

A Feasibility Study for an International Year of Landcare:

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ABSTRACT

Environmental challenges such as land degradation, climate change and loss of biodiversity are steadily growing globally. In order to address these challenges and achieve long-term sustainability, a holistic and interdisciplinary approach such as Landcare needs to be adopted worldwide. Landcare focuses on empowering local people to willingly take action on local problems, and integrates those actions in addressing broader issues. In countries where it has been applied, the Landcare approach has shown to be highly successful in changing attitudes and simulating new ideas among land users. This paper reviews the concept and effectiveness of the Landcare approach, and describes its rationale, strengths and weaknesses. It further explores the feasibility of establishing an International Year of Landcare. The importance of the United Nations declaring a Year of Landcare is examined, and some real cases are cited in support. Activities and processes for gaining support for this concept are discussed, as well as procedures for establishing an International Year of Landcare. Possible goals, objectives and programmes are also outlined. The conclusion of this report is that, if well planned, the concept of establishing an International Year of Landcare is ethically, culturally and environmentally feasible, and an excellent way to contribute to the future achievement and implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, decades, conventions and other sustainability goals.

1. INTRODUCTION

The need for increasing awareness about the importance of better care for global land resources is a burning issue. As the foundation of terrestrial life, human survival and lasting peace, caring for the land is compulsory for all human beings. The land consists of the vital ecosystems that make up life, based on complex interactions of soil, water, fresh air and so on. Benefits from the land depend on the health of the resources that are utilized and the ability to maintain those resources. An easily adaptable approach, such as Landcare, would be of a great value in gaining recognition of the importance the land and conserving its resources in a holistic manner. An International Year of Landcare, proclaimed by the United Nations, could be an efficient means to draw attention to this important tool and help in reaching global goals of sustainable land use.

Since 1959 the United Nations General Assembly has designated a number of International Years in order to highlight major global issues, increase awareness, and encourage action and participation. These approaches have allowed nations to look at major world problems in a holistic manner, share knowledge and find possible solutions.

In total 41 International Years have been designated. The various years have touched upon very varied different issues, from social well-being to environmental issues. The years also give an indication that the world issues converge into one main area, that of a healthy environment. Land degradation, poverty and climate change are, for example, complex issues that exemplify this interrelationship clearly.

At the International Forum on Soils, Society and Global Change (SSGC), which was held in September 2007 to commemorate 100 years of soil conservation in Iceland, a recommendation was put forward to explore the feasibility of establishing an International Year of Landcare (Soil, Society and Global Change report, 2007). The goals of such a year would be to promote the ethics of soil stewardship and landcare to help improve sustainability of land use on a global basis. Such a year would also bring into focus efforts to build local capacity and share knowledge and experiences between territories and countries.

At the Forum it was also recommended that particular attention should be given to the importance of participatory approaches for improving protection and restoration of the world's soil, vegetation and ecosystems, and associated educational programmes targeted at children in order to increase "land literacy" and to help people to "read the land". This is further discussed in the Soil, Society and Global Change report, 2007, and Campbell, 1992 and 2008, emphasizing the growing importance of land literacy tools and approaches.

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the feasibility of an International Year of Landcare, and the complex process of gaining support, planning and setting up such a Year. Such an undertaking would need a highly motivated team and good resources (personnel, funds and time) for the idea to

be accomplished. Most importantly, the objectives and goals of the year in question need to be well defined, as well as the processes needed to secure positive impacts. Furthermore, proposals for such an International Year have to be well supported by a wide range of governments in order to gain acceptance as a resolution by the United Nations.

There are many “factors that need to be analyzed carefully before a decision is taken on an international year”. As stated by Stirling (2007), International Years can be difficult and time-consuming to establish and to follow through. Furthermore, they can be expensive, possibly diverting funds from other worthwhile areas, and they can lead to resentment amongst communities that are not included. Overcoming these potential drawbacks requires that a good understanding is gained of all aspects of the process necessary for reaching a decision and establishing an International Year, and also that the areas to be addressed are well defined, with clear goals. Therefore, the main aims of this report/study are to:

- Review the concept of Landcare as an approach, review the lessons learned from landcare, and explore the value of establishing an International Year of Landcare to aid in the advancement of this approach.
- Explore procedures and criteria for establishing International Years.
- Explore a possible Year of Landcare in terms of goals, programme activities and possible target groups.
- Explore the facilitation support needed for an International Year of Landcare, and submitting such a proposal to the United Nations General Assembly.
- Identify and provide suggestions about the possible stakeholders and their importance within the year and its activities.
- Finally, to provide recommendations about the possible goals, suggest a way forward, and give examples of possible activities within an International Year of Landcare.

2. THE NEED TO IMPROVE LANDCARE

Expanding human activities are placing an increasing pressure on the land resources worldwide, creating competition and conflicts in turn resulting in suboptimal use of the land resources. An unprecedented rise in human population over recent decades is overburdening ecological and social systems. On a global scale, the degradation of land leads to decreasing land productivity, less food for people, loss of biodiversity, reduction of fresh drinking water, climate change, and reduced economic benefits, among others. The needs to improve landcare are linked to the complex underlying causes

deeply rooted in complex socio-cultural, economic and political contexts. These points are discussed in more detail below.

2.1 Food security

The world population has been rapidly growing (Fig. 1), with a steady need to produce ever more food. More and more productive land is needed to deliver the necessary food supply and to maintain the quality of land. At present, the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization programme indicates that 854 million people do not have sufficient food for an active and healthy life. Hunger and poverty continue to be a problem, especially in the world's developing countries. The major factor contributing to food shortage in the world is poor land management, financial resources, and lack of information sharing and collaboration, in terms of the best farming methods and new technologies.

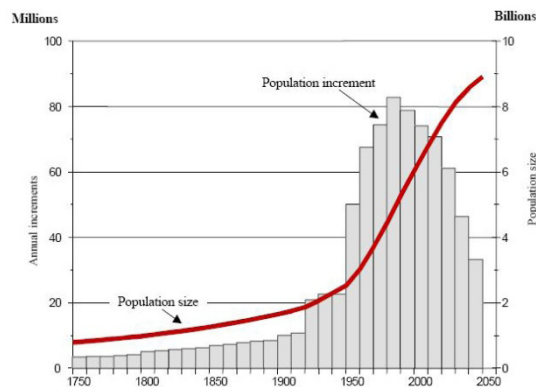


Figure 1. Long-term world population growth, 1750-2050. (Source: United Nations Population Division, *the World at Six Billion*).

In Chapter 14 of Agenda 21, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) notes that, by the year 2025, 83 percent of the expected global population of 8.5 billion will be living in developing countries alone. Yet the capacity of available resources and technologies to satisfy the demands of this growing population for food and other agricultural commodities remains uncertain. Regardless of that, agriculture has to meet this challenge, mainly by increasing production on land that is already in use. This means that farmers and all land users have to avoid further damage to the land they are using. The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, in an address to the CSD in May 2008, stated that “We need to work together to develop a new generation of technologies and farming methods which make possible a second green revolution, one which permits sustainable yield improvements with minimal environmental damage and contributes to sustainable development goals.”

The pressures on food production have knock-on effects all over the world, and there is a need for this problem to be examined and solved in a holistic, worldwide manner, using measures to restore and conserve ecosystems, and this should be everyone's responsibility. Action is needed to raise awareness, using all possible tools.

2.2 Economic benefits

Better care for the land is the key to many quantifiable benefits, such as improved yields, savings in input costs, increased biodiversity, and improved tourism, just to mention a few. Any land will create more economic long-term benefits and value for a longer period of time if it is used sustainably. This, for example, is noticeable in Iceland, in comparing farmers that participate actively in the project “Farmers Heal the Land” with those not participating. “Unproductive” natural lands, such as deserts, also have many inherent values that need to be cared for. For example, the Namib Desert in Namibia, although it is not cultivated for agriculture, has many cultural and economic values in terms of mining, ecotourism and research opportunities. Tourism, a booming industry and one of the biggest generators of income in many countries, also depends on land. Many visitors travel in search of unspoiled land: land that is neither degraded nor polluted. Land is also valuable for cultural beliefs and spiritual beliefs in many societies, which contributes economically in terms of tourism.

“The environment is where we live; and development is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode; the two are inseparable.” (Cleveland, 2007). Considering the above points, it becomes more and more evident that caring for the land is taken simply to mean sustaining economic stability and not just for the sustenance of humanity.

2.3 Reducing climate change effects

The changes in global temperatures observed since the onset of the industrial revolution is predominantly due to human activities, with land degradation and other consequences of “unwise” use contributing a prominent share of the added greenhouse gases. The changes in climate, such as in temperature and rainfall patterns, cause the land to become vulnerable and less productive. These changes have profound implications for human and environmental health, mainly through increased natural disasters (e.g. floods), food security and diseases (UNCSD, 2008).

Additionally, climate change is projected to exacerbate ecosystem instability, accelerate loss of biodiversity and increase the risk of extinction for many species (MEA, 2005). In the context of agriculture, the relationship between climate change and agriculture is a two-way street: agriculture and other land use contribute to climate change in several major ways, and climate change in general adversely affects agriculture.

Landcare has a large role in mitigating climate change. Reducing release of gaseous carbon to the atmosphere by combating land degradation and returning misplaced carbon back to soil and vegetation by restoring land quality constitute a win-win situation important to the achievement of a multitude of global goals.

2.4 Prevent and reduce land degradation

Defined as a long-term decline in ecosystem function and productivity, land degradation is increasing in severity and extent in many parts of the world, with more than 20% of all cultivated areas, 30% of forests and 10% of grasslands undergoing degradation (FAO Newsroom, 2008). The UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA) ranked land degradation among the world's greatest environmental challenges, claiming it risked destabilizing societies, endangering food security and increasing absolute poverty. The problems of land degradation are well known: degrading soil and agricultural land; shrinking vegetation cover and forests; diminishing supplies of clean water; dwindling fisheries; and the threat of growing social and ecological vulnerability (Holtz, 2003). Degradation of land is not just a collection of local difficulties -- it is a pressing global issue.

