
Desrameaux Community Development Plan

History and Geography



The community known as Desrameaux emerged out of a cluster of homes overlooking the Lafeuille, Gros Islet area. This hilly community is bounded by Monchy on the east and Babonneau on the west. Desrameaux is essentially a small and rural squatter settlement. The community showed that most of the land is owned by Government and many families have settled on these lands. Of the land that families have occupied, some tracks are occupied by successive generations of large extended families with some lands in dispute or unclaimed.



The name Desrameaux is of French origin and ‘rameaux’ is literally translated palm, as in a palm tree. The popular French phrase ‘dimanche des rameaux’ means Palm Sunday. However, residents cannot attest to the origin of the community’s name. The belief is that the community was given that name because of its location at the back of two main rivers. Residents remarked that Desrameaux was given the sobriquet “Sweet New York” by a visitor, who described the community as having everything he needs including a plentiful water supply.



The community sits in the path of the trade winds and is highly exposed to wind damage. The main road is under threat from water damage due to poor drainage. After the passage of Hurricane Tomas a number of fault lines appeared; an indication of significant earth





movement or subsidence. Left unattended this could result in land slippage with catastrophic consequences, to lives and property.

The southern flank of the community is covered by a large forest area, which offers protection to the numerous springs and other water sources that flow towards the community. This area is in need of protection for the sustainability of the water supply and preservation of the general ambience of the community. During the dry season, many farmers resort to the traditional slash-and-burn method of land clearing and preparation. This presents a threat to the natural environment and to the health of residents.



Des Rameaux is accessible by road and is only 4.35 kilometers away from the town of Gros Islet and 7.47 kilometers from the city of Castries. The road conditions are relatively good, but require proper drainage.



Residents boast that it is a clean and scenic community with fresh forest breeze. It is endowed with water, pristine flora and fauna. A number of natural springs are located in the community. As a result, a dam has been constructed along one of the larger springs and supplies water to the entire community. This reservoir is also fed by a pipeline from the Marquis River from Hill Twenty in Babonneau.



A unique tradition in the community is the use of a very primitive meeting-calling system. The town crier or Mr. Barbwire, as he is known, blows a special conch shell near the meeting hall and in less than 15 minutes a crowd from all over the community would assemble at the Mothers and Fathers hall.





Demography and Housing

Desrameaux is populated mainly by extended families of which the most popular surnames are: Lionel, Albertie, Delice, Eduard and Duncan. As of the 2010 Population and Housing Census, there are 276 residents and 96 households with an average size of 2.88 people. Presently, the population is now estimated at 450 with the highest among the age group of 15-35 (40%) and the lowest among the age range of 40 -55 (30%).



Initially, most houses were constructed of timber. In recent times however, with added means, there has been a trend to construct new homes of concrete, or to add concrete extensions to existing homes. The outer walls of most homes observed are constructed out of concrete or a combination of timber and concrete.

Water and Sanitation

Water has been piped into dwellings in the community since 2004 which residents consider a major achievement. They previously, used the standpipes. There is a perennial problem with the irregular supply of water in spite of the many rivers and waterfalls in the community. Some homes on elevations boast a constant water supply. Unfortunately, others who live on the higher elevations lament that they have had an inconsistent water supply for a number of years.



In certain areas, on account of the abundant water resources, residents are able to access water from nearby springs and streams. While they retain a water connection from the Water & Sewage Authority (WASCO), the untreated water is piped for domestic use





such as flushing toilets, washing and bathing. Both latrines and flush toilets are used in the community but most homes now have flush toilets.

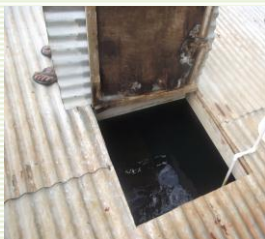


Diabetes and Hypertension are prevalent health conditions in the community, with increase use in many parts of the island. Alcoholism is of some concern, although its use has significantly increased during the festive season and at social gatherings such as birthdays. Periodically, the community experiences an infestation of mosquitoes due to the numerous pools of stagnant water which accumulate near the former playing field.



The community benefits from the bi-weekly garbage collection programme by the Solid Waste Management Authority. This regular public collection of garbage by the garbage truck is not widely used, since the garbage truck only travels through the main road. Many residents consider the walk to the main road a burden. Therefore, some families would burn and throw out their solid waste.

