

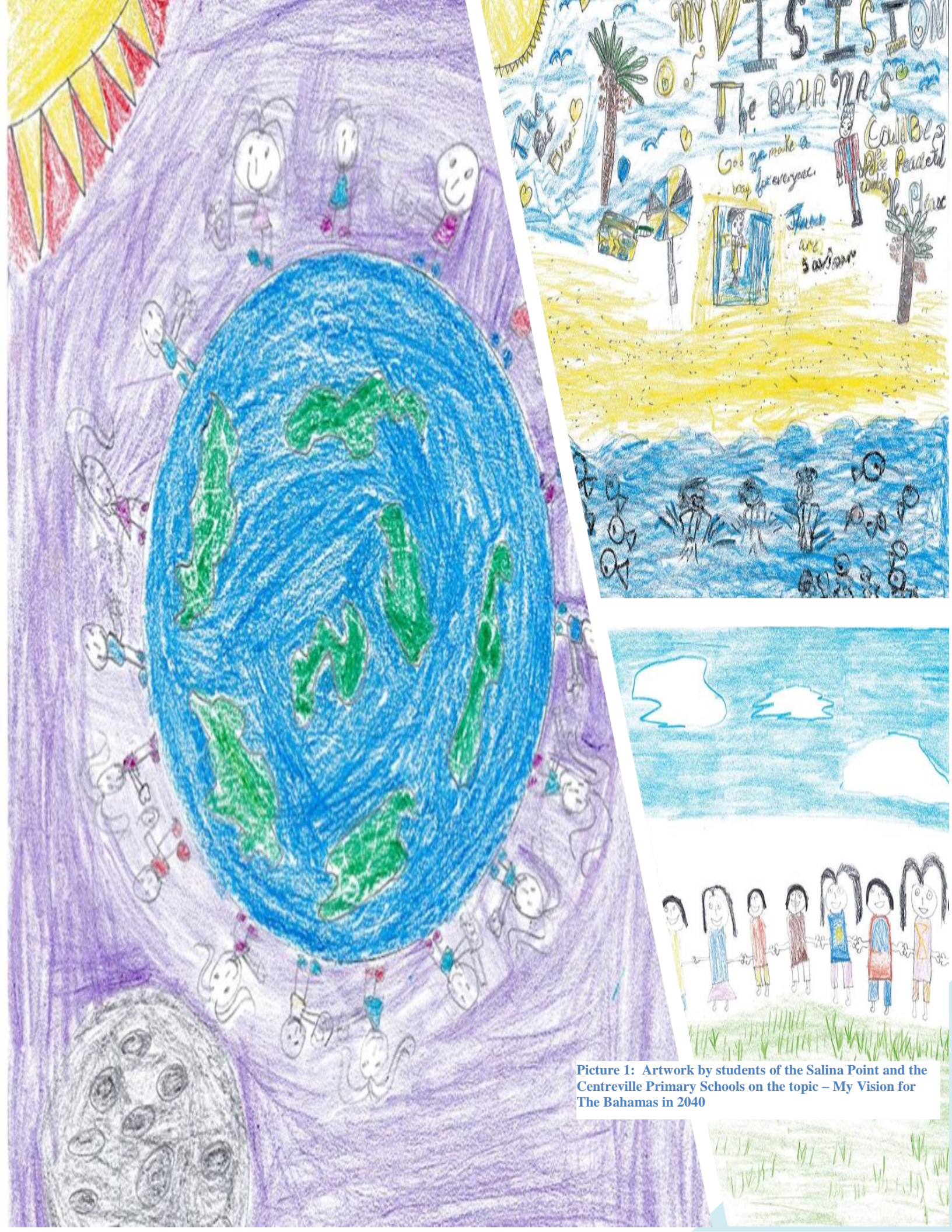


The Bahamas

Voluntary National Review
on the Sustainable
Development Goals to the
High Level Political Forum of
the United Nations Economic
and Social Council

Government of The Bahamas

July 2018



Picture 1: Artwork by students of the Salina Point and the Centreville Primary Schools on the topic – My Vision for The Bahamas in 2040

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2.0 Opening Statement



Dr. the Hon. Hubert Minnis
Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas

The Bahamas, a small island developing state, is fully committed to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These global goals are consistent with and are fully integrated into the country's National Development framework.

In 2014, The Bahamas began the process of developing a 25-year National Development Plan: Vision 2040. Recognizing the synergies between the National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Government of The Bahamas ensured that the 2030 Agenda has been localised into its national development planning process thereby providing a roadmap for the implementation of the SDGs. As will be discussed in more detail in this report, by achieving the 16 National Development Goals, The Bahamas will

also be achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (“the SDGs”) and the associated targets. In order to ensure that all sectors of society are involved and take ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Government is establishing a Sustainable Development Goals Inter-Agency Technical Committee with membership from government ministries and agencies, the private sector, civil society and academia. This approach will also ensure full integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in economic, social and environmental policy.

The Bahamas recognises that in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the country will also need strong institutions and access to the necessary resources. The Government has and continues to take steps to strengthen its public institutions including through: the introduction of a new programme to strengthen its financial and budgetary management systems; programme delivery capacity; and the development of a National Statistical System. Strengthening the country's statistical capacity to produce high quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data, is

particularly critical to support effective policy and decision-making and to ensure the continuous review of the country's progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Bahamas understands that meaningful sustainable development is critical for its very survival. The Bahamas is therefore fully committed to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Bahamas looks forward to continuing its partnership with the United Nations as it strives to implement the 2030 Agenda and extends its appreciation to the Secretary General for the United Nation's continued support to The Bahamas.

The Bahamas is pleased to present its National Voluntary Review at the 2018 High Level Political Forum of ECOSOC to showcase the work which has been done towards meaningful development for its citizens and residents and also to learn from the experiences of the other 46 countries presenting this year.



3.0 Highlights

The Bahamas is a low-lying, small-island, archipelagic developing state. The country has enjoyed the peaceful transition of Government within its Parliamentary democracy over its 45 years as an independent country, with 4 Prime Ministers serving during that period. The economy, driven by the twin pillars of tourism and financial services, has been generally strong, delivering a high quality of life evidenced by a strong Human Development Index score increasing from levels of 0.778 in 1990 to 0.792 in 2015.

Nevertheless, there are some important negative trends which suggest that many have been left behind as the country progressed. Youth unemployment, for example, has remained high – rising to as much as 30% in 2015. Some 13% of the population lives in poverty, with 25% of these being children between the ages of 5-14. Key industries are not producing enough growth to drive sufficient employment expansion. Challenges prevail in both the public education and health care systems leading to less than optimal results. The country is experiencing serious infrastructure gaps as there is a need to replicate expensive roads, bridges, schools, electricity generation and solid waste management systems throughout the archipelago, including to some sparsely populated islands and cays. As a result, there is marked uneven development. Development is further challenged by public institutions which require strengthening, increased accountability, transparency and effectiveness. Finally, like so many small island developing states (SIDS), the country's greatest threat is its vulnerability to climate change and sea level rise. The country has experienced, for three successive years, 3 major hurricanes of category 3 or higher at a total cost of \$678 million or 5% of GDP. Sea level rise threatens major tourism properties, many of the country's airports, road networks and of sea ports.

Integration of the SDGs into the National Development Plan

In 2014, The Bahamas began the process of developing a 25-year National Development Plan: Vision 2040. Recognizing the synergies between the National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals, the Government of The Bahamas ensured that the 2030 Agenda was localised into its national development planning process thereby providing a roadmap for the implementation of the SDGs.

Institutional Arrangements

The national process for preparing The Bahamas' SDG review is currently guided by a collaboration between the Economic Development and Planning Unit (EDPU) in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, it is recognized that these institutional arrangements must be strengthened and formalized to ensure that all segments of society are more involved in, and take ownership of, the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government is therefore establishing a Sustainable Development Goals Technical Committee with membership from various government ministries and agencies, private sector, civil society and academia to ensure full ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals and full integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in the areas of economic, social and environmental policy.

Leaving No-One -Behind

Groups and communities which are marginalized or have not benefited sufficiently from the successes of the country have been identified. Strengthening the resilience of these groups is a key goal of the recommendations and the implementation framework of the SDGs through the National Development Plan. It is important, for example, to develop programmes that address the underlying causes of poverty and joblessness in the country. These programmes must consider the special issues of the elderly, youth at risk and the particular, but different challenges for both men and women. This includes the need for applying a gendered lens to policy solutions and programme development. There are also geographical disparities within the country – with some of the most vulnerable communities being found on the more sparsely populated islands of The Bahamas and also on New Providence in one of the oldest and most historic communities. For this reason, the Government in collaboration with Civil Society, Academia and the Private Sector has created a special zone for a traditionally marginalized region known as the “Over the Hill Community” as a pilot for a comprehensive poverty alleviation strategy focusing on social and economic empowerment, rejuvenation, smart and green technology and programmes which focus on youth and the elderly.

Areas where support is needed for finance, capacity-building, technology, partnerships, etc.

The Bahamas recognises that to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the country will also need strong institutions and access to the necessary resources. Notwithstanding the high GDP per capita of the country, The Bahamas remains a vulnerable, developing country. The Government continues to take steps to strengthen its public institutions including, the introduction of a new programme to strengthen its financial and budgetary management systems, programme delivery capacity and the development of a National Statistical System. Strengthening the country’s statistical capacity to produce high quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data, is particularly critical to support effective policy and decision-making and to ensure the continuous review of the country’s progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.



4.0 Introduction

The Bahamas is a small island developing archipelagic nation of over 700 islands and cays of which about 29 are populated. The country has population of approximately 351,461 people,¹ clustered mainly on two islands – New Providence Island (the location of the capital – Nassau) with just over 70% of population, and Grand Bahama Island with just under 15% of the population. Island.² The other outlying, less densely populated islands are known as the Family Islands. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), The Bahamas’ economic and environmental vulnerabilities amplify its sensitivity to harmful external shocks. These vulnerabilities emanate from a limited resource base; high dependence on export earnings; a small domestic market; high susceptibility to climate change, and exposure to natural and environmental disasters.

As discussed in Part 3 of this report, The Bahamas has fully embraced the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by ensuring that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are aimed at: (a) ensuring inclusive and sustainable economic growth with quality job creation and decent work for all, (b) ensuring social inclusion to facilitate access to quality education and health care; and (c) promoting safe and resilient communities and environmental protection; have been incorporated in The Bahamas National Development Plan Vision2040 (“the Plan”).

The SDG implementation process is well underway in many sectors as detailed in Parts 5 and 6 of this report. Implementation is aided by strong governance arrangements particularly with respect to the existence of a stable, participative democracy with largely independent judicial institutions. Notwithstanding this progress, the Government acknowledges that public sector strengthening is required to achieve stronger and more consistent implementation results. Any slowdown of the reform agenda has the potential to reduce the efficiency of government ministries, particularly with respect to implementation of government policies³ including the SDGs. The Bahamas has undertaken an ambitious project through the Public Financial Management/ Performance Management Reform Programme with support from the Inter-American Development Bank to

¹ Department of Statistics 2010, *2010 Census of Population and Housing* [<http://www.soencouragement.org/forms/CENSUS2010084903300.pdf>]

² Department of Statistics. 2010 Census of Population and Housing.

³ The Bahamas National Development Plan Vision2040 page 46

strengthen government institutions. The programme will result in, among other things: (a) the creation of a Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit responsible for ensuring that priority policies are implemented and (b) the development of a National Statistical System to ensure that there is adequate data to assess and monitor the implementation of the SDGs. A more detailed discussion of this endeavour is discussed in Part 6 under interventions for SDG 16 and 17.

With tepid economic growth rates, rising poverty rates, weak education outcomes, persistent skills and productivity deficits and increasing threats and economic losses due to climate change; the purposeful and dedicated implementation of the 2030 Agenda through the National Development Framework is more critical than ever for The Bahamas. This ambitious agenda of reform, with its multi-dimensional approach, has the potential for improving the country’s human capital, strengthening its infrastructure, and placing the country on a stronger path towards economic competitiveness in support of meaningful sustainable development which leaves no one behind.⁴ As will be demonstrated throughout this report in in Part 5, the Government is committed to taking active steps to ensure that citizens and residents reach their full potential for the overall economic, social and political development of the country thereby realising the SDGs.

Part 7 of this report will address the means of implementation, including the challenges faced with implementation and Part 8 will address the next steps in the process to foster sustainable development within The Bahamas.

⁴ The Bahamas National Development Plan Vision2040 page 135

5.0 Methodology and process for preparation of the review

The process for the preparation of The Bahamas' national review was coordinated by collaborative efforts between the Economic Development and Planning Unit (EDPU) in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The EDPU, the focal point of contact for the National Development Plan (NDP), is responsible for ensuring and monitoring the implementation of the SDGs at the national, local and Ministerial levels; while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has responsibility for continued monitoring of SDG related initiatives at the international level. This collaboration has been supported by officers from other Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, civil society organisations, academia and the private sector. The institutional arrangements will be strengthened by the formal establishment of a Sustainable Development Goals Technical Committee.

Two critical partnerships have aided in the preparation of this report. The first is with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which has supported, through a grant to the University of The Bahamas, the compilation of an SDG country report in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister, along with the preparation of a statistical compendium of Tier 1 SDG Indicators, an advocacy plan for an SDG programme of action and a thematic report on mechanisms to ensure that no one is left behind. The University of The Bahamas assisted in the drafting of this report. The second partnership is with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC) which will be providing technical support through a grant from Government of Germany and the German Society for International Cooperation to conduct a needs assessment for the strengthening of ongoing SDG statistical reporting and to assist with the development of the institutional arrangements for the ongoing SDG monitoring process.

Several initiatives have been undertaken to ensure the sound preparation of this report. In September 2017, the EDPU mapped the SDGs to the purpose and missions of the various government Ministries and Agencies. Each SDG was assigned a lead Government agency and supporting agencies were identified. This matrix was distributed throughout the Government.

Additionally, in September 2017, the EDPU requested information from all Government Ministries and agencies on the public policies and programmes that were specific to their sector which are contributing to the implementation of the SDGs. Information from those submissions have been incorporated into this report. This exercise also assisted with identifying existing gaps in public policies and programmes with respect to implementation of the SDGs as well as highlighting trade-offs and emerging issues.

To ensure that civil society was fully included in the preparation of this report, the Government of The Bahamas has also met with Civil Society representatives to allow for the exchange information regarding contributions made by Civil Society on SDG related programmes and initiatives. However, deeper engagement with Civil Society is required to ensure full participation and engagement of all sectors of society.

With respect to private sector involvement, The Bahamas Chamber of Commerce oversaw the involvement of the Private Sector in the review process. Consultations of the SDG process with the Chamber of Commerce commenced in October 2017. The substance of those consultations has also been included in this report. However, it is also recognized that further engagement with a wider cross section of the private sector is required.

The report is to be presented by the Prime Minister at the High Level Political Forum of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in July 2018.

Policy and Enabling Environment

The Bahamas has a politically aware and engaged population. Historically, labour unions have been extremely strong and active. There is an extremely high voter turnout rate of over 80%. Awareness of public policy is gained through widespread newspaper readership, traditional and social media and an active radio media which includes multiple “all talk” radio stations discussing topical issues of the day. There is a Government information services agency – The Bahamas Information Services and the Government has a website which includes information on its programmes. There is a public broadcasting company offering television and radio coverage to

all islands of The Bahamas. For the first time in Bahamian history, the current administration appointed a Press Secretary to direct government communications within the Office of the Prime Minister. The population has an expectation to be informed.