Despite previous efforts toward combating desertification, Bai et al., 2008, pointed out that land degradation is still worsening rather than improving. Combating land degradation should be a growing priority issue, requiring renewed attention by individuals, communities and governments. If this problem is not successfully addressed and reversed, the world will not be able to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as halving extreme poverty and hunger, and ensuring environmental sustainability, by the year 2015 (Cleveland, 2007).

2.5 It pays to care for the land

For resolving the pressing environmental issues, such as those touched on above, programmes are urgently needed based on understanding the links between natural assets and sustainable land and water use. It requires all partners (local people, decision-makers, scientists, students, investors, etc.) to develop a common attitude and a passionate vision of caring for the land. The combined skills, know-how and support of all concerned can make an enormous difference. Special attention has to be given to assisting and increasing the hope and willpower of the poor.

Caring for the land we live on makes it possible to minimize conflict, make the most efficient trade-offs, help achieve MDG objectives, and sustainable development at large. Moreover, linking social and economic development with environmental protection and land enhancement also contributes significantly toward the same goals. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature (The Earth Charter, 2000). Humanity must unite in a common effort for the sustainable co-evolution of nature and human society.

3. LANDCARE

Land in general, according to the CSD definition, is a physical entity in terms of its topography and spatial nature; a broader integrative view includes natural resources such as the soils, minerals,

water, ecosystems and biota that the land comprises. Caring for the land means utilizing the land in a sustainable manner, nursing it, protecting the biodiversity and allowing it to perform its natural functions.

3.1 Defining Landcare

In e-mail correspondence about views on landcare, Dr Anton Imeson (2008) stated that, “it is difficult to have a direct definition of landcare; both words care and land have an extremely powerful symbolic content. Caring about things is the force that makes things actualized in reality”.

The terms land and care have been combined in several ways during the establishment and implementation of conservation programmes over several decades (considered further in the next Section). More recently, over the last 20 years, landcare has become much associated with movements with at least partial goals of increasing action at the local level, especially with the rapidly growing landcare movements. Among definitions of Landcare as a special approach, based on various sources, are:

- Landcare is a conservation movement that brings local communities, private corporations and government agencies together to support hands-on action to promote sustainable land and water management.
- Landcare is a movement, ethic, and culture of caring for the land; a community-based group process rooted in sustainability principles; the well recognized “caring hands” brand; an umbrella for linking actions and funds; and a comprehensive and integrated approach to resource management.
- Landcare is a world leader in building partnerships between communities, governments, and businesses—fostering the ability of the community and corporations to take action to repair and protect our environment (<http://www.landcareonline.com/page.asp?pID=84>).
- Landcare is a way of providing opportunities for people to practice their land ethic with out coercion, but in the spirit of stewardship and volunteerism, complemented with various types of support and incentives.

These definitions all have one thing in common, namely that Landcare is an approach that brings people together to work towards conservation and repairing the land. In the Australian Decade of Landcare Report by Campbell, 1992, it was suggested that the term Landcare should broadly apply to sustainable natural resource management activities and not be devalued by the use of similar names.

To sum up the definitions, Landcare is an initiating tool with different 'bottom-up' approaches that bring all types of people together on an equal basis. The focus is to optimize productivity and sustainability of natural resources so as to result in greater productivity, food security, job creation and ultimately a better quality of life for all.

3.2 History of Landcare

Caring for the land has always been part of human history, but Australia led and introduced the "modern" Landcare approach. Landcare as an approach began in 1986 in Australia when landholder groups initiated community-based collective action to address land degradation and natural resource management issues (Catacutan and Tanui, 2007). Since then, various governmental and local programmes have been developed in order to support local action. The Landcare approach has ever since been supported by appropriate technologies, partnership development and institution building. Most projects have focused on conserving the land. The Landcare movement was based on the community-based approach that employs innovative solutions to Natural Resources Management (NRM) challenges, linking farmers with the broader community and helping them influence NRM policy (Catacutan and Tanui, 2007).

Additionally, Landcare has been used as a strategic approach for sharing knowledge and developing collective action at the local level to deal with problems of agricultural land degradation (Cramb et al., 2006). Farmers have also learned new technologies and developed new expertise that has allowed them to increase their income.

The term, as well as the whole concept of Landcare, has become much wider than just a definition of a community-based approach. Evidence for this is well presented in the definitions section above. At present, with global environmental issues such as land degradation, loss of biological diversity and climate change all becoming major threats to human existence, approaches such as Landcare strongly need to be adopted, not only just by communities, but also by all land users.

3.2.1 Landcare beyond Australia

After a period of establishment and proving its value as a unique tool in achieving an improved balance between environmental, social and economic goals, the principles of Landcare based on the Australian Landcare model began to spread to other countries and continents. Today, Landcare based on, or with resemblance to, this model is implemented in or has been adapted by some 17 countries or multi-lateral organizations, including United States of America, Germany, Iceland, New Zealand, Philippines, United Kingdom, Canada, Fiji, South Africa, the Pacific islands, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Jamaica. Initial work is also going on in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Jamaica and Sri Lanka.

Among milestones in the international spread of Landcare were the establishment in 1999 of the non-profit organization The Secretariat for International Landcare (<http://www.landcareinternational.net/>), and the International Landcare conferences in 2000 and 2006 and perhaps more, which led to the formation of IL (<http://www.landcareinternational.net/>): IYLC. (<http://www.landcareinternational.net/>) a professional association of individuals (and institutions) committed to the principles, philosophy and practices of Landcare. Following these and other activities, more efforts were put into promoting this approach and forming professional gateways and networking. Awareness has also been given to Landcare through seminars, active learning and Web sites.

Evidence from reports has shown that Landcare as an approach has had significant positive impacts on farmers and countries where it has been practiced. Landcare has markedly contributed to improving NRM and livelihood outcomes in areas where it is active (Catacutan and Tanui, 2007).

3.2.2 Landcare, land tenure and land stewardship

Stewardship, one of the components of Landcare, is defined by Worrell and Appleby (2000) as the responsible use (including conservation) of natural resources in a way that takes a full and balanced account of the interests of society, future generations and other species, as well as of private needs, and accepts significant answerability to society.

In a farming context, stewardship refers to the notion that farmers are stewards of the land and that farming is a way of life that places implicit responsibility on farmers to look after the land for future generations (Curtis and De Lacy, 1996). Stewardship has relevance to aspects of land tenure and property rights, which makes it applicable across a wide range of fields of resource use. Stewardship is important in addressing land tenure, which is one of the major contributors to land degradation, mainly in developing countries, where land tenure systems limit the possibility people have to take full responsibility for the land.

Certain land tenure structures may constitute an obstacle to the adoption of sound soil management and conservation measures on farms. Landcare thus also means pursuing ways and means to overcome such obstacles with respect to the rights, duties and responsibilities of land owners, tenants and land users alike (FAO, 1982). In addition, as indicated in the Earth Charter (<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/>), Principle 9 is to eradicate poverty as an ethical, social and environmental imperative.

Stewardship is both responsible and answerable. Therefore by giving people stewardship for the land it becomes possible to develop sustainability and encourage a broader way of thinking about what could be done in order to benefit from the land. "This Land is Your Land."

4. LESSONS LEARNED FROM PREVIOUS LANDCARE PROJECTS

Lessons learned from countries where landcare has been practised are fundamental in the development of IYLC. In this section, landcare experiences from a few countries are discussed. Views on challenges faced with developing landcare have been presented. A further analysis of landcare experience from more countries is recommended to aid in programme development of the IYLC.

4.1 Australia

The following experience from Landcare approaches and projects in Australia is mainly based on the First National Landcare Facilitator project review (Campbell, 1992), the Australian Decade of Landcare report (Marriott et al.,2006) Queensland Landcare International Conference report (Marriott et al.,2006), as well as from other documents published over the years.

- In his report on the first three years of Landcare in Australia, Campbell (1992) provided valuable insights on both experiences from this initial phase of landcare and recommendations for the future. Among the many lessons learned after this short time was that many people involved in landcare were learning a lot about their own property, about the land in their district, and about issues they may have rarely considered in the past.
- Campbell (1989, in Curtis and De Lacy, 1996) discussed the benefits of Landcare participation from the landholder perspective in terms of landholders being able to share their problems and ideas and, in doing so, to gain support and encouragement from others to push ahead and work together to tackle common problems more effectively.
- Furthermore, Landcare groups have opportunities for learning about land management and to plan at property and catchment levels so that resource management is based upon a shared understanding of important physical, social and economic processes operating within and beyond the farm gate; obtain financial and technical assistance from government that they would be unlikely to receive as individual landholders; and have increased opportunities for social interaction with other members of their local community.
- The development of Landcare has been one of the largest contributing factors in giving Australians new ways to tackle environmental problems, and has increased their success in soil conservation and salinity control; eliminating introduced (exotic) bush land weeds and restoring native ground flora; restoring degraded lands; revegetating areas; controlling pests, while plants and animals yield more for their farmers; and in better water management. Through Landcare programmes, participants have also developed a deeper understanding of the connection between economic and environmental impacts of land degradation issues, and the importance of this link for their own benefits.

- The Australian government and other agencies have been committed to funding the Landcare programme and related activities. Today, Landcare is funded through The Natural Heritage Trust (NHT), which has been funding the programme since 1997. Associated benefits from Landcare being included in NHT include more skilled resource managers, communities deciding their future directions, improved productivity and profitability, enhanced protection and restoration of biodiversity, and more people taking direct and indirect roles in improving NRM.
- A characteristic of Australian Landcare is that the government supports it heavily but does not lead. In other words, the “bureaucrats” trust the people. The community is regarded as comprising positive, responsible, intelligent, co-operative and technically competent individuals capable of managing finances collaboratively and making sensible and at least medium-term decisions. Trust empowerment is brought to the community.
- In summary, Australian Landcare may be regarded as egalitarian, democratic and respects local knowledge – it is an approach “of the people, by the people, for the people!” It has a “flat” organization, with no pretentious, complex or unnecessary hierarchy.