Community Facilities



The community boasts a single public building sometimes referred as the Community Centre. In reality, it is a Mothers and Fathers Group building. The absence of other meeting venues necessitates that other groups and individuals use the facility for meetings and other social events. Numerous user conflicts abound as the youth groups both formal and informal challenge the Mothers and Fathers group which seeks to retain control of the facility. A changing room facility is under construction in the vicinity of the playing field. It contains space for a meeting room. The new facility will provide an alternative venue for





meetings thus reducing some of the tension that exist on account of a single meeting place.

The community has access to daycare and preschool facilities in the neighboring community of Ti Dauphin near La Riviere Mitant. Some of the children of primary school age attend the Monchy Primary School, while others whose parents own vehicles attend schools in Castries.



Primary health care is accessed at the Monchy Heath Center located approximately four kilometers away. The health aides from the Monchy Health center undertake community visits. There are no churches at Desrameaux. Residents attend the Plateau Seventh Day Adventist, and Monchy Roman Catholic churches which are the closest houses of worship available to the community.



The members of the community indicate that there is a regular bus service during the rush hour but it becomes increasingly difficult to get a bus after that time. There are a few unpaved footpaths leading to clusters of homes, several of which are in a state of disrepair. In some instances, community members who are ill can only be reached by the emergency services with the extreme difficulty.



At present the community, netball court and football field are inaccessible due to construction work on the changing room which started approximately three months before the passage of Hurricane Tomas. Work on the project is currently at a stand-still. The electric lamps on the courts were also disconnected a few months ago.



There is a single stand pipe located near the business centre of the community. It is freely available for public use, although it was initially installed to facilitate Jounen Kweyol activities.

Community residents have access to electricity, cable television, telephone services both land line and mobile



Economic Livelihood

The economic backbone of Desrameaux constitutes farming including animal rearing and number of small enterprises are employed. The majority of residents, who do work, seek employment outside the community in the tourism, construction and other industries, particularly the services industry. Most of the men in the community work as construction workers and farmers. Some work in the Government Service and are also employed as bus drivers. Most of the women folk earn their living by gardening and vending at the market in Gros-Islet and Castries. Older women engage in seasonal domestic paid labour, mainly at guest houses, during the tourist season. Some are self-employed within the community and operate food stalls.



A substantial number of persons within the community practice farming. There is a single banana holding and several subsistence farmers engage in cash crops such as tomatoes, peppers and other vegetables. Animal rearing primarily of pigs and small ruminants is a form of livelihood in the community.





A number of older residents produce charcoal. This activity does not appear to be very widespread and production is limited and exclusively for local consumption. Charcoal production was observed near the periphery of the rain forest whose watershed protects the many streams which provide water to Desrameaux and surrounding areas. Deforestation of the watershed could result in a substantial depletion of both the quality and quantity of water available in the water sources which supply Desrameaux and surrounding areas.



Small-scale traditional broom making is undertaken in the community using the latanier (*thrinax parviflora*) plant. The latanier broom is a permanent feature in most St. Lucian homes and owes its survival to its versatility, longevity and efficiency in cleaning. This artifact has survived the influx of many imported substitutes in the market, and possibilities for wider production and product differentiation for the residents should be explored.



Most households tend a kitchen garden. Tomatoes, anise, okra, and pigeon peas are produced in sizable quantities. The production of pigeon peas appear be a viable option. This commodity was extremely popular in the recent past, but local production has waned considerably. Pigeon peas has a unique taste and is a delicacy among older St Lucians. The arid soil conditions in certain areas of Desrameaux seem favourable for production on a commercial scale. The plants are perennial, do not need intensive care and are prolific bearers.



Among the main business enterprises in the community are twelve grocery shops; a large number for a community of such a small size.





Of these twelve grocery shops; seven of these also sell rum and there are also three main rum shops. The community also boasts one barber shop but interestingly, no hairdressing salon.



Desrameaux also boasts thousands of mauby trees (*Colubrina elliptica*). Bottled mauby is imported into St. Lucia in large quantities and is a much favoured drink, particularly by the older population. The possibilities for production of the drink by Desrameaux and neighbouring communities should be examined, as it is easy to prepare and the resource can be harvested in a sustainable manner on a wider.



Leandre Springs is a small water-bottling enterprise which extracts water from one of the many springs of Desrameaux. The operation is reportedly beset by various operational problems and the plant only functions occasionally. Employment is provided for a single resident of the community. Waterfalls in the community have the potential to provide eco-touristic initiatives and generate employment and create income.



There are six minibuses which are primarily owned by residents. They leave the community at 5 am on weekdays and leave Castries at 9:30 pm. The late bus services provide transportation for students of the community who study part time at the Monroe College in Castries.

