authority (CCDA), and other key government stakeholders;
- The Papua New Guinea National REDD+ Strategy, developed by CCDA and key government stakeholders; and
- The development of the Papua New Guinea Sustainable Palm Oil Platform, which is a multi-stakeholder forum that brings together key representatives from the palm oil industry, civil society, communities, the government and development partners, to support the development of sustainable palm oil in the country, thereby addressing land degradation.

Building resilience to climate change in the Pacific Islands through sustainable agriculture

For the Pacific Islands, building resilience to climate change and disasters is extremely important and calls for the priority of LDN in the region. Of particular importance is the vulnerability of the Atoll Nations, which has led to the establishment of several operational strategies to adapt to climate change. Integrated sustainable agriculture and coastal management initiatives based on community-driven land use planning are also part of a potential LDN strategy; the Pacific Community (SPC) is advancing such a strategy through its earmarked Atoll Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Agriculture to develop ways to increase crop production, improve marketing opportunities and raise local incomes.

EMBEDDING MEASURES TO CONSERVE, SUSTAINABLY MANAGE AND RESTORE LAND IN LAND USE PLANNING

Integration of LDN in land use planning at multiple levels is essential. Nearly 83% of the SIDS set LDN commitments to minimize land degradation from ridge to reef, and to manage artificial areas, by applying LDN-specific land use planning policies and urban design guidelines (such as the ratio of

tree cover and/or green area to built-up environment/infrastructure, plot coverage, etc.) as part of the national development strategy. The SIDS effectively underscored the need for innovative land use planning principles (for instance, through a possible amendment of existing acts on activities of physical planning and development authority; improved land use planning based on best practices; strict enforcement of existing land management legislations; and an update of the formulation of land use, policy and inter-agency cooperation).

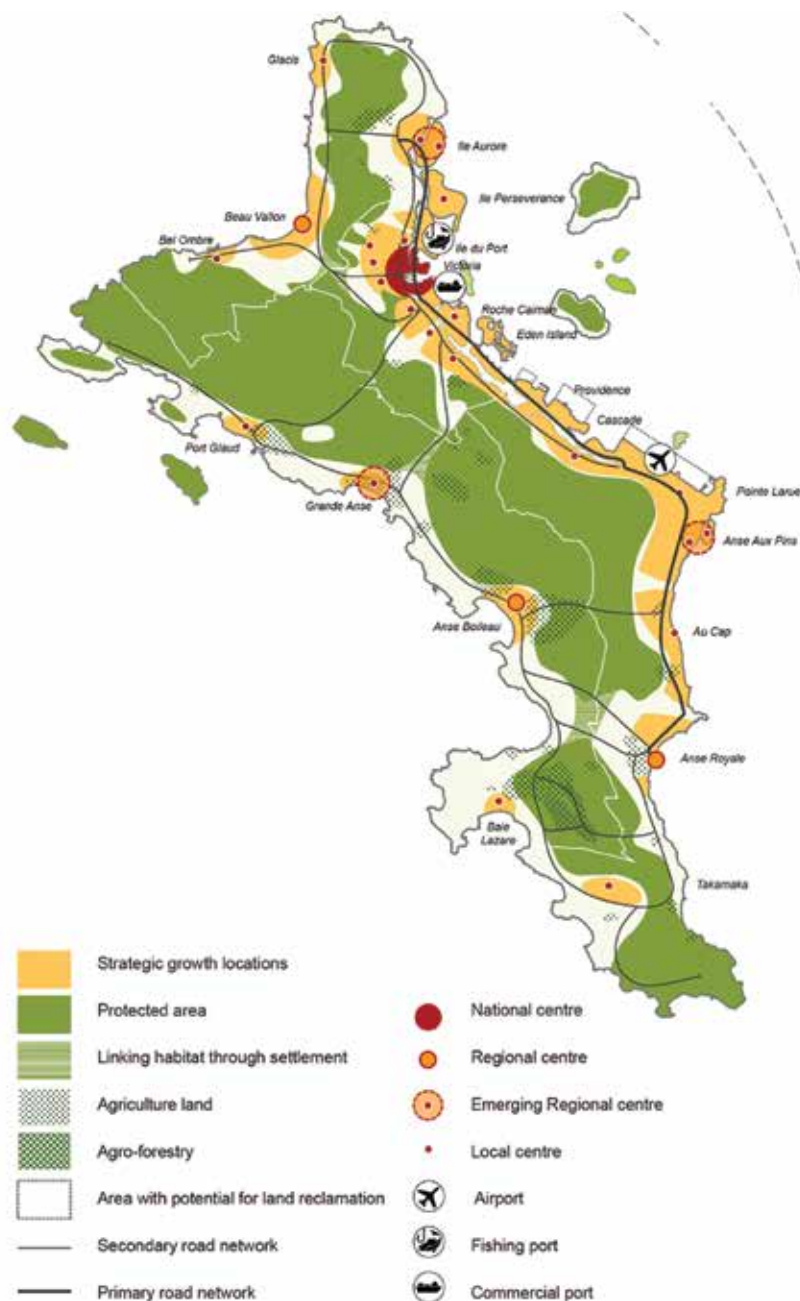
Seychelles prioritized land use planning