4.2 The Philippines

Adapted from the Australian model, Landcare in the Philippines started off in the mid-1990s as an important strategy for sharing knowledge and developing collective action at the local level to deal with problems of agricultural land degradation. With support from the government and other agencies, such as ACIAR and AusAID, community Landcare groups were formed. Such groups identify problems at the local level and mobilize information, community effort and finances to help improve the management of their soil, water, vegetation and other natural resources (Cramb *et al.*, 2006). The groups operate countrywide and provide valuable lessons with regard to IYLC, including:

- The Landcare approach has expanded faster than expected, and has contributed to more rapid adoption of soil conservation and agroforestry technologies. Yields and income from farming have increased in such areas and soil erosion impact has been reduced.
- Farmers who participated in Landcare training adopted the principles and also showed their neighbours how to use new technologies. This point indicates that Landcare also creates a sense of knowledge sharing among the local people.
- The activities succeed because there was cross-sectional co-ordination and networking among stakeholders. In every way, there was acknowledgement of what is called the “Landcare Triangle”, meaning Landcare that includes all possible partners.
- Landcare has worked well where it has been able to introduce farmers to readily adoptable

practices that meet immediate needs. This was done by linking the conservation practices with productive technologies.

- Technologies to be used must fit the biophysical and socio-economic environments in question. The technologies to be used should also be of low risk and culturally acceptable. This increases the chances of applying what has been learned among the farmers.

4.3 Eastern Africa (Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda and Ethiopia)

- In Eastern Africa, the Landcare approach has become an important driver in promoting sustainable management of the environment and of natural resources (Catacutan and Tanui, 2007). The experience from this approach shows that local initiatives yield the most effective and reliable on-ground results, contributing significantly to the vision of the MDGs.
- The inception of Landcare in East Africa (Catacutan, 2007) followed an action-research and capacity building process, to better understand the socio-economic, cultural and policy contexts within which the Landcare approach can successfully thrive.
- The Landcare approach has encouraged more farmers to willingly join and become involved in projects and training that work toward sustainable land use. Even though they initially lacked necessary understanding and knowledge, this was addressed by Landcare training, through knowledge building and understanding of various environmental issues.
- Most of the participating farmers joined Landcare groups primarily to gain access to training and to technical advice, and in order to get some assistance (e.g. with planting materials), and to be part of a wider group. Landcare associated them with people and resources beyond their immediate community, and this served as a motivation for others to join as well.
- Building capacity for Landcare through dedicated champions or individuals is possible although resources are modest, in that it allows for a natural process of assimilation and commitment building. The positive experience from Eastern African Landcare is hoped to lead to further adoption of this movement in other parts in Africa.

4.4 Iceland

In Iceland, over the last two decades, considerable progress has been made in increasing participatory approaches in conservation work. As a step in reaching the long-term goal of making the land users the true custodians of the land, a participatory programme for revegetation was launched in 1990, termed "Farmers Heal the Land" (Arnalds, 2000, 2005). This programme, which uses the Landcare approach, has stimulated land users' interest in caring for the land, and their role in conservation and revegetation has been greatly increased through governmental incentives, such as support for

co-operative action. The land user had previously been a passive recipient of externally formulated extension messages and research recommendations (Arnalds, 2005). More details on the Icelandic approach are provided in Section 9.

4.5 What to keep in mind

The success stories are numerous, but there are many pitfalls to avoid. Among recommendations that can be drawn from experiences and documents on this subject on what to keep in mind when designing Landcare projects are:

- Make sure people are willing and committed to participate in the projects. As Campbell (1992) stated, commitment is an essential condition for sustainability--people must want it--but it is not a sufficient condition. It is also important that commitment is matched with resources, knowledge and good processes for planning for changes, otherwise people might become discouraged and there will be no positive impacts.
- Recognition of the need for continuous management training, and better communications networks.
- Targeting the right people on a departmental and community level. Community participation should be encouraged right at the start of a project. New projects should be integrated within the existing structures that deal with similar issues, e.g. restoring degraded land.
- Cramb et al. (2006) pointed out that the governments and all agencies who will be involved in setting up Landcare projects should recognize that landcare is a continuous action learning programme; thus they should continue to allocate resources for participatory measures. Regularly monitoring and evaluating activities should be conducted.
- Strong collaboration and active participation from all possible stakeholders is needed for the Landcare approach to succeed.
- In particular, landcare requires management skills (to communicate and negotiate with potential partners) and technical and scientific skills (to identify problems, assess solutions and monitor and evaluate impacts).
- An adequately resourced and professionally managed Landcare support agency is crucial if the Landcare approach is to be effectively disseminated on a broader scale (Cramb et al., 2006). Cramb et al. further advised that all procedures of projects should be documented and projects should be evaluated. Evaluating of capacity building efforts is very important.

4.6 Insights from developing countries

In September 2004, a group of participants from developing countries at a Landcare International Conference Session in Toowoomba, Australia, had a discussion on landcare. Among their ideas on further development of the Landcare approach and how it could be more effective were:

- Supportive or enabling environmental policies have to be in place for Landcare projects to function effectively. This is still a challenge in some developing countries. These challenges are mainly associated with interacting harmoniously with operating alongside existing local or regional organizations, as well as local government, to work effectively within the grassroots community. The participants recommended that the policies in place should favour decentralization rather than centralization, because decentralization was thought to be more likely to work at the grassroots level. Landcare projects should obtain broad support across the political spectrum in every country, and should be a grassroots movement rather than top-down, or perhaps better as a “middle-in” approach, whereby the government is in the middle giving support.
- The second point was that poverty (in addition to refusal to change old practices and lack of awareness), is one of the limiting factors preventing most developing countries from generating enthusiasm for landcare. In developing countries, most people tend to prioritize food and income security, with insufficient means allocated to conserving natural resources. A way of avoiding this problem is to use an integrated and sustainable development of resources approach, by applying an approach that will solve many problems at once instead of just one.
- The third point the group made is that it is difficult and time consuming to engage local communities in projects. This problem makes fostering and facilitating projects time consuming. As indicated in the lessons learned above, this problem has been reduced where bottom-up approaches have been applied successfully.
- Finally, all participants agreed that landcare is a “people-care” process. People become more aware of their environment, their ability to influence it, and the benefits it could bring to them. While there were quite different cultural and social settings, many of the principles were the same, and it is a matter of taking different pathways to arrive at the same destination.

Based on the above recommendations, establishing IYLC could be of a great value in furthering the practice of integrated approaches and sustainable land use, not only in developing countries but also in most other countries where such an approach is weak or lacking.

Experiences from Landcare indicate a “proof of concept”, namely that community-driven approaches with broader partnerships are essential elements to addressing the world’s key environmental, social and economic challenges. The approach also has a high positive impact on the people involved (e.g. change of behaviour in order to conserve) and is easily adaptable and applicable in a wider and

inclusive context. All of these values of Landcare are essential ingredients in good international approaches for sustaining our future.

5. LANDCARE AND INTERNATIONAL YEARS WITHIN THE UN SYSTEM

At the International Forum on Soils, Society and Global Change, hosted by Iceland to commemorate its century of successful conservation and restoration of soil and vegetative resources, IYLC was suggested. This suggestion was backed with the thinking that a year would be a distinctive opportunity to use the convening power of the Landcare approach to capture the attention of and mobilize individuals, organizations, communities and the public at large. The year would probably facilitate the delivery of messages and programmes to a wide range of people at local, national, regional and global levels, drawing diverse groups together in a positive and supportive environment.

Since their initiation in 1959, a total of 41 International Years have been designated or proclaimed by the UN. These have highlighted issues such as Mountains (2002), Cultural Heritage (2002), Ecotourism (2002), Freshwater (2003), Rice (2004), Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition (2004), Sport and Physical Education (2005), Physics (2005), and International Year of Deserts and Desertification (2006).

During 2008, four International Years are being celebrated. These are: Year of the Potato, Year of Languages, Year of Sanitation, and Years of Planet Earth (2007-2009). International Years planned in the near future include: International Year of Natural Fibres (2009), International Year of Reconciliation (2009), International Year of Astronomy (2009), International Year of Biodiversity (2010) and International Year of Forests (2011).

An International Year of Landcare would fit well into this range of years and be a springboard for launching new, and strengthening existing, programmes, using the Landcare approach to achieve internationally recognized development goals such as the MDGs.

5.1. Landcare and the UN Conventions

Implementing IYLC would contribute to the efforts to cultivate a “global partnership for development” and be important in furthering synergy between the Global Environmental Conventions:

- UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Land degradation can trigger a vicious cycle of environmental degradation, impoverishment, migration and conflicts, often also putting the political stability of affected countries and regions at risk. IYLC would be a good follow-up to the International Year of Desert and Desertification (IYDD), held in 2006.
- UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). With an aim of increasing awareness and

sharing knowledge about natural resources, IYLC would contribute to protecting the important biodiversity of the world, and have strong links to the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010.

- UN Convention on Climate Change (UNCCC): Climate change affects land potentials through drought, flooding and other impacts. Yet when the land is degraded, it emits more greenhouse gases and in turn worsens climate change. The advancement of Landcare approaches can have a large role in mitigating and adapting to global warming. Organically managed soils can convert carbon dioxide from a greenhouse gas into a food-producing asset. Soils contain more carbon than is contained in vegetation and the atmosphere combined (UNCCD Web site). Consequently, improving or restoring land health is a valuable tool in mitigating climate change by converting misplaced CO₂ into organic matter stored in soil and vegetation. Therefore it becomes imperative to make concerted efforts to put the issues of land and soil as major themes in seeking solutions to the climate change problems.

