Practitioner-to-Practitioner Forum

on

Strengthening Capacities of Public Administration in Island States

Equipping Public Institutions, Strengthening Resilience and Building Effective Partnerships for Implementing the 2030 Agenda from an Island States Perspective

Aide-Mémoire

Co-organized by

Ministry of Sustainable Development, Wildlife and Regional Development of Sri Lanka

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)

United Nations in Sri Lanka

Colombo, Sri Lanka

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1. Context

1. Adopted in 2015 by all United Nations Member States, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to achieve the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** as a holistic and interdependent agenda to be achieved in both developed and developing countries. It aspires to "leave no one behind" and calls for a special effort to ensure that Island States make rapid progress towards realizing the SDGs. The **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030** is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda with its seven targets and indicators embedded across the SDGs. The Sendai Framework particularly advances the achievement of eleven goals, particularly 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 14 and 15 among others to ensure resilience[1] in progress on sustainable development across all Member States.[2]

2. Though it universally applies to all United Nations Member States, the 2030 Agenda underscores the special challenges facing the most vulnerable countries.[3] For Island States with finite borders come finite resources, especially in terms of natural resource constraints, requiring them to address sustainable development and resilience strategies in tandem. Island States are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and the increasing intensity and frequency of natural disasters.[4] The pursuit of more collaborative and coordinated efforts to deal with increasingly limited resources is required as global progress towards meeting disaster risk reduction targets.[5]

3. Notably, Small Island Developing States[6] (SIDS) face unique challenges and constraints due to their small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base, and exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks. In relation to the size of their economies, SIDS have borne a disproportionate impact from disasters and have struggled to cope with their impact, particularly in terms of broader climate change-related risks. The 2030 Agenda reinforces the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway of September 2014, the key intergovernmental agreement serving as the blueprint for addressing SIDS' continuing sustainable development challenges.

4. The **2018 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) for Sustainable Development** focuses on the theme of "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies."[7] 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[8]. Furthermore, the 48th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Communiqué has endorsed the November 2017 Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development. SIDS have recognized that five elements of the Roadmap provide necessary guidance for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda by the region with a focus on strengthening (i) leadership and coordination; (ii) advocacy and communications;

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[1] UNISDR defines resilience as "The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management."
https://www.preventionweb.net/files/50683_oiewgreportenglish.pdf

[2] https://www.unisdr.org/files/50438_implementingthesendaiframeworktoach.pdf

[3] See "Making the 2030 Agenda Deliver for SIDS, Building on the SAMOA Pathway,"
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=20000&nr=324&menu=2993

[4] https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/176899/ewp-466.pdf

[5] UNISDR Global Capacity Development Strategy to Support Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Accessed at: https://www.preventionweb.net/files/56922_sfdrrcdstrategyzerodraft20180223.pdf

[6] Small Island Developing States (SIDS) were formally recognized as a distinct group of developing countries facing specific social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (3-14 June 1992).

[7] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2018#prep

[8] 48th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Communiqué, 8 September 2017, Apia, Samoa
The Blue Pacific – Our Sea Of Islands – Our Security Through Sustainable Development, Management and Conservation

(iii) regional monitoring and indicators; (iv) integrated reporting; and (v) supporting the means of implementation.[9]

5. Within this strategic frame, the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) of UN DESA, through its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), in collaboration with the Government of Republic of Korea and with the support of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) and UNDP, organized a Symposium in December 2017 in Incheon, Republic of Korea, on **Building Effective, Inclusive and Accountable Institutions and Public Administration for Advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. The Symposium contributed to developing the capacity of governments to address challenges posed by the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to respond to the SDGs in innovative ways, drawing from the strategies that different countries are implementing and their successes and challenges.

6. During the Symposium it was recognized that SIDS are generally struggling to finance and manage resources to advance resilience effectively given their vulnerability to disaster risks and the current size and capacity of their public institutions. There is a need to continue collaborating to address these challenges by considering ways to simplify and streamline financial administration for development projects and programmes. This effort includes moving from funds dependency to self-sustainable financing, fostering innovation in financing resilience.[10]

7. The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) defines capacity as "the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully," and capacity development as "the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt, and maintain capacity over time" to achieve their own development objectives. There are many capacity needs and gaps to address across Island States in achieving the 2030 Agenda and its Sendai Framework targets for resilience. National mainstreaming of the SDGs through a Whole-of-Government approach that ensures policy coherence and coordination across government is critical to foster national ownership of the 2030 Agenda. Building capacity across all sectors, especially regarding collection and use of data, is necessary, as is public information sharing to enhance transparency and accountability and to build trust. Equally, stakeholder engagement and effective partnerships are key to the implementation of the SDGs for SIDS. The following table summarizes key documented capacity gaps to ensure ongoing training efforts focus on closing these knowledge and skills gaps across Member States.