Creating Ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals: National Level Discussions



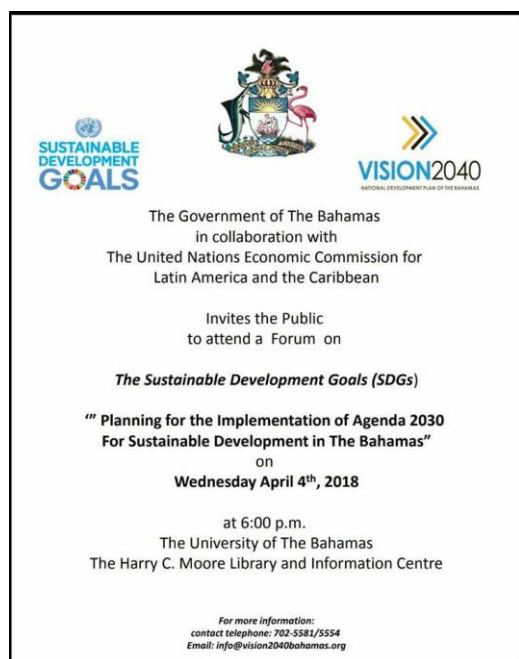
Picture 2: Advertisement for the Bahamas Symposium

In February 2017, the Government of The Bahamas hosted a United Nations Symposium on “*Implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Equipping public institutions and mobilizing partnerships*” with the support of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).

The symposium provided an opportunity for the country to learn from the experiences of other Small Island Developing States and to share its experiences on the mainstreaming the SDGs through its National Development Plan. In preparation for the Symposium a detailed mapping of the SDGs onto the recommendations of the National Development Plan had been prepared. This mapping was shared at the Caribbean Symposium on Mainstreaming the SDGs into National Development Planning, held in Kingston, Jamaica in early February 2017. Both symposia provided an opportunity for the Government to build meaningful partnerships with the various UN bodies and organs involved in the regional SDG effort.

The Bahamas Symposium, however, was an important first component in national awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals and for this reason invitations were extended not only to Small Island Development States, but also to all Bahamas Government Ministries, Civil Society Organisations, Academia, Schools and Youth Organizations and development partners to

participate. Specific sessions of that symposium were broadcasted nationally, and videos of the symposium are available to the public on the website of the National Development Plan.



Picture 3: Advertisement for SDG Forum in April 2018

The Government, in collaboration with UN ECLAC, facilitated two subsequent workshops in October 2017 and April 2018 with emphasis placed on the existing institutional structures for the SDG implementation processes. The workshops were hosted with the intent of raising further awareness about the SDGs with persons from Government Ministries, Civil Society Organisations, Academia, Foundations and development partners.

Through an integrated Communications Strategy prepared by the University of The Bahamas as part of the UNDP technical cooperation grant, The Government of The Bahamas will continue to educate and inform the public about the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The

communications campaign will include public engagement throughout The Bahamas on the SDGs

The SDG communication strategy is structured to ensure that all sectors of society have ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals and builds on the successful engagement of the National Development Plan process. It has been recognized that engagement must take place at both the National and Community levels.

The communications strategy for SDG implementation includes:

- Further collaborative sessions with the Government agencies, Ministers and Parliamentarians;
- A National Civil Society conclave;
- A National Private Sector conclave (Chambers of Commerce, Manufacturers Associations, Small Business Associations, the Tourism, Maritime and Financial Services Sectors, etc) on the SDGs;

- A National Youth conclave on the SDGs;
- Nationally televised town meetings; and
- Traditional (i.e. radio, television, newspapers) and social media communications on SDG activities and progress.

These discussions will provide opportunities for stakeholders to discuss mechanisms to further advance the 2030 Agenda and the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level through public policy and national level action.

An SDG Bahamas website is also being launched to monitor progress on achieving the SDGs through the statistical indicators; and to directly link Government policies and programmes, and civil society and private sector initiatives to specific SDGs.

Creating Ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals: Community Discussions Public, Private Sector and Civil Society Discussions

While the National level discussions are critical, it is also important to localize communications. This was a key lesson learned through the National Development Plan process. The SDG communications strategy therefore builds on the previous awareness and community input campaigns undertaken through the National Development Plan process. It should be noted that the NDP communications campaign included strong references to the SDGs, including the idea that these were two intertwined processes which achieved the common goals of strengthening institutions, promoting peace and security, strengthening the capacity of people, protecting the planet and achieving greater economic prosperity for all.

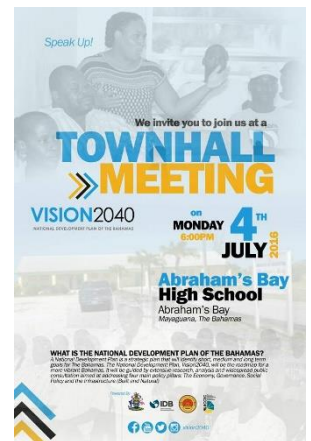


Picture 5: Dr. Nicola Virgill Rolle, Director of the Economic Development and Planning Unit of the Office of the Prime Minister leading a National Development Plan Presentation to the McCullough Corner Community at the Junkanoo Shack of the Saxons Superstars Junkanoo Group, Saxons Way, New Providence.



Picture 7: National Development Plan Presentation at West End, Grand Bahama Island

The National Development Plan’s Communication Strategy focused on the sensitization of community leaders and communities. This included awareness building in communities in the highly populated island of New Providence and also in the Family Islands (Grand Bahama, Andros, Inagua, Exuma, Cat Island, Abaco, Bimini, Eleuthera, and Long Island). The awareness campaigns were conducted by town meetings and small group meetings and also through posting videos, clips and text on matters relevant to the NDP and the Sustainable Development Goals on social media, particularly the National Development Plan’s Facebook page.



Picture 6: National Development Plan Advertisement for a Town Meeting in Abraham’s Bay, Mayaguana Island

Going forward, the SDG community level strategy will include visits to these islands to convene town hall meetings. One-on-one meetings are planned with Civic Organizations, Junkanoo Groups, Church and Community Groups. Special focus is also being paid to awareness raising

within traditionally marginalized groups in the country and economically challenged communities to ensure that no one is left out of the discussion. The SDG awareness strategy also calls for all political parties to also be part of the SDG sensitization process. This was a key aspect of the National Development Plan's ability to garner both national and local support.



Picture 8: Town Meeting to launch the Over the Hill Community Development Partnership. Each project in this programme is linked to an SDG.

The sensitization meetings conducted to date, have facilitated the exchange of knowledge on the Sustainable Development Goals and allowed communities to provide their input on ways they would like to become involved in, and take ownership of, the various actions and targets of the SDGs through the NDP actions and activities. This approach will ensure that the country realizes the Sustainable Development Goals.

To enhance the communication efforts on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Government will also be producing and disseminating booklets on the opportunities that are available for ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals for different sectors. These efforts will help to enhance publicity and public support for the Sustainable Development.

Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals in National Framework

The Sustainable Development Goals process has fully been incorporated in The Bahamas' National Development Plan Vision 2040 ("the Plan"). The Plan is the long term, national development policy that aims to bring about structural reform in the country. The Bahamas National Development Plan is comprised of 16 Goals, accompanying strategies and action steps necessary for sustainable development of The Bahamas under 4 pillars of development (Governance, Human Capital, Economy and Infrastructure and Environment).

- a) **Governance:** ensure that the country is governed according to the principles of good governance, including, good governance in local government;
- b) **Human Capital:** ensure everyone has access to quality health care and education and aggressively address issues such as poverty and discrimination;
- c) **The Natural and Built Environment:** modernise infrastructure, improve transportation links while ensuring that the country has a natural environment which can support economic growth and way of life for generations; and
- d) **Economy:** facilitate inclusive economic growth leading to the elimination of poverty, reduction of inequalities and a better quality of life for everyone.

The plan was developed in three phases.

- The first phase involved a diagnostic of the state of the country by examining the four key pillars of: Governance, Human Capital, the Environment and the Economy. The output of this stage was the release of the State of the Nation Report which highlighted the countries challenges and strengthens.
- The second phase consisted of national consultations with members of the public, stakeholders and stakeholder groups in New Providence and in the Family Islands (Grand Bahama, Andros, Inagua, Exuma, Cat Island, Abaco, Bimini, Eleuthera, and Long Island). Additionally, Bahamians have also had the opportunity to provide their input on the National Development Plan through social media, by attending town hall meetings, a national survey and through one-on-one meetings with the Secretariat.
- The information received from the consultations provided input for the recommendations of National Development Plan – the third phase.



Picture 9: Launch of the State of the Nation Report at the University of The Bahamas, April 2016

The National Development Plan identified and prioritises accelerators. The NDP identified six broad priority areas that are subsumed in the SDGs:

- a. Transparency, Accountability and Effectiveness in Government;
- b. A Healthy, Productive Workforce for a Modern World;
- c. Enduring Citizen Security;
- d. Community Revitalisation;
- e. Inclusive Economic Growth through Empowerment, Business Climate Improvement and Diversification; and
- f. A Sustainable and Resilient Environment.

The identification of accelerators represents a first level of prioritisation according to areas believed to be broadly attainable in the short term. This methodology is typically employed as a means of ‘jump starting’ the implementation process.

While drafting The National Development Plan, the National Development Plan Secretariat ensured that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and accompanying targets were integrated into The Bahamas National Development Plan. Each of the strategies accompanying the 16 National Development Plan Goals is aligned to 17 Sustainable Development Goals and accompanying targets. The Plan is therefore the vehicle through which The Bahamas will achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. By achieving the 16 National Development Goals, the country will be achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (“the SDGs”) and the associated targets. Thus, the NDP pillars were successfully mapped to the SDGs as shown in **Figure 1**.

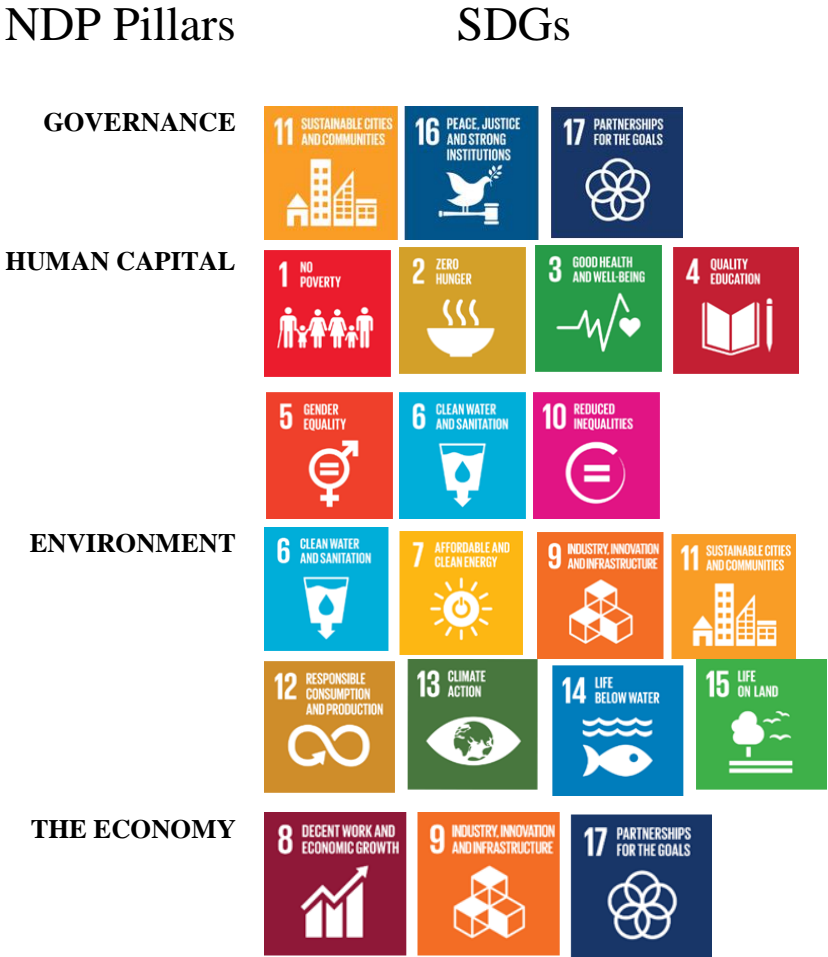


Figure 1. Mapping of NDP pillars with SDGs

In February 2017, the Government of The Bahamas requested the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to conduct an assessment of The Bahamas National Development Plan to

evaluate its alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. The UNDP conducted a Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) and the findings of that review revealed that the first draft of the Plan was 88% aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals. The National Development Plan Secretariat following the RIA, incorporated the recommendations made by the UNDP’s report into The Bahamas National Development Plan to further strengthen the Plan’s alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. A subsequent review of the Plan would therefore reveal that it is more closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and that gender mainstreaming has been incorporated throughout the Plan as appropriate.

Alignment of the NDP with the SDGs

- a. **SDG1 No Poverty: Five priority targets out of the seven indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 1).**

Table 1. SDG1 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action number

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Number
SDG1.2	All NDP Goals in particular Goal 7
SDG1.3.	Goal 7.10.2; 7.10.3; 7.10.4
SDG1.4	Goal 7.2.2; 7.2.3; 8.2.2; 8.2.3; 8.3.2; 7.3.2; 7.3.4; 7.3.9; 12.6.1
SDG1.5	Goal 11.2.2; 11.2.3; 7.10
SDG1.b	Goal 7.11.1; 7.2.5; 7.2.6

Goal 7 of the NDP is focused on building a nation free of poverty and discrimination (including gender, nationality and disabilities). The various action items in this NDP goal address inequality (economic and social exclusion of poor and vulnerable groups limiting their access to basic goods and services); the high unemployment rate among vulnerable groups; intolerably high levels of youth unemployment and social exclusion; a high poverty rate in single parent households, discrimination against vulnerable groups (those with disabilities, migrants and women); and high levels of violence (gender-based violence, sexual assault, child abuse and child neglect). In addition to Goal 7, other goals associated with SDG1 include: Goal 8.2 and 8.3, dealing with the issue of land ownership and the manner in which Crown Land is administered. Goal 11.2 addresses how poverty is worsened in communities that are affected by disaster. Thus, an integrated disaster risk reduction policy is the way forward to manage these impacted communities. Finally, Goal

12.6 of the NDP is critical for SDG1 in improving the financial literacy that, in turn, will improve personal and household resilience and ownership within local economy.

b. SDG2 Zero Hunger: Three priority targets out of the eight indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 2).

Table 2. SDG2 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG2.1	Goal 7.1.1; 7.1.2; 7.1.3; 7.1.4; 7.1.5; 7.1.6; 7.1.8; 5.4.3; 5.4.3; 5.6.1
SDG2.2	Goal 7.1.1; 7.1.2; 7.1.3; 7.1.4; 7.1.5; 7.1.6; 7.1.8; 5.4.3; 5
SDG2.3	Goal 8.2.2; 8.2.3, 8.3.2; 14.9.1; 14.9.2; 14.9.6; 14.9.7; 14.9.8

In the NDP, Goal 7 (free of poverty and discrimination), Goal 8.2 (addressing land ownership) and Goal 8.3 (strengthening administration of crown land) support this SDG extensively. Lack of access to food will impact the health and wellness of the population (Goal 5.4). There is also explicit mention in Goal 5.6 of the importance of healthy diets related to maternal and prenatal care (Goal 5.6: reproductive and sexual health). Goal 14.9 of the NDP relates to creating an enabling microeconomic environment for the development of the food production sector as well as increasing productivity in that sector.



Picture 10: Locally grown fruits and vegetables

- c. **SDG3 Good Health and Well-being: Seven priority targets out of the thirteen indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 3).**

Table 3. SDG3 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG3.3	Goal 5.6.3; 5.6.4;7.7.17
SDG3.4	Goal 2.2; 5.3.2; 5.3.3; 5.3.4; 5.4.3; 5.4.4
SDG3.5	Goal 5.4.2
SDG3.6	Goal 5.4.6
SDG3.7	Goal 5.6.4;7.3.3
SDG3.8	Goal 5.1.1; 5.1.2; 5.1.6
SDG3.a	Goal 5.4.1

The associated NDP Goals 2, 5 and 7 are aligned to SDG3. Only by strengthening the management and operations of public health facilities, can this service be affordable to the population at large. A modern, sustainable and universal accessible health care system is the associated NDP Goal 5. This goal focuses on: providing universal access to health, funding for National Health Insurance, wellness and the social determinants of health and the rationalising of health care governance. The associated Goal 7.3 and 7.7 will create a level playing field for the population and the marginalised community ensuring that they get equal health care treatment and are not discriminated.