5.2 Characteristics of the UN declared International Years

International Years (IY) are now regular events, and most often more than one is celebrated in a single year. Their objectives are determined by the nature of the issue to be addressed, with regard to its execution and end result. As anticipated, there are no distinct or strict rules and characteristics for an IY. However, one of the main objectives that all years have in common is to awaken interest and focus the attention of people on a certain subject. This objective is achieved through greater awareness and sharing of information.

In line with that, Stirling (2007) outlined essential features that all IYs, as well as any large-scale projects, should incorporate:

- There should be widely understood programme objectives, with clearly defined boundaries.
- There should be widespread acceptance by the relevant communities, and other stakeholders, of the need and benefits of the programme.
- In most cases, it is beneficial if the programme is initiated and established by a group of motivated persons who in due course interact with potential sponsors, governments, funding agencies, etc., and with the public at large.
- Financial issues, in particular funding arrangements, need to be defined at an early stage. In general, processes for establishing an IY at the UN level, should take into account:
- The criteria and procedures contained in the guidelines in considering future proposals for IYs.

- A UN body has to be invited at country level to facilitate the implementation of the Year. The United Nations body has to be selected to take a lead in facilitation and implementation of an IY.
- A proposal needs to be submitted for proclamation at the United Nation General Assembly.
- The proposed theme should reflect importance, and this should be clearly outlined in the proposal.

5.3 International Years and the importance of Landcare

A growing number of IYs reflect the rise of global concerns with regard to social, economic and natural environment aspects. Examples of some recent IYs with high relevance to the goals of Landcare, and that link to the importance of Landcare past, present and future years, are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. *International Years and their relevance to Landcare*

Years	Title of Years	Lead organizations	Potential relevance to Landcare
1996	International Year of Eradicating Poverty		Yes
2001	International Year of Volunteers	FESA	Yes
2002	International Year of Ecotourism	UNEP and WTO	Yes
2002	International Year of Mountains	FAO	Yes
2002	International Year for Cultural Heritage	UNESCO	Yes
2003	International Year of Freshwater	UNESCO	Yes
2004	International Year of Rice	FAO	Yes
2005	International Year of Sport and Physical Education	IUPAP	Yes
2006	International Year of Desert and Desertification	UNCCD	Yes
2007	International Year of the Dolphin	UNEP	Yes
2008	International Year of Sanitation		Yes
2008	International Year of Languages	UNESCO	Yes
2008	International Year of Planet Earth	IUGS and UNESCO	Yes
2008	International Year of Potato	FAO	Yes
2008	International Year of Reef	UNEP	Yes
2009	International Year of Astronomy	IAU	No
2009	International Year of Natural Fibres	FAO	Yes
2009	International Year of Reconciliation		Yes
2010	International Year of Biodiversity	CBD and UNEP	Yes
2011	International Year of Forest	UN Forum on Forests	Yes

(Acronyms: IAU International Astronomical Union, IUGS International Union of Geological Sciences, IUPAP International Union of Pure and Applied Physics). The rest of the acronyms are mentioned within the main body and appendix 1)

The table shows clearly the diversity of UN International Years, and the topics that those years deal with, as well as the agencies that launched those years. The table also shows the leading organizational agency or agencies. The concepts of Landcare are related to almost all years implemented by the UN, thus supporting the concept of establishing IYLC.

5.4 Accomplishments: examples from other International Years

In general, most of these years seem to have achieved valuable accomplishments for the benefit of global society. Some examples with relation to the theme of landcare include:

- Year of Mountains, 2002. Attention has focused attention on mountainous areas and the preservation of vulnerable natural habitats. In this case it also matters that agriculture has in many countries been moving into mountainous areas due to lack of cultivable land in the valleys or on the deltas. Mountains and mountain glaciers furthermore are important sources of water for irrigation and agriculture, as in the Himalayas, for instance, where rivers like the Ganges-Brahmaputra flow from the mountains and down to the sea. (See <http://www.mountains2002.org/>)
- International Year of Freshwater, 2003. Among its important accomplishments were the development of educational projects and awareness-building tools, geared towards all ages, all countries, and all professions through Websites, newsletters, publications, brochures, media kits, exhibitions and partnerships. These generated thousands of activities at local, national and international levels. Examples of such outreach materials could be useful to spread awareness on landcare (See <http://www.unesco.org/water/iyfw2/>)
- Year of Rice, 2004. The success of IYR 2004 has given a new impetus to efforts to develop sustainable rice-based systems that will reduce hunger and poverty and contribute to environmental conservation and a better life for present and future generations (See <http://www.fao.org/rice2004/>).
- Year of Desert and Desertification, 2006. One of the main achievements is that a Decade of Desert and Desertification (2010-2020) was proposed and agreed upon by the UN General Assembly on 19 December 2007 (See (http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/en/calendar_years_decades_08.html?print)). This is a highlight because it indicates the good collaboration formed and the enthusiasm characterizing the follow-up initiatives after the year. A decade of Desert and Desertification will have multiple effects. In addition, several outputs of the decade provide suggestions about how to strengthen existing, often well-established, aspects of the UNCCD implementation process, and how to address the Convention's long-term goals by focusing on a variety of core themes (See <http://www.iydd.org/>).

5.5 Procedures for establishing an International Year

The United Nations has formally adopted guidelines and a course of action to be followed for the proclamation of a (UN) International Year. These criteria and procedures not only apply to the UN agencies, but are sometimes adapted and followed by other international agencies, such as The International Council for Science and The International Union for Conservation of Nature in proclaiming international events.

Proposals for International Years to the UN should follow these procedures and criteria. Looking back, many, if not most, of the proposals are dropped as time passes, perhaps because of dwindling enthusiasm by their main drivers or failure to meet the basic criteria required (Stirling, 2007). The criteria and procedures for establishing an IY are listed in Table 2. They constituted guidance when compiling this report.

Table 2. *United Nations procedures for the proclamation of the International Years*

Criteria
- A subject proposed for an international year should be consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations as stated in its Charter.
- It should be of priority concern to all or the majority of countries and should contribute to the development of international development of international co-operation in solving global problems, in particular those affecting developing countries.
- It should involve action at the international and national levels and should be expected to generate sufficient follow-up at both levels in the form of new activities or the strengthening of existing ones.
- There should be an interval of at least two years between proclamation of international years and a longer period between years concerning similar subjects.
- The proclamation of an International Year should be considered only when celebrations of shorter duration (a month, week, day) would not suffice.
- An international year should not be proclaimed when a world conference has been convened separately on the same subject or when a subject is already of wide international concern and effective programmes exist to further its ends.

Procedures

- As a general rule, a final decision on a proposal is taken by the General Assembly not earlier than one full year after the introduction of the proposal in order to take into account the views expressed by all Member States and allow a thorough assessment of the proposal by the competent organs.
- In general, there should be a period of two years between the proclamation and the beginning of an International Year.
- An International Year should not be proclaimed before basic arrangements necessary for its financing (which in principle should be based on voluntary contributions) and its organization have been made.
- There should be effective co-ordination of the activities of all United Nations organizations and bodies concerned to avoid duplication.
- Each International Year should have objectives that are likely to lead to identifiable and practicable results.
- Procedures for evaluation should be established in the preparatory phase and form part of the of the implementation and follow-up of each year.

Sources: Resolution 53/199 of the UN General Assembly, 15 December 1998

Although the UN has put up such criteria and procedures, Stirling (2007) pointed out that some Years have been viewed by many as a self-serving publicity vehicle. In plans for establishing IYLC, this needs to be avoided. For this reason, some criteria with high relevance for establishing IYLC are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. *Suggested criteria for establishing an International Year of Landcare*

- There is a necessity to engage in strong international co-operation to fulfill the aims of the programme.
- There should be widely recognized benefits to be gained through setting a fixed duration for the activity.
- There should be a degree of topicality and/or urgency in the proposed programme.
- There should be added-value on top of on-going existing programmes.
- There should be the expectation of significant follow-up in the form of new activities and the strengthening of existing ones.
- There should be benefits to be gained through public awareness and education.
- There is a need to establish indicators and a monitoring system, as well as setting criteria to measure the achievements.

5.6 Appropriate timing for an International Year of Landcare

The timing of the implementation of an International Year of Landcare (IYLC) would depend on many interacting factors, including the period needed for planning and other years that have been proposed or approved.

In the UN procedures and criteria for the proclamation, it is stated that there should be at least a two-year interval between IYs concerning similar subjects. However, this rule has in fact not been observed, and this year, 2008, has for instance has five IYs running at the same time.

In September 2008, the calendar for IYs and Decades showed that the next three years are already reserved in order to celebrate the following IYs:

- 2009, International Year of Natural Fibres. The aim of this year is to eradicate poverty and improve food security by generating income from fibres.
- 2010, International Year of Biodiversity. The aim is to bring greater international attention to the sustainable use of natural resources and preventing the loss of biodiversity.
- 2011, International Year of Forests: This year aims to eradicate poverty and improve sustainable developmental practices.

These Years all include the common overall goals of eradicating poverty and increasing sustainable development. Eradication of poverty is described by the UN as “the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in particular for developing countries”. Additionally, addressing poverty and achieving sustainable development is a crucial need, and many visions have been directed toward realizing these objectives.

Landcare embraces all of these goals, and it might be ideal for the IYLC to be launched in 2012 as a follow-up to the above-mentioned years, especially in the light of the importance of landcare in the battle for eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development. A period of four years from now seems to be sufficiently long for proper planning and preparation for implementing the year. However, the timeframe for necessary preparation would have to be carefully considered.

In addition to the above reasons, celebrating IYLC around 2012 would fit excellently with the second UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty 2008-2017, as well as the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification, 2010-2020.

5.7 The key drivers for the International Year

An International Year of Landcare (IYLC) has enormous potential to increase awareness and generate commitment to developing more sustainable systems of land use and management among nations, communities and individuals. However, commitment is only a single ingredient, the other being resources (money and materials), processes for planning a year, the strength of the selected lead agency, and governmental roles in carrying out this task.