There are major unemployment issues among the youth and middle aged residents. One member of the community suggests that the Government is making no effort to create additional jobs, a situation which compounds the unemployment issue in Desrameaux. The



young men, who do not work, congregate at particular points in the community and engage in gambling and some drug use. The young unemployed women on the other hand, remain idle at home. Due to the high level of unemployment within the community, a small percentage of residents migrate to other countries mainly Anguilla and Barbados.



The prevalence of unemployment among both youth and middle-aged persons within the Desrameaux community has the potential to escalate into a number of troubling social issues which are already visible. Gambling seems to be a growing trend among young unemployed men because of idleness. The youth gamble using dominoes and card games. Presently, the prevalence of teenage pregnancy within the community has been linked to lack of proper family life education and also transactional sex to satisfy basic needs. The block culture is not a major issue but is gradually becoming a concern as a substantial number of young males are unemployed. Residents of Desrameaux are proud to mention a low crime rate in the community. Notwithstanding, there are isolated incidents of petty theft. The culprits behind these incidents have been identified as new entrants into the community.



Community Organizations

Presently there are two groups functioning in the community, the Mothers and Fathers Group and the Community Development Committee. The Development Committee is an elective body with representation from the Mothers and Fathers group, Youth and community opinion leaders. Most key decisions concerning the development of the community are made through an unstructured





association which comprises the Development Committee, the Mothers and Fathers group and elements of a network of community-based youth.



It has been noted by members of the development committee that there is some disquiet among the Mothers and Fathers group, the Community Development Committee and the youth. Sources reveal that this is in relation to the use of the hall and payment of electricity bills. The youth do not seem to favour participation in self help activities without remuneration and have been quoted as saying “you cy’an work without rum.” Also, members of the Development Committee are disillusioned because of failed promises made by government agencies.



Desrameaux once boasted of vibrant cultural and youth groups. This is evidenced by the creation of the Jounen Kweyol Committee in the past, which has afforded the community the opportunity to host Jounen Kweyol activities. Residents are eager for revitalisation of vibrant groups in the community.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES



Below is a listing of the felt needs and priorities as determined by the members of the community. Achievement of these needs would require a great deal of effort and commitment from the members of the community, and technical expertise from social and physical planners, development specialists. The needs are as follows

1. A Community Centre





2. An Information Technology Centre
3. Construction of vendors Stalls
4. Development of waterfall for tourism
5. Increase street lighting
6. Increase capacity of the water tank
7. A Pre School
8. Rehabilitation of roads and drains
9. Rehabilitation of retaining walls and footpaths
10. Renovation of Mothers and Fathers Hall
11. Construction of Playing Field
12. Provision of Soft Skills Training



IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN

This plan embodies the hopes, aspirations and dreams of the community for the future. The Desrameaux Development Committee will provide leadership and general oversight to the implementation of this plan, in close collaboration with the St. Lucia Social Development Fund (SSDF) through their keystone programmes, the Special Framework of Assistance (SFA) 2006 and the Holistic Opportunities for Personal Empowerment (HOPE). The success of this venture is also contingent upon the functionality of the Committee, and the extent to which they can enlist the support of the wider community. The contribution of technical experts from Government and other Development agencies are considered imperatives in the execution of this unfolding plan.



Desrameaux-SWOT Analysis



STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fertile agricultural land. ➤ Strong Social Capital. ➤ Access to basic amenities (electricity, cable, telephone services, public bins and garbage collection service). ➤ The presence of forest reserve contributing to the ambiance. ➤ Abundant water supply. ➤ Low crime rate. ➤ Presence of Community Development committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unemployment and Underemployment ➤ Incidents of substance abuse. ➤ User conflict regarding the Mothers' and Fathers' Hall/Community Center. ➤ The disintegration of formal youth and cultural groups. ➤ Poor land tenure pattern. ➤ Inaccessible playing field and court due to unfinished construction. ➤ Improper foot paths leading to homes of Residents including Persons' with Disabilities. (PWD's) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Proximity to the Castries and Gros-Islet. ➤ Neighbouring communities with necessary public services (pre-schools, primary school and health centre.) ➤ Capitalize on the tourism industry (creating tours to the water fall, develop craft industry). ➤ Interventions by HOPE and SFA 2006. ➤ Opportunity for expanding the broom making industry. ➤ Opportunity for developing a community bottling plant. ➤ Opportunity for develop mauby bi-products ➤ Opportunity for expanding the peas holdings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Vulnerability to natural disasters particular wind and water damage. ➤ Undue external influences. ➤ Disease outbreak due to pools of stagnant water.