Seychelles' prioritization of LDN in land use planning is critical going forward to create a strong balance between economic sectors such as tourism, agriculture, forestry, industrial activities, infrastructure and environmental sustainability, and will greatly improve climate resilience.

The Seychelles Strategic Land Use Development Plan (2014-2040) outlined the following features:

- Consolidating local centres to provide services for the local catchment population;
- Providing land in appropriate locations to accommodate the growth of key economic sectors, including the blue economy;
- Diversifying tourism away from traditional beach resorts;
- Providing necessary transport, utilities, infrastructure and community facilities to support planned levels of growth;
- Reflecting a presumption against the conversion of agricultural land for development;
- Protecting and enhancing key environmental and heritage assets; and
- Addressing issues of climate change and resilience in locating new development.

Spatial strategy, Republic of Seychelles 2015



Source: Republic of Seychelles LDN target setting report, 2018 / Seychelles Strategic Land Use and Development Plan 2014-2040

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND GENDER

Raising awareness at the community level and mainstreaming gender into LDN are well recognized by SIDS as integral to achieving LDN. SLM implementation in SIDS involves an assessment of communal tenure systems, traditional land use practices, cultural values, and the integration of environmental and developmental decision-making. The importance of local knowledge and management systems are well

recognized by SIDS as integral to achieving LDN. Out of the 65 million people living in SIDS, 50% within the working age group are female (2017). There is a growing need for:

- An enabling policy environment for climate-smart and gender-responsive land use and management, as well as LDN at the regional and national levels; and
- The capacity of women and men from local communities to adapt to climate change impacts.

Workshop on “Strengthening Gender-Responsive and Climate Smart Land Management in the Caribbean”

SIDS from the Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago) came together to identify opportunities for integrating gender in LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes during a technical workshop entitled “Strengthening Gender-Responsive and Climate Smart Land Management in the Caribbean”, co-organized by the PISLM, the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD, UN Women, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and FAO, held on 26-28 September 2018 in St. Lucia. Participant countries identified practical approaches to reinforce the capacities of all stakeholders on gender (especially women farmer group representatives) and design gender-responsive LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes.

Samoa emphasizes community-driven, land-based adaptation, policy advisory and capacity-building support to achieve LDN

A consultation workshop for Pacific countries was organized by the Samoan Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, attended by officials of the national government, members of the national LDN working group, UNCCD National Focal Points, FAO, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the SPC. The outcomes emphasized community participation and awareness on LDN. The Community Integrated Management Plan of Samoa, 2018, outlines climate-resilient investment plans that provide sustainable solutions to district and village environmental issues that have been made worse by climate change. It addresses four thematic areas – Biological Resources and Environment, Infrastructure, Food Security and Livelihood, and Governance, with the community as the focus. In Samoa, the leading NGO for agribusiness, with a global market presence, is the women’s NGO Women in Business Development. The organisation works with 1,300 farmers and 796 certified organic farmers, plays a critical role in supporting local farmers in Samoa and has established the first digital database mapping all the farmers and families they support.



