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Department of  
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**SMALL ISLAND  
DEVELOPING STATES  
LEARNING WORKSHOP**

18-20 March 2020  
UN Conference Centre  
Bangkok, Thailand

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*Strengthening capacities of SIDS to advance implementation of  
the SAMOA Pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals*



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# Small Island Developing States Learning Workshop

*Strengthening capacities of SIDS to advance implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the SAMOA Pathway*

18-20 March 2020, Bangkok, Thailand

Organized by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

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## Introduction

In September 2019, world leaders participated in a week of series of summits and high-level meetings at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to accelerate progress on sustainable development, underpinned by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - the universal call to action to end poverty and hunger, expand access to health, education, justice and jobs, while protecting our planet from environmental degradation.

As part of the action week, a high-level meeting was held to review progress, gaps and challenges on the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway<sup>1</sup>, the outcome of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in 2014. The review resulted in a political declaration, reaffirming member State's solidarity with SIDS and outlining concrete actions for accelerating sustainable development priorities of SIDS, including for scaling-up and development of genuine and durable partnerships with all stakeholders at national, regional and international levels.

In an effort to strengthen capacities of SIDS to advance the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and SDGs in SIDS, a global *SIDS Learning Workshop* will be organized in Bangkok, Thailand, on 18-20 March 2020. The workshop is to take place the week preceding the 7<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup>, the regional preparatory meeting to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, with the aim of building synergies and enhancing effectiveness of resources.

The workshop – implemented by UN DESA's Division for the Sustainable Goals (DSDG), through its UN Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD), and the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, through its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) – will provide an opportunity to:

- **Enhancing peer to peer learning among SIDS and the sharing of lessons learned from SDG and SAMOA Pathway implementation on priorities of SIDS**, including, inter alia, accessing sustainable development finance for SIDS, improving data collection and statistical analysis, policy coherence for integrated planning, with focus on identifying concrete measures for advancing implementation
- **Strengthening public institutions for implementations of the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway** – Enhancing Institutional Effectiveness and National to Local Governance & Building Risk-Informed Governance and Resilience

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sids/samoareview>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/2030-agenda/regional-processes-and-dialogue>



- **Build strong understanding of multi-stakeholder partnerships for SIDS**, including learning of effective approaches and of introduction of tools to implement and develop effective partnerships and partnership platforms.

The workshop aims to contribute to and inform the discussions of the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, scheduled for 7-16 July 2020 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

## Background

### **Enhance peer to peer learning among SIDS and share lessons learned from SDG and SAMOA Pathway implementation on priorities of SIDS, with a focus on identifying concrete measures for advancing implementation**

SIDS remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities. Many SIDS share common challenges for sustainable development, including their general small size, geographical isolation, vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change, and high dependence on volatile international trade as well as biodiversity loss.

Among all challenges, one significant challenge is the limited capacities to develop evidence-based integrated development plans that mainstream the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway. There is also limited capacity to implement, monitor and evaluate progress in the achievement of SDGs.

Despite these challenges, some SIDS have managed to make progress in enhancing policy coherence through establishing inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms and held consultations to improve national ownership of the 2030 Agenda. Several countries have also set up strategies to localize the SDGs to tailor them to countries' specific challenges. A few countries have also made good efforts to overcome financial constraints and broaden financial means through new innovative instruments.

### **Strengthen the capacities of public institutions at the national and local levels to support SDG and SAMOA Pathway implementations and to promote innovation for inclusive service delivery;**

A strong public sector with enhanced institutional capacity is necessary for overcoming the challenges confronted by SIDS. The implementation of all of the SDGs depend critically on capable public institutions and effective and inclusive service delivery. Institutions need new capacities to provide integrated support to SDG implementation and to leave no one behind.

In general, SIDS have limited public administration capacity in terms of government effectiveness, regulatory quality and transparency. This is largely attributed to the population size and the geographical characteristics of smallness, isolation, and remoteness. The SIDS also have limited



access to specialized knowledge and skills required to establish and operate civil service bureaucracies efficiently as well as effectively.

Moreover, the remoteness of SIDS is often associated with weak control of central government, and people in SIDS are more inclined to rely on informal processes than formal structures and processes. In this context, SIDS tend to use highly decentralized systems to implement sustainable development. They depend on local governments and traditional, informal local governance in formulating and implementing the SDG-related plans and policies, when formal governance and accountability systems are not effective.

Resilience to the frequent impacts of disasters has been identified as major challenges for many SIDS. Considering the threat posed by climate change and its adverse effects, disaster risk reduction and building resilience, both institutional and physical, have particular importance for SIDS. There are a few SIDS have managed to align the National Resilience Development Strategy with Sector Strategic Plans.