The decision power for proclamation of an IY rests in the hands of the UN Assembly. The UN Assembly also decides which agencies should launch and implement the proposed International Year. Such an agency usually has goals linked to the proposed year and sometimes to the convention, within the agency. The UN has many agencies and conventions which deal with and are set to address the different issues relevant to landcare. For example, the UNCCD deals with combating desertification, UNESCO with education and cultural, FAO with food and eradicating poverty, UNEP deals with the environment for development, and many more.

The organizations selected to launch the project would be responsible for making sure that the goals and objectives of such a project are achieved at the end of the project life. Thus, it is important that the nature of such an organization fits well with the goals of IYLC, and that it has sufficient strength in the relevant areas for launching and administrating the various tasks within one ambitious project. Experiences from previous IYs, e.g. the International Year of Desert and Desertification, can provide valuable insights to aid in such decisions.

Yet, as former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated, “The United Nations once dealt only with governments. By now, we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partnerships involving governments, international organizations, the business community and civil society. In today’s world, we depend on each other.”

This means that, while there is a need for clear and efficient leadership from UN agencies, the success of an International UN Year of Landcare would entirely depend on the ability of the lead agencies to work in conjunction with other bodies and at inter-agency levels worldwide during the implementation process. The global environmental policies report also supported this point, that initiatives must be multilateral and launched jointly by industrialized and all countries.

An International Year of Landcare has enormous potential to generate commitment to developing more sustainable systems of land use and management among nations, communities and individuals. However, commitment is only a single ingredient, others being resources (money and materials) and processes for planning as a year, and mostly who is driving such processes. The question of who has the decision-making power and what role governments exactly need to play is fundamental.

5.8 Role of national governments in the International Years

In many countries, if not all, governmental actions and policies influence most land use. Consequently, the success or failure of the International Year's ambitions will largely depend on the actions by national governments and the strength of their co-operation with other internal partners. The activities will be most clearly visible to the public if the planning and implementation are done right at the national level.

According to Najam (2005), to make a treaty operative implementation involves specific actions taken by the respective states within their own legal system. This is the stage that, if not well set up from the beginning, can lead either to success or failure. The year should be well introduced and supported by the national governments in all of the participating countries. Furthermore, all groups initiating and implementing the project have to be highly motivated; if not, there are high chances of the project becoming a failure. Thus, responsibilities and roles at the national government level should include:

- Making sure that the project is well introduced countrywide and that the activities are being carried out as planned.
- Making sure that there are sufficient funds to carry out the planned activities. Funds are allocated from many sources to those carrying out environmental projects, but criteria and competition are strong factors. Among such sources for funding agricultural, environmental and educational projects in low- and middle-income countries are UN agencies, International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and other related agencies. Most funds for carrying out IYLC activities in the higher income countries would have to come from internal sources.
- Making sure that the project is implemented by the most appropriate ministries. This set-up would differ from country to country because the ministries have different names and different responsibilities. For example, in Iceland, IYLC could most likely be implemented as a co-operative task by the Ministries for Foreign Affairs, of the Environment and of Fisheries and Agriculture, while in Namibia such a project would be implemented by both the Ministry of Agriculture Water and Forestry and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, with the Ministry of Land and Resettlement having a supporting role. Besides, dealing with land is a broad issue and requires a multi-sectoral approach and inter-ministerial co-ordination. Therefore the national governments should not concentrate on selecting the right ministry as such but rather on ensuring that the project runs well. In this case, all possible ministries and institutions can put into practise activities that are in line with their own works and that will contribute toward the success of the year. Caring for the land should be everybody's responsibility.

- Inviting all possible stakeholders to participate in activities and ensure good interaction among the stakeholders. All ministries (sectors), agencies, institutions and local communities should be encouraged to give their input into the implementation process.
- Making sure that the project educates, creates awareness and stimulates participation among the grassroots participants.
- Making sure that there is excellent collaboration and information sharing among all stakeholders, locally, nationally, regionally and globally.
- Seeing that the respective governments spearhead promotion of IYLC nationally, and that they ensure that the concept of landcare becomes and remains a household concern.
- The national governments should also strive to ensure that the project will result in positive impacts and changes in the society, especially within local communities. They need to assist people to change their way of thinking and way of living towards sustainable ways.

It would be important to maintain a delicate balance between the role of governments and the role of other partners at all levels within IYLC. While clear leadership is needed within such an international activity, care must be taken to create enabling environments for the various interest groups that are or may be the main keys to a successful implementation. As an example of how delicate this balance is, Cook *et al.* (1997) indicated that within the Australian Landcare movement, Landcare groups tended to fail if the government was very direct in its behaviour towards the respective groups. At the same time, the groups where government played little or no supporting role were also unsuccessful. Thus, in planning IYLC or activities in general the governments need to keep in mind this delicate balance: the potential for success is in their own hands.

6. INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LANDCARE

Strengthening the Landcare approach globally, through establishing an IY has many qualities. Among those, is that the Landcare approach has proven to be one of the best ways to exchange knowledge about on-ground works, research, monitoring, planning, education and community awareness. The approach also works well for the people on the ground, and is easily adapted to a wide range of areas.

As with many of the other IYs, one of the main objectives could be to increase awareness of the issue, on global to local scales, in order to stimulate sustainability of use and recovery of damaged land resources. An IYLC would be an opportunity for binding nations and all possible partners together to:

- Share the common goal of overcoming land degradation and bring about positive changes toward sustainable development.
- Strengthen and establish superb and positive networks for the fight against land issues and which will help to promote grassroots participation.
- Form an alliance, and strengthen the ability to quickly form results-oriented task forces.

Furthermore, the year should support the development of landcare in interested countries, through research, training, environmentally oriented education, and the collection, dissemination and adoption of relevant knowledge, and international co-ordination of peer-to-peer learning and educational exchange activities among landcare participants.

6.1 Goals

In general the overall goal of the International Years (IY) should be to bring attention to the need to take better care of land resources and the important role of landcare, both as a concept and as a movement, in facilitating this crucial task. Such a year would help to facilitate and improve networks and partnerships. This could contribute to achieving a coherent organized institutional landscape, shared responsibilities toward sustainable use of land, and it will also help to avoid duplication and unnecessary overlap of information among related organizations. The preparation and follow-up should be regarded as a part of the process, built around the Year itself, and there needs to be good assessments of outcomes.

Other possible goals should be, inter alia:

- Enhance capacity at all levels to plan and implement sustainable landcare programmes and activities.
- Increase awareness toward sustainable land use through improving education and collection and sharing of information.
- Raise awareness to accelerate progress towards the MDG target to reduce poverty and hunger and to ensure environmental sustainability.
- Promote ethics of soil stewardship and landcare through capacity building, collaboration, sharing of knowledge and experience.
- Encourage all people, in particular grassroots participants and children to take collective action on local conservation issues and to develop positive attitudes to preserve and restore the natural environment.

- Promote and defend the cultural heritage of land.
- Follow up on goals of the International Year of Desert and Desertification, and aid in the follow-up of relevant goals and conclusions from other IYs and activities.

6.2. Core themes

Landcare is a broad term and is associated with all aspects of life: social, economic and natural. As such, the year could address a wide range of social aspects, in line with the main physical aspects, such as sustainable land management, climate change, biodiversity loss and deforestation, soil and land degradation, freshwater scarcity and pollution, effective farming and social and financial environmental issues.

6.3 Who should be involved?

The “who should be involved” question was a tricky one decades ago. Nowadays, with an increasingly critical environmental crisis, such as food shortage and climate change, the answer to the WHO question has become less complicated because nowadays we are threatened by or contributing to the environmental crisis. Nevertheless, the follow-up question is how many people really become committed to participate in the projects. Campbell (1992) indicated that one of the keys to becoming more sustainable is for the land users, the people advising them and the community generally to be far more in tune with the condition and the characteristics of natural resources so that emerging “problems” are immediately visible, not invisible or confined to the concerns of scientists, engineers or regulators.

Full participation and commitment in activities is a trigger for change and one of the main characteristics of successful conservation. However, participation and commitment should involve all stakeholders. The Landcare approach is a triadic partnership, with a continuous interaction process between Landcare groups (local people, farmers), governmental units, technical and financial providers and facilitators (researchers, funding providers, etc.).

Land users and other local people, conservation agencies, scientists, advisors, universities, colleges, schools, churches, businesses, government ministries and NGOs must all acknowledge the shared role that they can play in promoting landcare – and participate in those functions. If established, IYLC will not only benefit government and the poor as well as the rich, but also the entire planet.

Although the UN General Assembly always calls out to all nations to participate in celebrating an IY, this is often poorly done. Not all potential stakeholders participate; in most cases, countries join but less is done to get the message to people in those respective countries, especially the local people. Communities are less aware of the significance of certain projects initiated at international or national levels, and even less aware of how to become involved. In some ways, certain countries

do not participate, with an attitude that certain issues are not within their scope of interest. IYLC should be planned in ways that foster shared responsibilities. The planning should be carried out in the right manner, at the right time and with the right people. The right time is now!

The essence of the integrated approach finds expression in the co-ordination of the sectoral planning and management activities concerned with the various aspects of land use and land resources (Catacutan and Tanui, 2007). For example, farmers need to have good knowledge of all aspects linked to farming (e.g. soil fertility, land and labour availability, etc.). Integration will be based on multi-stakeholder situations and multiple objectives.

Catacutan and Tanui (2007) showed that stakeholder engagement is not inherently difficult—the difficulties are externally imposed. By the way the rules of engagement are set “Solidarity” and “Shared Responsibility” are also a common force throughout the Earth Charter (See <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org>).as well (<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org>). In addition, Van Noordwijk (in Catacutan, 2007) stated that natural resources are influenced by the day-to-day management decisions of large numbers of different categories of actors or stakeholders at various scales. Therefore Integrated Natural Resources Management (INRM) should be stakeholder-centred.

Involvement of all countries in establishing or participating in the Year will increase sharing of ideas, including implementation possibilities. Small- and large-holder farmers, policy-makers, managers, administrators, businesses, scientists, communities and other economic and social sectors should all join the projects of landcare.