- d. **SDG4 Quality Education: Five priority targets out of the ten indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 4).**

Table 4. SDG4 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG4.1	Goal 6.2.1; 6.2.2; 6.2.3; 6.3.4
SDG4.2	Goal 6.4.1; 6.4.2
SDG4.3	Goal 6.9.1; 6.8.1
SDG4.4	Goal 6.9.2; 6.9.3; 6.10.1
SDG4.5	Goal 6.6.1; 6.7.3; 6.7.1

In the NDP, Goal 6 focuses on providing a best in class, equitable, comprehensive and an effective education system. This goal seeks to overcome the challenges of skills deficit, low numeracy and literacy levels; education inequality, unemployment, and inclusiveness in education.

- e. **SDG5 Gender Equality: Three priority targets out of the nine indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 5).**

Table 5. SDG5 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG5.1	Goal 7.7.2; 7.2.8
SDG5.2	Goal 7.7.1; 7.7.9
SDG5.3.	Goal 7.7.3; 7.7.6

Goal 7 of the NDP looks to eliminate inequality by removing discriminatory laws, policies and practices to ensure social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or other status (Goal 7.7). NDP Goal 7.2 also supports SDG5 by creating policies which enable full participation of poor and vulnerable groups in economic opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.

- f. **SDG6 Clean Water and Sanitation: Four priority targets out of the eight indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 6).**

Table 6. SDG6 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG6.1	Goal 7.6.9; 9.2.5
SDG6.2	Goal 7.6.9
SDG6.3	Goal 11.4.2; 11.4.4; 11.4.5
SDG6.4	Goal 9.2.6



Picture 11: Typical standpipe found throughout The Bahamas to provide clean, safe potable water to residents who do not have access to piped water

The associated NDP goals supporting the SDG6 include Goal 7.6 which aims at developing and revitalizing neglected and marginalised communities so that they have access to improved housing, water and sanitation. It is also critical to have access to reliable and affordable power, water, sewer, and telecommunication services (Goal 9.2). Thus, a successful modern waste management strategy that includes public education and new services to sustainably manage waste is essential as indicated in NDP Goal 11.4.

g. SDG7 Affordable and Clean Energy: Three priority targets out of the five indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 7).

Table 7. SDG7 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG7.1	Goal 9.2.1; 9.2.3;9.2.6;11.1.5
SDG7.2	Goal 9.2.3; 11.1.5;
SDG7.a	Goal 11.1.1; 11.1.4

The associated NDP goals supporting the SDG7 include NDP Goal 9.2 which ensures the population has long term access to reliable power, water, sewer and telecommunication services at a reasonable price. This SDG will be supported by Goal 11.1 in positioning the country as a leader in researching and implementing climate change adaptation and mitigation measures and as an incubator of green technologies.

h. SDG8 Decent Work and Economic Growth: Five priority targets out of the twelve indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 8).

Table 8. SDG8 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG8.2	Goal 12.9.1; 14.2.1; 14.7.6; 14.7.6; 14.8.2; 14.8.2; 14.13.2; 14.13.3; 14.13.6
SDG8.3	Goal 7.2.1; 13.3.5; 13.3.6; 13.4.1; 13.4.3;13.4.4
SDG8.6	Goal 3.8.1;13.8.3;13.8.4;13.8.5; 13.5.1;7.3.4; 7.3.6; 7.3.9; 7.3.14
SDG8.8	Goal 7.2.8;15.3.4
SDG8.9	Goal 16.1.1



Picture 12: Woodworking business on Exuma Island

For SDG8, there are numerous NDP goals that support the initiatives, namely Goal 3, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16. To promote healthy economic growth, having a law-abiding society in which rules are respected and communities can thrive is essential (Goal 3). Goal 3 of the NDP also has special provisions for at risk youth. Goal 7 commits to creating policies which enable the full participation of poor and vulnerable groups in economic opportunities for sustainable livelihoods together with helping youth realise their fullest potential through programmes geared to assist their entry into the labour market and aid in their educational and social development. Further, the country must have a healthy macro-economic

environment (Goal 12) and a competitive business environment for economic success that supports business development, innovation, wealth creation, entrepreneurship, diversification and job growth (Goal 13 and 14). All of this can only happen if the labour laws are rationalized (Goal 15.3) and cultural infrastructure and orange economy opportunities are developed (Goal 16.1).

i. SDG9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure: Two priority targets out of the ten indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 9).

Table 9. SDG9 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG9.1	Goal 9.1.1; 9.1.2; 10.1.2; 10.1.3; 10.1.4; 10.1.5; 10.1.6
SDG9.c	Goal 9.3.1; 9.3.2; 9.4.1

NDP Goal 9.1 supports this SDG by recommending the implementation of a strategic framework that guides infrastructure decisions with robust (Goal 9.3) and comprehensive (Goal 9.4) ICT infrastructure. The supporting NDP goals also focus on implementing a National Transportation Strategy and strategic investments and an effective policy environment (Goal 10.1) that are critical to sustainable industrialization.

j. SDG10 Reduced Inequalities: Two priority targets out of the eight indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 10).

Table 10. SDG10 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

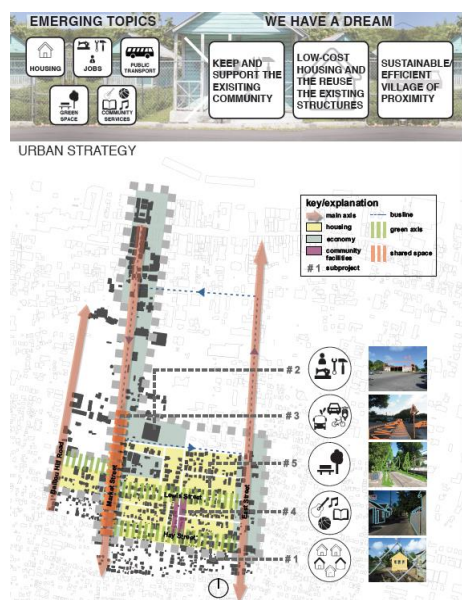
SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG10.1	Goal 7.2.1; 7.2.2; 7.2.3; 7.2.4; 7.2.5; 7.2.6; 7.2.8; 7.2.9
SDG10.2	Goal 7.7.2; 7.7.10; 7.7.12; 7.7.13; 7.7.14; 7.7.15; 7.7.17; 7.8.1

NDP Goal 7 is focused on supporting SDG10 and freeing the nation of poverty and discrimination as discussed for SDG1 (see discussion in **Table 5**). It specifically targets strengthening the provision of social protection to ensure that all vulnerable groups have access to adequate safety nets through: more informed policy on social protection programmes; increased number of vulnerable individuals (men, women and minorities) with access to social protection programmes; an increase in the number men, and women who can participate in economic activities; reduction in the number of targeting errors; reduction in poverty; and a more sustainable National Insurance Fund.

- k. SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities: Five priority targets out of the nine indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 11).**

Table 11. SDG11 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG11.1	Goal 7.6.7; 7.6.8
SDG11.2	Goal 7.7.12; 10.2.1
SDG11.3	Goal 8.4.1; 8.4.2; 8.4.3
SDG11.6	Goal 11.4.9
SDG11.7	Refer also to NDP Action/Outs in SDG Target 12.5 and 12.6



Picture 13: Masterplan for Grants Town, New Providence as part of the Urban Design Lab

NDP Goals 2, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12 supports SDG11. Firstly, NDP Goal 2 seeks to strengthen local government in The Bahamas. The NDP recommendations also supports access to improved housing, water and sanitation for neglected and marginalised communities (Goal 7.6); eliminating inequality by removing discriminatory laws, policies and practices to ensure social, economic and political inclusion of all (Goal 7.7); and strengthening the administration and transparency in the allocation of Crown Land (Goal 8.4). The NDP goals also aim to implement a Public Transit Strategy in New Providence (Goal 10.2) and a modern waste management system (Goal 11.4). In addition, Goal 12.5 and 12.6 will result in more transparent reporting between the Central

Government and local communities and island districts and improve financial literacy and personal financial management which will, in turn, improve the local economy.

- l. SDG12 Responsible Consumption and Production: Four priority targets out of the eleven indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 12).**

Table 12. SDG12 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG12.2	Goal 11.3.1; 11.3.2; 11.3.3; 11.3.4; 11.3.5; 11.3.6; 11.3.7
SDG12.3	Goal 7.1.7
SDG12.5	Goal 11.4.1; 11.4.2; 11.4.3; 11.4.4; 11.4.5; 11.4.6; 11.4.7
SDG12.6	Goal 11.4.8; 11.4.6;

NDP Goal 11 focuses on: creating a country with a natural environment for the long term sustainable development of the economy and way of life for generations; the introduction of a national recycling policy along with the promotion of policies which encourage reducing, reusing and recycling to encourage sustainable consumption and production patterns; and better regulation of hazardous waste. NDP Goal 7.1 also supports the initiative to achieve food security and end hunger, through targeted efforts to end food waste which supports SDG12. NDP Goal 12.3 calls for budgets to have an emphasis on sustainable consumption and production practices and NDP Goal 12.6 recommends strategies to encourage sustainable consumption as part of a strategy on personal and household resilience and financial literacy.



Picture 14: NDP Team visits the Nassau Sanitary Landfill to understand about the handling of solid waste and efforts to promote recycling.

m. SDG13 Climate Action: Four priority targets out of the five indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 13)

Table 13. SDG13 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG13.1	Goal 11.1.1;11.1.3
SDG13.2	Goal 11.1.2
SDG13.3	Goal 11.1.2
SDG13.b	Goal 11.2.1;11.2.2;11.2.3;11.2.4; 11.2.6

NDP Goal 11.2 focuses on supporting SDG13 by positioning The Bahamas as a leader in researching and implementing climate change adaptation and mitigation measures and as an incubator of green technologies (Goal 11.1). The Bahamas must also integrate disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies and planning and build resilience to hazards (Goal 11.2). Only then, can the nation combat climate change and other natural disasters such as hurricanes.

n. SDG14 Life Below Water: Four priority targets out of the ten indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 14).

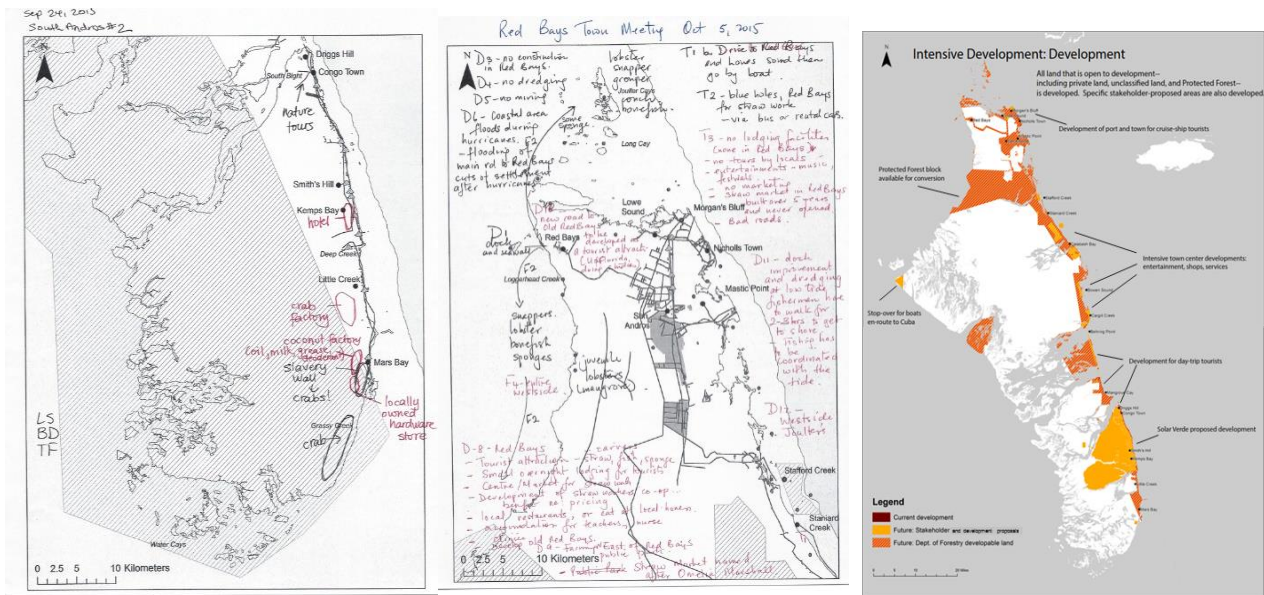
Table 14. SDG14 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG14.1	Goal 11.4.10
SDG14.2	Goal 11.3.6
SDG14.4	Goal 11.3.7; 11.3.8
SDG14.5	Goal 11.3.7; 11.3.10

NDP Goals 11.3 and 11.4 support SDG14 by recommending that the country sustainably manages and uses natural resources while guarding against anthropogenic influences, unsustainable practices and invasive species which undermine terrestrial and marine ecosystems. Goal 14.8 recommends the undertaking of ecosystem valuation studies of marine resources. Goal 14.11 recommends the implementation of a National Maritime Policy with the aim of a healthy and productive marine environment.



Picture 15: National Development Plan Secretariat Visits Inagua Island to understand the salt industry



Picture 16: Participatory Ecosystem Services Mapping of Andros Island as part of the Ecosystem Services Master Plan for Andros Project

- o. **SDG15 Life on Land: Five priority targets out of the twelve indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 15).**

Table 15. SDG15 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG15.1	Goal 11.3.1
SDG15.2	Goal 11.3.4
SDG15.4	Goal 11.3.14
SDG15.5	Goal 11.3.5
SDG15.6	Goal 11.3.4

NDP Goal 11.3 is in alignment with SDG15 with a focus on ecosystem valuations of terrestrial environments, guarding against anthropogenic influences and unsustainable practices, the implementation of several policies related to sustainable ecosystem management approaches, including the development of a comprehensive framework to prevent and reverse loss of ecosystems, including restoring degraded land and soil.



Picture 17: Mangroves at Big Pond, New Providence

- p. **SDG16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions: Eight priority targets out of the twelve indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 16).**

Table 16. SDG16 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
SDG16.1	Goal 3.1.2; 3.1.3; 3.2.3; 3.2.6; 4.2.1; 4.2.6; 4.2.8; 4.2.12; 7.7.1
SDG16.2	Goal 7.7.3; 7.7.6; 7.9.2; 7.7.9
SDG16.3	Goal 4.1.8; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.4.1; 4.4.3; 4.5.5; 7.8.1; 4.5.6
SDG16.4	Goal 4.1.10; 4.2.9; 16.1.4
SDG16.5	Goal 1.3.1; 1.3.5; 1.4.1; 1.4.2; 1.4.3; 1.4.4;
SDG16.6	Refer to actions under Target 16.5 and Goal 1.1.1; 1.1.4; 1.1.5; 1.3.1; 1.3.5; 1.2.1; 1.5.5
SDG16.7.	Goal 2.4.1; 7.4.1; 2.6.1; 7.4.2; 7.4.5; 7.5.3; 7.5.2
SDG16.9	Goal 7.2.9; 7.7.10

As SDG16 is an elaborate goal, there are a number of NDP goals supporting its priority targets, namely Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7, elaborated previously. The focus is for the nation to have: a modern, open and accountable, service oriented government that is well trusted by citizens, residents and the business community (Goal 1); well governed public institutions that engage the citizens to strengthen democracy (Goal 2); a law abiding society in which rules are respected and communities can thrive (Goal 3); a more efficient, methodical, fair and effective administration of justice through coordinated action by the police, courts and corrections services (Goal 4); a society free of poverty and discrimination (Goal 7). Thus, all of these NDP goals are well aligned to the SDG16 priority targets.

