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NATIONAL REVIEW

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SAINT LUCIA

- FREE -

GROWTH AND ECONOMIC STABILITY IN THE MIDST OF A GLOBAL STORM

Wall Street is a long way from High Street, but as our economy becomes more integrated with the world economy through trade and investment, we also become more exposed to radical changes in the economies of the developed world. And so Saint Lucia has not been spared the global financial upheaval. Remarkably, though, the island was one of the few countries that actually experienced strong growth in 2010. With a 4.4% growth rate, Saint Lucia had the highest growth in the OECS sub-region and one of the highest in the Caribbean.

According to Isaac Anthony, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and National Development, this is a remarkable achievement especially when juxtaposed against some of the unique challenges brought on by 2010. This was when the island faced one of the most severe droughts in its history in the early part of the year and one of the worst natural disasters in the shape of Hurricane Tomas at the end of the year. Despite the challenges posed by both these phenomena, the island emerged from 2010 with a strong economic performance.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in a statement following the conclusion of its Article IV Consultations, said the island "recovered rapidly" from the global economic recession and attributed this to "timely policy action by the authorities."

Saint Lucia also retained its CariCRIS credit rating, despite the severity of the economic forces marshalled against us. Some other countries were not so fortunate. Saint Lucia maintained its rating for a number of reasons including its exchange rate stability, relatively diversified economic base, moderate balance of payments and relatively low external debt. CariCRIS is the regional agency which provides credit ratings on Caribbean countries.

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SALCC - From Community College to Full-Fledge Unviversity

Meeting of the SALCC Board of Governors and Chairperson/Deputy Chairperson of Transformation Committee

The Government of Saint Lucia in its effort to make a university education more easily accessible has decided to transform the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC) into a full fledged University College.

The SALCC was established in 1985 and has contributed significantly to the development of the island's human resource, but in Government's push to make tertiary education more accessible and to provide Saint Lucians with the opportunity to receive a qualification or further skills and training it believes the time is ripe to grant University College status to the SALCC. This is with the intention of making it a full fledged University eventually.

Sir Arthur himself had a vision for the establishment of a University in Saint Lucia which would serve the need of the Saint Lucian society as well as the wider Caribbean. Government by Cabinet Conclusion #1387 of 2009 took the first steps toward making that vision a reality.

There are a number of steps outlined by the cabinet conclusion to be taken toward the realisation of the goal of transforming the SALCC to a University College. This includes; the establishment of a fulltime project office; the design of a strategic plan and establishment advisory committee; the revision of the existing Act of 1985 establishing the SALCC. The transformation would require the formulation of a new Act to reflect the organisational structure and operational modalities of the new entity. The Cabinet Conclusion called for the design of a new organisational structure with the understanding that the orientation of a Community College is significantly different from that of University College and that as such it would require an organisational structure that would allow it to effectively an efficiently carry out its mandate and fulfils the various requirements of a University College.

The Cabinet Conclusion made provisions for the establishment of operating policies and procedures for the new institution; the conduct of a human resource audit; the establishment of funding mechanisms to the University College's ability to meet expenditures without complete dependence o Government support or financing.

Accreditation is also an important consideration for the new facility, as is the design of a physical development master plan and the existence of various support systems, including adequate library facilities, information technology systems and mechanisms to ensure students success. Initially the new institution would offer five bachelor degree programmes in the areas of Humanities, Business, Nursing, Education, and Hospitality.

Ezra Jn Baptiste is the man charged with overseeing the implementation of these recommendations. He is the Project Manager and says progress has been made toward the achievement of a number of these objectives with specific emphasis on the design of the Strategic Plan which will guide all other activities. A project office was established in August 2010 to oversee implementation of the various elements. It was initially envisioned that the project would last for 18 months ending in December 2011 but according to Jn Baptiste the project may have to be extended or subsumed under normal functions of the College. It's a decision he says, the board will have to make. The overall advisory committees suggested by Cabinet has been deferred in favour of a number of sub-committees appointed by the board, each one composed of knowledgeable experienced individuals.

In May 2011 a stakeholder consultation was held to begin formulating a strategic direction for the College. It involved a "visioning exercise" with various stakeholders from within the SALCC and the private sector in an attempt to get their views and ideas to design a roadmap for the development of the institution over the next five years. Coming out of that exercise was a draft document which it is hoped will be refined and to finalized by September 2011. The final document Jn Baptiste says will set the stage for achieving specific objectives such as the types of programmes to be offered, graduate attributes, as well as a mission and vision statement for the new institution.

The hope is that by January 2012 the new Act to govern the institution would have been enacted and the foundation laid for the official launch of the University College. Currently a team of consultants is working with the Government to review the existing Act as well as other benchmark legislation with a view to developing a comprehensive and germane regulation. The final document will be presented to the Board of Directors of the SALCC, who will in turn submit it to the Ministry of Education before it goes on to Parliament. If all goes as planned the University College could begin offering classes by September 2012.

In the meantime Jn Baptiste says critical decisions remain to be made on a number of issues such as the most suitable organisational structure for the new institution. This he says is critical, because as the transformation is made certain portfolios and designations will have to be decided upon. E.g. will the University College have a President or Vice President instead of a Principal? Equally important he says will be the policies and procedures required to govern the various departments of the new University College.

A Human Resource audit was conducted to determine if the existing human resource base is adequate to deliver the degree programmes required by the new institution. One of the benchmarks of such an institution Jn Batiste says is having sufficient persons with Doctoral Degrees to chair faculties and guide the preparation of courses. Such an audit he says would help identify and address any gaps.

A Finance Committee has been established to come up with options for revenue generation to support the new institution.

The accreditation aspect of the process by its nature is very involved and time consuming and as such a Dean from the Teacher Education Division with training and experience in this area has been charged with oversight for this aspect of the project.