Healing, conserving and managing of the land should be everybody’s responsibility, regardless of their age, race, qualification or position. In many countries, it is still environmentalists, biologists and soil conservationists that measure and treat the effects of land degradation. This scenario should be reversed in every country: the need to treat causes should be spread out, and all land users should have a vital role to play in landcare. For all the above points to be achieved, the concept of a Year of Landcare needs voices to connect all concerned into a strong bond. Government, researchers, civil society, investors, businesses and so forth, all have to be involved.

6.4 Main implementation agency

The success of an international year will depend much on how the activities are planned; budget allocated to carry out activities; how and when the information is shared (conferences, meetings); the alliance between relevant agencies; and the support given to each country involved. Thus, the selection of a launching and leading agency has to be carefully considered. This process takes a long time to plan, and the need to identify the launching body at an early stage is very significant.

The global community has many agencies that would be relevant, and it is difficult to pinpoint which UN body could take the lead to prepare, launch and implement the IYLC. Regardless of this,

it is not wise for the year to be implemented by many organizations, perhaps two at the most. An example of such dual arrangement is that of the International Year of Mountains, 2002, which was jointly promoted by UNEP and FAO (See <http://www.unep.org/gc/gc22/Document/K0360247.doc>). Governing Council: (<http://www.unep.org/gc/gc22/Document/K0360247.doc>).

It is important to have clear responsibilities in the preparatory, launching and implementation stages of IYLC, but strong institutional collaboration is essential to support the ideals and objectives proclaimed for the international years. For example, FAO, UNEP, UNESCO, UNDP and UNCCD could all take roles in the planning stages, implementation and follow-up after the year, and be responsible for different tasks, provided co-ordination is clear.

Of these, the FAO may have specific features that may make it ideal as the main agency for launching the IYLC, including the following:

- Its aims are to improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices and ensure good nutrition for all. These aims fit in well with direct reasons for caring for land.
- FAO's strategic goals emphasize poverty reduction, sustainable agriculture and rural development, conservation of natural resources and economic contribution. If initiated, IYLC could endorse education and awareness of land ethics as part of common human culture.
- FAO has launched successful years in the past, such as the International Year of Mountains, the International Year of Rice and the International Year of Potato.
- In summary, it is stressed that support is needed from all relevant partners at all stages. Although FAO is mentioned here as a good candidate for a lead agency, other UN agencies could also serve in this role.

6.5 Potential Partnership

It is important to form a strong partnership of potential stakeholders worldwide to plan the process for preparing, implementing and following up on IYLC. The year could be supported by any organizations whose mandates are primarily environmental, have a strong environmental component (primarily development, sustainable development or project implementation) and organizations whose primary mandates are not environment or sustainable development, but nevertheless might have a significant impact on one or more environmental issues.

Among the organizations that match the above-mentioned roles, one way or another, are United Nations bodies and Specialized Agencies (such as UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNCCD, FAO, CCD, CBD, FCCC), the International Institute for Sustainable Development, World Agroforestry Centre, International Council of Science (ICSU), International Union for Conservation of Nature

(IUCN), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and many more. According to Axelrod (2005), most international institutions, in particular those given as examples, have accomplished much over the past several decades toward facilitating co-operation among nations in addressing environmental problems that transcend their borders and affect the global commons. A further indicative list of potential partners, although far from complete, is given in the Appendix.

7. GAINING SUPPORT FOR AND PREPARING AN INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LANDCARE

The process of fully evaluating the feasibility of having an IYLC is a complex one, and the same applies to its preparation. This has to be done at many levels: globally to gain intergovernmental support, nationally to secure strong in-country programmes, and at the local level to activate the people whose actions are the main determinants of land health. The main drivers for leading this work have to be identified. It is important to keep in mind that the process of planning IYLC can be very valuable in itself, and the same applies to the need for preparing a good follow-up. That is, the Year itself should not be looked upon as a stand-alone event but rather as a culmination of a process, with direct spin-offs to follow.

7.1 Global level

The main focus in the process of gaining support and establishing IYLC should be on bringing attention to the fundamental role of caring for the land in the global dialogue on sustainable land use. This can be done through several means, such as by creating an international platform for dialogue, bringing the issue up at conferences and other meetings.

Although politically sensitive, it is important to discuss the issue of IYLC at some of the major events hosted by the international community. This could be done in both a direct manner, such as by delegate interventions and more indirectly through side events and in informal meetings. The aim of such meetings would include answering the questions: What this is about? Why? For whom? How should we do it? Some of international and regional conferences that might be important in promoting the concept for establishing IYLC have already been scheduled, or are being planned. These include the conferences of the relevant Global Conventions, including UNCCD (with its CRIC 7 meeting 3-14 November 2008 in Turkey) UNCBD and UNFCCC (14th session of the Conference of Parties, 1-12 December 2008 in Poland). Meetings of intergovernmental organizations such as FAO (e.g. the 135th Governing Bodies Session on 14 November 2008), UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO and UNU are also of particular importance, especially as a lead agency has to be selected.

The issue of landcare is important to a high number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the international and regional level, and their meetings and newsletters would be ideal to build support for the year. This includes soil conservation societies, farmer or land user federations, The

World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Many of these organizations regularly bring together sustainable development leaders from different nations to debate, share, network, learn, commit themselves, vote and decide on further action and solutions for a diverse and sustainable world.

7.2 National Level

The submitting and passing of a resolution on IYLC depends on the individual countries, and the same applies to its success. To facilitate the process it would be best if a national focal point or co-ordinator could be appointed, to co-ordinate and identify the respective roles and build up support for both the preparation and implementation of the Year. The main tasks of these focal points should include co-ordinating participation, ensuring that there are secure funds to run the preparatory process, and facilitating activities by providing outreach and other possible support to carry out effective activities. The National Focal Point could, where relevant, be a part of existing International or National Landcare Committees dealing with matters related to landcare, or a special committee appointed for this role. It is important to activate the “most influential” representatives from all possible stakeholder groups, such as from governments, NGOs, scientists, advisors, educators, local community, media and inventors. As suggested by Mkhize Sizwe from South Africa, in e-mail correspondence about views on landcare: “very influential persons can be deployed to promote this concept within interested nationalities”.

If an agreement on IYLC is reached, the planning for implementation would need to include preparing the events that the respective countries would like to carry out within the framework of the year. Examples of such events and activities are discussed later, but during the preparatory stage, various avenues can be used to raise awareness about IYLC and prepare its execution and follow-up. Conferences, workshops, seminars, symposiums, including academic lectures, scientific meetings, round-table discussions, forums and press conferences can be taken advantage of, and cultural and local events could also be used to foster public interest about the year during the planning stages (e.g. the Icelandic Landcare Day).

7.3 Local level

In essence, Landcare is a bottom-up approach, a partnership between the community, government and business to “do something practical” about protecting and repairing our environment. Therefore, people at the community level should be selected to facilitate the participation of local people as well as to give feedback of any needs to the national co-ordinator during the year itself. Such a group, with a leader, should work alongside and with the national project co-ordinator during the year itself. Respected country focal points can invite the young and old to form voluntary groups, in order to assist the programme throughout the year and after.

7.4 Possible structure for preparation

In bringing the above planning considerations together, it is important to have a framework to facilitate the process and to ensure that responsibilities are well shared. Such a structure will facilitate the planning for the Year's programme. The possible structure is indicated (Fig.2). The same structure could be followed in forming strong networks during the planning stage, and perhaps during the actual year, if successful.



Figure 2. Possible facilitation structure

7.5 Strengthening the existing International Landcare (IL) Committee

Landcare is gaining strong ground in a number of countries, and this experience and enthusiasm is important in building up a global momentum for a successful IYLC. A good way forward would be to strengthen such existing activities to enable them to encompass a wider task.

At present there is an International Landcare (IL) Committee facilitated by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF). The committee is an association of individuals (senior landcare practitioners with diverse international and national landcare experience) and institutions committed to the principles, philosophy and practices of landcare. This committee was launched in 2004 at the South African Landcare Conference with the main aim of promoting national initiatives and establishing a global and regional network.

With an emphasis on developing and promoting landcare globally through research, training and other educational exchange activities, the committee has had an important role in broadening activities and enhancing such knowledge worldwide. Countries are invited to join in recognition and adoption of the Landcare approach as a model for environmental and natural resource conservation,

effective public-private partnerships, and authentic stakeholder participation in community action and decision-making (See www.landcareinternational.net; www.landcareinternational.net).

Strengthening this committee to facilitate the process as well as to explore and plan for establishing the Year would be crucial, and was emphasized for example by Working Group-1 at SSGC. As indicated by Catacutan and Tanui (2007), the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders, at an international level, will help many nations understand their land ethos in a concerted way and will build extensive partnerships between land users all over the world.

Although a formal international committee may be required to co-ordinate at the governmental level, the importance of NGOs, such as IL, should be emphasized. It could be very efficient to create an enabling environment for them to carry out many responsibilities especially targeted to the preparation and implementation of the year. A group like the IL committee could help ensure that there is strong collaboration between countries and that support is given to involved countries where needed. Strong links between UN lead agencies and such groups are important.

8. POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES FOR A YEAR OF LANDCARE

Among the main barriers in resolving the pressing environmental issues of the world is that the problems are often looked at separately and not in a holistic manner. The conditions might vary from area to area, but environmental problems are universally shared. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger, living world

In relation to the above, plans for activities of IYLC should be planned in a way that will help nations to look at environmental problems in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner. They should move in tandem with education and awareness sharing.

This section outlines some suggestions for activities that IYLC could include. The ideas go along with a set of Guiding Principles for reaching sustainability of land use that was suggested by Working Group-1 (Landcare and Stewardship) at the SSGC Forum, 2007. These principles (Table 4) have high relevance for the planning and implementation of IYLC.

