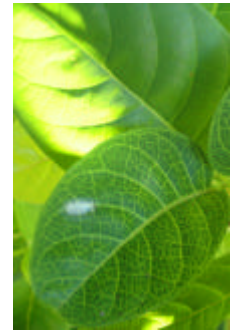




Pacific Land

Sustaining our environment,
economies, and way of life



Global event, regional relevance

The Pacific theme for this year's World Environment Day on 5 June is *Pacific Land: sustaining our environment, economies, and way of life*. World Environment Day is a global initiative that aims to empower people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development, raise awareness about environmental issues and advocate partnerships.

The global theme for this year is *Don't desert drylands*. Although the Pacific region may not have drylands, many of the islands are undergoing various forms of land degradation.

SPREP is encouraging its member countries and territories to coordinate national activities to mark this event.

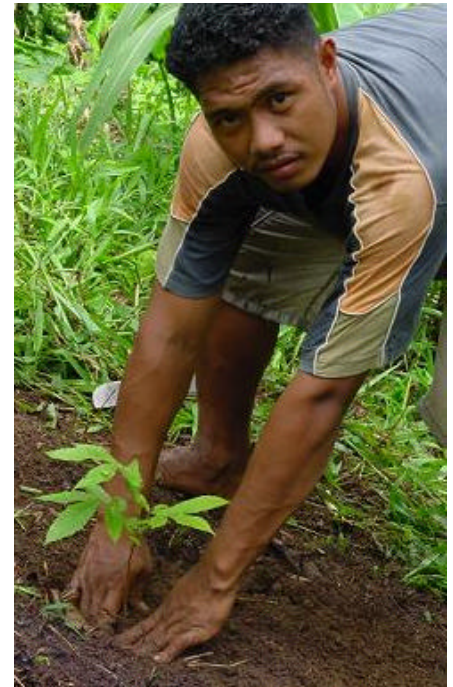
Land degradation

Broadly defined, land degradation is any form of deterioration of the natural potential of land, which adversely affects ecosystems and people's livelihoods. Causes of land degradation include changing weather patterns, increasing human populations, and a host of other complex interactions between the socio-economic and bio-physical processes.

Only 2% of the Pacific is land, yet Pacific islanders live in and rely on the rural subsistence economy. Due to the relatively small size of the islands, any disturbances to the land can impact on the surrounding marine environment and ultimately on the livelihoods of families and communities.

Many Pacific islands are experiencing the effects of land degradation. Countries with bigger islands like Fiji are experiencing soil loss at very high rates. Studies are revealing losses of between 20 and 70 tonnes per hectare per year, partly due to agriculture and forestry activities coupled with high levels of rainfall. In the Solomon Islands the rapid decline in areas of natural forests and unsustainable logging is a main cause of land degradation. This is associated with increases in runoff and sedimentation and threatens coastal lagoons and other marine ecosystems. In Nauru, and some parts of PNG, land degradation has been the direct result of historic, extensive or intensive mining activities. Atoll countries like Kiribati and Tuvalu are experiencing increased salinity of soils due to saltwater intrusion that is affecting plant growth.

National strategies and mechanisms are required to address these effects including establishing watershed management plans, conducting research to identify critical areas, and reviewing and developing appropriate land-use legislation and regulations.



Replanting is a key activity to reduce the effects of land degradation.

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How SPREP is supporting the Pacific

Under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Parties are required to plan, develop and implement National Action Programmes (NAPs) to guide ongoing work in combating land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought.

SPREP is working with its Members, particularly countries who are Parties to the UNCCD, to prepare national plans to combat land degradation.

On a regional level, SPREP will be working with other regional bodies to foster stronger integration of initiatives and strengthen environmental governance.

Regional synergies

Closely linked to the development of NAPs is the GEF-funded National Capacity Self-Assessments (NCSA) and the development of Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Medium-Sized Projects (MSP).

Links between SPREP's Programmes

The development of NAPs provides SPREP with the opportunity to strengthen interlinkages between its various programme components particularly in the areas of conservation, adaptation to climate change, solid waste management, pollution prevention, support for meteorological services, and training and education.

At the national level, countries will be encouraged to identify the interlinkages between land degradation and other thematic areas eg: forestry and agriculture development.

For more information on SPREP's role with the above initiatives contact Frank Wickham, HRD/Training Officer, frankw@sprep.org.

Table 1: Status/progress of NAP development in the Pacific

Country	Status/progress
Niue, Palau	NAPs completed
Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu	NAP development began in 2005 with funding assistance from UNDP and UNCCD
Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu	NAP development commencing in 2006 with funding assistance from UNDP GovPac Project

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

The challenge to combat land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought was recognised by world leaders over the period leading up to the World Summit in Rio during 2001 with greater attention placed on the arid regions of the world.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was adopted in 2004. Fourteen Pacific Island independent states have since become Parties to the convention, committing to address the causes and effects of land degradation.

The convention highlights the need for a bottom-up approach with people and communities playing an important role in planning and implementing measures to combat land degradation, encourages an integrated approach to addressing the complex causes of land degradation, and emphasizes the need for stronger partnerships and for the provision of an enabling environment to support such measures. It also recognises the links between land degradation and poverty and encourages increased opportunities for sustainable development.