Another important part of the exercise Jn Baptiste says is the conduct of a space inventory which will give a true sense of the square footage of he existing College. This is important because it will help determine if the facility can accommodate or meet the expected demand and if it will need to be extended and how. As part of this special audit, consideration will also have to be given to the role of the other campuses at Dennery and Vieux-Fort and how to maximise use of those facilities.

The role of the library facilities is being reviewed with a view to ensuring relevant content, and the feasibility of e-learning options. One suggestion under consideration is the delivery of some programmes via e-learning or online study.

At the end of the day Jn Baptiste says, a lot of work has been done and a lot more remains to be done, but ultimately it is all for nought if students aren't successful. It is the success of the students he says that ultimately indicate the quality of the institution. Work is being done to create the sort of institution and environment to guarantee optimal learning and student success.

Government is committed to fulfilling the vision of transforming the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College into a full-fledged University. The establishment of such a facility will be expected to play a pivotal role in contributing to and engineering the future growth and development of our nation.

Government Fulfills Committment To Resolve Longstanding Problem Affecting Operations Of Augier Combine School

The Ministry of Agriculture is in the final stages of a process to resolve an impasse between poultry farmers in Vieux-Fort and the parents of students, and the staff of the Augier Combine School, over unsanitary conditions from the nearby farms, which affected the operations of the educational institution.

The problem was a long standing one, which at one point led to parents keeping their children away from school in protest. It also necessitated the relocation of students, while the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture and Planning worked to identify a permanent solution to the problem.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. Hubert Emmanuel led a delegation to Augier which identified two major problems; the stench from the farms and the accompanying swarm of flies. Mr. Emmanuel indicates that poultry farming has been practiced in the particular area, in excess of forty years. He explains though that problems which have manifested over the past seven (7) years are as a direct result of the size of the farming operations which have grown significantly over the past seven years. This would have resulted in the stench and the increase in the flies, which have been affecting the operations of the school.

Immediate steps were taken to resolve both problems, starting with the identification of a suitable site to which to relocate the farmers. Several meetings were held with a number of stakeholders including the various ministries, the National Development Corporation (NDC) and the Parent Teachers Association of the school. The agreement was that the largest farmer who controlled at least 70% of the production in the area, be relocated first. The thinking was that his relocation, because of the sheer size of his farm and proximity, would bring significant relief to the school.

With the help of the Ministry of Planning and the NDC an area in Black Bay was identified earlier this year, to which to relocate the largest of farmers. The identified areas was ideal because it had been zoned for agricultural purposes. It was already home to small pig and ruminant farmers as well as a couple poultry farms.

Recognising that the entire cost of the move could not be bourne by the farmer the Ministry of Agriculture petitioned the Cabinet of Ministers for consideration of an allocation of $150,000.00 to assist with the construction of a new pen for the farmer in Black bay. This request was approved by Cabinet and opened the way for construction of the new structure and relocation of the largest farmer. It is anticipated that the relocation of the remaining farmers will cost about a third of the amount which it cost to relocated the largest.

New structure constructed for use by largest egg producer

The next phase of the solution would involve the relocation of the remaining four farms from the area, following which the area within which the school is located would be designated a residential area. The Government had high hopes that this could have been achieved by the end of August, but there were challenges in the construction of an access road to the new farming area for the remaining smaller farmers, which is farther north of the school and away from any housing or other activity. Work has however, commenced on the demolition of the remaining farms, on September 3rd, just ahead of the reopening of school.

The Permanent Secretary says the relocation of the farmers is an ongoing exercise in which the school and its PTA are constantly informed through ongoing dialogue with the Ministry of Agriculture. This approach he says is important in order to find a balance between the comfort of residents, and the farmers who feed this nation.

The challenge of managing the balance between agricultural considerations and education is one that Government has always been mindful of. In the case of Augier, the relocated farmer was critical to local egg production. The farmer in question is estimated to produce 25% of national production and is ranked as the second highest egg producer on the island. His contribution is therefore significant to maintaining the island's self-sufficiency in egg production. Mr. William satisfies certain established standards including candling and grading of eggs. He is also the only egg producer who has met requirements that enable him to sell to cruise ships visiting the island.

The Augier scenario presents a case story of how we as people and Government can manage the challenges of development in a small island context. This is even more critical considering the onset of new residential growth, the provision of community services, roads, schools and other services and the implications for existing farm land and other open spaces. Recognising this fact, Government continues to work to strike the balance between the goals of maintaining affordable housing, creating jobs, providing education and conserving land and ensuring food security. With good planning it believes, these goals can complement, rather than compete with each other.

The recent move by Government towards a permanent resolution of this longstanding problem, will no doubt be received with great joy and relief by the students, teachers and parents associated with the Laborie Combine School as they begin the new school year.

Growth and Economic Stability in the Midst of a Global Storm

Continued from page 1

Saint Lucia's outstanding economic performance, says Mr. Anthony, reflects the Government's success in creating an environment conducive to recovery. Once the Government recognised the initial signs which accompanied the onset of the recession, it realised that creative ways would have to be found to cushion the impact on the economy and immediately set a chain of events in motion to do just that.

There was a lot of interest in the island from foreign investors but the crisis adversely impacted the level of foreign direct investment and brought a number of major projects to a screeching halt.

The Government needed to find ways to maintain employment and keep enough money circulating in the system while being careful to maintain macroeconomic stability in the country.

The Government paid particular attention to the island's major economic sector – tourism. This sector employs more persons than any other sector and contributes the most to GDP, directly and indirectly. The Government sought to provide support to the sector by waiving taxes and duties on the importation of select items by hotels. In addition, the Government increased investment in tourism marketing through the Saint Lucia Tourist Board. The Board was able to come up with innovative ways to use those funds and the resulting marketing campaign bore fruit in the shape of a 10% increase in tourist arrivals. This was at a time when most islands experienced decreases in their arrivals. Not a single hotel closed its doors during this time. The same could not be said for other countries.