Table 4. *Guiding principles for Soil Stewardship and Landcare*

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The land ethic statement by Aldo Leopold, that things are right if they reinforce the integrity and stability of the land community and things are wrong if they do not.- Motivate people (landowners and farmers) to communicate among themselves. Knowledge transfer should be bottom-up and not top-down.- Think about all land users, not just farmers. The whole economy impacts on the land, and in many places land is now being managed by interests other than farmers. This can bring big opportunities, but new land users may not bring a land ethic with them. |
|---|

- Start with the kids. Children should be educated about the importance of landcare.
- Allow time for building trust with all the possible stakeholders and organizations.
- Start landcare activities through small projects in order to build confidence among the people involved in the projects.
- Use a step by step approach. Do not pour in everything at once. Start with locally generated technology and then add on as you proceed. This approach has proven effective in many developing countries.
- Work with and reinforce the way that land users (such as farmers) feel about their land — don't work against it. Respect traditional knowledge.
- Work from what's right, not from what's wrong, but maintain personal integrity and that of the land – don't endorse practices that degrade the land.
- Be cautious of a single issue focus.

8.1 Education for creating land literacy

The best long-term remedy for bringing about sustainability of the natural resources of the world is through a variety of educational activities aimed at fostering understanding, creating awareness, and sharing solutions about the land. This means through education that focuses on all aspects of land and land literacy. Campbell (1992) referred to land literacy as activities designed to help people “read the land”, to understand the condition of and trends in the environment around them, and to make the invisible become visible. He further emphasized that land management standards are only likely to be feasible if the condition of natural resources is well understood by the people managing those resources and by anyone proposing to specify and enforce standards of management.

The concept of land literacy matches the slogan of the 2008 International Year of Literacy: “Literacy is the best remedy”. Taking this further, the need to understand and care for the land is crucial in addressing all land issues. For IYLC, the activities should have a strong focus on educating people about the land and the environment at large. Land education helps to make people more aware about the land, not just environmentally and economically, but also socially (for the benefit of future generations, for cultural and spiritually values).

For land literacy to be more effective at the international level, it needs to be supported by an international “champion” agency in education, such as UNESCO, which has a good reputation in promoting education for other IYs.

With support from UNESCO, land literacy can be developed through education at the following levels:

In Schools

Among the guiding principles on Landcare and Stewardship suggested by Working Group-1 at the SSGC International Forum is that Landcare should stress the importance of educating children. This group (children and youths) has a huge role to play in long-term approaches to improve land management because they are the generation of tomorrow. Moreover, they can easily adapt knowledge to their needs and have a high chance of bringing positive change about within the society. Educating children about the importance of the land is the first step in bringing forth achievement (Bumacas *et al.*, 2007).

The children should have a clear knowledge about what is happening around them, so that they can feel empowered within their own community and not alienated. Hence, educating youth and providing them with high quality outdoor environmental experiences should be the first priority for landcare education.

Below are some suggestions on how land literacy can be delivered:

- Landcare should become part of the school syllabus, at both lower and higher levels. This will ensure that understanding and caring for the environment is an essential part of every student's school experience.
- Environmental clubs, nurseries, scout groups, youth forums, and in general all kinds of fun activities, where students can be engaged, could be encouraged to participate in conservation activities. Furthermore, many countries, e.g. Namibia and South Africa, have had good experience from encouraging students to conduct research projects designed toward sustainable land use.
- Landcare could be promoted through fun, yet educative competitions, such as science fair projects, essays, poems, songs, drawing, painting, puzzle designing and solving, comic drawing, fun radio and television, and many more. Such activities can broaden understanding faster because they are held in a fun, competitive manner.

The International Year of Landcare activities could have an important role in supporting or as a follow-up of other International Years, e.g. the International Year of Languages, 2008. Traditional tales (told in indigenous languages) and knowledge can be applied to give land literacy education. This will enable young people to understand land tenure systems in the past and stimulate them to think about how they can incorporate that knowledge in the future.

At the tertiary and community level

An International Year of Landcare would be a powerful instrument to help educate the world's future leaders and local people in becoming better citizens of the global community. Such a Year could generate understanding of the complex relationships between man and nature and promote fundamental understanding of the interdependence of things. Mr Orn Thorleifsson, an Icelandic

farmer and educator and recipient of the 2008 Soil Conservation Award of Iceland, stated that “People should be educated in order to develop an attitude of caring for the land from their hearts and not because someone is telling them to do so”.

At the tertiary level, research and case studies generating additional information could be carried out and shared before and during the year. More courses, such as on ecology and nature, could be designed in such a manner as to allow young professionals to explore (through research and hands-on experience) the importance of sustainable land use.

At the scientific, land user and community levels, knowledge gained through research and views on research needs should have a double feedback between researchers, grassroots participants and government, in order to promote effective land-related decision taking.

As suggested at the SSGC Forum, 2007, soil stewardship and landcare knowledge can be increased by making more efficient use of existing materials on land literacy education and training programmes. Thus, strong co-operation between all stakeholders, in particular research institutions, universities, advisory and educational groups and government bodies, could be established in the process of activity planning. Research conducted, papers written and possible research topics should be shared worldwide. Activities that are easy to understand and adapt could be planned to educate local people.

8.2 The importance of grassroots approaches

As stated in one of the definitions, landcare focuses on empowering local people to willingly take action on local problems, and integrating actions to address broader issues. Thus it is important to engage people that deal with and utilize land and all its resources in the planning and implementation of projects. To achieve a long-term commitment to landcare, local communities must have a real say in decisions that affect them. They must feel empowered to take responsible decisions and have ownership of the outcomes (Campbell, 1992). If local people are influenced and involved at an early stage in the process with a clear idea of direction and purposes, then the projects--and IYLC--will be smoother.

In his address at the SSGC Forum, Dr Sigurgeir Thorgeirsson, Director of the Farmers' Association of Iceland, stated that “farmers are the most important users and guardians of the land and thus their understanding and participation in landcare is essential”. In relation to this, Gudrun Schmidt, a District Soil Conservationist in Iceland, suggested that slogans for IYLC should emphasize it as “A grassroots Year”.

The year's activities should have a special focus on local people, especially those who utilize the land on a day-to-day basis. People tend to be more motivated and understand the core problem when they are involved.

Another important element of the Year should be to encourage and allow the grassroots participants to be at the centre of the project. Governmental workers, researchers and politicians should merely facilitate the process of the Year by providing support, including financial and educational and awareness materials. As a participant at the International Forum on Soils, Society and Global Change, 2007, mentioned, “there is no ‘us and them’, there is just us. This whole issue is one of knowledge transfer – it is usually top down but should also be bottom up. We must get the people to communicate amongst themselves. We should be looking at this from the perspective of the land, landowners and farmers.”

The importance of a grassroots approach should thus be one of the main ingredients to be considered in further plans for establishing such a year. Moving in grassroots approach footsteps would also contribute to achieving some of the MDGs, in particular goals 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, 7: Ensure environmental sustainability and 8: Develop a global partnership for development.

8.3 Awareness and outreach programme

Among the main aims of an IY is to generate a wide-ranging interest and awareness of the widely available wealth of land for the benefit of human society. Therefore, awareness and outreach programmes should be at the heart of the Year.

Awareness materials

A focus should be given to increasing awareness about the diversity and complexity of land issues at all levels. Materials such as books, reports, magazines, brochures, posters, logos, flyers, stickers, videos, DVDs, radio programmes, issue papers, Websites, and promotional packages are examples of tools that can be used to spread the importance of caring for the land. Other examples include postcards, envelopes, playing cards, games, posters, t-shirts and caps. In multilingual countries, materials should be written in the various languages for the benefit of the local people.

Celebrations to bring the year into the limelight

A number of striking, inviting and enjoyable activities could be developed in order to raise awareness of the year in every possible way, such as musical concerts, exhibitions, films, sports events, and so on. This can be done by including high-profile people as champions in raising awareness about the year. In that way, awareness can easily reach out to a broader audience, attract the young to participate and stimulate visionary attitudes, trigger people to think towards what is sustainable, ideal and practical at all levels.

Music stars, actors and actresses, football stars, photographers, politicians and others could be approached to participate in creating awareness. High-profile people have capability and the chance to influence and inspire many people to take part in activities during and after the year. This is applicable at all levels: local, national and global. A number of such celebrities are devoted to caring

for nature, and might welcome opportunities to let their star shine on the positive messages of landcare.

Information sharing

Another significant factor of landcare is improving access to information technology. The International Year of Landcare should strengthen opportunities for information sharing. Sharing of information should be done through as many media and sources as possible, thus increasing the chances for information to reach a wide range of groups, as not all groups have access to the same media. Hence the use of mass media such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and interpersonal communication such as meeting tours and so on.

Information could be shared through a Landcare Website or similar links. Educational materials, projects, reports, research topics old and new could be shared through a Website. UN organizations such as UNESCO and FAO could have important roles in supporting and facilitating such a Website and the sharing of materials.

Empowerment

In general, it is important that activities are planned in such a way that they:

- Encourage and empower innovation, ideas, integration and stakeholder collaboration.
- Empower communities to identify, plan and act holistically on land problems. In particular land degradation, climate change, poverty and food shortage, as well as the environment in general.
- Link scientific knowledge, cultural knowledge and advanced technology with actions at local, national, and international levels through education, extension and training.
- Create understanding of the causes and how to prevent or eradicate them, as well as of the interlinked symptoms of the global environmental problems.
- A bottom-up, time-bound, quantifiable results-driven approach should be applied to facilitate activities.
- The activities could also contribute to MDG goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.

As Andrew Campbell suggested at the SSGC Forum, 2007, new ideas or practices will not be adopted if they are too complex; cannot be tried out; do not fit with local contexts and capabilities; and do not offer relative advantages. Therefore activities for such a Year should be simple, yet educative, and should cultivate widespread behavioural change among human beings.

9. CASE STUDY: ICELANDIC FARMERS

As a part of this feasibility study, a case study on landcare views was conducted among Icelandic farmers. The aim of this was:

- 1) To obtain direct views from the farmer level on the feasibility of establishing IYLC, and also to inspire them to get interested in this idea.
- 2) To include the grassroots approach, exploring local people's involvement in making plans for current and future benefits.