- q. **SDG17 Partnerships for the Goals: Five priority targets out of the nineteen indicators matched to the associated NDP goals (see Table 17).**

Table 17. SDG17 priority targets versus associated NDP goals and action numbers

SDG Priority Targets	Associated NDP Goals and Action Numbers
Finance	
SDG17.1	Goal 12.3.1; 12.4.2; 12.4.3; 12.4.4
SDG17.3	Goal 12.2.1; 12.2.2
Trade	
SDG17.1	Goal 13.6.1; 13.6.2
Multi-stakeholder partnerships	
SDG17.17	Refer also to references under Target 16.7 and Goal 14.2.5; 14.3.4; 6.1.2; 12.9.9
Data, monitoring and accountability	
SDG17.18	Goal 7.11.1; 12.3.3

Goals 6, 7, 12, 13 and 14 of the NDP are well aligned with SDG17. In summary, to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development, it is critical to relook at best in class education systems to improve productivity and the possibilities for economic growth (Goal 6); eradicate poverty and strengthen the role of civil society and the private sector for development action (Goal 7); have a healthy macro-economic environment that supports growth and stability as well as promoting strategic public, private partnerships for development (Goal 12); have a competitive business environment that supports business development, innovation, wealth creation, entrepreneurship and job growth along with a development focused trade and FDI policy (Goal 13); and have a diversified and resilient economy that provides opportunities for the expansion of both existing and new industries including ICTs (Goal 14).

Integration of the 3 Dimensions of Sustainable Development

These four pillars of the National Development Plan, the implementing vehicle of the Sustainable Development Goals are inter-related; none of them stands alone and each has impact on the others.

The **Governance Pillar** of the NDP recommends approaches to strengthen governance and ensures that The Bahamas remains a stable, democratic country whose citizens feel empowered and engaged, and whose government is forward-looking, capable and able to manage the challenges it must face.

The **Human Capital Pillar** of the NDP focuses on universal access to quality, affordable and accessible health care; peoples' education, skills and training, and their ability to use their knowledge in their work is fully realised, and the goal of having a nation free from poverty and discrimination.

The **Environment Pillar** of the NDP seeks to ensure the country's built environment, its buildings, utilities and services promote the country's social and economic development and can withstand the effects of climate change. The Environment Pillar also seeks to preserve the natural environment and to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The **Economy Pillar** of the NDP recommends reforms that create an enabling environment for macro-economic stability, business facilitation, diversification to maximise the value added from traditional sectors such as the tourism and financial services sectors, development of newer or less explored sectors such as Agribusiness, growing the cultural and creative economy, deepening activities in the maritime sector and leveraging the bandwidth to use information and communication technologies (ICT) as a business facilitator. All of these are supported by a fair and effective labour regime.

The four pillars of the National Development Plan are supported by a policy philosophy summarized as follows:

- The quality of life of citizens will not improve without meaningful sustainable development. This necessitates important structural reform at all levels of the economic and social system;
- Economic growth which leaves out significant portions of the population is not sustainable;
- The resources of the country must be used as effectively and efficiently as possible to ensure sustained development;
- The environment is fragile and must be at the forefront as the country considers its strategies for economic growth and development as well as infrastructural improvement; and
- The Bahamas is impacted by other countries as a small island developing state, but also should be mindful that its development can impact other countries;

Leaving No One Behind

The 2015 SDG Declaration indicated that countries should target and address persons who were furthest behind first in order to achieve successful implementation of the SDGs. The following groups have been identified for special attention as vulnerable groups:

- Persons living in poverty;
- Persons living with disabilities;
- Family island residents;

- The elderly;
- At-risk Youth;
- Youth who are falling behind academically;
- Unemployed Persons;
- Migrants;
- Children with obesity;
- Single parents;
- Women; and
- Men with criminal records

With support from the UNDP, the Government commissioned the production of a Thematic Report “Ensuring Inclusive Development in the Bahamian Society” which identifies and outlines the status and challenges experienced by those identified as marginalised. The report concluded that The Bahamas with a GDP per capita rate similar to developed countries has structural barriers that place severe burdens on those that have been left behind. Issues of poverty, infrastructural challenges, gender inequality, climate change and unemployment have further exacerbated the challenges realised by marginalised groups. The thematic report focuses on marginalized groups and communities and people who are part of the weakest segments of the society. These groups include persons who face social exclusion due to discrimination, lack of power and those whose voices are often overlooked.

For the Government, to achieve successful implementation of the SDGs, an intervention must be made for persons in these marginalized groups. The Report highlights gap in which the Government needs to put more focus on to achieve the goal of leaving no one behind.

National Institutional Mechanisms for the Ongoing

Implementation of the SDGs

The Government of The Bahamas will be establishing an inter-ministerial/agency group to facilitate and coordinate the national response to the implementation of the SDGs. On the Government’s side, the Office of the Prime Minister has been the country’s technical lead on the

SDG initiative. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has focused on the global SDG programme of action at the United Nations and other international forums.

It is also recognized that an inclusive approach will be necessary for implementation to promote widespread acceptance and the appropriate application of the relevant implementation strategies, public policies and programmes in the long term. The proposed SDG multi sector technical community will facilitate:

- a) strengthening of the coordination mechanism for the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs;
- b) enhancing the awareness of the SDGs and their alignment to the National Development Plan Vision 2040; and
- c) improving the technical knowledge to produce high quality data for monitoring the SDGs.

This technical committee, coupled with the development and execution of a robust communications, public awareness and advocacy strategy will help to ensure that The Bahamas meets the 2030 Agenda.

National Mechanisms for Monitoring Progress and Data Reporting

The Government recognises that monitoring and evaluation is critical for the successful implementation of the SDGs. Currently SDG data is collected by the Department of Statistics as part of its mandate to produce social and economic data for The Bahamas. To further strengthen the production of high quality data and monitoring capacity, the Government has embarked on an initiative to strengthen its national statistical capacity and develop a National Statistical System (NSS). This reform project will bring The Bahamas closer to having an open data system that augments its ability to monitor the implementation of the SDGs and satisfy reporting requirements. This process is funded through a \$3 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank.

The Government is also considering the creation of a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework and review process for the implementation of the National Development Plan. Given that the NDP is the policy framework which has localized the SDGs, this M&E framework will form a secondary monitoring checkpoint on the adoption of the Agenda 2030.

Further, the Government is exploring accepting additional support from the Organization of American States (OAS) to aid in the monitoring and evaluation process. The OAS has invited The Bahamas to adopt a National Reporting Platform for the SDGs. Members of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Government of The Bahamas' Department of Information Technology have participated in training to learn more about the Platform and about the technical support available for the adoption of the National Reporting Platform. If adopted, this platform represents an important example of SDG partnership for The Bahamas

Data Availability for Monitoring the SDGs

A review with the Department of Statistics and OPM was conducted on 1st November, 2017 to determine: the availability of Tier 1 SDG data and capacity gaps that currently exist. In addition, recommendations were also provided to the Department of Statistics for incomplete data or prioritization of targeted data required for the SDGs.

A review of existing data to support SDG monitoring was conducted as part of the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework for the National Development Plan. Focus was placed on the availability of disaggregated data on the basis of income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic locations, particularly in relation to the Family Islands to identify inequalities and social vulnerabilities. In addition, attention was also placed on prioritizing data collection and dissemination and on existing or potential partnerships that could be developed to assist with this aim.

A score card for Tier 1 data availability is presented below.

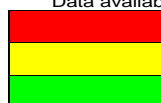
Table 1. Score card for data availability for The Bahamas

Goals	No. of Indicators (Tier 1)	Available via National Indicators*	Available via International Agencies**	Total Indicators with Data Available	Total Indicators with Data Not Available	% Data Available***
Goal 1	2	1	1	2	0	100.00
Goal 2	6	0	1	1	5	16.67
Goal 3	13	0	11	11	2	84.62
Goal 4	3	0	1	1	2	33.33
Goal 5	3	0	3	3	0	100.00
Goal 6	4	0	2	2	2	50.00
Goal 7	4	2	2	4	0	100.00
Goal 8	10	2	3	5	5	50.00
Goal 9	8	1	4	5	3	62.50
Goal 10	5	0	1	1	4	20.00
Goal 11	1	0	1	1	0	100.00
Goal 12	1	0	1	1	0	100.00
Goal 13	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Goal 14	2	0	1	1	1	50.00
Goal 15	4	0	2	2	2	50.00
Goal 16	6	0	2	2	4	33.33
Goal 17	15	2	4	6	9	40.00
Total	87	8	40	48	39	
%		9.20	45.98	55.17	44.83	

Note: * The data is available in The Bahamas through related Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

** The data is available through international agencies or bodies.

*** Data availability assessment:



Data generally is not available and collection of data is critical and needs to be developed.

Data collection is fair but needs to be enhanced and be developed.

Data collection is good and can be further enhanced.

Figure 2: Score Card for Tier 1 Data Availability

Challenges Faced Monitoring the SDGs

Monitoring of the SDGs in The Bahamas, like in many developing countries, will have certain challenges. These include:

- Inadequate data on the majority of the SDG indicators;
- Inadequate disaggregated data by geography and gender; and
- Capacity challenges with the National Statistical institution (human resources and infrastructure)

6.0 Progress on Goals and Targets

This section provides a description of the current situation with respect to each of the SDGs, current interventions in implementing the goals and also an overview of the challenges which are faced by The Bahamas in implementing the particular SDG.

SDG1: Ending Poverty in all its Forms

The Bahamas is classified as a high-income economy. While the per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is one of the highest in the Caribbean at USD\$20,568.3⁵, other statistics reflect a more complex story: one of increasing poverty and violent crime, poor educational outcomes and skills training that do not reach the people who need it most. While unemployment estimates declined from 12.7% in May 2016 to 9.9% in May 2017, there remains higher unemployment rates among females (11.6% in May 2017 for New Providence)⁶. Youth unemployment remains very high at around 30%.



Picture 18: A dwelling in the Over the Hill Area of New Providence

A 2013 Household and Expenditure Survey conducted by the Department of Statistics shows that poverty rates in The Bahamas increased from 9.3% in 2001⁷ to 12.5% in 2013 among all age categories except those older than 65⁸. This means there are at least 43,000 people living below the poverty line (The Department of Statistics set the poverty line at \$4,247 per person per year). Statistics show that: women comprised the majority of the poor, consistent with their larger share of the population;⁹ but the poverty rate for females was 12.4% compared to a poverty rate for males of 13.2%. The incidences of poverty were higher among female-headed households (9.7%) than among male headed ones (7.9%)¹⁰. People 20 years and younger were overrepresented among the poor. The poverty rate of children aged 0 to 9 and those aged 10 -19

⁵ World Bank. 2016 (available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.KD?locations=BS>)

⁶ Department of Statistics. Labour Force Survey May 2017 Preliminary Results.

⁷ Bahamas Living Conditions Survey 2001

⁸ Household and Expenditure Survey 2013

⁹ Household and Expenditure Survey 2013 p. 2

¹⁰ Household and Expenditure Survey 2013 p. 17

was higher than the national rate at 18.2% and 19.3% respectively¹¹. Persons between the ages of 20 to 29 years had a similar rate to the national poverty rate, 13.0%, while those with the lowest poverty rate were between the ages of 60-69 years with a poverty rate of 6.5%¹². Household size affected the poverty rate with larger households more likely to be poor¹³. Additionally, poverty rates are considerably higher in the Family Islands at 17.2% compared to the rate for people living in New Providence (12.4%) or Grand Bahama (9.4%)¹⁴. Some 62.3% of household heads who were poor in 2013 were employed. However, one of the most striking relationships with poverty was educational attainment. Indeed, there was a marked difference in poverty outcomes based on education levels. The poverty rate for heads of households with college degrees in 2013 was 0.6% or 1.8% of the poor. There were differences in the poverty rates across country of origin. Persons from Haiti, representing 7.5% of the population, had a poverty rate of 37.7%.

Table 18: Poverty rates, by household head characteristics

	Poverty rate	Poverty gap	Squared poverty gap	Percentage of population	Distribution of poor
All Bahamas	8.7	2.3	0.9	100.0	100.0
Household size					
1	1.9	1.0	0.6	16.8	3.7
2	2.8	0.7	0.3	21.4	6.9
3-4	8.3	2.0	0.8	39.0	37.4
5-6	15.7	4.1	1.6	17.1	30.9
7+	32.1	8.5	3.4	5.7	21.0
Children <= 14 years:					
Yes	14.3	3.5	1.4	44.8	74.0
No	4.1	1.3	0.6	55.2	26.1
Age group					
15-24	16.7	5.6	2.3	3.1	5.9
25-44	9.5	2.4	1.0	38.5	42.7
45-64	8.7	2.0	0.6	40.8	41.2
65+	5.0	1.6	0.9	17.7	10.2
Education					
None/Kindergarten	24.9	5.8	2.4	1.8	5.2
Primary School	12.3	3.3	1.3	12.8	18.6
High School	11.6	3.1	1.2	50.4	69.5
Technical Vocational	3.8	0.7	0.2	10.9	4.9
College University	0.6	0.1	0.1	24.1	1.8

As of 2016, the available social safety nets did not provide full coverage of those at or below the poverty line¹⁵. The challenges with land tenure security also impact poverty. These challenges

¹¹ Household and Expenditure Survey 2013 p. 15

¹² Ibid

¹³ Household and Expenditure Survey 2013 p. 12

¹⁴ Household and Expenditure Survey 2013 p. 2

¹⁵ Working Paper, State of the Nation on Human Capital 2016, page 143

include: the lack of a parcel based cadastral map, uncertainty regarding ownership of land resulting from overlapping land claims and the existence of generational and commonage land¹⁶.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG1

Social Protection

The National Insurance Board (NIB), the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, and the Ministry of Labour oversee the country's social protection system and the provision of social protection mechanisms.

Bahamian citizens and residents benefit from both contributory and non-contributory benefits. Contributory benefits are designed to help households insure themselves against sudden reductions in work income as a result of sickness, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, invalidity, old age (pensions) or death of a breadwinner. They include benefits paid for sickness, maternity, unemployment, injury, disablement and death¹⁷ administered by NIB. NIB also administers non-contributory benefits, benefits to persons in need over 65 years of age who have not met the requirements for a contributory pension and provides invalidity assistance to people rendered permanently incapable of work or as a result of employment injury and sickness¹⁸. Non-contributory benefits generally consist of targeted interventions designed for the poorest and most vulnerable and financed out of general Government revenue.

The Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development is responsible for administering non-contributory benefits which include unconditional and conditional transfers (in cash or kind); and targeted subsidies designed to ensure access to health, education, housing or public utilities, such as water or electricity, child care, elderly care, care for people with disabilities, home based care and referral support for people living with HIV, family and community support services, rehabilitation support for out-of-school youth, drug users and child labourers and psychosocial services. The non-contributory benefits provided by the Ministry include food allowances

¹⁶ Inter-American Development Bank's Land Use, Policy and Administration Project 2005 p.1

¹⁷ National Insurance Act 1974 section 21

¹⁸ National Insurance Act 1974 section 33

(monthly food coupons), financial assistance (for clothing and household and personal items), disability allowances in cash for those medically certified as persons with disabilities, house repair allowances for indigent senior citizens and those who are invalid, burial assistance, rent assistance, assistance with funds to access water and electricity and funding for a national school lunch programme¹⁹. The budget for the Department of Social Services in the 2018/2019 budget year is \$39.8 million and is projected to rise to \$43.95 million by the 2020/2021 budget cycle.