The Government instituted several other fiscal measures to help citizens weather the economic storm. It increased the personal income tax allowance from $16,000.00 to $17,000.00 and the deduction for mortgage interest was increased from $15,000.00 to $18,000.00. The deduction for mortgage interest for first time home owners was increased to $20,000.00 for a period of two years, after which everyone will receive a maximum of $18,000.00. The Government also extended the tax amnesty to a second year to give Saint Lucians time to deal with outstanding tax liabilities.

The Government also increased its budgetary allocation for income tax refunds from $2.5 million to $10 million and increased payment to pensioners from 2% to 5%. There was also a reduction in duty on a range of commodities that clearly impacted all consumers. The excise tax on fuel was reduced to cushion the effect of rising fuel prices on consumers. The Government also increased the subsidy on 20 pound LPG gas cylinders from $10.00 to $15.00 a cylinder

The Government of Saint Lucia continued its policy of subsidizing basic commodity prices and stabilizing the prices of rice, sugar, and flour so that these commodities remained affordable.

Through the re-establishment of the Saint Lucia Development Bank, the Government channelled resources to facilitate lending to micro businesses. The provision of financial resources to the SLDB by external agencies, most notably through the Exogenous Shock Facility of the IMF and more recently the CARICOM Development Fund, demonstrated the confidence of the international community in the SLDB, the Government and Saint Lucia.

The Government also introduced a number of stimulus programmes in 2009 and has had at least seven since then. Under these programmes, funds are allocated to various communities to help generate employment and provide tangible assistance. These programmes are conducted at strategic times in the year such as Christmas and Easter when people are likely to be in need of the assistance the most. One programme undertaken in August this year, helped parents to purchase school books and other necessities for their children who are about to commence the new academic year.

In addition, the Government has been able to accelerate the implementation of key projects in the country and the overall project implementation rate has improved.

This, the Permanent Secretary says, has all contributed to growth and macroeconomic stability during this tough economic period. These measures are reflective of the strategic direction and timely policy measures instituted by the Government of Saint Lucia.

NEMO Disaster Preparedness Feature

What's Your Readiness Measure[1]?

Get your Readiness Measure – by answering these 10 questions

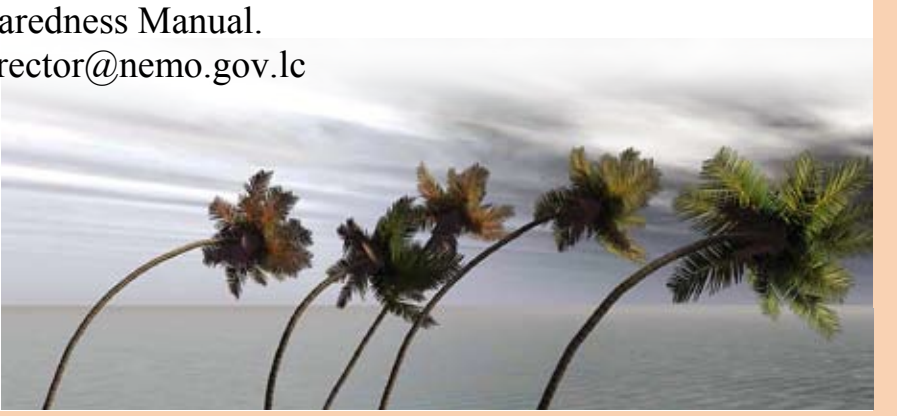
Question	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. Does government have an emergency or disaster plan?			
2. Does your place of work have an emergency or disaster plan?			
3. In the past 30 days, have you seen or heard any messages that encourage people to take steps to be prepared for emergency situations in your community?			

Question	Done	Not Done	Not Sure
4. In the last year, have you prepared a Disaster Supply Kit with emergency supplies like water, food and medicine that is kept in a designated place in your home?			
5. In the last year, have you prepared a small kit with emergency supplies that you keep at home, in your car or where you work to take with you if you had to leave quickly?			
6. In the last year, have you made a specific plan for how you and your family would communicate in an emergency situation if you were separated?			
7. In the last year, have you established a specific meeting place to reunite in the event you and your family cannot return home or are evacuated?			
8. In the last year, have you practiced or drilled on what to do in an emergency at home?			
9. In the last year, have you volunteered to help prepare for or respond to a major emergency?			
10. Have you taken first aid training such as CPR **in the past five years?**			

SCORE OUT OF 10 _____

COPIES

This section is taken from a larger Disaster Preparedness Manual.
A complete copy is available on request from director@nemo.gov.lc



[1] *Source:* http://www.whatsyourrq.org/form.php

Youth Feature

Youth on Fire Ministry

Changing the World One Youth at a Time

In the quiet fishing village of Anse La Raye exists a small group of young people, silently and modestly working to change lives, one youth at a time. The Youth on Fire Ministry, quite aptly named, has as its main goal the inspiration and empowerment of other young people. Started seven years ago by Albert Joseph out of the Catholic youth group in Anse La Raye, it was initially set up to meet the spiritual needs of community youth.

Group Co-ordinator, Magnus Deboville says the plethora of challenges facing Anse La Raye's youth necessitated the broadening of that objective. The group's mission became the development of young leaders through participation in wholesome, meaningful activities that encourage skill development and self expression. This was important he says, because of the circumstances in which Anse La Raye youth existed -one of extreme poverty, the threat of HIV, drug abuse and the growing influence of gangs. Youth on Fire Ministry he says, wanted to break the cycle of poverty and hopelessness gripping the youth of the village, by being a catalyst for their moral and spiritual upliftment and the creation of productive and progressive adults who could in turn change the community.