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LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Global Mechanism has been supporting SIDS in designing and implementing gender-responsive LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes through sustainable and inclusive interventions at scale (e.g., in landscapes) and featuring innovation in terms of locally-adapted technologies and practices, financial mechanisms (such as blended finance), measures to reverse land degradation trends and biodiversity loss and the promotion of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

More than half of the SIDS mentioned that their efforts to achieve LDN required a surge in financing and investments. Innovative public-private partnership financing incentives to encourage the private sector, such as impact investments, tax rebates on land restoration programmes, planning relief to support landscape and biodiversity rehabilitation, the promotion of nature-based tourism activities, and mangrove and wetland restoration, can play an important role. There are growing opportunities for SIDS to tap into diverse funding sources to achieve transformational change at scale through, for example:

- **National sources:** national budgets, national industries such as the timber and tourism sectors, forestry and/or agriculture-based industries);
- **International sources:** climate finance institutions such as the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund and the Commonwealth Climate Action Finance Hub; bilateral, multilateral and Official Development Assistance from organisations such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, UN agencies, the GEF; bilateral donors such as the UK Department for International Development, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation; and assistance from international NGOs such as the World Wildlife Fund and Conservation International.
- **Innovative sources:** previously untapped funds or growing/emerging mechanisms from the private sector (LDN Fund)⁶, as well as market-based mechanisms such as carbon markets and REDD+.

Mapping transformative actions in Indian Ocean Small Island Developing States and Madagascar: 'Neutral Islands'

The secretariat of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) hosted the regional expert consultation on “LDN in IOC SIDS and Madagascar: Opportunities for Transformative Projects and Programmes” on 21-22 November 2018 in Ebène, Mauritius.

It brought together some 20 participants from Comoros, Mauritius, Madagascar, the Seychelles and the World Bank, who put together a note entitled ‘Neutral Islands’ (Neutral-is): “Mainstreaming land-use planning, waste management and sustainable agriculture in the peri-urban environment at landscape level in Indian Ocean SIDS and Madagascar.” The key collective objectives identified during the workshop were:

- By 2025, a knowledge management platform will be established for mainstreaming LDN priorities in the process of land use planning at the peri-urban level in the IOC region.
- By 2030, a sustainable system will be established for the transformation of green waste into compost and its supply to peri-urban agricultural areas in IOC countries.
- By 2030 peri-urban agricultural areas will be maintained and valorized in a sustainable manner in IOC countries by progressively improving the livelihoods of farming communities through more SLM practices (including via compost from urban green waste) and the promotion of high-value agricultural products.

Small Island Developing States and financing opportunities

Although not exhaustive, the below list showcases the emerging interests of financial partners to support sustainable practices in SIDS, with projects focused on integrated approaches and multiple benefits.

- **The GEF** recognizes that there is a need for targeted capacity building for SIDS, which includes mainstreaming LDN into national development frameworks. For its GEF-7 programming cycle, US\$233 million has been allocated to SIDS. The GEF Trust Fund has a special window for SIDS and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) under the Chemicals and Waste focal area, regional funds available under the International Waters focal area, resources via the Small Grants Program, and support for fulfilling convention obligations. In addition, funds are available to SIDS from the Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Fund.⁷
- By 2017, the **Adaptation Fund** had allocated US\$110.4 million to 15 concrete adaptation projects in 14 SIDS. Altogether, 17 SIDS countries have received support from the Adaptation Fund (including from the Readiness and Project Formulation Grants).⁸
- Overall, the 39 SIDS countries spread across three regions have received USD1,380 million from multilateral climate funds between 2003 and 2017. In 2017, USD228 million was approved for projects in SIDS. A full 50% of this is programmed by **the Green Climate Fund**.⁹
- Following the Paris Climate Agreement, **Agence Française de Développement (the French Development Agency)** launched **Adapt'Action** to support countries seeking technical assistance for the institutional, methodological and operational implementation of their commitments to the fight against climate change. With a budget of EUR30 million over a 4-year period, Adapt'Action will support 15 countries, with a priority focus on Africa and particularly LDCs and SIDS, which are among the most vulnerable countries to climate change.¹⁰
- At its eleventh session in 2015, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) established the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN) as one of the six elements of the UN Forest Instrument (UNFI), with special consideration to be given to SIDS and countries with economies in transition in gaining access to the funds.