Social Safety Net Reform Programme

In 2012, the Government of The Bahamas through an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) loan for Social Safety Net Reform Programme commenced a social protection reform programme to modernise the delivery of social protection in the country and accelerate efforts to reduce poverty and improve human capital through a Pilot Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (CCT) referred to as the RISE (Renewing, Inspiring, Sustaining, and Empowering) Programme. RISE was aimed at tackling poverty, particularly among children, and improving educational and health outcomes amongst poor households²⁰. The CCT programme provided the poor with support through the provision of a cash grant on condition that the eligible beneficiary/households comply with set conditional steps to improve their health and education or those of their families. The key features of the CCT are:

- “a single cash grant to replace various assistance programmes;
- a Proxy Means Test (PMT) administered by way of a Management Information System (MIS) will determine the eligibility of each applicant based on a pre-determined score;
- the MIS generates a list of beneficiaries who have met the criteria and are eligible to receive the benefit; and
- contributes to long-term growth and development through a better educated and healthier population.”²¹

¹⁹ Inter-American Development Bank 2012, Social Safety Net Reform Program, BH-L1030 p. 2

²⁰ Working Paper, State of the Nation on Human Capital 2016, page 24

²¹ Maura, Matt 2012, ‘Cash Transfer Programme part of plan to break ‘poverty cycle’ Bahamas Information Services

The Cash Transfers were delivered through electronic cards, cellular phones or cheques/cash until August 2017²². The RISE programme also introduced the pre-paid debit card in conjunction with Bank of The Bahamas in November 2014. At the CCT launch, more than 4,000 New Providence residents were said to be part of the Department's modernised food assistance programme. Since 2015, more than 1,000 beneficiaries had registered into the programme and benefited²³.

The RISE conditional cash transfer project is currently under review to provide an opportunity to understand how to strengthen its operation and achieve stronger results.

Job Training

On July 1, 2018 the Ministry of Public Service and National Insurance will begin a 52-Week Skills Empowerment Programme aimed at providing jobs for the unemployed youth. The programme's objective is to equip individuals between the ages of 19 years to 30 years with skills that will assist in obtaining steady employment.

The Ministry in collaboration with the National Training Agency (NTA) and The Bahamas Vocational Institute (BTVI) will provide soft-skills training followed by training in specific areas such as patient care assistants, teachers' aides, landscaping, caregivers for the elderly and various construction trades.

Access to Land

The Government is in the process of reviewing previously drafted legislation which includes the Land Adjudication Bill 2010, the Law of Property Bill 2010 and the Registered Land Bill 2010. These are aimed at modernising property laws and addressing the challenges of generational land. The Land Adjudication Bill 2010 offers legal protection to generational land owners by providing a legal framework which enables families who have been in possession of a parcel of land (less than one acre) for 12 years or more to claim ownership of such land and, if successful, to be granted a certificate of title. The grant of a certificate is important because it makes title to the land

²² Maura, Matt 2012, 'Cash Transfer Programme part of plan to break 'poverty cycle' Bahamas Information Services

²³ Tribune 242, 23 Aug 2017. <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2017/aug/23/new-benefit-programme-suspended/>

marketable. The Registered Land Bill 2010 makes provisions to reform the land registration system and the Law of Property Bill 2010 provides for the consolidation and reform of the laws relating to property and conveyance.

The Government of The Bahamas has further committed to offering concessionary rates for, regularizing long-term occupation of Crown Land, developed or cultivated by Bahamians.

Support for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises



Picture 19: Local SME engaged in jam making

The Government recognises the importance of encouraging and building the capacity for micro, small and medium enterprises to ensure that all men and women, particularly the poor and vulnerable, have better access to economic resources. In the 2018/2019 budget the government placed particular emphasis on promoting the development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

Creation of Empowerment Zones for Economically Depressed Regions Commencing with the “Over-the-Hill” Communities



Picture 20: The Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis, Prime Minister speaking at the launch of the Over The Hill Community Development Partnership Initiative in December 2017

The economically depressed areas known as “Over the Hill” in Nassau, have been characterized by high unemployment levels, high crime rates, low income and infrastructure dilapidation. This area is home to many who have been left behind.

A comprehensive intervention has been designed to alleviate these issues by providing incentives for:

- Social Empowerment
- Economic Empowerment
- Infrastructural and Environmental Rejuvenation
- Smart Technology
- Green Technology
- Community Empowerment with a focus on Youth and the Elderly.

Tax Concessions

Within the 2018/2019 budget, the Government of The Bahamas has sought to provide tax relief to positively impact the poor through the following measures: eliminating value-added tax (VAT) on essential breadbasket food items and eliminating VAT on monthly electricity bills under \$200 and on monthly water bills under \$50. Other measures, such as extending stamp tax exemptions on first-time homeownership should positively impact the middle class. There has also been a broad reduction in customs duty rates on a range of consumer items which, if passed on to the consumer by the wholesalers and retailers, should positively impact disposable incomes for many residents, including the poor.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG1 Programmes

The following issues are likely to pose challenges to the implementation of SDG 1:

- Access to social protection programmes must be improved. Programmes must be directed more effectively to screen for persons who require these services and educate the population on available services.
- Social protection funds must be sustainable and social protection floors must be strengthened through legislation and policies.
- Data collection and monitoring must be strengthened to reflect the multidimensional nature of poverty. The monitoring and evaluation systems to track the progress and success of social protection and the information flows on the availability and provision of social protection must be strengthened.

- Finally, greater civic participation and community engagement is required in the efforts to reduce poverty.

SDG2: End Hunger, Achieve Food Security & Improved Nutrition & Promote Sustainable Agriculture

Access to food is a basic human right. Food security and access to nutritious food is necessary for health and wellbeing. It is estimated that in The Bahamas 1 in every 6 people in the country suffers from chronic hunger²⁴. The Bahamas imports \$1 billion worth of food annually, which accounts for more than 90% of national consumption. Efforts to reduce dependence on imported food have the potential to move the country further towards food security, reduce unemployment and stimulate domestic economic growth.

The responsibility for food safety is divided among multiple ministries. The Ministry of Health is responsible for Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points training for all food handlers, while the Department of Public Health is responsible for the surveillance, reporting and analysis of foodborne disease trends. The Department of Environmental Health is responsible for meat inspections at the abattoir and sanitary inspections of food establishments. The Ministry of Agriculture has responsibility for creating an enabling environment for the protection and preservation of national agricultural and marine resources for future generations and the implementation of food recalls²⁵. The Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality is charged with developing national regulatory standards, based on international and regional principles and practices, to improve the overall quality environment for products and services.

The Bahamas also has a host of biodiversity and genetic resources unique to the different islands.

²⁴ Hands for Hunger : <http://dev.handsforhunger.org/resources/hunger-facts/>

²⁵Working Paper, State of the Nation Working Paper on Human Capital p. 89

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG2

Food Affordability Measures

With the Government's recently announced increase in value-added tax from 7.5% to 12%, concerns were raised about the affordability of healthy foods. However, the Government has announced that the breadbasket staples will be 0% rated for VAT and that fruits and vegetables would be among those 0% rated breadbasket items.²⁶ The Government has also utilized reduced customs duty rates to positively impact the cost of nutritious foods.



Picture 21: Experimentation with pineapple farming at BAMSI in North Andros Island.

The Establishment of BAMSI

In 2014, the Government established The Bahamas Agriculture and Marine Science Institute (BAMSI) in North Andros, on Andros Island – the largest of The Bahama islands. BAMSI is an 800-acre research and demonstration farm which promotes crop production, provides training and research in the fields of agriculture and marine science to inform policy, equips Bahamians for careers in

the agricultural field and seeks to reduce dependency on imported food by supplying the country with domestically grown food and eventually replacing a significant portion of imported food²⁷. Initially, the two main crops were bananas and papayas. They have since been expanded to coconuts, limes, avocados, cabbage, sweet peppers and honey²⁸.

²⁶ Turnquest, A. (2018, June 6). Breadbasket Items List To Include Healthier Goods. The Tribune. Retrieved from <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2018/jun/06/breadbasket-items-list-to-include-healthier-goods/>

²⁷ Gibbs, Gina 17 October 2014

²⁸ Bahamas Agriculture and Marine Science Institute Website [<http://www.bamsibahamas.com/index.html>]

Backyard Farming Initiatives

The Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources has, since January 2015, conducted Backyard Farming initiatives throughout the country in various communities including in economically depressed communities and at the behavioural schools for young people: the Simpson Penn Centre for Boys and the Willie Mae Pratt Centre for Girls.

National Food and Nutrition Security Policy Launched

In April 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources launched a National Food and Nutrition Security Policy and Agenda for Action for the Bahamas to:

- i. improve the food, nutrition and health status of the population;
- ii. ensure the consumer has sufficient knowledge about the relationship between dietary practices and physical fitness to protect their health, wellbeing and environment; and
- iii. provide adequate supplies of safe nutritional food that are available on continuous basis and accessible to all people of The Bahamas ²⁹.

The Ministry is presently preparing a plan for the implementation of the policy.

Food Safety

With respect to food safety, the Government passed new legislation namely, the Food Safety and Quality Act 2016, Plant Protection Act 2016, and Animal Health and Production Act 2016 to strengthen the regulation of agriculture-based products in accordance with international best practices. Additionally, the Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality is in the process of developing the Bahamas National Standardization Strategy to ensure adequate regulation of food products. The work of the Bureau will include the development of Food Labelling Standards (including requirements mandating use of expiry date labels) approved by the Council of the Bureau of Standards and Quality and revision of the Standards Act and Weights and Measures Act.

²⁹ Draft National Food & Nutrition Security & Agenda for Action for the Bahamas. A food Secure Nation. Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources 2017

Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources

With respect to access to genetic resources, The Bahamas is preparing to sign on to NAGGOYA Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization³⁰ and to develop a regulatory framework to implement the Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources.

Food Assistance Programmes

The Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development and numerous charities also provide food assistance programmes which include soup kitchens and school feeding programmes. Food assistance programmes through the Department of Social Services are currently budgeted at \$12.8 million in the 2018/2019 fiscal year.

The Role of CSOs in Combatting Hunger

A number of CSOs have emerged to tackle hunger in The Bahamas. Many engage in surplus food rescue particularly from the hospitality industry, the storage of non-perishable goods and food distribution to communities.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG2 Programmes

The following issues are likely to impact the implementation of SDG2:

- The country must strengthen its food security programmes to better guarantee access to nutritious food on a regular basis.
- Because of its small size (leading to scale diseconomies) and the high cost of inputs, including labour, The Bahamas relies heavily on food imports.
- Farming is not yet seen as an attractive industry to many Bahamians.
- Logistics networks to move agricultural products across the archipelago in a time effective manner are not well developed.
- For agricultural development, it is necessary to provide the educational and technical support to small and larger scale farmers.

³⁰ Smith, Xian, 15 June 2016, *\$1.9 Project to Protect The Bahamas' Genetic Materials*. Nassau Guardian. Found at: <http://www.thenassauguardian.com/bahamas-business/40-bahamas-business/65575-19mproject-to-protect-bahamas-genetic-material>

- More emphasis should be placed on easier land acquisition for farming, innovative financial and credit products for agriculture; support for entrepreneurship initiatives; and support for the creation of partnerships for investments in agriculture.

SDG3: Ensure Healthy Lives & Promote Well-Being for all at all

Ages



Picture 22: Doctors at the Princess Margaret Hospital in Nassau, Bahamas (Photo credit: PHA)

Good health is a cornerstone of human capital development. The Bahamas has a functioning health care system with public and private hospitals and an extensive network of clinics throughout the Family Islands. Funding for the public system is largely derived from the national budget with contributions by the National Insurance Board and some private and external sources.³¹ The Ministry of Health has a budget

of \$293.9 million, of which \$216 is allocated to the Public Hospitals Authority, the body that oversees the major hospitals in the country, among other responsibilities.

With respect to maternal and reproductive health, deaths among infants and newborns remain significant contributors to mortality with 8.6 deaths per 1,000 live births recorded in 2016 and a mortality rate of 10.6 deaths per 1,000 live births for children under five years old. The main cause of infant mortality is respiratory disorders. Approximately 6% of mothers-to-be do not seek medical care during their pregnancies³².

There is a high prevalence of non-communicable diseases in The Bahamas. WHO estimates that diabetes, cancer, and heart disease account for 72% of the deaths in the country. Some of these diseases are simply a result of a longer life expectancy, but others are reflective of lifestyle

³¹ Sanigest International, 2014

³² Working Paper, State of the Nation on Human Capital 2016 p.85

changes. Obesity has also been cited as the main risk factor influencing the rise of non-communicable diseases. The 2014 WHO report indicates that as high as 43.2% females and 29.8% males were obese and that 56.5% of females and 38.5% of males do not get sufficient levels of exercise. Other lifestyle risk factors included smoking and alcohol consumption.

Although there has been a reduction in newly diagnosed cases of AIDS and in AIDS-related deaths because of the use of anti-retroviral drugs, the fight against HIV/AIDS continues. The national adult HIV prevalence rate is 3.3%, which is among the highest in the Caribbean region, and there is a challenge with under-reporting of HIV transmission through injected drug use³³. Rates of HIV infection among pregnant women have remained relatively stable. Between 2003 and 2013, there were no reports of any child being born infected with HIV when the mothers received and adhered to appropriate Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission (PMTCT) ARV treatment³⁴.

The incidence of tuberculosis (TB) has shown a steady downward trend since the 1990s. This is due to contact tracing and the introduction of directly-observed therapy³⁵. The notification rate of new cases has decreased from 28.4 per 100,000 population in 1997 to 9.1 per 100,000 population in 2010, the lowest rate in more than 20 years³⁶.

With respect to mental health, the Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre in New Providence and the Rand Memorial Hospital in Grand Bahama are the two main government facilities that offer mental health services for substance abuse and psychiatric disorders³⁷. The resources at these institutions are strained. The negative stigma attached to mental health issues also prevents persons from seeking care.

The prevalence of road accidents requires urgent action. Ninety percent of road traffic fatalities were caused by human error such as drunk driving, speeding, overtaking in dangerous circumstances, texting, and cell phone use³⁸.

³³ Working Paper, State of the Nation on Human Capital 2016 p. 82

³⁴ Working Paper, State of the Nation on Human Capital 2016, page 87

³⁵ Working Paper, State of the Nation on Human Capital 2016, page 87

³⁶ World Health Organization.

³⁷ PAHO, "Health in the Americas 2012: Bahamas Chapter" referenced in Working Paper, State of the Nation on Human Capital p.89

³⁸ The Bahama Journal, 5 November 2013. 46 People Killed In Car Crashes <http://jonesbahamas.com/46-people-killed-in-car-crashes/>



Picture 23: School children engaging in sporting activities in New Providence

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG3

National Health Insurance

In January 2016, the Government launched the National Health Insurance Plan for universal access to primary care to improve coverage and promote greater efficiency, equity, performance and accountability within the healthcare system. During the fiscal period beginning July 2018, the Government will extend the critical healthcare component under the NHI and introduce the first phase of the Catastrophic Care Insurance Plan.

Healthcare Capital Works

The Government invested \$60 million to renovate the Princess Margaret Hospital (New Providence) and the Rand Memorial Hospital (Grand Bahama). The Critical Care Block has been improved through a \$45 million refurbishment project in 2015³⁹.

³⁹Stronger Bahamas. 2015. A Stronger Bahamas. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://strongerbahamas.com/modern/social-programmes/>. [Accessed 21 September 2017].

Road Safety

In April 2014, The Ministry of Transport and Aviation acquired the expertise of an independent transportation, planning and management consultant to spearhead the revision of the Road Traffic Act with a view to modernising the country's transportation system⁴⁰. The Government also continues to receive support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) for the New Providence Transport Programme. This programme aims to improve the public road system. More efficient traffic flows will reduce the harm caused to the environment by congestion, increase productivity and improve the attractiveness of the island.

To reduce the number of deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents, in 2014 the Ministry of Transport developed a National Road Safety Strategy which provides a strategic framework to address road safety over a six-year period (2006-2012)⁴¹. Some of the initiatives include accelerating driver education in the schools and public awareness campaigns on road safety⁴². Additionally, announced during its 2015/2016 Budget communication, the Government banned the importation of wrecked vehicles and cars more than ten years old⁴³.

Non-Communicable Diseases

In 2016, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) developed a roadmap, the National Multi-sectoral Non-Communicable Disease Strategy and Plan of Action, 2017-2022, embodying the social determinants of health to halt and reverse the climbing non-communicable disease statistics. This roadmap is geared towards accomplishing the Government's goal of reducing the prevalence of such diseases. The next step is the development of an implementation plan for the roadmap.