The group engages members in a variety of activities that are designed to help the over one hundred members tap into their full potential and develop into more well rounded adults. These include leadership programmes, mentoring, peer counselling, youth outreach, talks and discussions, dance, drama, music, and a host of other activities; all of this without adult support or funding. The nation got an opportunity to see the group perform at the launch of the SIGN UP programme last month. They put on an exciting "step' performance that served as a call to action for youth to volunteer through a wide variety of community initiatives and groups. Their performance was received with thunderous applause.

Shanice Everiste a young artist and performer is intimately aware of the powerful transformative process that the arts have on the individual and on society and has been instrumental in including performing arts on the group's agenda. She is now helping other young people find a way to use their skill and talent to unify the community and empower it's youth. Through the group's mentor programme, members get the opportunity to meet and interact with individuals already working in areas they are interested in, who can share their experiences with them.

This sort of encouragement Shanice says is important because young people in Anse La Raye in addition to all the challenges that come with their youth must contend with peculiar challenges that stem from living in Anse La Raye, including its extreme poverty. But there are a lot of positives that often go unnoticed. Youth on Fire Ministry Shanice says aspires to highlight the positives in the community and in the youth. It tries to inspire young people to explore their potential as human beings in relation to themselves, others and their environment. It attempts to cultivate leaders and to create platforms of self expression for them to voice their dreams and concerns. At the same time she says Youth on Fire is attempting to raise awareness amongst the adults and the rest of the island of the current social and environmental climate that is affecting young people and their future, so that they too can take action to ensure that it is the best future for everyone.

Youth on Fire is an example of positive motivated young people can achieve. They've learned to develop what is best in themselves and are committed to helping other youth do the same; not just in the community of Anse La Raye, but throughout the island. Government is proud of and will continue to encourage such initiatives by our nation's youth.

Eye on the Constituencies

Honourable Ezechiel Joseph
Minister for Agriculture, Land, Fisheries and Forestry and Parliamentary Representative for Babonneau

The approach to development in the Babonneau Constituency is one that builds on a balanced approach and that addresses and integrates economic, social, environmental and cultural considerations into the process. This is apparent in the wide scope and nature of projects undertaken in the community thus far, as well as those earmarked for completion in the coming months.

Ongoing projects include the construction of public toilet facilities and four vending booths at Babonneau to create employment for local crafters. The opening of the Rainforest Skyrides has meant an increase in tourists travelling through the community, and it is envisioned that residents will benefit from the new traffic through central Babonneau.

Work has started on a new police station in central Babonneau on a recommendation from the Minster of National Security and Police Commissioner for it to be centrally located. A new Fire Station is in the planning stages and the tendering process will start shortly. A site has already been identified near the Babonneau playing field.

A number of roads have been constructed or renovated with support of the Kuwaiti Government. The Babonneau, Fond Assau and Inner Cabiche roads are all under construction and will be completed in a few weeks.

Land has been acquired at La Guerre to expand the health facility there to a Level II Wellness Centre. The health facility at Boguis was decommissioned following a recent landslide and the new facility will fill the void created. The Babonneau health facility even though upgraded to a Level IV facility (one level below a polyclinic) has had to cope with growing demands for its services and that is beginning to test the capacity of the facility. Working with the Saint Lucia Social Development Fund, a project proposal has been submitted to the Caribbean Development Bank and the Government has acquired land at La Guerre to expand the existing facility and construction is expected to begin shortly.

A new school is being constructed on the grounds of the existing La Guerre Combined School and students have been relocated to accommodate construction. A new wing is being built at Fond Assau Combined School, to replace an old wooden structure there.

Work will commence shortly on a new playing field at Garrand. The land has already been acquired for that purpose and two new multipurpose courts will also be built a Ti Morne and Union Terrace. The La Guerre playing field has been upgraded and lights installed.

Prime Minister Stephenson King, and the Honourable Ezechiel Joseph are undertaking a joint project to upgrade the Balata playing field and work will start shortly on the fencing, relaying of the surface of the facility, the installation of lights, and proper drainage. It has been noted that interest in sports has increased significantly following the installation of lights at the various sporting facilities, which allows for longer participation in events and the staging of more night time sporting activities. Lighting of the facilities also has the effect of taking youth away from deviant and unproductive activities

Work is ongoing on a number of inner community roads designed to make travelling more comfortable for residents while granting easier access to emergency vehicles with the financial support from the Government of Taiwan. In excess of 25 of those roads have been done, with another four to be completed in the coming weeks.

Several youth development programmes are being undertaken and supported in the constituency and these range from 20/20 cricket competitions, to football competitions which are sponsored by the Constituency Representative. This year, the annual Babonneau Youth and Sports Awards will be expanded to recognise excellence in both in sports and academics.

Residents in the northernmost communities of La Geurre, Boguis and Plateau in recent times experienced extended periods without water due the inadequacy of an old 50 000 gallon water tank, which served these communities. This problem has been addressed with the installation of a new160 000 gallon tank at a cost of half a million dollars. Based on WASCO's advice these communities should have a reliable supply of water from now on. In addition the new tank should reduce pressure on the Garrand and lower Babonneau supply from the La Croix tank.

Several school IT labs have been upgraded, including the labs at Fond Assau Combined, Boguis Combined and Babonneau Primary. Security fencing is being installed at the Balata Combined School. That school is earmarked to receive assistance in the form of a new library and IT centre.

The Constituency Representative is also involved in several unpublicised social programmes, and continues to offer financial and other support to the needy and sick in the community. There is a very successful school book programme which continues to benefit hundreds of students. Residents continue to gain employment through various projects including ongoing road and drainage works, owing to a deliberate decision to hire only local contractors and labour for these projects.