Identified Capacity Gaps for Achieving the SDGs and Resilience[11]

Limited Resources	Countries have reported that gaps exist in current human, technical and financial resources to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its specific Sendai Framework targets on Resilience. This also requires strengthening resource management competencies and a strategic mindset to implement development activities effectively, as governments are increasingly required to do more with less.
Stakeholder Engagement	Countries have reported capacity gaps in engaging stakeholders, especially at local level, from private and civil society sectors into planning and decision-making, as well as monitoring. This would also require strengthening in public service competencies for participatory governance for greater citizen and non-government actors in governance processes.
Accountability and Institutional Strengthening	In line with the 2030 Agenda's focus on good governance and targets to strengthen transparency, there are observed capacity gaps in accountability systems which needed to be closed to ensure responsive institutions and public services in the face of disaster or recovery. This also links to capacity gaps in addressing anti-corruption and transparency targets of the agenda for transparent and just recovery efforts. It also requires a focus on auditing, critical thinking and integrated problem solving competencies in governance of risk prevention and

[9] http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/newsroom/press-statements/2017-media-releases/samoa-hosts-series-of-meetings-to-operationalise-pacific-roadmap-for-sustainable-development.html
[10] http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/newsroom/press-statements/2017-media-releases/samoa-hosts-series-of-meetings-to-operationalise-pacific-roadmap-for-sustainable-development.html
[11] Sources: UNISDR, 2018. Strategic Approach to Capacity Development for Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction – Concise Guide. Online at: https://www.unisdr.org/files/58211_fullconciseguide.pdf and UN DESA Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, 2018.

	recovery processes.
Sub-National Ownership	Capacities differ widely from national to local levels, thus ensuring local ownership of SDG and Resilience strategies is recognized as a key capacity gap for many member states. This is especially prevalent in disaster risk reduction capacity development activities due to a lack of nationally-based facilities and programmes to address the knowledge gap in DRR-related practices and the lack of attention paid to developing capacity at sub-national level.
Whole-of-Government Approach for Policy Coherence and Coordination	The 2030 Agenda requires transversal coordination and policy coherence across government through the Whole-of-Government approach. In achieving resilience for Island States all ministries require capacities to integrate DRR. This is especially so for staff in other line ministries that are not directly linked to DRR but nonetheless play an important role in resilience-building and recovery. This capacity area also points to competency gaps in systems-thinking for strengthened coordination, risk planning and assessment across government.
Monitoring Risk Data and Evidence-based Guidance	Data, especially real-time data, is increasingly being used to guide government decision-making and policy. However, many member states still lack capacity in the systems and technical skills to monitor, collect, manage, store and disseminate accurate data for Disaster Risk Management and Resilience. Human behaviour needs to change to ensure data can be leveraged for more risk informed sustainable development.
Evaluating Resilience	Capacity gaps also exist in evaluating Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience efforts, especially in terms of standardized indicators. While the Sustainable Development Goals and integrated Sendai Framework targets provide some indicators, translating these into realistic evaluation systems within country contexts is still a challenge.
Addressing Post-Conflict Areas	With an increasing number of conflicts worldwide and the intensity and frequency of disasters set to increase globally due to climate change, addressing post-conflict disaster risk recovery and resilience is a key capacity gap. Post-conflict areas require special attention and interventions.

8. Aligning national SDG planning with ongoing agendas for resilience and climate change, including the Paris agreement is also crucial to ensure positive synergies with existing national development efforts. By way of example, the Government of the Bahamas, with the support of UN DESA, organized in February 2017 a Symposium on "**Implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Equipping Public Institutions and Mobilizing Partnerships**". This Symposium reflected on how SIDS can integrate the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway in national planning processes, policies, strategies and public institutions – along with other recent United Nations agreements.

