

### **3.0 DESERTIFICATION**

Zambia signed and ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) on 15th October 1994 and 19<sup>th</sup> September 1996 respectively. The convention aims at combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought by promoting effective action through innovative local programmes and supportive action to international partnerships. To achieve this aim, the Convention requires that each country party prepares a National Action Programme (NAP). The Zambian government with financial assistance from cooperating partners developed the UNCCD NAP in 2002. The NAP preparation process involved undertaking stakeholder inventories and technical studies to document the extent of the desertification problem.

#### **3.1 Concrete actions taken and specific progress made in implementation**

Sustainable development objectives for Zambia have been supported by sectoral policies and strategies that fulfill national obligations. The policies and strategies have been developed over the years, since independence, and are aimed at contributing to achieving environmental sustainability.

The country's national Conservation Strategy (NCS) of 1985 identified and recommended institutional and regulatory reforms. This culminated into enactment of the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Act (EPPCA) of 1990, which led to the establishment of the Environmental Council of Zambia. In 1994 the NCS was updated into the national Environment Action Plan (NEAP), and highlighted key environmental problems that included unsustainable harvesting of natural resources and deforestation.

In 2002, Zambia prepared a National Action Programme (NAP) to Combat Desertification and Mitigate serious effects of drought. Consistent with Article 10 of the Convention, the NAP emphasizes integrated local development programmes for affected areas based on participatory mechanisms and strategies for poverty eradication into efforts to combat desertification and mitigate effects of drought. It provides a framework for identifying factors contributing to desertification. The vision of the NAP is to restore land productivity in order to reduce poverty and foster development.

The NAP concentrated on five provinces, namely Central, Eastern, Lusaka, Southern and Western. These are located in Agro-ecological Regions I and II and experienced severe land degradation and drought.

The Zambian government, with support from the cooperating partners has been implementing programmes/projects aimed at promoting effective environmental protection and sustainable management of the natural resources. These programmes and/or projects implemented in collaboration with communities are in line with the NAP and UNCCD provisions and they include the following:

##### **1.1.1 Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM)**

Zambia was one of the first countries to pioneer approaches involving communities in managing natural resources, through the initiative of the Administrative Management Design (ADMAD) programme in the early 1980s. Since that time, Government in

collaboration with various cooperating partners has attempted to establish a number of Community based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) initiatives to improve community involvement in the management of forests, fisheries, water resources and in sustainable development of agriculture and tourism. A number of communities have been involved in managing community natural resources through integrated and sustainable land use practices. Successes have been recorded and what is required now is to upscale the programmes to cover all the districts and address more effectively the issues of community natural resources management systems.

### **3.1.2 Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Management Programme**

One of the critical challenges that Zambia faces is environmental degradation through loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, water pollution etc. Such resource degradation and depletion contribute significantly to the low productivity of the primary sectors like agriculture, forestry, wildlife and fisheries thereby contributing to prevailing extreme poverty in most of the Zambia's rural communities. This situation relates to lack of managerial capacity in the local environmental practitioners to implement their programmes aimed at promoting sustainable management of natural resources. Due to widespread nature of this problem, the Zambia government with support from United Nations Development Programme/Global Environmental Facility (UNDP/GEF) implemented the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Management Project (EPNRMP) to enhance managerial capacity for environmental protection and sustainable management of the natural resources as well as for coordination the implementation of Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs).

Through the ENRMP Government implemented programmes aimed at promoting public awareness on the protection of the environment, and strengthening of the existing institutional mechanisms for enforcement of environmental standards. In addition, domestication of international conventions on environment and natural resources management is underway and this has encouraged the communities to implement the provisions of the UNCCD at grass root level. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources (MTENR) spearheaded the implementation of provisions of the Convention on land degradation and mitigation of drought in affected areas of agro-ecological regions II and I. The Department, with participation of the local communities, NGOs and CBOs has facilitated the formation of community groups who are involved in rehabilitation of degraded lands, through replanting of trees and promotion of conservation farming and linking their programmes to NAP and UNCCD provisions.

### **3.1.3 Sustainable Management of Zambia's Protected Areas**

The rural population depends entirely on the natural resources for their livelihood. The natural resources such as the forests are the only source of firewood, fodder, food, medicines and thatching grass for the local people. The MTENR in collaboration with the local communities, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Community Resources Boards (CRBs), and Village Resources Management Committees (VRMCs) in protected areas have been involved in regulation and protection of the natural resources in protected areas in an integrated manner. The natural resources management in protected areas is through formulation of by-laws by CBOs and CRBs. Most of the

programmes on resources management are co-managed programmes between the communities and the government.

#### **3.1.4 National Tree Planting**

The Forestry Department has been encouraging communities to protect and plant trees through its annual National Tree Planting programme, implemented countrywide between 15<sup>th</sup> December and 15<sup>th</sup> January of every subsequent years. The aforestation programme has lead to the establishment of community forest and fruit tree plantations and rehabilitation of degraded lands.

### **3.2 Lessons learnt**

1. Traditional Knowledge initiatives have played major roles in sustainable resource management. Most relevant institutions in resource management have involved traditional approaches in planning and management of natural resources;
2. Several projects in the country are including traditional methods as ways of ensuring sustainability. Best examples are those to do with wildlife management, forest management, water supply and health programmes
3. The Early Warning System has assisted the country to intervene and take necessary measures where drought has occurred.

### **3.3 Recent trends and emerging issues**

Although about 60 percent of Zambia's land is covered by forests, evidence of continuing forest destruction leading to environmental degradation and their negative impacts is widespread.

Climate change is one of the defining issues in our recent times which pose a major challenge to sustainable development and poverty reduction. Zambia's Fifth National Development Plan and National Policy on Environment recognize climate change as a problem and suggest measures to address it.

### **3.4 Major constraints**

The major constraints in the UNCCD implementation revolve around inadequate financial resources, insufficient technical expertise and lack of harmony in existing environment related policy and legislation leading to implementation and legal enforcement failures.

Although the NAP is clear on the scientific activities necessary to combat desertification there is still limited technical and financial capacities to implement scientific and technical measures stipulated in the NAP.