160,000 gallon water tank erected at Paix Bouche

Wheel Chair Assistance

Babonneau Primary School students regcognised for excellance at the Common Entrance examinations

Pre -Schools Sports Meet in the Babonneau community

Childrens Party at Paix Bouche

Bus Shelter at Des Barras

Bus Shelter at Plateau

2010 20/20 Cricket Champions

Babonneau Health Facility

Fond Assau Agro Processing Centre

Some of the Products of the Rural Women Network

Rural Women Network Certificate Recipients

Hon. Joseph recognized two UWP stalwarts, Mrs. Raymona Cornibert and Mr. Denis Jn Baptiste who both reached the age of 90

Bon Manje Road

Cork Poul Road - Talvan

Desablon Road - Boguis

Ti Morne Road

Drainage Work - Balata Laundry Road

Drainage Work Duncan Road - Plateau

Drainage Work Robert Lee Road - Plateau

Self Help Project at Cacoa Giraud

Family Lane La Guerre

Faway Road - Balata

Garrand Footpath

Jacobie Road - Des Barras

La Guerre Health Centre Access Road

Chicken Back Street

Pork Palace Road

Ti Ravine Road

Community/Citizens Action ☑

Barre St Joseph/Ti Colon Women Agri-project

Women Acting to Secure Self Sufficiency

As food prices continue to remain high, with potential increases on the horizon because of soaring oil prices and supply concerns, experts says there is one often-overlooked solution for fighting hunger: women. A group from the Barre St Joseph/Ti Colon Development Committee has made it their mission to empower women farmers in a bid to relieve hunger while providing its members with a livelihood.

Anastasie Augustin is the President of the Barre St Joseph/Ti Colon Development Committee. She says one year ago a group of forty three women from the organisation decided to start a kitchen garden project as a direct response to the rising food prices. The group recognised that Empowering women could also improve food security for their entire family, because women are more likely than men to spend additional income on food, education and other basic household needs. The group of women prepared a proposal and set out to find funding from the European Union and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The group received a grant from the FAO, of EC$16, 000.00 eight months ago, to assist with their project. The money was used to construct a nursery in Barre St Joseph and to purchase farming equipment, a water tank and various other farming implements.

The participating women were able to purchase seedlings with grant funding provided by the FAO to begin their garden project. Among crops produced by the women are cucumbers, carrots, cabbage, lettuce, sweet peppers, corn and pineapples. There are plans to expand the range of crops to include watermelon and honeydew but heavy rains have delayed these plans.

The women are categorised as individual farmers and community plot farmers to reflect the land ownership dynamic among the group, and to allow women who are interested in the project but who don't own land to participate. A generous resident has contributed the land for the community plot.

The produce from the project is distributed among participating members to feed their households. The surplus is sold to the community and to local shops and Min-Marts. The group has held discussions with the Saint Lucia Marketing Board and Super J Supermarket chain about possible partnerships.

The major challenge for the group now is how to sustain the project since the funding expired in July 2011. Consideration has been given to the formation of a cooperative, but this will require a lot more work and time. Alternatively the women have decided to establish a bank account to which members contribute a monthly subscription.

Plans to expand the project have been hindered by the limited land space available. However discussions have been held with the Ministry of Agriculture with a view to obtaining a portion of land at Roseau for expansion of the project.

Augustin says the achievements of the group in one short year is nothing short of spectacular and wants the experience to motivate other community development committees to step out of their comfort zones and explore various opportunities for growth and development. The women involved in the project she says had no knowledge or experience in farming. "All they had was an idea and they acted on it." They sent two of their members on an eight month farmer training programme and those two women help to train the other members. The lesson she says is "to equip yourself with the tools you need to make your dreams into reality."

Beyond that she says is an important lesson about bridging the gender gap in the agriculture sector. Giving women the same tools and resources as men, including better access to financial services, technical equipment, land, education and markets, could help increase agricultural production and help improve the island's food security.

Government salutes this group of hard working women for their courage and entrepreneurial spirit. They provide a good example of proactive and positive thinking transformed into meaningful action. Their actions no doubt contribute towards improving their quality of life as individual women and at the households and community levels.

National Crime Prevention Strategy

A Proactive Approach

The Ministry of Home Affairs and National Security will launch its National Crime Prevention Strategy later this month with an islandwide anti-crime campaign dubbed UNITED AGAINST CRIME.

National Security Minister Senator Guy Mayers says the national crime prevention strategy will focus attention on some key areas that require urgent attention. These include Community policing, the development of neighbourhood watch programmes as well as family-based programs for preventing and reducing juvenile crime.

The effect of crime on tourism and other economic activities is one other area of concern which will be addressed by the campaign. Direct attacks on tourists, Senator Mayers says, have a marked impact on the tourism sector, given the importance of positive consumer perception. Considering that tourism is the largest foreign exchange earner for the island and the largest employer, he says the provision of a safe and secure environment for visitors is critical.

Senator Mayers says the strategy includes a behavioural research component which will provide behavioural solutions to the high rates of recidivism and the increasing gang membership in some major communities.

"A United Against Crime Television Programme, radio programmes and other communication activities will feature crime as it affects us and crime prevention to curb the nuisance of crime in our country and in our communities," he says.

According to the Minister, the success of entire prevention strategy will be based on the accomplishment of six primary objectives key among which is the establishment of a comprehensive policy framework to enable Government to address crime in a coordinated and focused manner. It will draw on the resources of all government agencies, civil society and the private sector.

"A shared understanding and common vision of how we, as a nation, are going to tackle crime is imperative to the success of the strategy" Senator Mayers explains. "This vision should also inform and stimulate initiatives at all levels of the society. It should facilitate the development of a set of national programmes and focus the efforts of various Government departments in delivering quality service aimed at solving the problems leading to high crime levels. It should also foster partnership with the private sector and civil society in the crime fighting efforts in a bid to maximize civil society's participation in mobilizing and sustaining crime prevention initiatives."