Sri Lanka's Development Journey and Experience in Supporting SDG Implementation

9. Sri Lanka's economic development strategy is increasingly being planned in accordance with the country's commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. Sri Lanka's strategy is to implement the SDGs in three phases; 2017 to 2020, 2020 to 2025, and 2025 to 2030. The Government is expected to further elaborate on this approach when it conducts its Voluntary National Review at the 2018 HLPF.

10. In July 2017, Sri Lanka released a national statement during the 2017 HLPF,[12] in which it provided detailed information on the key institutional arrangements the country has established in support of SDG implementation, such as putting in place a Blue-Green Strategy to sustainably unlock the value of Sri Lanka's ocean resources sustainably;[13] establishing a Parliamentary Select Committee to monitor the progress of the implementation of the SDGs; establishing a Cabinet Ministry of Sustainable Development, Wildlife and Regional Development to steer the planning of the implementation of the SDGs; and conducting an inter- and intra-linkage mapping exercise between and amongst the 169

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[12] See National Statement of Sri Lanka at the General Debate of the High-level Segment of ECOSOC including the Ministerial Meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development by Hon. Gamini Jayawickrama Perera Minister of Sustainable Development and Wildlife, 18th July 2017
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25723srilanka.pdf
[13] The Government of Sri Lanka envisions pursuing a Blue–Green Development Strategy, whereby the Government plans to integrate the full economic potential of ocean related activities in formulating the overall growth strategy, and build the economy on an environmentally sustainable development strategy. In a recent national annual budget presentation, the Finance Minister – Mr. Mangala Samaraweera on November 10, 2017 presented the 2018 Budget to Parliament. Launched under the theme 'Blue-Green Budget; the Launch of Enterprise Sri Lanka', the budget aims to achieve the SDGs. According to the authorities, "It is 'Blue' because we plan to integrate the full economic potential of ocean related activities in formulating the overall growth strategy. It is 'Green' because we build our economy on an environmentally sustainable development strategy. See "Blue-Green 'Enterprise' Budget unveiled Targets SDGs" http://www.ceylontoday.lk/print20170401CT20170630.php?id=33861

targets and the 400 plus statutory institutions under the ministries to identify their roles and responsibilities in implementing the SDGs.

11. Last year, Sri Lanka completed the formulation of the "National SDG Roadmap" along with a National Monitoring, Review, Reporting and Follow-up Mechanism for the SDGs.[14] The Government is further pursuing efforts to develop a convergent long-term sustainability vision, a national policy and strategy, a roadmap on implementing the SDGs, a monitoring, evaluation, and reporting mechanism defined by a national indicator and statistical framework, and decentralized implementation of sustainability plans through awareness-raising and behavior change.[15]

12. In their commitment to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Framework 2018-2022 (UNSDF), the United Nations and the Sri Lankan Government on August 3, 2017 signed an agreement linking UN assistance to Sri Lanka's long-term development priorities. This "Results Framework" indicates alignment between the Sri Lanka National Development Strategy and the SDGs, providing a concise set of outcome indicators and verifiable baselines and targets.[16] It argues further that the production of accessible, timely, and reliable disaggregated data and building national statistical capacity are essential steps in the process of achieving the SDGs.

13. In the same regard, the Government of Sri Lanka in a recent publication, "Status of Sustainable Development Goals Indicators in Sri Lanka: 2017" presented baseline data providing details on the available data on the SDG Indicators. The Government expects to achieve the SDGs by 2030 by working towards the provision of basic needs of the people, progressive alleviation of poverty, elimination of all forms of discrimination and inequalities, and establishing a society based on social justice and human security.

14. Sri Lanka was the first country to deploy the I-Sahana[17] open source disaster warning software. The software was originally developed by a team of Sri Lankan technology workers under the Lanka Software Foundation, for use by the Government of Sri Lanka to coordinate assistance tsunami impacted areas.

15. Sri Lanka is focusing on long-term strategic and structural development challenges as it strives to transition to an upper middle-income country. Key challenges include boosting investment, including in human capital and realigning public spending and policy with the needs of a middle-income country.[18]

16. Economic growth in the country in the last five years is in substantial part due to a "peace dividend." Since the end of the conflict in Sri Lanka, the Government has enacted an ambitious program of economic development projects, financed in partnership with the Government of the People's Republic of China.[17]

17. Going forward, increased economic growth will likely require continued structural changes towards greater diversification and productivity increases, as well as a reduction in the role of agricultural production, which currently employs a third of the population.[19]

Overall Purpose

18. Given Sri Lanka's significant strides in aligning its national strategies to SDG implementation and its willingness to cooperate with other Island States, a Forum for selected Island States will be organized to promote knowledge sharing about SDG implementation in the context of resilience and to facilitate discussions about best practices the for Pacific and Indian Ocean SIDS.