Additionally, through the Ministry of Health, the Healthy Bahamas Coalition has been established to propose and revise policies to assist in the reduction of the incidence, complications, and deaths related to non-communicable diseases. The Coalition comprises representatives from the

⁴⁰ Bahamas Local 8 April 2014. Ministry of Transport undertakes comprehensive review of Road Traffic Act. https://www.bahamaslocal.com/newsitem/96668/Ministry_of_Transport_undertakes_comprehensive_review_of_Road_Traffic_Act.html

⁴¹ The Nassau Guardian, 23 June 2012, Policy and Planning Unit was created to address various road user issues, says minister <https://thenassauguardian.com/2012/06/23/policy-and-planning-unit-was-created-to-address-various-road-user-issues-says-minister/>

⁴² Rose, Eric 2012

⁴³ Virgill, Khrisna 28 May 2015

Government, private sector, faith-based, and civil society organizations with a view to improving the general health of persons living in The Bahamas.

Upcoming Minister of Health Initiatives

The Ministry in its 2018/2019 budget has proposed the following:

- Sponsorship of several studies to look at the potential role of mental and psychological challenges as well as the impact of nutrition (specifically micronutrient deficiency) and the impact of sugar, fat, preservatives, chemicals steroids and antibiotics in the diet on the expression of violence;
- A national campaign which will be geared towards equipping Bahamians with practical tips to turn forgotten foods such as beans, pumpkin and cassava into viable delicious meal options; and to reinvent some of our familiar staples; and
- An aggressive public sensitization campaign to improve the nation's understanding of what's healthy and what's not. There will be Breadbasket Town Halls to raise health literacy and education;
- A proposed tax on sugar sweetened beverages to decrease consumption and improve revenue to support healthy lifestyle initiatives.
- The implementation of "Cyclovias" i.e. closing certain streets for set periods to all vehicles for cyclists, skate boarders, runners, and walkers to move freely and be active;
- New funding to conduct a population-based research study to define the current health status and risk factor profile;
- The launch of the "Treat All" people living with HIV strategy which makes life-saving antiretroviral medication available to all who need it, regardless of CD4 count or clinical stage;
- Strengthening of Emergency & Urgent Care: Expansion of A&E and other clinics to prevent the unnecessary use of urgent hospital services as well as the early detection and management of Secondary Complications;
- Commencement of Telemedicine Services in a phased approach, with particular emphasis on the Family Islands;
- Strengthening Community Education and Participation;
- Restructuring and improving Home Care Services; and

- Upgrading health Information Management Clinical Data systems utilized within the hospitals.
- Training: the PHA successfully completed its first Psychiatric Mental Health Diploma Program, where thirty-one Registered Nurses were trained in this specialty area, the Ministry plans to sponsor another eighteen-month Trained Clinical Nurse Certificate Programme at The University of The Bahamas. Additionally, discussions are underway to sponsor an eighteen-month Midwifery Diploma Programme in January 2018, also, at The University of The Bahamas.
- Disaster Preparedness to ensure a resilient health system.
- Strengthening of funding to primary health care.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG3 Programmes

Particular challenges faced by The Bahamas in the implementation of SDG3 include:

- Sustainable funding of the health care system.
- The high cost of healthy foods particularly vegetables and cultural changes to encourage the consumption of a healthier food mix.
- A predominantly sedentary lifestyle for some residents resulting from the absence of appropriate infrastructure to encourage physical activity, coupled with concerns about safety.
- The prevalence of social stigmas around mental health challenges and addiction.
- Social norms which discourage condom use.

SDG4: Ensure Inclusive & Quality Education for all & Promote Lifelong Learning

A well-educated country has enhanced capacity for research and innovation, and thus higher productivity; it also attracts new, higher value-added investments. To this end, the Government has endeavoured to invest in human capital, particularly in the areas of education and training.

Education is the largest expenditure in the annual budget, approximately 13%, and schools have a qualified cadre of teachers and other professionals as well as a relatively low student-teacher ratio.



Picture 24: School children in Salinas Point, Acklins Island learning about the National Development Plan and the SDGs

While the spending on education as a percentage of total government expenditure is generally consistent with international peers, Government spending relative to GDP is slightly lower than the world average and below its regional peers as shown by World Bank development indicators⁴⁴. The Department of Education has a budget in 2018/2019 of \$205.6 million which is expected to increase to \$247.4 million in the 2020/2021 fiscal period.

Table 19: Number and Type of Schools Across The Bahamas

School Type	New Providence	Family Islands	Total
Pre-school	4	5	9
Primary	25	69	94
All-age	0	13	13
Junior High	7	1	8
Senior High	7	0	7
Secondary	1	23	24
Special	8	5	13
Post-secondary/Tertiary	2	0	2
Total	54	116	170

Source: Ministry of Education

Education is compulsory for children between the ages of 5 and 16 and tuition free education is provided in the country's 170 public schools across the archipelago. There are also 77 private schools, the University of The Bahamas (formerly known as College of The Bahamas), and the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI). The school enrolment rate at the primary

⁴⁴ World Bank Development Indicators, www.worldbank.org

level is nearly 95%, which is higher than both regional and global primary enrolment rates. The secondary-level enrolment rate is around 85%, which is comparable to the regional rate but much higher than the world rate. Enrolment by Bahamians in tertiary educational institutions has increased steadily, with 20% of the population over age 15 now participating. This is, however, below that of other high-income, non-OECD countries as well as other Caribbean competitors with university campuses. It has also been noted that many students educated in universities in OECD countries stay on in those countries, permanently or for some period after completing university.

Although children generally have equitable access to a quality education, the education system grapples with low levels of student attainment. Only 50% of graduating high school students actually achieve a diploma in any given year. The other half are awarded a “certificate of attendance”; that is, although they attended classes they did not achieve the standard required for graduation. Additionally, the national examinations at the third⁴⁵, sixth⁴⁶, ninth⁴⁷ and twelfth⁴⁸ grade levels reveal widening performance gaps between private and public schools and between boys and girls⁴⁹. Private schools tend to perform better than public schools and girls tend to perform better than boys⁵⁰.

Additionally, there are significant concerns that the education system is not producing graduates with the skills required by the business sector and that there is a significant gap in terms of the identification of key skills needed and a process to ensure that the education system delivers them⁵¹. Many of these young people join the labour force but do not have the skills necessary for employment – both soft skills such as coming to work on time or hard skills such as the appropriate level of literacy and numeracy. A 2014 study by the World Bank on Youth Unemployment in the Caribbean⁵² noted that 34.5% of employers in The Bahamas cite the need for experience as a critical determinant of employment. Additionally, the inadequacy of the education of the

⁴⁵ Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT)

⁴⁶ Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT)

⁴⁷ Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJCs)

⁴⁸ Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE)

⁴⁹ Ministry of Education, Educational Statistical Digest, 2012-13 (Ministry of Education, The Commonwealth of the Bahamas 2012 Ministry of Education Annual Report 2010-2011. Nassau: Research and Planning Unit)

⁵⁰ Ministry of Education, Educational Statistical Digest, 2012-13 (Ministry of Education, The Commonwealth of the Bahamas 2012 Ministry of Education Annual Report 2010-2011) Nassau: Research and Planning Unit

⁵¹ Working Paper State of the Nation Working Paper on Human Capital p 63

⁵² Torrado Monica, Youth Unemployment in the Caribbean, 2014 World Bank LAC Report: http://www.dbzchild.org/uploads/docs/youth_unemployment_in_the_caribbean_2014.pdf

workforce was seen as the single largest obstacle to doing business in The Bahamas. The mismatch is seen in all sectors and sizes of business.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG4

Improvements to educational attainment and outcomes have been listed as a key priority of the Government and will be closely monitored by the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit.

Initiatives to Improve Academic Outcomes

In 2010-2014, the Government launched an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funded project - Investing in Students and Programmes for the Innovative Reform of Education (INSPIRE) to improve educational outcomes in The Bahamas. Targeted to improve the quality of teaching and learning opportunities in early, secondary and post-secondary education systems as well as enhance access for students with special needs, the project's results have exceeded many of the targeted performance indicators. Some early evidence of the project's success can be seen in improvements in the number of students achieving grades A-C, particularly in the Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT) 3 and 6 exams.

Introduction of a Student Achievement Unit

Additionally, a Student Achievement Unit was established in August 2014 to bring equity and efficacy to the education system, with the aim of all schools delivering high-quality education to all. The Unit collects and analyses data that will allow data-driven decisions to guide educational interventions in subject areas in schools where deficiencies are identified. The Unit also tracks every student to ensure that necessary intervention and support is given to address the challenges each faces.

Programmes for At Risk Students

The Government also runs an education programme for pregnant school-age girls. Providing Access to Continued Education (PACE) is an alternative education programme coordinated by the Department of Health in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST). PACE is designed to help first-time teenage mothers complete high school, thereby giving them a better chance of breaking the cycle of poverty. MOEST has also instituted two

alternative education programmes to assist at-risk boys and girls in the education system. The boys programme, the Success Ultimately Reassures Everyone (SURE), which was started in Nassau in 1992 and in Grand Bahama in 1993 assists boys with chronic disciplinary problems overcome their challenges. The Transitional Alternative Programme for Students (TAPS) assists girls with similar difficulties. Additionally, after-school programmes exist at both primary and high schools to help students focus on numeracy and literacy and prepare for examinations.

Introduction of a National High School Diploma Standard

MOEST implemented a new standardized National High School Diploma in grade 10 in public schools in 2014-2015. One of its hallmarks is the implementation of three pathways to graduation: college, apprenticeship, and workplace learning. The new diploma is designed to ensure that at least 90% of all who leave school graduate with diplomas. It is expected to reduce the percentage of students who leave grade 12 with only a certificate of attendance. The next phase of the programme will offer thousands of students who did not earn a high school diploma an opportunity to earn a general education diploma, the equivalent of a regular high school diploma. This phase was launched in June 2016. MOEST held the inaugural High School Diploma graduation ceremony⁵³ for New Providence district schools in June 2017 with over 900 students from the four districts having met the Ministry's requirements. All students achieved a minimum of a 2.0 grade point average, completed job readiness and community service programmes, and maintained 90% attendance/punctuality.



Preschool as part of the Over the Hill Project and in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Civil Society partners

Technology

The Ministry of Education is implementing a number of technology initiatives to ensure that today's students are adequately equipped to meet the urgent demand for a high-skilled workforce in years to come, by utilising ICT-based delivery tools.

⁵³ Government of The Bahamas. 19 June 2017. Press release: High School Diploma Graduation Ceremony in New Providence. <http://www.bahamas.gov.bs/wps/portal/public/gov/government/news/>

Financial Aid

All students who pass their Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations with at least five grades of “C” and above are eligible to receive scholarships to the University of The Bahamas. Students in the teacher-education and nursing programmes also receive funding.

Technical and Vocational Training

MOEST has mandated that technical and vocational education be given priority at the secondary level to help meet the nation’s development needs. Public schools have introduced courses such as bookkeeping and accounting, family and consumer sciences (including food and nutrition), auto mechanics and electricity into their syllabus.

Moreover, the Government has pledged \$2.6 million for scholarships to The Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute with an additional \$600,000 increase in BTVI’s budget in 2018/2019.

New School Construction

The Government pledges \$6 million for the construction of a new school in New Providence.

Learning for Adults with Developmental Disabilities

In February 2016, the Government launched a Multi-Service Centre for Adults with Developmental Disabilities in Nassau. The facility will provide a safe, nurturing, learning, living and supportive environment for such adults. One of the facility’s goals is to provide opportunities for the training and development of persons residing the facility⁵⁴.

Environmental Stewardship Education

⁵⁴ Bahamas Local February 2016, Sign unveiled for Multi- Service Centre for Adults with Developmental Disabilities. Accessed at: [https://www.bahamaslocal.com/newsitem/145635/Sign_unveiled_for_Multi_Service_Centre_for_Adults_with_Developmental_Disabilities_Gladstone_Road.html]

The Bahamas National Trust (BNT) has worked with the Government of The Bahamas (GOB) and partners to ensure that nationally relevant biodiversity information is integrated in formal and informal educational programmes.

- The BNT has ensured that national species, habitats and conservation issues are inserted into the national curriculum, and developed educational materials such as teaching manuals, fact sheets, posters, radio segments, educational videos, and teacher training workshops to help support this.
- The BNT has developed the national park system throughout the archipelago to work as outdoor classrooms that impact some 16,000 school children to date.
- The BNT has developed an after-school environmental club to run from schools across the country, called the Discovery Club, which currently provides environmental educational content to thousands of children in over 60 schools.
- The BNT also executes environmental educational camps at for various age groups on the islands of New Providence, Andros, Grand Bahama and Eleuthera.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG4 Programmes

Educational attainment in both hard and soft skills must be improved as employers often cite finding well-qualified workers as one of their primary business challenges. There is also a need to eliminate the negative stigma of technical courses which can sometimes be regarded as inferior to university preparatory courses. The Bahamas faces the following particular challenges with respect to implementing SDG 4:

- Continued sustainable funding for education and training at all levels, with specific emphasis on early childhood education and vocational training.
- Innovative mechanisms, including greater use of technology, to ensure equity in education across the archipelago.
- Curriculum development which is relevant for a modern Bahamas.
- Bridging the educational outcome gaps between boys and girls and between private school and public-school students.

SDG5: Achieve Gender Equality & Empower all Women & Girls

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is critical for the development of The Bahamas. The Bahamas has ratified numerous international treaties, one of which is the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). However, despite the ratification of CEDAW, the Bahamian Constitution does not adequately protect women and men against gender discrimination in the following ways:

- i. Bahamian women are not afforded the same opportunity as Bahamian men to pass on citizenship to their children under the Constitution. Article 8 of the Constitution provides that a person born outside of The Bahamas after 9th July 1973 shall become a citizen of The Bahamas at the date of his birth if at that date his father is a citizen of The Bahamas. This Article of the Constitution prevents a woman who is a citizen of The Bahamas from passing their citizenship if the father is not a citizen and the child is born outside of The Bahamas. If the father is not a citizen of The Bahamas and the person is born outside the Bahamas to a mother who is a citizen of The Bahamas, Article 9 of the Constitution states that that person shall only be entitled to apply for citizenship upon making an application at the age of eighteen years and before he or she attains the age of twenty-one years.
- ii. Bahamian women married to foreign men are not accorded the same opportunity as Bahamian men married to foreign women to secure their spouse access to Bahamian citizenship under Article 10 of the Constitution as Bahamian men.
- iii. Unmarried Bahamian fathers of children born abroad cannot pass their Bahamian citizenship to their children at all and unmarried fathers of children born in country cannot pass Bahamians citizenship to their child on an equal basis with unmarried mother.
- iv. Article 26 of the Constitution does not expressly afford protection from discrimination on the grounds of sex but only expressly affords protection against discrimination based on race, place of origin political opinions colour or creed.

Data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'s Crime Trends Survey (CTS) based on police statistics found that all Caribbean countries “for which comparable data are available (Bahamas, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Jamaica, St. Kitts/Nevis, Dominica, Barbados, and Trinidad & Tobago) experienced a rape rate of above the unweighted average of the 102 countries in the CTS”⁵⁵. Furthermore, a 2016 IDB report indicated that the Caribbean has a high tolerance for violence against women and children, with The Bahamas ranking among the top three [*Suriname (38 percent), followed by The Bahamas (29.5 percent) and Guyana (25.4 percent)*] for tolerance for physical violence against women.⁵⁶ This is the case despite the existence of laws against domestic violence which include, the Sexual Offences Act 1991, the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2011, Sexual Offences (Amendment) 2014 and the Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) 2008.