Success of the strategy Senator Mayers says will require ongoing research, and evaluation of Best Practices as well as participation in regional and international crime prevention efforts. The seriousness of the problem he says demands a regional as well as national policy response. "Crimes like drug trafficking transcend national borders and as such requires a response that in turn transcends national borders." Civil society organizations he says must be co-opted because they can play an important role implementing violence prevention programs targeting youth violence, violence against women, and other important forms of violence.

The top three development issues are identified as Unemployment, Crime, and Education/Training. Senator Mayers says crime is not just as a developmental issue but a national priority. He says the strategic objectives outlined by the Government are aimed at proactive measures to reduce the threat of crime, and the devising of effective mechanisms to improve the quality of life and to improve the safety and security of citizens and visitors.

"Government's strategy is a coordinated approach to fighting crime demonstrating collective commitment to the purpose. Responsibility for crime prevention is not exclusively that of Government, the police. It is the responsibility of and requires the participation, of civil society, the private sector, community groups, government organizations, youth groups, faith based organizations, trade unions, and advocacy groups to identify hard core solutions and to mobilize participation," Senator Mayers says.

He says while the strategy will seek out the facts and behavioural attitudes on crime in Saint Lucia, Government is guided by the template developed by the United Nations during its consultations in the Caribbean in 2008/2009 and the 2006 Deosaran Report on a Nationwide Survey on Fear of Crime and Community Policing in Saint Lucia.

Specifically, The Government of Saint Lucia will concentrate on five pillars and priority areas. There is a Social dimension which seeks to reduce the socially deprived conditions which leads to crime, and the empowerment of citizens. As well there are Justice and Legal considerations which would encompass legislative and judicial reform. Increasing the visibility of the police in the society is expected to also contribute to a reduction in deviant behaviour.

He says consideration also must be given to protecting the environment and economic resources: ensuring that corporate responsibility is undertaken with innovation and creativity.

A major challenge for Caribbean countries is the growing threat posed by organized trans-national crime and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and which necessitates Caribbean nations to combat organized crime on a regional level. This Mayers says will require Saint Lucia contextualize and streamline local efforts within established frameworks and obligations.

"The participatory approach is driven by statistics, and the hard facts that will enable the development of appropriate responses,

Senator Hon. Guy Mayers
Minister for Home Affairs and National Security

solutions and programmes to deal with the problem of crime in a decisive way. The behavioural research component will be our guide on the way forward to reduce recidivism and gang membership," Senator Mayers says.

He says the government is heartened by the successes in fighting crime, to date, but the prevention aspect requires a social responsibility that Government and its partners intend to harness as it moves forward with the UNITED AGAINST CRIME campaign.

The campaign will be launched during the last week of September and the programmes will be presented to the public and communities at the launch.

Royal Saint Lucia Police Force Resumes Beach Patrols

The Royal Saint Lucia Police Force has commenced the recruitment process for forty five new Special Constables. The new officers are a response to calls for a replacement to obsolete Beach Rangers Unit. That unit was charged primarily with responsibility for patrolling the island's beaches and ensuring the safety of local and foreign users.

According to Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police Responsible for Administration and Corporate Services, Errol Alexander, the growing importance of the tourism industry to the national economy, has made it necessary for the unit to be revived, albeit in a slightly modified state.

Fear of abduction, muggings and rape, Alexander says are very real among tourists and may be keeping larger numbers of visitors, confined to the cruise ships that bring them to the island's. These factors and other perceptions about onshore law enforcement, he says are very real influences in people's decision whether to come to the island at all. It is with this in mind he says that steps are being taken to ensure visitors a safe and secure environment.

Vernon Francois
Acting Commissioner of Police

The Executive of the Police department along with tourism stakeholders have decided to revive the Rangers Unit and Government made provisions in the last budget estimates for the training and deployment of forty five officers. Background checks have been completed on applicants and the interview process began as of Monday September 5th. The selected recruits will complete an intensive three week training programme during which they will acquire skills necessary to manage criminal activity in areas frequented by visitors. Their training includes instruction in basic policing and tourism oriented customer service.

The new Special Constables will be deployed around the island with a special concentration in the north of the island, where statistics show the highest criminal activity. The new recruits will be sworn in as members of the RSLPF as Special police Constables and will augment existing police patrols in various crime hotspots and popular tourist hangouts.

The expectation is that the new officers will be trained and deployed well before the official start of the next tourist season.

With an average of 30 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants annually, the English-speaking Caribbean now has one of the highest murder rates in the world. This Alexander says is a major concern to the police and the fragile tourism sector, which is especially sensitive to rising crime. Attacks on tourists, have serious implications for the tourism sector, as evinced by the recent removal of the island from Norwegian Cruise Line's itinerary following a series of attacks on its passengers here. Positive consumer perception Alexander says is critical to the success or failure of a tourism destination, and that in turn depends on the island's ability to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors. The re-establishment of the Ranger Unit he says is one step toward ensuring just that.

Saint Lucia's New General Hospital Coming Soon

The new hospital when completed will boast a state of the art accident and emergency department. The new national hospital is a 116 bed facility, two storey reinforced concrete structure spanning across a floor area of approximately 14, 500 square metres.

Work is progressing on the construction of the island's new general hospital, with approximately seventy percent of the project already complete.

Kerry Joseph, the Health Planner in the Ministry of Health says there have been some challenges to the project due to the unseasonably high rainfall in the earlier part of the year, but progress is being made toward achieving the May 2012 deadline for completion of the project.

The new hospital when completed will boast a state of the art accident and emergency department. The new national hospital is a 116 bed facility, two storey reinforced concrete structure spanning across a floor area of approximately 14,500 square metres. It comprises thirty-three departments that include Accident and Emergency (A&E), Outpatient, Acute General Wards, Operating Theatres, Radiography, Intensive Care, Special Care Baby Unit and associated support facilities.