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[14] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25723srilanka.pdf
[15] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25723srilanka.pdf
[16] See "United Nations Sustainable Development Framework 2018 – 2022"
[17] See "The World Bank in Sri Lanka" http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/srilanka/overview

[19] See "The World Bank in Sri Lanka" http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/srilanka/overview

19. The Forum will provide an opportunity to build on Sri Lanka's significant strides towards achieving the 2030 Agenda by deepening selected Island State government representatives' knowledge and skills on how best to equip public institutions and strengthen resilience for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Specifically, it will provide an opportunity for country participants to discuss and assimilate good practices, as well as guidance and lessons learned from Sri Lanka's work in connection with its VNR in 2018, both in terms of its content as well as the Government's institutional coordination and processes.

20. The Forum will include intensive peer-exchange between government officials from Island States, with emphasis on experts and practitioners in public administration and resilience, including experts in finance, disaster risk resilience and disaster preparedness at the national and local levels. This would foster practitioner-to-practitioner insights into several areas, including aligning national development plans with relevant international frameworks, building the capacities of national and local authorities and communities, strengthening planning and governance mechanisms for resilience, leveraging E-Government services and open data for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) for resilience, and advancing means of implementation.

2. Thematic Areas

21. Sri Lanka can share its experience and practical approaches in each of the following areas.

i.   Implementing the SDGs through policy coherence, institutional coordination, and a whole-of-government approach examining the Sendai Framework targets within the SDGs in detail;
ii. Integrating global agendas into national development plans and lessons learned in institutional arrangements and stakeholder engagement for the SDGs;
iii. Enhancing the capacities of national and local authorities on localizing SDGs;
iv. Planning and implementing governance mechanisms for resilience;
v.   Leveraging E-Government services and open data for DRR;
vi. Mobilizing resources through partnerships for strengthening means of implementation (i.e. innovative domestic financing, enhancing aid effectiveness, and strengthening South-South Cooperation);
vii. Monitoring, review and follow-up process (VNR preparation and Sendai Framework).

3. Goals and Learning Objectives

22. The Forum will aim to strengthen capacities of government officials in implementing the SDGs. It will provide the opportunity for participants to understand how Sri Lanka adapted the SDGs into its national development plans, policies and institutions, and mobilized its public administration to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

23. The Forum also enables learning from the experiences of other national and/or local governments, civil society and private sector entities with resource persons invited from UNISDR, UNDP the Pacific Islands Development Forum Secretariat and other institutions to present their perspectives on the SDGs and resilience program planning, financing and/or implementation. Moreover, public and private sector institutions could also lead discussions to elaborate on the role of public-private collaboration in strengthening resilience. Elements to be considered could include various strategies and approaches to sustainable infrastructure financing, inclusive institutions and new technical and technological means adapted to recipient states.

24. As Sri Lanka undertook a VNR of its SDG implementation at the 2018 HLPF, insights into the Government's approach to preparing for the VNR will also leveraged. Seven attending countries will present their VNRs in the 2019 HLPF.

25. Officials from various ministries and public institutions that have a role in implementing the 2030 Agenda in Sri Lanka and in participating SIDS could engage in peer-to-peer exchange. This could lead to pairing specific institutions/offices in the SIDS and Sri Lanka, as well as with organizers, to ensure continued capacity building and progress towards implementation of the SDGs.

26. In line with the above, the learning objectives of the Forum are implementation and results-oriented, based on the 2018 HLPF theme. At the conclusion of the Forum, it is expected that participants will have:

1. Increased knowledge of results-based management in realizing resilience, including through planning and policy design, management of funds, partnerships and stakeholder engagement;

2. Increased awareness to support the integration of the SDGs in national development plans and policies through evidence-based policymaking, institutional coordination and policy coherence to achieve the SDGs in line with national public administration systems;

3. Strengthened skills to help mobilize resources, technologies and other means to strengthen public service delivery and implement the SDGs from national to local levels, ensuring that no one is left behind;

4. Compared partnership models and stakeholder engagement mechanisms for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and

5. Examined key dimensions of DRR with enhanced awareness of proven good practices to strengthen resilience including through ICT innovations.