Resilience is also noted as a regional priority under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and the 48th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Communiqué where governments “committed to ensuring a whole-of government engagement” with regional priorities. Governments need current knowledge and training tools to enable capacity development and the design of more effective public programmes that can ensure resilience and disaster risk reduction.

**Build strong understanding of multi-stakeholder partnerships for SIDS, including learning of effective approaches and tools to implement and develop effective partnerships and partnership platforms.**

The scope and complexity of the transformations required for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) that are at its core are unprecedented. As a result, no government or stakeholder will be able to address the multi-sectoral, cross-pillar global challenges of today alone, instead, the 2030 Agenda can only be achieved if different sectors and actors work together in an integrated manner by pooling financial resources, knowledge and expertise.

SDG 17 on “*strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development*”, through its targets 17.16 and 17.17, recognizes the critical importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share the finance, knowledge, expertise and technology to support the achievement of SDGs in all countries. The targets also highlight the need to promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships.

Over the recent years, the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in supporting the implementation of sustainable development has also been increasingly recognized by member States and different stakeholders, including leading institutions in international development and the private sector. This is evident in the many UN Conferences that have resulted in the launch of new multi-stakeholder partnerships and voluntary commitments.



At the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS Conference) in 2014, 300 multi-stakeholder partnerships devoted to the sustainable development of SIDS were announced, covering areas such as oceans and seas, climate change, biodiversity, resilience-building, sustainable economic growth, renewable energy and disaster risk reduction. In 2017, at the UN Ocean Conference, over 1,400 voluntary commitments for concrete action to advance implementation of SDG 14 targets were made by all stakeholders, including governments, the United Nations system, civil society organizations, academia, the scientific community, and the private sector. Collectively, these partnerships and commitments make considerable contributions to supporting the implementation of the SDGs.

The political declaration of the SAMOA Pathway high-level review called for scaling-up and development of genuine and durable partnerships with all stakeholders at national, regional and international levels.

Despite the strong rhetoric for the engagement of multi-stakeholder partnerships for supporting implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs – the reality is that we are still only scratching the surface in terms of the number, and quality, of partnerships required to deliver the SDGs.

## **Annotated agenda**

- High-level opening segment
- Sharing lessons learned from SDG implementation in SIDS - facilitate the peer to peer sharing of experiences among SIDS in implementing the SAMOA Pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals in SIDS
- Strengthening public institutions for implementations of the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway – Enhancing Institutional Effectiveness and National to Local Governance & Building Risk-Informed Governance and Resilience
- Accelerating effective partnerships for SIDS

## **Participants**

The workshop will include about 70 participants, including representatives of SIDS dealing with implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs at the national level, relevant UN entities, UN Resident Coordinators in SIDS, and other stakeholders committed to the pursuit of sustainable development in SIDS.

## **Venue**

The SIDS Learning workshop will be held on 18-20 March 2020 at the United Nations Conference Centre (Conference Room A), in Bangkok, Thailand.



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## Organizers

The workshop is being organized by UN DESA (through its various divisions and offices) in collaboration with partners, hence drawing on numerous comparative advantages, strengths and experiences in supporting SIDS in their pursuit of sustainable development.

### **United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)**

UN DESA is a vital interface between global policies and national action in the economic, social and environmental spheres. Rooted in the United Nations Charter and guided by the universal and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global agreements, UN DESA responds to the needs and priorities of the global community.

The **Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG)** of UN DESA act as the Secretariat for SDGs, focusing on providing substantive support and capacity building to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their related thematic issues, including water, energy, climate, ocean, urbanization, transport, science and technology, the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), partnerships and SIDS.

The **United Nations Office on Sustainable Development (UNOSD)**, a part of Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of UN DESA, supports UN Member States in planning and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, through knowledge sharing, research and advisory services, capacity building and partnerships.

The **Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)** of UN DESA focuses on analyzing and supporting efforts to make institutions inclusive, effective, accountable and well-equipped to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as reflected in SDG 16. By focusing on building strong institutions and governance for the 2030 Agenda, the Division assists UN intergovernmental bodies in reflecting on the role of institutions as an integral part of their examination of the SDGs and supports the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA).

The **United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG)**, a part of the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), focuses on strengthen the public governance capacities of developing Member States in Asia and the Pacific and beyond to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) serves as the United Nations' regional hub promoting cooperation among countries to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. The largest regional intergovernmental platform with 53 Member States and 9 associate members, ESCAP has emerged as a strong regional think-tank offering



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countries sound analytical products that shed insight into the evolving economic, social and environmental dynamics of the region.