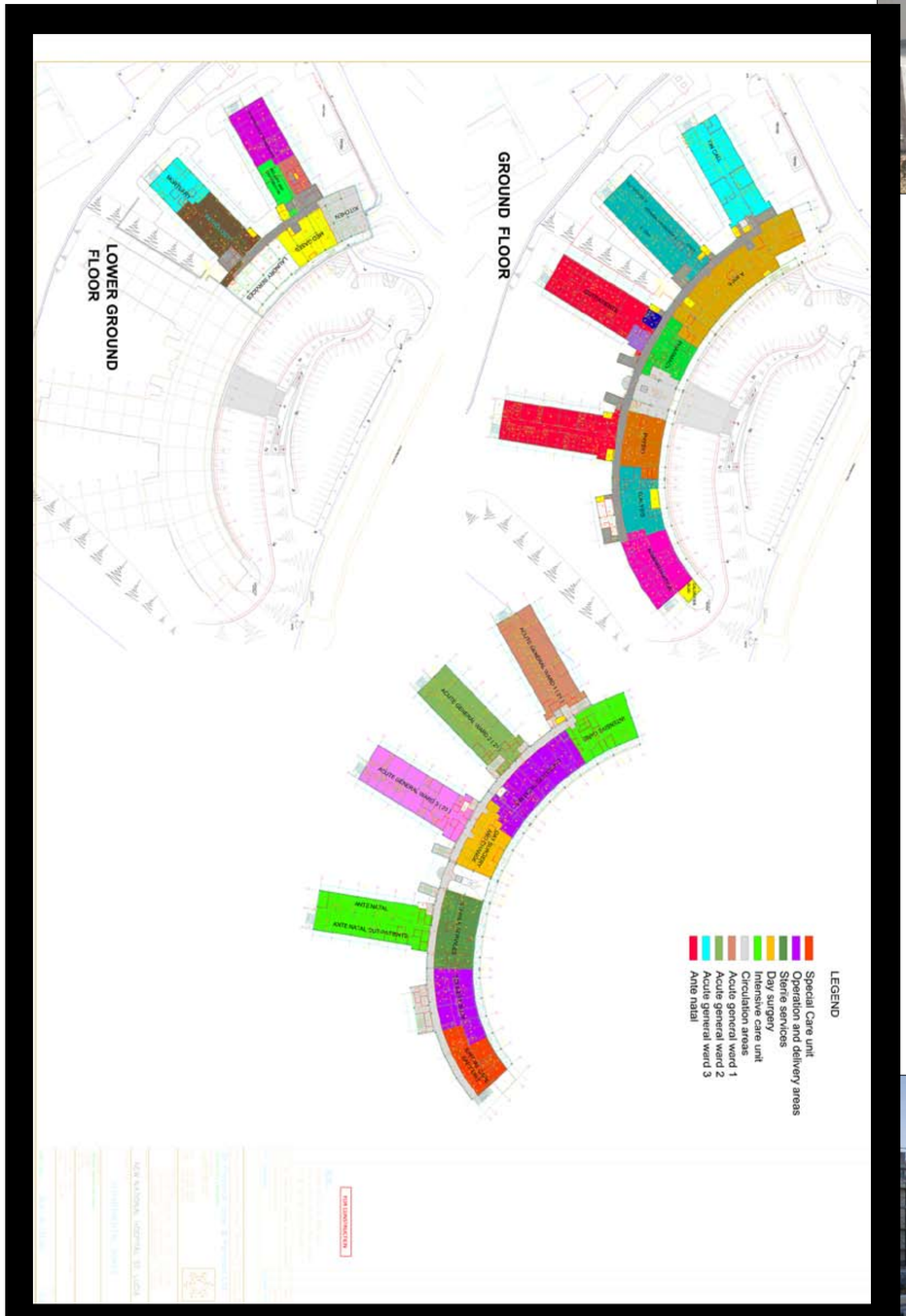
The facility was designed by Sir Frederick Snow and Partners of the United Kindgom and the plans were unveiled in June 2005 after atleast two years of discussion and planning with various stakeholders. The EC$122 million EU funded project was expected to take up to three years to complete.

A commissioning team has been assembled ahead of the completion date, firstly, to prepare staff for the transition to the new facility, and secondly to prepare the public for the grand opening.

Without a proper commissioning team Joseph says, the hospital facility may be inappropriately used and the transitioning period may become more challenging for staff and clients alike. Joseph says the proper commissioning process is essential to ensure that the New National Hospital becomes a functioning organization that provides a well planned and improved level of services to the population that it serves. To that end, as the various sections and departments are completed, medical staff is brought over to tour the new facility and to be acquainted with the layout, in a bid to ensure the transition is as seamless as possible. She says this will be followed by reorientation exercise for management and clinical staff to hospital policies and procedures and developing change management tools and mechanisms to ensure the smooth transition of staff and services.

The next few months she says will see the development of a detailed communication plan to ensure that the hospital staff and public and hospital clientele are fully informed at every stage of the commissioning process to minimize staff and public distress and anxieties.

The new national hospital Joseph says, is a major part of efforts by the Government to improve the overall quality of health services on the island. It is in keeping with the mandate of the Ministry of Health "to develop a health service delivery system that is accessible, affordable, sustainable and of international standard."



Why Errors and Omissions Exist on Birth Certificates Today - Part I

In order to properly understand the causes of the errors and omissions on St. Lucia's Birth Certificates today, one must first understand the process by which these certificates are prepared.

How are Birth Certificates Prepared at the Civil Status Registry?

All information on births for the state of St. Lucia is recorded on various registers that are securely stored at the Civil Status Registry (located on Brazil Street in Castries).