A United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council Report by the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, following an official country visit to the Bahamas from 9 to 11 December 2013 confirmed that The Bahamas “is a transit and destination country for trafficked persons from the Caribbean region and from Central and South America” and that the form of trafficking that has been identified in the Bahamas is “for commercial sexual exploitation, whereby women and girls, mainly from the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, are made to dance in bars and sell sexual services.” Additionally, trafficking for labour exploitation occurs in the “construction, agriculture, fishing and domestic work sectors (and that) there have been suspected cases of labour exploitation of Haitian, Filipino, Chinese, Dominican and Colombian nationals and other migrants from South America”⁵⁷.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG5

Gender Equality Referendum 2016

In 2012, the Government of The Bahamas appointed a new Constitutional Commission to inquire into and make recommendations of needed changes to the Constitution. This new Constitutional Commission was tasked with reviewing the Constitution and considering various matters with

⁵⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Bank Report 2007 p. 12

⁵⁶ Sutton, H. & Alvarez, L. (2016). How Safe Are Caribbean Homes for Women and Children?: Attitudes toward Intimate Partner Violence and Corporal Punishment. Retrieved from <https://publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/7998#sthash.ZYnuUUri.dpuf>

⁵⁷ United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council Report, 2014 p. 4-5

respect to the Constitution including “[the] need to strengthen the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual including the need to end gender-based discrimination consistent with the United Nations Conventions...the Commission’s Inquiry will entail close examination of ...the citizenship provisions of the constitution...⁵⁸”.

Following the review of the Constitution and consultations with stakeholders, the Constitutional Commission recommended the amendment of the Constitution to address gender discrimination within the Constitution⁵⁹. This recommendation led to the drafting and tabling on four Bills in Parliament, which were be debated and passed in Parliament the 2nd of March 2016. The Bills were passed in the Senate on the 9th of March 2016. All four Constitutional Amendment Bills required the approval of citizens taking part in the referendum before an amendment to the Constitution. The Bills sought to do the following:

- i. Bill # 1: The Bahamas Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2016 sought to amend Article 8 of the Constitution and repeal Article 9 of the Constitution in order to give a child born outside The Bahamas to a Bahamian-born mother and non-Bahamian father the same automatic right to Bahamian citizenship that the Constitution already gives to a child born outside The Bahamas to a Bahamian-born father and a non-Bahamian mother⁶⁰.
- ii. Bill #2: The Bahamas Constitution (Amendment) (No.2) Bill, 2016 sought to amend Article 10 of the Constitution to enable a Bahamian woman who marries a foreign man to secure for him the same access to Bahamian citizenship that a Bahamian man has always enjoyed under the Constitution in relation to his foreign spouse. Citizenship will however not be granted if the marriage no longer subsists, parties have no intention to cohabit with each other permanent after marriage, if the marriage is one of convenience or in the interests of national security or public policy⁶¹.
- iii. Bill #3: The Bahamas Constitution (Amendment) (No.3) Bill, 2016 sought to amend Article 14 of the Constitution and to give an unwed Bahamian father the same right to pass

⁵⁸ Communication to Parliament by the RT. Honourable Prime Minister and Member for Centerville: 2012

⁵⁹ Constitutional Commission Report 2013

⁶⁰ Section 2 of The Bahamas Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2016

⁶¹ Section 2 of The Bahamas Constitution (Amendment) (No.2) Bill, 2016

citizenship to his child that a Bahamian woman has always had under the Constitution in relation to a child born to her out of wedlock⁶².

- iv. Bill #4: The Bahamas Constitution (Amendment) (No.4) Bill, 2016 sought to amend Article 26 of the Constitution by inserting the word “sex” in Article 26 of the Constitution so as that it discrimination based on whether someone is male or female is prohibited. The Bill defines ‘sex’ to mean male or female⁶³”.

A Constitutional Referendum was held in July 2016.⁶⁴ The above four bills were not approved by voters and the Constitution was therefore not amended. The Government, by policy and through proposed amendments to the Immigration Act, has sought to remedy some of the issues which were addressed in the Constitutional Referendum.

National Strategic Plan to Address Gender-Based Violence

With respect to eliminating gender-based violence, the Ministry of Social Services in collaboration with the United Nations developed a National Strategic Plan to Address Gender-Based Violence in 2015. The Strategic Plan provides a road map includes, inter alia, goals to:

- achieve an effective, integrated and coordinated response to situations of gender-based violence. One of the outputs is the establishment of a National coordinating agency and the establishment of a gender-based violence coalition on each major Family Island;
- ensure an effective, integrated and coordinated criminal justice system that can prevent the escalation of and respond to gender-based violence. One of the outputs of this goal is the introduction of a National Legal Aid Programme to assist victims of Gender Based Violence in accessing justice;
- strengthen and expand psycho-social health services. One of the outputs of this goal is the development of national standards for care and treatment of victims and rehabilitation of perpetrators; and

⁶² Section 2 of The Bahamas Constitution (Amendment) (No.3) Bill, 2016

⁶³ Section 2 of The Bahamas Constitution (Amendment) (No.4) Bill, 2016

⁶⁴ Jones, Royston 10 March 2016

- bring about attitudinal change by encouraging intolerance to gender-based violence. One of the outputs is increased public awareness and understanding of the nature, cause and effects of various forms and types of gender-based violence

Establishment of the Department of Gender and Family Affairs

To strengthen the voice of women, girls and communities as a whole, in October 2016, the Government expanded Bureau of Women’s Affairs into a Department of Gender and Family Affairs to create a more comprehensive, participatory approach to tackling the country’s social challenges while creating programmes to address education, training, employment and social justice for both men and women⁶⁵. The Department of Gender and Family affairs also aims, inter alia, to empower women to lead and partner equally with men in nation building⁶⁶.

Proposal for Gender Officers

The Ministry of Social Services is considering a proposal to have gender officers posted at every ministry, department and major organization to ensure the fundamental principles of fairness and equal opportunity exists throughout the country.

Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee/Task Force

To address human trafficking concerns, the Ministry of National Security has drafted a National Anti-trafficking in Persons Strategy 2014-2018. The Strategy is intended to create guiding principles, a common understanding and coordinated action among stakeholders and actors, and ensure the financial support of local and international donors to reduce trafficking and to protect trafficked persons. The government has an inter-ministerial committee which provides advice on trafficking matters and makes recommendations to strengthen national anti-trafficking initiatives through the identification of training opportunities, public awareness raising activities, engagement of relevant stakeholders including civil society organisations, and fulfilling the international obligations of The Bahamas as they relate to trafficking in persons. The government's anti-trafficking taskforce is charged with ensuring operational coordination on trafficking cases from conducting prevention activities, victim assistance to the prosecution of suspected traffickers.

⁶⁵ Maura, Matt, November 2014, Department of Gender and Family Affairs Established, Bahamas Information Services

⁶⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Minister Griffin informs global body Bahamas <http://mofa.gov.bs/minister-griffin-informs-global-body-bahamas-efforts-promote-economic-empowerment-women/> accessed on September 18th, 2017.

The issue of trafficking in persons has been elevated to a key priority of the Government to be monitored by the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit.

Girls in ICT

Since 2015, the Utilities Regulator - URCA has partnered with major stakeholders in the local ICT sector to host an annual 'Girls in ICT Day', which is a forum and career fair designed to promote awareness of ICT careers and study paths to girls and young women in society.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG5 Programmes

SDG5 requires more sustained education on gender equality and human rights at all levels of Bahamian society. Greater efforts must be made to eradicate harmful stereotypes which lead to discriminatory and abusive behaviour toward women and girls.

SDG6: Ensure Availability & Sustainable Management of Water & Sanitation for All

The Water and Sewerage Corporation (WSC), a wholly owned Government organization entrusted with managing, maintaining, distributing and developing the water resources of The Bahamas, continually seeks to expand its water supply and sanitation services throughout The Bahamas. Water and sewerage services in The Bahamas are provided primarily by the WSC which serves most of New Providence and 14 of the Family Islands. The major exceptions are Grand Bahama and Paradise Island, each of which has its own provider, the Grand Bahama Utility Company and Paradise Utilities, respectively⁶⁷. The New Providence Development Company, which is an important real estate developer in the western part of New Providence, serves customers where it has its business activities.

The IDB has estimated that only 38% of properties on New Providence regularly use water provided by the WSC. Many households and businesses do not rely on WSC but use their own well water and wastewater treatment facilities. Well water in The Bahamas is often untreated and

⁶⁷ IDB 2011 (Project No. BH-L1028) p. 1

contaminated to some degree⁶⁸ due to the high prevalence of septic tanks and saltwater intrusion. This is particularly true in New Providence. Owing to this, and also due to individual preference, many citizens and residents who have private wells primarily use well water for washing and purchase bottled water for cooking and drinking.



Picture 26: Public Water Standpipe

Some households do not have access to running water and rely primarily on water from public water pumps⁶⁹.

The majority of the population has access to sanitation facilities as shown from the Department of Statistics' 2010 Census of Population and Housing findings on Private Dwellings by Type and Use of Toilet Facilities⁷⁰. The Department's data show that in 2010, of the 102,758 households surveyed, 200 dwellings did not have toilet facilities and that at least 5,342 dwellings shared toilet facilities with other households. Some of these households are in informal settlements.

Water and sanitation infrastructure also face significant problems that are being addressed through critical interventions. Years of inadequate maintenance have left the system with a water loss rate as high as 58% in previous years⁷¹.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG6

Water Supply Expansion Effort

The WSC has made investments to reduce water losses and reports that it will save an estimated 10 billion gallons over its 10-year implementation. To this end, in November 2016, WSC

⁶⁸ Genting 2012

⁶⁹ Nunez, Paco, 18 September 2013 and Department of Environmental Health Services 2013

⁷⁰ Department of Statistics, 2010, Census of Population and Housing [<http://www.soencouragement.org/forms/CENSUS2010084903300.pdf>]

⁷¹ Wyatt, A. (2018). Case Study: Performance Based Contract for NRW Reduction and Control – New Providence, Bahamas. Inter-American Development Bank Publication. Retrieved from <https://publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/8729>

embarked on a series of projects to extend water supply to various locations as well as the construction of several wastewater treatment plans and pumping stations in New Providence; and the development of a Wastewater Master Plan.^{72 73}

Through a \$28.33 million CDB project with \$13.3 million of counterpart financing, The Water and Sewerage Corporation is also in the process of expanding the provision of piped water to several islands that were underserved, including Long Island, San Salvador, South Andros and Cat Island.⁷⁴

Water for All Strategy

Through its Over the Hill project, The Government of The Bahamas is embarking on a Water for All Strategy for the zone. The main aim is to ensure modern indoor sanitation and access to piped water to all residents of the Zone by 2025. The project will be completed in phases and include the refurbishment of 77 standpipes in the zone to acceptable standards, the retrofitting of 100 homes for indoor plumbing and the design of a household prepaid smart metering system for water resources.

In June 2018, the Water and Sewerage Corporation announced a \$75 million project to expand the sewerage system to cover over two-thirds of Over the Hill households.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG6 Programmes

The Bahamas witnessed a significant improvement in the living standards on every island and new economic activity related to tourism which have led to increased demands for water. The crisis in sourcing groundwater gave birth to now-thriving private water supply companies with desalinated saltwater systems. Challenges come from:

- Sustainable financing for continued water and sanitation improvements throughout The Bahamas;

⁷² <http://www.wsc.com.bs/Press.aspx>

⁷³ <http://www.wsc.com.bs/Press.aspx>

⁷⁴ See <https://thenassauguardian.com/2018/05/11/gibson-contract-awarded-for-provision-of-potable-water-on-long-island/>

- Resistance from residents to transitioning from well water which is vulnerable to contamination to metered water obtained through reverse osmosis offered by providers such as WSC or the use of water catchment systems;
- Continued monitoring of informal settlements and availability of affordable housing with modern amenities for clean water and good sanitation infrastructure.

SDG7: Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable & Modern Energy for All.

Clean, affordable and reliable energy services are key to The Bahamas' prosperity to: reduce poverty, increase productivity and competitiveness to promote economic growth⁷⁵. In a recent Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) report, it was revealed that electricity costs/rates in The Bahamas are among the highest in the Latin American/Caribbean region. This elevated cost is burdensome to consumers and serves as a drain on the economy. A major problem is that The Bahamas uses fuel oil to produce most of its electricity and the country imports a disproportionately large amount of petroleum products - including motor fuels - equal to 11% of the nation's 2011 GDP⁷⁶. The Bahamas ranks lowest in the region for renewable energy penetration. Furthermore, as a consequence of old power generation infrastructure, The Bahamas suffers from a high fuel import bill (4 percent of GDP), high and volatile electricity prices⁷⁷

The unique nature of the Bahamian archipelago means that economies of scale are difficult to achieve. For example, there are almost 30 isolated power stations that require servicing, staffing, etc. In addition, factors such as duty, subsidies, taxes, etc. can influence the cost of fuel.⁷⁸ The Bahamas' electrical system faces reliability issues. According to a recent IDB report, many more businesses in The Bahamas have emergency generators than their counterparts elsewhere in the Caribbean. Some have the capacity to cover all their needs.

⁷⁵ Working Paper on the Environment p. 48

⁷⁶ IDB Country Strategy 2013-2017

⁷⁷ IDB Country Strategy with the Commonwealth of The Bahamas (2018-2022). May 2018

⁷⁸ Working Paper on the Environment p. 48

According to a recent analysis, the generation, transmission, and distribution systems are poorly maintained.⁷⁹ Compared to its peers in the Caribbean, The Bahamas suffers from higher system losses (17% versus an average of 10%) and higher energy costs (44 cents/kWh versus an average of 33 cents/kWh)⁸⁰.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG7

In recent years the Government has taken some steps to improve the country's energy efficiency and to promote the use of renewable energy by introducing various initiatives.

Policies and Programmes

- i. Designing a National Energy Policy 2013-2033 which commits to increasing the share of renewable resources to 30% of the overall mix, with an additional 10% coming from residential self-generation⁸¹. The implementation of the National Energy Policy and, in particular its renewable energy targets, has now been elevated to a key priority of the Government to be monitored through the new established Prime Minister's Delivery Unit;
- ii. Launching, in March 2017 through Bahamas Power and Light, the Small Scale Renewable Generation Program has allowed residential consumers to install solar panels at home to supplement residential energy needs⁸² in order to improve the reliability and sustainability of the energy supply. This Programme has been bolstered by the Ministry of Finance which has eliminated tariffs on solar equipment, making it more affordable for persons in lower income categories;
- iii. Eliminating duties on solar kits upon application to the Ministry of Finance. Presently solar panels are duty free, and this new allowance will promote the use of green energy.

⁷⁹ DNV KEMA, 2013.

⁸⁰ DNV KEMA, 2013.

⁸¹ Bahamas National Energy Policy 2013-2033

⁸² <http://www.bahamaselectricity.com/ssrg.html>

- iv. Improving the reliability of the BPL network by expanding the use of Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI). This technology would allow technicians to better identify sources and locations of disruptions in the network at the micro level to more rapidly reconnect individual customers. This AMI would support the current technology used to monitor network disruptions at the macro level.
- v. Increasing access to electricity for persons in the lower income categories, through facilitating BPL's exploration of the use of pre-paid metering to provide electricity service. This would allow persons who have been disconnected from the grid to access reliable energy up to the limit which they can afford. Use of this technology also supports the practice of ensuring better financial practices by preventing consumers accumulating large and unsustainable credit balances.

Partnerships

- vi. Signing on to the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Sustainable Energy mechanism – SID DOCK in 2014, designed to provide the country with access to grant funding to finance the transformation of the country's energy sectors in order to achieve a 25% increase in energy efficiency and to generate at least 50% of electric power from renewable energy resources and a 25% decrease in conventional fuel use⁸³;
- vii. Entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Carbon War Room (CWR), a non-profit organization based in Washington D.C in 2014, for assistance with transiting The Bahamas from a heavy dependence on fossil fuels to use of renewable energy resources. Pursuant to the MOU, CWR will assist The Bahamas with projects which include:
 - developing solar farm programmes of up to 20MW across a number of islands (Eleuthera, Andros, Cat Island, Acklins, Bimini, Inagua, Crooked Island, Exuma, and Long Island); and

⁸³ Ministry of Environment and Housing, Fulfilling the Charter, A Progress Report 2012-2015. Government of The Bahamas p. 11

- viii. Facilitating an energy efficiency audit and a Solar PV installation viability assessment at the Anatol Rodgers School⁸⁴. In 2017, the Anatol Rodgers High School was removed from the electrical grid by outfitting it with a 300 kW photovoltaic system. The project will serve as a blueprint for how other public buildings, particularly, the more than 150 public schools throughout The Bahamas, can be systematically removed from the electrical grid.