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CONCLUSION

LDN provides a coherent framework where SIDS have linked LDN as a means for ecosystem-based adaptation and mitigation to address climate change.

Adopting LDN as the means to stimulate integrated land use planning, shifting towards greener economic initiatives and restoring degraded landscapes, can further build the ability of communities to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change and reduce disaster risks, while simultaneously accelerating implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

The LDN Target Setting Programme provided critical support to SIDS in using evidence-based strategic land use planning and policymaking, and enabled them to both expand their data capacity and increase their opportunities for finance.

There is an increasing need to build data capacity and resolve resource constraints (human, institutional and financial) to enable SIDS to achieve transformational change at scale. It is also obvious that continued financial resources are needed to reach the goals of LDN – not only to address direct land degradation, but also to build human and institutional capacities as a contribution to changes in policies and strategies at national and local levels.

Mainstreaming LDN into the annual and medium-term plans of the relevant ministries and agencies, as well as into other related national strategies, is key; for example, to have those ministries/

agencies coordinating climate change, biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation, to do so preferably through a central ministry of planning.

LDN implementation is an accelerator of climate actions and disaster risk reduction, and can therefore access multilateral and bilateral climate finance while keeping in mind important regional similarities and differences in capacity needs among countries.

Partnerships with regional agencies are key for small states. Building an effective monitoring and evaluation system, SLM/LDN knowledge hub and communication mechanisms will bring together regional institutions working on SLM and climate change adaptation.

LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes could either focus on adaptation or deliver on both mitigation and adaptation. This could be a unique opportunity for SIDS to reduce deforestation while improving their sustainable climate-smart agriculture, food security, ecosystems services, livelihoods and watershed management.

The private sector can play a pivotal role in joining efforts to address land degradation. From the sourcing of agricultural products to the use of water as an input for production and tourism, the private sector has a business interest in contributing to the success of ongoing efforts to achieve LDN in SIDS.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Preamble of the SAMOA Pathway; available at <http://www.sids2014.org/index.php?menu=1537>
- ² This study refers to the following countries as SIDS: Antigua and Barbuda*, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize*, Cape Verde*, Comoros*, Cook Islands, Cuba*, Dominica*, Dominican Republic*, Fiji, Grenada*, Guinea-Bissau*, Guyana*, Haiti*, Jamaica*, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius*, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue*, Palau, Papua New Guinea*, Saint Kitts and Nevis*, Saint Lucia*, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*, Samoa*, São Tomé and Príncipe*, Seychelles*, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Suriname*, Timor-Leste*, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago*, Tuvalu, Vanuatu. (Countries followed by an asterisk (*) are currently participating in the LDN Target Setting Programme).
- ³ See FAO/UNCCD flyer on “Opportunities of LDN for SIDS” at <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2017-12/Opportunities%20of%20LDN%20for%20SIDS.pdf>.
- ⁴ Orr et al. (2017). Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality: A report of the Science-Policy Interface. UNCCD. Bonn, Germany.
- ⁵ Moderate-resolution imaging spectroradiometer.
- ⁶ http://catalogue.unccd.int/1076_LDN%20Fund_Brochure_Q1_2019.pdf
- ⁷ More information is available at https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF%20and%20SIDS%20October%202018_r2.pdf
- ⁸ More information is available at <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Adaptation-Fund-in-the-SIDS-1.pdf>.
- ⁹ More information is available at <https://www.odi.org/publications/11060-climate-finance-fundamentals-12-small-island-developing-states-2017-update>.
- ¹⁰ More information is available at <https://www.afd.fr/en/adaptaction>.

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