4. Regional Partnerships and Cooperation

27. The United Nations Country Team in Sri Lanka consists of 21 agencies, funds, programmes, and offices around the island and the region. It leads coordination efforts among resident and non-resident agencies, implementing activities related to all 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda, as well as providing institutional support to the government for SDG mainstreaming and the Voluntary National Review process. It supports coordination, programme development and fostering partnerships with national UN and government institutions as part of this Forum.

5. Participants

28. The Forum is designed for government officials with a significant role in implementing the SDGs in the participating Island States, with a particular focus on resilience planning and implementation. To ensure greater policy coherence in line with the cross-cutting themes of the SDGs in government, as well as to respond to the 2018 HLPF theme of "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies," the participants will be comprised of inter-ministerial delegations of 2-3 nominated representatives per country. These inter-ministerial delegations will include nominated government officials specializing planning and public administration, the 2030 Agenda, and in building national resilience and disaster risk reduction strategies. Participants will be at decision-making level.

6. Organizers and Facilitators

29. The Forum is organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) through its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG). UN DESA's DPIDG supports intergovernmental discussions, research and capacity development for building effective, accountable, inclusive and transparent institutions. As a project office of UN DESA, UNPOG aims to strengthen the public governance capacities of developing Member States in Asia and the Pacific and beyond to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNPOG leverages partnerships with relevant international, regional and national agencies and civil society organizations working in the area of public administration to build synergies, including networks of experts, and workshops, online courses and training toolkits in collaboration with other institutions.

30. The Forum is organized in partnership with the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Wildlife and Regional Development of Sri Lanka, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, and with the coordination support of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

31. Established in 2015,[20] the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Wildlife and Regional Development of Sri Lanka leads policy planning and implementation of the Government's sustainable development commitments, in coordination with other responsible institutions and in support of the Ministry's vision of "a sustainable country." As part of its overall sustainable development mission, it is entrusted with ensuring biodiversity conservation in Sri Lanka and regional development strategies.

32. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction for Northeast Asia and Global Education Training Institute (UNISDR ONEA-GETI) was established in 2010 through cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Korea to develop a new cadre of professionals in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation for disaster resilient societies. It supports and promotes effective and coherent Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction implementation among governments, city leaders, the private sector, universities, the science community, NGOs and other international organizations.

7. Programme and Structure

33. The Forum will include interactive discussions with Sri Lankan officials from various institutions and sectors. It will also include field Forums to learn firsthand from successful initiatives undertaken by the Government. Past experiences have demonstrated that optimal learning is achieved by allocating equal time to presentations and to peer-to-peer discussions and exchange of experiences between participants and host organizations. This week-long Forum would adopt a similar balanced approach.

8. Expected Outputs

34. Outputs from the event are expected to be the following:
- A final report to capture the lessons and good practices shared during the Forum;
- Examples of good practices and initiatives elaborated in brief factsheets or other training materials to be used by participants in preparation for the Forum as well as for future capacity development initiatives;
- Specific partnerships could be formed between institutions in Sri Lanka and their counterparts in Island States to strengthen south-south cooperation; and
- The organizers will follow up with attending countries to assess impacts in terms of knowledge retained and results implemented after the Forum.
- The organizers will provide follow up support based on expressed needs regarding the development of national and local strategies for the Sendai Framework and for the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. Funding

35. The United Nations will provide government participants full funding including air tickets, daily subsistence allowance (covering accommodation and meals) and terminal expenses, in accordance with the UN Rules and Regulations.

10. Evaluation

36. Evaluation forms will be circulated during the Forum to assess participants' knowledge and skills attained as a result of participation.

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[20] https://www.parliament.lk/uploads/documents/paperspresented/performance-report-ministry-of-sustainable-development-and-wildlife-2016.pdf

37. Six months after the Forum, a follow-up questionnaire will be distributed to participants to gather information on progress made and continued capacity gaps to assess the provision of additional support.

11. Languages

38. The Forum will be conducted in English.

12. Venue and Dates

39. The Forum will be organized in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 20 to 24 August 2018 at the Sri Lanka Institute for Development Administration (SLIDA).

13. Contact Information

40. For further information, please contact the following representatives:

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