

Symposium on “Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway in Small Island Developing States - SIDS: Equipping Public Institutions and Mobilizing Partnerships”

THINK PIECE 3¹

Effective Partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway: what works, what’s new and what has been done at international level

The achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals will require an intensified collaboration between all governments, sectors and people working together in an integrated manner by pooling, knowledge, expertise and financial resources. With this ambitious agenda, consisting of 17 interlinked Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets as a blue-print for achieving the sustainable Future We Want, cross-sectoral and innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships will play a crucial role for getting us to where we need to be by the year 2030 if we want to leave no one behind.

Sustainable Development Goal 17, which reads “*Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development*”, recognizes multi-stakeholder partnerships as important vehicles for mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, particularly developing countries. Goal 17 further seeks to encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of existing partnerships.

The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States – the SIDS conference – was held in Apia, Samoa, from 1-4 September in 2014. The Conference produced the *Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities Of Action* (SAMOA) Pathway, a blue-print for achieving sustainable development in SIDS. The outcome was based on outcome documents from previous SIDS conferences, years of experience, on-the-ground knowledge, and the conviction that strong and genuine partnerships lie at the heart of the successful implementation of sustainable development.

The intergovernmental negotiations on the SAMOA Pathway took place in parallel with the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, which later resulted in the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This resulted in close integration of the priority areas of Small Island Developing States into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – a framework which will guide development efforts globally for the next 15 years.

At the SIDS Conference in 2014, which had the overarching theme of “*The sustainable development of Small Island developing States through genuine and durable partnerships*”, the international community came together and announced over 300 partnerships aimed at driving sustainable development in SIDS. At the SIDS Conference, Member states realized that the mere announcement of commitments and partnerships should not be the end of the process, but the beginning - a realization that was enshrined

¹ This thinkpiece is prepared by UNDESA to guide Session 3 on “Effective Partnerships for implementing the SDGs” at the Symposium, to be held on 21-23 February 2017, at the Bahamas. More information about the Symposium is available at https://publicadministration.un.org/bahamas_symposium.

Note: This paper may not be exhaustive or exclusive in illustrating concepts or cases related to the topics. For any question or comment, please contact kwok@un.org and goranssono@un.org

in the call for the development of a SIDS Partnership Framework, as outlined in the SAMOA Pathway. The Framework was one year later (December 2015) formally established by the General Assembly. The establishment of an inter-governmentally driven framework for follow-up and review of multi-stakeholder partnerships is the first of its kind at the United Nations, and itself a tribute to multilateralism at its best.

The SIDS Partnership Framework has several components; namely a UN Member States-driven Steering Committee (currently co-chaired by Italy and the Maldives), an annual gathering of relevant partners and beneficiaries, ongoing expert meetings and consultations with stakeholders, a partnership reporting mechanism, and an evolving, modern, partnership online platform. The objective of the Framework is to monitor progress of partnership commitments, ensure its implementation, as well make sure the issues of SIDS remains high on the political agenda and encourage new partnerships to be forged across a diverse range of stakeholders.

In its first operational year – 2016 – the SIDS Partnership Framework has laid a strong foundation for its work. On 22 September 2016, during the high-level week of the 71st session of the General Assembly, the first High-level Global SIDS Partnership Dialogue was held at United Nations headquarters, bringing together government ministers, delegates from both SIDS and non-SIDS countries, senior UN officials, partnership practitioners, NGOs and members from the private sector, who reported on what they were doing to advance the 2030 Agenda and SAMOA Pathway through partnerships.

The decision of making partnerships the overarching theme of the SIDS Conference in 2014, as well the establishment of the SIDS Partnership Framework, has ensured that partnerships for Small Island Developing States – as well as partnerships as a concept for driving sustainable development – has remained high on the international development agenda. The SIDS Partnership framework could be seen as a lighthouse when looking at successful models for both engaging various actors in driving sustainable development, as well as for reviewing its work, moving towards a more sustainable future in all countries.

The Small Island Developing States Global Business Network (SIDS-GBN) is another such initiative to link the national and regional SIDS private sectors, global businesses and relevant stakeholders through an online platform. The SIDS-GBN is an initiative announced in the Private Sector Partnerships Forum convened jointly by UN-OHRLLS with the Government of Samoa and the Samoa Chamber of Commerce in Apia, Samoa in the margins of the SIDS Conference in 2014. The objective of the SIDS-GBN is to serve an online hub to coordinate; structure and exchange information on SIDS market opportunities and share knowledge and best practices to encourage scaling up of existing partnerships and promotion of new partnerships and enhance the development impact of the private sector in SIDS.

A lot of work has been done across all regions of SIDS through many innovative partnership arrangements, but there are still a number of challenges to be overcome. One of the most common challenges of partnerships in SIDS relates to receiving adequate and sustained funding. Public-private partnerships is one such modality through which increase in investments in infrastructure and basic services and efficiency can be achieved in SIDS however, knowledge and skills required for undertaking PPP often are lacking in the public sector and private sector is often unaware of the potential of such partnerships in SIDS. More needs to be done for capacity building in SIDS and the facilitation of knowledge sharing and lessons learnt from other countries which have successfully exploited this approach to increase resources and gain efficiency.

Geographic distance and remoteness of Small Island Developing States pose a significant challenge for SIDS partnerships, which often leads to increased transaction and travel costs and it limits communication abilities with partners and stakeholders, and limited access to internet in rural areas.

Socio-cultural differences and sensitivities, as well as language barriers, among Small Island Developing States, and in particular in rural areas, sometimes also hinders progress, as do certain country specific circumstances.

In order for partnerships to effectively contribute to the sustainable development of SIDS, and the SDGs, it is crucial that there is a national enabling environment which allows multi-stakeholder platforms to fully engage with all sectors of society. In carrying out its work, multi-stakeholder partnerships interact with various international, national, and local institutional frameworks. Therefore, national political and social context could in large determine its effectiveness, and by extension, its success.

In order for partnerships - in all its forms - to thrive, they should be consistent with national laws, be fully aligned with national development strategies and the priorities of countries where they are implemented, bearing in mind the relevant guidance provided by governments, as well as aligned with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Similarly, governments should strive to create an enabling environment and a set of interrelated local and national conditions that allows all stakeholders to fully engage in national development processes in a sustained and efficient manner, for all types of partnerships to be able to fully contribute to national development priorities.

A successful partnership relies on broad engagement with all sectors of society and its surrounding communities and people. The above mentioned challenges sometimes hinder this type of engagement, which poses a particular difficulty for the continuation of partnerships in Small Island Developing States.

Mapping the governance architecture and the social and political context in which a multi-stakeholder partnership is situated is crucial to understanding the opportunities and challenges to its implementation.

The Bahamas Symposium on *“Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway in Small Island Developing States - SIDS: Equipping Public Institutions and Mobilizing Partnerships”* will provide a unique opportunity to look at what is needed for mobilizing effective partnerships that can drive sustainable development in SIDS and the Sustainable Development Goals, leading us to the future we want.

Guiding Questions

1. What policies and institutional arrangements have best worked for enabling governments to engage in successful partnerships for sustainable development? What are the critical elements of a national enabling environment for this purpose? What competencies and capacities do policymakers need?
2. Do partnerships engage relevant constituencies, including local communities, in shaping their objectives and deliverables? Do partnerships aim to leave no one behind?
3. What are some of the innovative approaches of partnerships in helping Small Island Developing States tackle the SDGs?

What are some of the successful governance, structures and models for ensuring accountability for multistakeholder partnerships? How can these models be improved?
