

Practitioner-to-Practitioner Study Visit

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

20-24 August 2018

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 resilience¹ 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 States⁶ (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 priorities⁸. 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;

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.¹⁰ This effort includes moving from funds dependency to self-sustainable financing for resilience and fostering innovation in financing resilience, including impact investment models.¹¹

7. National mainstreaming of the SDGs is critical to foster national ownership of the 2030 Agenda and ensure positive synergies with existing national development efforts. 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.

8. Stakeholder engagement and effective partnerships are key to the implementation of the SDGs for SIDS. 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

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 [Symposium Report]

¹¹ <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>

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>

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 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-Sahana¹⁷ open source disaster warning software. The software was originally developed by a team of Sri Lankan technology workers associated with the Lanka Software Foundation, for use by the Government of Sri Lanka to coordinate assistance for those impacted by the tsunami.

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 Progress continues to be made on issues such as reaching a political settlement with Tamil-

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>

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>

¹⁸

See "The World Bank in Sri Lanka" <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/srilanka/overview>

elected representatives and holding accountable those alleged to have been involved in human rights violations and other abuses during the conflict.¹⁸

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 Study Visit 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 for Pacific and Indian Ocean SIDS.

19. The Study Visit 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 Study Visit 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 Study Visit 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

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

national development plans, policies and institutions, and mobilized its public administration to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

23. The Study Visit 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 is undertaking a VNR of its SDG implementation at the 2018 HLPF, insights into the Government's approach to preparing for the VNR could also be leveraged.

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 study visit are implementation and results-oriented, based on the outcomes of the 2018 HLPF. At the conclusion of the visit, it is expected that participants will have:

1. Increased knowledge of results-based management in realizing resilience, including through planning, project 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 visit.

5. Participants

28. The Study Visit 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 Sustainable Development Goals and 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 Study Visit 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 Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (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 Study Visit 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 Study Visit will include interactive discussions with Sri Lankan officials from various institutions and sectors. It will also include field study visits to learn firsthand from successful initiatives undertaken by the Government. The Visit could also organize and tailor learning events based on the expectations and level of interest of prospective participants. 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 study visit would adopt a similar balanced approach.

8. Expected Outputs

34. Outputs from the event are expected to be the following:

- A wrap-up report to capture the lessons and good practices shared during the Study Visit;

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

- Examples of good practices and initiatives elaborated in brief factsheets or other training materials to be used by participants in preparation for the Study Visit 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 participating countries after the Study Visit is completed to assess ongoing impacts in terms of knowledge retained and results implemented.

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. Funding is provided for selected country participants in accordance with the UN Rules and Regulations.

10. Evaluation

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

37. Six months after the Study Visit, a follow-up questionnaire will be distributed to participants to gather information on progress made and on continued capacity gaps and priorities to assess whether additional support could be provided.

11. Languages

38. The Study Visit will be conducted in English.

12. Venue and Dates

39. The Study Visit 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 Study Visit representatives:

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