The case study was conducted in all the districts (North, South, East and West) in Iceland. For comparison purposes, farmers were randomly selected, including both farmers who were a part of the co-operative programme "Farmers Heal the Land" and farmers who were not participating. An interview questionnaire was used to lead into discussion (see Appendix). The responses from the interviews are summarized below.

a) The need for a year

All farmers that took part in the interview or discussion supported the concept of establishing IYLC. They viewed such a year as a way to promote awareness about environmental protection and to emphasize the importance of protecting living nature, mostly for next-generation benefits.

Among points made by individual farmers were:

- The main objectives of such a year should be "to collect the souls, awaken them, and encourage them to work toward a turning point".
- The year should be for all to celebrate "It is part of our duty as human beings to maintain and conserve the land."
- "Countries throughout the world have common problems and common dreams, thus such problems can be combined and shared for those dreams to come true"
- Establishing a year as such is necessary, advisable and can be effective if it is well presented. This year could well help people change from being ignorant and greedy, and in realizing that one can make the land better, could at the same time promote utilization of the land for human benefit.
- People should stop introducing new species, which destroy the environment and cause genetic change. "Rather they should preserve the natural land instead of modifying, destroying it". Most of the farmers felt that IYLC is an opportunity to link with other countries and share experience and skills.

b) Activities of information sharing and collaboration

Most farmers were not very much aware of IYs in general, or of landcare projects or programme in other countries, such as Australia and Eastern African countries. They indicated that they had learned about IY via the internet, environmental news and word of mouth, but mainly from Soil Conservation Service (SCS) staff.

In relation to the above, most farmers stressed that the IYLC should reinforce information sharing, using radio, newspapers and the internet. They put emphasis on the point that there should be a better information sharing connection amongst people, not just in Iceland, but worldwide. "We could gain so much knowledge if we were able to know what is happening in other districts of Iceland, and in other countries like Namibia and Uganda."

The farmers who are not part of landcare projects indicated that they are not well informed about projects elsewhere, and that was the reason they were not participating. However, they stated that they were involved in land reclamation work by themselves on their own land. "We are always looking for information, but information does not always reach us, therefore the government should use every possible way to deliver the information to us."

In terms of activities, most farmers suggested that the focus should be on education and information sharing activities. As one farmer said, "People should be educated in order to develop an attitude of caring for the land from their hearts and not because someone is telling them to do so." Furthermore, he added that education should start at the base of the root, with children.

Collaboration between decision-makers and grassroots people was considered weak by most farmers interviewed in East Iceland. However, overall, farmers mentioned that collaboration in the whole country is okay, but could be improved. An example of the lack collaboration was that decision-makers sometimes make major decisions (for the country's economic growth) that strongly affect communities or the entire country without taking community members' concerns and needs into consideration. "Development should be sustainable and not just economically feasible."

c) Expectations

Most farmers' expectations are that people can be taught to treat the land with respect and helped to gain increased conservation knowledge. "My biggest expectation is to stop people being short-sighted and to look into the future with a long-term vision."

Furthermore, most farmers felt that the year should address food prices and all farming prices in general. One farmer stated that the farmers should be assisted with machinery and the best farming methods so that they can maintain productivity. This allows countries to be independent in terms of food production. "Developed countries should limit exporting bad food to developing countries, as this only causes problems of food, genetics and human health and the environment."

d) Recommendation

In this survey there came a recommendation that one common name, such as Landcare or Farmers Heal the Land, should be used for projects aimed at maintaining or improving land condition within the country, or even globally. This would make it easier for countries to visualize common goals, as well as to set similar criteria for measuring achievements between districts and countries. The use of a common name was suggested because some farmers indicated that they get confused and discouraged, in terms of which project is more relevant, when government institutions introduce different, yet related, projects at the same time. Encouragement can also increase when countries learn and compete with each other. The process of learning from experience warrants greater attention, and so does the way in which knowledge gained is retained and made available within the community (Cook *et al.*, 1997). One farmer stated that “just as with individuals, nations also work hard when they are in competition with other nations because each one wants it to be seen that they are the best.”

The main conclusion from this survey among Icelandic farmers is that Landcare and similar projects are having highly visible impacts in Iceland, although the farmers feel that communication still needs improvement in order to reach out to everyone. The farmers indicated that the Landcare concept is an excellent approach and should be shared worldwide.

10. CONCLUSION

For decades, Landcare approaches, and more recently the Landcare movement as such, have served as valuable tools in communicating the values of land use and conservation of natural resources in many countries. Such tools for achieving sustainable development are of growing importance, linked to interacting global challenges, such as securing enough food and water in an era of changing climate and growing land degradation. Caring for the land needs to be improved and solutions sought and applied globally in a holistic manner (Holtz, 2003).

The feasibility study that forms the basis for this report indicates that the establishment of an International Year of Landcare (IYLC) could be an important tool in furthering Landcare-based approaches globally. It would be ethically and environmentally highly feasible and would greatly contribute to the Millennium Development Goals, and the long term goals of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, UN Framework for Climate Change, UN Convention for Bio-Diversity as well as many other long term goals related to sustaining our future.

Establishing an International Year is by its very nature a complex process; hence the planning process needs to be well organized, with enough lead time for preparation. Clear goals, strong commitment among potential partners and sufficient resources are a prerequisite. The process leading to an IYCL, as well as during a follow-up period, should include building mutual relationships among all potential stakeholders, including the local people. Participation is the key to creating local ownership of initiatives, and is thus one of the keys to successful conservation programmes (Arnalds, 2005).

The concept of an IYCL needs to be promoted through a wide range of channels in order to gain support for the submitting and passing of a resolution at the United Nations Assembly. Attaining goals of sustainability, educational, awareness and outreach activities targeted towards land users and young people are among the activities that should be planned for the year. Careful planning is essential, and an international lead agency, with support from other related agencies, needs to be approached to facilitate the process.

This report on the feasibility of an IYLC may be considered only preliminary, and as such it does not contain all possible ideas and necessary steps for fully evaluating, preparing and planning the establishment of IYLC. Full-time highly motivated individuals could be employed to explore this concept further and facilitate the process. Next step activities would need to include, inter alia, the preparation of presentations and brochures to be used at various meetings in order to market the idea of such a year.

There also is a need to design an IYLC , or use existing s devoted to the issue such as the IL (www.internationallandcare.net), to invite people all over the world to post suggestions and ideas to contribute toward the establishment and success of the year. Governments, NGO's and agencies in support of the IYLC idea also could add a page or section on their s disseminating information and inviting individuals and other agencies to support the ideas and initiate activities towards the year.

Finally, it is important to set clear criteria for monitoring the planning, implementation and follow-up phases of an IYLC. Such evaluation is essential to adapt processes in order to maximize their impact.

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APPENDIX 1: Potential partners

The list below contains some examples of potential partners that can support the establishment of International Years of Landcare. The list is only intended to show the diverse nature of such partners, and as such is far from being complete.

- All United Nations bodies, such as FAO (www.fao.org), UNDP (www.undp.org), UNEP (www.unep.org), UNESCO (www.unesco.org; www.undp.org), UNEP (www.unep.org), UNESCO (www.unesco.org), and UNDCC (www.undcc.org)
- All possible governments
- Societies devoted to the conservation of soil and water
- International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), <http://www.iisd.org/>
- World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), <http://www.worldagroforestry.org>
- International Council of Science (ICSU), <http://www.icsu.org/index.php>
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), <http://cms.iucn.org>
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), www.ifad.org
- Global Environmental Facility (GEF), www.gefweb.org
- European Environment Agency (EEA), www.eea.europa.eu
- The African Highlands Initiative (AHI), www.africanhighlands.org
- Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), <http://www.ausaid.gov.au>
- Soil Conservation Service (SCS) of Iceland, www.land.is.
- World Trade Organization (WTO) (GATT), www.gatt.org

APPENDIX 2: Responses through e-mail connections

In addition to the report, views and support from a number of different people from of countries around the world on the view and idea of establishing IYLC were gained. Contact and communication was effected through e-mail. Points made by some of the individuals who replied included:

- “Landcare would be an instrument to help educate the world’s people in becoming better citizens who understand the relationships between man and nature and the interdependence of things”.
- “The goal should be to make land ethics a bigger part of our common human culture so that people behave with more responsibility. This could be a way of achieving synergy between the conventions.”
- “Countries can have an influence at the regional level, e.g. SADC, whereby best practices are shared, and supported, and policies developed with the aim of getting the most benefits, particularly on shared resources”.
- ”Every potential investor should see value in supporting Landcare. Governments should be prepared to give seed funding.”
- ”Universities, colleges, schools, churches and NGOs should also acknowledge the role that they can play in promoting Landcare – and be invited to play that role. Anybody, anytime, can contribute to a better world (Landcare).”
- “Such a year is good, but will need a concerted international effort and a lot of activities to get noticed.”
- “The movement is very useful and can attract people’s interest quickly.”
- ”The idea first needs to be discussed among various organizations that have been involved in running Landcare programmes until it gets crystallized. Then it could be sent to the UN for consideration and endorsement, probably through a strong government, to make sure our voice is heard.”

APPENDIX 3: Farmers’ case study questions

The following interview questions were used in the Icelandic farmers’ case study :

1. Are you aware of International Years? How did you learn about them?
2. Are you aware of Landcare projects in Iceland and in other countries, e.g. Australia?
3. What is your view about establishing an International Year of Landcare (IYLC)?
4. Do you think such a year might help you in any way? How?

5. Do you think IYLC might increase your knowledge, awareness, about land on national and international scales?
6. What activities would you recommend for IYLC?
7. Do you think a Landcare Year can facilitate linking you to other farmers and support in the world and derive practical and technology support?
8. What are your expectations or what impacts would you like to see at the end of the year?
9. Any other comments?

