

Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions and answers are drafted based on the feedback of the attendees at the workshop.

This is an initial first step towards capturing the thoughts surrounding the process and an attempt to address some of the comments and remarks, uncertainties, wants and wishes that were expressed at the workshop. It is also an explanation of key concepts and terms.

Your feedback is very necessary, as only with your input we can create the most appropriate way to accommodate the diverse voices of the vibrant community of St. Maarten.

Question 1: *Why the call for the program: Building a Nation?*

With the dismantling of the Netherlands Antilles on October 10, 2010, St. Maarten emerged as a new self-governing country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The program 'Building a Nation' will support the strengthening of institutional capacities for national development and nation building with specific focus on delivering a National Vision and a National Development Plan (NDP) through national dialogues; developing an MDGs Acceleration Framework (MAF) to tackle the prioritized MDGs and implementing two pilot projects focusing on MDGs 1 (poverty) and 7 (environmental sustainability). A national framework is important as a common vision but also important is an implementation strategy that supports the development of the kind of St. Maarten that we want. It is critical that you can find yourself in the planning process in order to have a role during the implementation.

Question 2: *What is meant by 'Building a Nation'?*

St. Maarten recently entered a new era of statehood. This brings the institutionalization of the governing bodies of the nation with it.

One should be mindful however of the distinction between the related terms of *state* and *nation*. The latter referring to the geographical entity holding a diverse community, while conserving a common identity.

Thus, the process of building a nation entails the structuring and enforcement of our nation through the deployment of the state. The aim here is to foster the endurance of our nation and achieve a unified society.

Question 3: *How long is this process going to take?*

The program is built out of a cooperation agreement with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), signed in 2012 for the duration of three years. Consequently, the *blueprint* for the process of building our nation will be implemented until 2015. Consequently, the real impact takes effect when that blueprint is agreed by politically elected leaders, civil service, private sector, NGOs, and the citizens and enabled for implementation through the reserving of funds and dedication of adequate human resources to deliver the outcomes.

Building a nation is an ongoing process without a set end date. The nation is not a static entity, but subjected to a constant process of change and revision, impacted by the ever changing political composition of the state.

Nevertheless, at this point in time, an urgent need is to set the stage for building a sturdy foundation for achieving a resilient nation in the coming decennia.

Question 4: *How will this process of 'Building a Nation' take place?*

Under the signed agreement, the approach of using a *Dialogue* methodology to arrive at a common vision and national plan has been endorsed. This methodology has been piloted by UNDP in a number of countries and will have to be adapted to fit the context of St. Maarten.

Dialogue is the process of people coming together to build mutual understanding and trust across their differences and to create positive outcomes through conversation.

The National Development plan will cover a period of some 20-30 years and will be built on the outcome of these broad national dialogues and existing strategic development plans. The program will bring all stakeholders on St. Maarten together, thereby supporting the process of nation building.

The dialogue mechanism allows the creation and maintenance of permanent spaces where government and all social sectors – including the most marginalized – can interact and jointly address issues of social, economic, cultural and environmental concern. It's about enhancing social cohesion amongst the participants through participation, by creating an open space where the issues at hand are dealt with while fostering social bonding across boundaries and differences.

Question 5: *What is a 'bottom-up' approach?*

The approach of reaching at the long-term planning strategy through a communally drawn vision, centers on a process where the civil community of St. Maarten forms the pivotal drive. The process thus holds the nation's community as the principle of the program, while spiraling up to the level of the state where policy is eventually drafted in the extension of the communally drawn aspirations for St. Maarten.

The process is structured according to an organizational structure, which contains the *dialogue platform*. This platform is divided into a) Forum: venue where the actual dialogue takes place; b) National Development Workgroup: the set of participants who facilitate and validates the process; c) Steering Committee: the highest accountable body of the *platform*, which has the task of endorsing and taking responsibility for the process.

Question 6: *Who are eligible to take part in this process?*

Each and every member of the St. Maarten nation is being called upon to participate in this process. All citizens born here or elsewhere, who have migrated here, reside here, who have made a home for themselves and are entitled to the rights and obligations of St. Maarten have a stake in the building of the nation.

To provide a workable structure, the choice was made to have an egalitarian division of the sectors:

- Private (businesses, employees, workforce)
- Civil (members of society, Non-profit/non governmental organizations-NGOs)
- Public (governmental organizations).

This subdivision reflects the main pillars of the societal framework of our nation. Furthermore, the dialogue process is built up along the lines of the sustainable development pillars:

- Culture;
- Environment & Infrastructure;

- Social and Human development;
- Economy.

From the different sectors, each and every one can participate in the dialogues, on the basis of the affiliation with the various thematic pillars.

Question 7: *How do I sign up to participate in this program?*

The forum for dialogue is an open forum. Meaning, each and every member of society can join in, by attending the fora to be organized, participating in the consultations and even organizing your own community consultations and providing the feedback to the Working Groups.

The Steering Committee (SC) representation: NGO and Private sector representatives to the SC are selected by their own networks. The SC will be formed through an open selection process.