Consider a member of the public applying to the Registry for a copy of his Birth Certificate. Once the particulars of his birth have been retrieved from the appropriate Birth Register, the information is entered on his Birth Certificate exactly as it appears on the register. This is critical. To make sure of this, the certificate is subsequently verified by a trained verifier at the Registry. It is important to note that even if an error on the register may be apparent, the information entered on the certificate must exactly mirror that which appears on the register.

There is a formal facility for making amendments to the register. Any such amendments must be made through the rectification process at the Adjudicator's Office.

It therefore follows that the errors and omissions on Birth Certificates mostly complained of are the result of inaccurate and insufficient information having been originally entered on the various Birth Registers. This is the crux of the matter; the heart of the problem.

Of course, the Registry's staff are not infallible. They will make the odd typographical or other clerical error during the preparation of the Registry's certificates. In their defence however, such errors in issued certificates are not at all substantial.

This leads one to naturally ask next – how are the Birth Registers prepared?

Preparation of the Birth Registers

A hospital birth form is completed for each child born at hospital. Details of the child's name, date of birth and the names of the parents are noted on this form. These forms are then transferred in batches to the relevant District Registrars for the initial recording of the births in the relevant Birth Registers. However, within six months of a child's birth the parents must apply to the appropriate District Registrar to have the child registered. (Before the passing of the Civil Status Act 2010, the time limit for the registration of a child was one year.)

At registration, parents are required to (1) verify the information on the child's birth record , originally noted at the hospital; (2) insert a forename or forenames for the child if he was not already named at hospital and (3) insert the father's name on the child's birth record if the child is illegitimate. Inserting a father's name on the record of an illegitimate child involves the further step of a deposition by affidavit of the father regarding the child's paternity. The father's affidavit must be supported by an affidavit from the child's mother deposing that the man who claims to be the father is in fact the father of the child.

Periodically, the Birth Registers for the various districts are transferred to the Civil Status Registry, where they are stored in the Registry's vault.

The Main Reasons for Errors and Omissions on Birth Records

1. Parents' failure to ensure the completeness and correctness of their child's birth record information both at the hospital and subsequently at the child's registration.

For a child born at hospital, his parents essentially have two opportunities to ensure that the information appearing on his birth record is both complete and correct. The first is at hospital, when the child's hospital birth form is being prepared. The second is during the subsequent registration of the child with the appropriate District Registrar.

Problems created at the hospital

Often parents fail to make use of the first opportunity to have all the necessary details correctly inserted on their child's birth record by allowing inaccurate and/or insufficient information to be entered on the hospital birth form. This may have occurred for one of several reasons, including: (a) The problem of illiteracy; (b) Parents' tendency not to name their children from the hospital; (c) Lax recording procedures at the hospital. (Note however that this was more an issue with the hospital's recording system than it was with children's parents.)

(a) **The problem of illiteracy**: Significant advances in education have been seen in recent times but in earlier years the rate of illiteracy throughout the island, particularly in rural areas, tended to be a limiting factor in respect of the birth registration process. Parents who possessed poor literacy skills would have undoubtedly found it challenging to convey the correct information to be recorded on hospital birth forms, such as the proper spelling of their own names. These parents would have also found it difficult to verify the accuracy of the information actually recorded on the forms.

(b) **Parents' tendency not to name their children from the hospital**: Parents at times decided against naming their child from hospital, resulting in the absence of a forename from the District Registrar's initial record in respect of the child. This first opportunity to ensure that a name was recorded for the child was therefore missed.

(c) **Lax recording procedures at the hospital**: In the past, parents' names entered on hospital birth forms were not always verified using official forms of identification such as identification cards, passports and birth or baptism records. Furthermore, some parents were not minded to ensure that the information noted on the hospital birth form was completely accurate. Often parents would give their middle names and house names as their first names, for instance. Also, problems were created by the fact that certain names could be spelt in more than one way. For example, a child's mother's name might have been recorded as Crystal Taylor on the hospital birth form, although the correct spelling of her name was actually Kristal Taylor.

Errors/omissions on child's birth record not resolved at registration

Parents may then forgo the chance to remedy, at the registration of their child, any errors and/or omissions in the information transmitted to the District Registrar by the hospital. Possible causes of this were:

(a) Parents not understanding of the importance of their child having a complete and correct birth record;

(b) The problem of illiteracy;

(c) Parents missing the registration deadline entirely, either due to carelessness, or their ignorance of the existence of a specific time within which their child should be registered;

(d) Lax recording procedures at registration. (Again, this was more an issue with the District Registrar's system of recording births than it was an issue with children's parents.)

(a) **Parents not understanding the importance of their child having a complete and correct birth record**: It would not be uncommon to find parents registering their child without properly verifying the accuracy and completeness of the information which was initially noted on the child's birth record, from the hospital birth form. This may have been due to parents not fully understanding the importance of their child having both a complete and correct birth record, from the time of his registration. In all fairness to parents, however, use of the Baptism Certificate (as opposed to the Birth Certificate) was widespread until recently in 2006 . The Baptism Certificate was accepted for the purposes of obtaining a passport or an ID card, for job applications and for several other transactions for which only a Birth Certificate would suffice today. It therefore was not absolutely necessary for parents to have their children's birth record details in good order.

Many parents did not fully understand the involved nature of the Birth Certificate rectification process – this may have also caused them to approach the registration of their children as casually as they did. Many still believe, quite incorrectly, that the rectification process simply involves reprinting the certificate which originally contained the errors, so that it bears the correct details.

As a result of parents' casual approach to their children's registration, incorrect names for parents would remain on children's birth records. Parents who were perhaps insistent on waiting until baptism to name their child would have lost another opportunity to ensure that a forename had been recorded for the child . Some parents were adamant about not naming their children before baptism as they believed that to do otherwise would bring them bad luck. The names of unwed fathers who were not present at their children's registration would not be inserted on their children's records. Badly transcribed birth dates would remain incorrect on the Birth Registers.

Continued in the next of issue of National Review