The National Development Working Group: Representation in this Working Group will take place by nominations of Focal Points according to the division of the thematic pillars. Volunteers with specific skills or experience that will benefit the group can opt to join in. This will also include an alignment with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as baseline for the NDP. The thematic pillars will eventually become crosscutting to the different targets stated by the MDGs.

Question 8: *Why is government directing the program: Building a Nation?*

Government is the *puller* of the program and sees it as its task – being the highest competent authority of the nation – to offer a central coordinating body while working towards providing a secure environment for future generations.

This task is set in the creation of long-term policy and planning which will result from the dialogue process, the strengthening of institutional capacities, the establishing of a donors and aid coordination mechanism that will enhance the country's funding strategy and provide opportunities for sharing best practices.

Question 9: *How does the 'right to development' in accordance with the UN-declaration relate to St. Maarten's position within the Kingdom?*

To have a comparative benchmark as a nation and have a balanced representation internationally, the Kingdom has a role to play. A comparison within the Kingdom offers a basis for connecting the issues of nation-building and social development with aid-effectiveness and global partnership for development.

Question 10: *Where does the funding for this program come from?*

The government of St. Maarten is funding the program. But, part of the program is to address funding needs and design a strategy to attract both local and overseas donor assistance to guarantee the achievement of the long-term development goals.

Question 11: *The Steering Committee just endorses?*

Within the platform for Dialogue, the Steering Committee forms the ultimate accountable body. Together with the forum and the National Development workgroup, the SC creates a cycle of checks and balances.

The Platform for Dialogue essentially forms a triangular structure of three inter-related bodies, which sets up a visioning process, while at the same time having a system of validation put in place through a cross-verification of the stages leading up to the communally drawn Vision and Development Plan for St. Maarten.

Question 11: *How do the MDGs relate to the program?*

The Millennium Development Goals relate to the program by offering a base-line for development as the starting point. The indicators and targets as stipulated by the St. Maarten MDG-report of 2011, make a status assessment and monitoring of the progress possible, based on the Caribbean Specific Indicators and localized to the St. Maarten context. On the basis hereof, particular MDGs are emphasized resulting in the prioritization of implementing two pilot projects focusing on MDGs 1 (poverty) and 7 (environmental sustainability). But that is not where it ends for the MDGs. A process of rechecking on the status and current priority needs would be used to establish a new acceleration framework for implementation. That would be the opportunity to capture the goals that need to be refocused for attention.

Question 12: *Is there a disregard for MDGs other than the pilot projects?*

Based on the MDG 2011 assessment report a prioritization of goals 1 & 7 was made, using the census data of 2001. The census of 2011 which is currently being analyzed, will provide vital information for identifying other areas that are currently relevant.

For example, the topic of 'education' also deserves a priority focus. Consequently MDG # 2 will receive special emphasis, as will other MDGs, based on the interests and needs brought forth by the current state of affairs on St. Maarten.

Question 13: *How does the program build on issues that are already being worked on?*

Work-in-progress relevant to the development of the NDP, will obviously become part of the process. An example hereof is the undertaking of the Ministry of Public Health, Social Development & Labor (VSA) and the Statistics department (STAT) concerning the development of a *poverty-line*.

It should be mentioned that we could build on the lessons learned by our sister country Curaçao, which has developed a poverty-line pertaining to the local context of the country.

Question 14: *What local examples of the NDP approach are there?*

The visioning process through dialogue has been adopted by various countries across the globe. The dialogue mechanism stems from a collaborative effort of international institutions, which, together with the UNDP, have developed this methodology to achieve medium to long-term development. In the Latin America and Caribbean region, it has been applied in Jamaica, Panama, Guatemala, Trinidad and Tobago, etc.

A National Development Plan provides accountability. It sets out a program for medium to long-term development by which the public can hold government accountable. Furthermore, a NDP is required for branding and to attract funding and thereby support continuity. A more successful cases, a NDP is often used by newly elected leaders to set their short term goals. Their achievements over a period of time is then measured against the milestones and targets set in the NDP.

On the website of the UNDP one can find many examples of NDP-country programs driven by this similar dialogue methodology: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home.html>

Regionally, countries such as Jamaica (<http://www.vision2030.gov.jm/>), St. Lucia (<http://www.finance.gov.lc/programmes/view/39>) and Barbados offer fine examples.

Question 15: *How does the ‘French side’ relate to the program?*

‘Building a Nation’ entails a process which fosters the progress of St. Maarten. From the perspective of the nation, this process applies to the county of St. Maarten, which is bounded by national borders.

However, the unique realities of our bi-national country situation provides an opportunity for sharing lessons of the visioning process. From a legal-state perspective, the government of St. Maarten cannot meet the aspirations felt on the French side of our island.

Nevertheless, this fact equates to the discrepancies felt between state institutions and the nation’s community. The program for building a nation will thus have to meet these open ended questions through dialogue, which will offer insights into the experienced sentiments concerning these uncertainties and how these matters should be addressed.

Question 16: *How is the political commitment ensured in the NDP process?*

The initiative of government to undertake this endeavor arose from the urgency of connecting the voices of the people with the development of government programs. In order to guarantee the continuity of this process from a political angle, the critical constituents of the program’s design will be institutionalized through government regulation.