Key Legislation/Legislative Reform Efforts

- ix. Introducing a legislative package to facilitate the reform the country's energy sector. The legislation includes the Electricity Act 2015, Utilities and Competition Amendment Act 2015 and the Electricity Rate Reduction Bond Act 2015⁸⁵. The purpose of the legislation are as follows:
- The Electricity Act 2015, inter alia, overhauls the energy sector and establishes a sector policy governing the supply of electricity consistent with the goals of the National Energy Policy and creates an electricity supply regime that promotes diversification and competition in the generation, supply and distribution of electricity;
 - The Utilities Regulation and Competition Amendment Act 2015 amends the Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority Act 2009 to enable URCA to fulfil its functions as independent regulator of the electricity sector; and
 - The Electricity Rate Reduction Bond Act 2015, inter alia: provides a legal framework for the issuance and redemption of securitised rate reduction bonds to satisfy certain debts of The Bahamas Electricity Corporation⁸⁶ and reforms the electricity sector and the institution of a new electricity supply regime in The Bahamas.

⁸⁴ Ministry of Environment and Housing, Fulfilling the Charter, A Progress Report 2012-2015. Government of The Bahamas p. 11

⁸⁵ Government of The Bahamas Official website

⁸⁶ The public corporation responsible for supplying electricity prior to Bahamas Power and Light

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG7 Programmes

The key challenges with implementing SDG7 relate to:

- Maintaining the political will to aggressively strengthen the publicly owned electrical company;
- Consistent policy momentum and sustainable financing models to implement renewable energy programmes through the country; and
- Training of technical experts in renewable energy.

SDG8: Promote Sustained, Inclusive & Sustainable Economic Growth, Full & Productive Employment & Decent Work for All

The Bahamas recognised that economic growth is necessary for the alleviation of poverty. Inclusive economic growth will ensure the wellbeing of the citizens and residents of The Bahamas through the promotion of human rights and the creation of an enabling environment for decent work and secured livelihoods for all members of the society, including vulnerable and often marginalised groups.

Over the past decades, The Bahamas's economy has been primarily driven by two sectors, tourism and financial services, with tourism being the dominant sector contributing 46%⁸⁷ of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while financial services sector contributes directly and indirectly 20% of the country's GDP.⁸⁸ Other sectors such as the country's Manufacturing sector accounts for on average, 3.8% of the country's GDP while the Agriculture and Fisheries industries sectors contribute to about, on average, 2.4% of the country's GDP.

Most economic activities are concentrated in New Providence, the country's most populated island. Grand Bahama, the second most populated island hosts one of the first free ports of the world, a special economic zone. In Freeport, Grand Bahama Island, the role of the Port Authority is to provide an enabling environment for the promotion of business development and industry,

⁸⁷ World Travel & Tourism Council: Economic Impact 2014, Bahamas (NDP Working Paper on the Economy)

⁸⁸ Bahamas Ministry of Finance: Economic Environment 2013 (NDP Working Paper on the Economy)

facilitating the creation of business clusters and encouraging innovation and knowledge transfer leading to increased business development and competitiveness.

Many businesses indicate a shortage of the required skills within the local workforce. Additionally, the ease of doing business in The Bahamas has been problematic with the country ranking in 119th place on the World Bank's 2018 Doing Business Index.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG8

Skills for Current and Future Jobs Programme

In order to increase productivity and to reduce unemployment, the Government entered into a \$20 million loan agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in November 2016 to facilitate the rolling out of the 'Skills for Current and Future Jobs in The Bahamas' programme. The programme's objectives include, inter alia, increasing employability and productivity through the provision of job-readiness, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programmes and promoting better job matching through modernization of labour intermediation services – that is improvements in software, hardware, infrastructure and training of personnel to ensure provision of targeted quality services to the unemployed⁸⁹.

The Government will, in conjunction with the IDB, enact legislation to establish a National Apprenticeship Programme designed to provide both theoretical and practical training for young people. At the end of the training, successful candidates will be placed in various disciplines in the labour market as Apprentices.

Decent Work

Additionally, in September 2017, the Government in conjunction with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Decent Work Team and Office of the Caribbean held a two-day workshop on the implementation of National Productivity legislation in the country. Workshop participants included social partners and Government agencies. At the end of the workshop, a Plan of Action

⁸⁹ IDB 2016, 'Skills for Current and Future Jobs in The Bahamas' BL1037. Accessed at: [http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=40271687]

was agreed with specific timeframes that will lead to the enactment of productivity legislation and the establishment of a National Productivity Council.

Public Employment Services

The Department of Labour in conjunction with IDB has completed a technological upgrade of the Information Technology Network in the Public Employment Services Unit that will significantly improve the delivery of quality service to members of the public seeking employment. This includes upgrades in hardware and software and the establishment of “One Stop Centres” to ensure job seeker services are more accessible to the public.

Citizen Security and Justice Programme – Employment

The Government obtained a \$20m Citizen Security and Justice Programme loan from the IDB aimed (as will be discussed in SDG16) at reducing the levels of crime in the society and which includes an employability component facilitated via the Department of Labour. This component is designed to target young people between the ages of 16 to 29 with limited employability skills and incorporates two mixed components to prepare the youth for the labour market through the development of technical and soft skills. In 2018/2019 the Government pledged an additional \$1.5 to the programme’s budget.

National Training Agency

The National Training Agency (NTA) is keenly focused on reducing unemployment among youth between the ages of 16 and 30 years. Every year, a minimum of 600 persons aged between 16 and 30 are trained free of charge in vocational skill areas which include Microsoft Office, Quickbooks, Allied Health Care and Auto Body Repair. The NTA also offers adult literacy and numeracy training and facilitates internship and job placement services with its partners.

Access to Financial Capital

The Government has recognised that the growth of small and medium enterprises is necessary for sustainable economic growth and has over the years set up agencies such as The Bahamas Agricultural Industrial Corporation, The Bahamas Entrepreneurial Venture Capital Fund and The Bahamas Development Bank. The aim of these agencies is to encourage the creation, expansion

and promotion of small and medium enterprises through the provision of business incubation support services, resources such as industrial land at concessionary rates, access to development funding, access to buyers' markets and the provision of monitoring and evaluation services for small businesses.

Small Business Development

In the 2018/2019 budget the government placed particular emphasis on promoting the development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) around seven key pillars.

These pillars are:

- i. Improving the enabling environment for MSMEs by facilitating their interactions with public and regulatory entities (e.g. easing the obtaining of licenses and certificates as well as the use of digital platforms to fulfil tax and regulatory requirements);
- ii. Increasing direct financing to MSMEs through the commitment of \$25 million over five years for measures such as micro loans, small business loans, grants and guarantee facilities through the commercial banking sector;
- iii. Enhancing MSME business development support through the establishment of the Small Business Development Center. In February 2017, the Government and the Organization of American States signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the creation of The Bahamas Small Business Development Centre.⁹⁰ The Centre will become part of the Caribbean network of Small Business Development Centres that will support the development of MSMEs in the region. The Centre will provide technical support and training to assist in entrepreneurial growth and development of MSMEs. Assistance will include providing MSMEs with training in financial literacy and ways to access financing on a non-discriminatory basis as identified in the 2014 Compete Caribbean survey of the Bahamian private sector⁹¹.

⁹⁰ "OAS and The Bahamas To Jointly Promote Small Businesses." OAS - Organization of American States: Democracy for peace, security, and development, 1 Aug. 2009, www.oas.org/en/media_center/phonews.asp?sCodigo=FNE-21064. Accessed 5 Sept. 2017.

⁹¹ Private Sector Assessment of Bahamas. Inter-American Development Bank, 2014, Private Sector Assessment of Bahamas, www.competecaribbean.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2014-The-Bahamas-Private-Sector-Assessment-Report.pdf. Accessed 5 Sept. 2017.

Additionally, the Centre will assist MSMEs with accessing local and export markets through provision of a global portal linking exporters in The Bahamas with the world. The Centre's work would help catapult micro, small and medium sized businesses to subsequent stages in their development and help them obtain access to new markets. The Centre's initiatives will aid in providing the technical support and training needed by MSMEs to qualify for and gain access to credit on a non-discriminatory basis as identified in the 2014 Compete Caribbean survey of the Bahamian private sector⁹². The Centre is expected to open in August 2018.

- iv. Providing specific support for entrepreneurship and MSME development within vulnerable groups, with specific funding and support set aside for youth;
- v. Fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation with support for curricula-based programs and for new financial literacy and entrepreneurial programmes within the school system;
- vi. Strengthening corporate governance and minimizing outside political interference within MSME enabling agencies; and
- vii. Promoting greater linkages between our MSMEs and other domestic and international sectors of the economy.

Additionally, the Ministry of Finance provides Small Business Guarantee Loans to assist individuals in establishing a small business and providing access to guaranteed loans at concessionary interest rates at commercial banks. The loan cannot exceed BS\$250,000 dollars and must be repaid within 10 years⁹³.

Ease of Doing Business

The Government, took the following action to improve the ease of doing business in the country:

- Starting a Business: In 2015 the Government launched the Department of Inland Revenue's online portal for business licensing which creates a single point of contact and brings together numerous government agencies involved in the business licensing process. The

⁹² Private Sector Assessment of Bahamas. Inter-American Development Bank, 2014, Private Sector Assessment of Bahamas, www.competecaribbean.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2014-The-Bahamas-Private-Sector-Assessment-Report.pdf. Accessed 5 Sept. 2017.

⁹³ The Government of The Bahamas. 2017. Ministry of Finance. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.bahamas.gov.bs/finance>. [Accessed 22 September 2017].

Government has begun dialogue with funding agencies to continue expansion of the platform to allow for further integration and ease of the application process. Through these initial interventions, the Government therefore has shortened the time required to secure both new and renewed licenses, created a stress-free and more citizen-centered environment and improved delivery. Upon completion in early 2019, the new system will include the complete integration of systems between agencies and complete online services, including the submission of applications and the reservation of business names through the Office of the Registrar General;

- Registering Property: In 2015, the Government began to digitize all deeds and titles, formerly in paper-based format, at the registry of records to create a publicly searchable database. This makes the process of a title search and property ownership faster, cheaper and more accessible to all;
- Getting Credit: In 2016, the Central Bank of The Bahamas, in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance, drafted the Credit Reporting Bill 2016 and the Credit Reporting Regulations 2016 allowing for the creation of a credit bureau in The Bahamas. The establishment of such a bureau will allow lending agencies to better access the risk and credit worthiness of potential borrowers and reduce the apprehension experienced by many local banks; and

Paying Taxes: In 2016, the National Insurance Board (NIB), one of the entities responsible for delivery of social protection, launched a new electronic platform to allow businesses and individuals to register with the scheme electronically⁹⁴. Simultaneously, the NIB launched a platform to allow for limited e-payment of national insurance contributions from businesses and vendors throughout The Bahamas. As part of the continued upgrade of services, the NIB has begun a project to expand its electronic platform to allow for universal access to its e-payment platform from any location or bank facility. This will increase access for persons in remote communities.

⁹⁴ <http://www.nib-bahamas.com/UserFiles/HTML/Editor/RBC%20Online%202012.pdf>

To further promote entrepreneurship and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro, small and medium sized enterprises, in 2017 the Government appointed a select committee of experts with experience operating within the private sector to provide recommendations to the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) with respect to improving the ease of doing business in The Bahamas. The recommendations will be used to design additional interventions targeted at reducing the cost and time for doing business in The Bahamas in line with World Bank indicators.

Improvements in the ease of doing business has been elevated to a key priority of the Government and will be monitored by the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit.

Economic Diversification

Recognising the need for economic diversification the Government has secured a non-reimbursable grant with the Inter-American Development Bank in the amount of \$500,000 to finance a three-year technical cooperation project to enhance the utilisation of digital technologies in the **Digital Economy and the Blue Economy** by Bahamian firms. The project scheduled for three phases will undertake a diagnostic for each of the industries in the initial phase. Phase two will consist of efforts to promote stakeholder ownership and commitment and establishment of a structure for implementation of the roadmap and communication campaigns to promote the findings from the studies in phase three.

To promote industry growth in the 2018/2019 fiscal period, the Government will provide duty free entry of goods for use in the commercial printing industry, as well as for processing and garment manufacturing equipment without the need for specific concessions as before. Tax concessions have also been offered to invigorate the air transportation sector.

A Climate-resilient and ecosystem-based development plan for San Salvador

The Government, in conjunction with the IDB in early 2017, began to design a programme on diversifying the economy of San Salvador to make use of the island's natural and historic capital. San Salvador is located in the south eastern area of The Bahamas, approximately 300 miles from the capital of Nassau, New Providence. The island has hill ridges, mangroves, rivers and lakes. These features contribute to the diverse ecosystem of the island, which is home to the endangered

San Salvador iguana; breeding grounds for grouper, conch, crawfish and the hawksbill turtle; and a variety of seabirds. Many of these habitats are supported by the surrounding fringing coral reefs and the 4,000-foot-deep waters of the Atlantic Ocean. The habitat of these ecological assets is protected in five legally protected national parks. The island also boasts a rich history, most notably as the site of the first landfall of Christopher Columbus in the “New World” – Guanahani as it was then called by the Lucayan Indians who inhabited the island at the time. In 1992 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognized the island of San Salvador as a “Monument of the Quincentennial”⁹⁵.

The San Salvador IDB programme which commenced in early 2017 seeks to provide two major deliverables:

- A Climate-resilient and ecosystem-based development plan for the island: This plan is designed to map sensitive ecosystems on the island and develop a strategy for sustainable use and consumption of these assets. The data and information will also be used to ensure infrastructure is developed in a resilient manner.
- A Heritage resource conservation plan: The conservation plan is designed to map out areas of historic significance on the island, develop a strategy to restore and preserve these assets and develop a strategy to exploit these assets in the overall tourism product. Such interventions would include guided tours of historic sites, historic re-enactments and other activities.

The use and inclusion of the above master plans in the development strategy of San Salvador should improve earnings for the low income and marginalized communities on that island. It would also provide for the sustainable use of historic and cultural assets and provide entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly for youth.

⁹⁵ “UNESCO Monument.” *UNESCO Monument - The Bahamas Family of Islands*, National Geographic, www.bahamasgeotourism.com/content/unesco-monument/bah8DD8510073CBF9B2D. Accessed 6 Sept. 2017.

Technical Cooperation Grant for the Sponging Industry



The Government of The Bahamas in further efforts to assist in the diversification of the economy in December 2015 received a technical cooperation grant through IDB for a project aimed at assisting spongers in the country in

Picture 27: Sea Sponge increasing their global market share. The technical cooperation will facilitate the following activities:

- i. Surveying the current state of the Bahamian sponge industry to look at the sustainability and capacity of the natural resource.
- ii. Investigating avenues of sustainable growth of the industry for sponge farming and expanded use of the total sponge.
- iii. Educating and training the spongers in methods to grow their sponging businesses which will involve technical and business training.
- iv. Marketing and promotion of the Bahamian Sponging industry both locally and internationally to maximize the opportunities for job creation and increased income.
- v. Strengthening of the Fisheries Alliance Association to develop among the members high standards of conduct, practice and responsibility in the pursuit of their trade⁹⁶.

⁹⁶ Inter-American Development Bank. 2017. PROJECT DETAILS. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.iadb.org/en/projects/project-details,1301.html?query=&topic=&country=BH>. [Accessed 22 September 2017].



Additional diversification efforts included the identification of niche markets on the island of Andros based on the island's natural capital through the Andros Master Plan project developed in 2015.

Picture 28: Fisherman on the island of Spanish Wells, Eleuthera Island preparing nets before the opening of the grouper season.

Legislative Reform

In 2017, the Government enacted the Employment (Amendment) Act 2017. The Act amends the Employment Act 2001 to further protect employees by inter alia, placing an obligation on employers contemplating redundancy to inter alia, notify the Minister responsible and respective trade unions of redundancy intentions and to provide for the prioritising of redundant employees for rehiring. Additionally, the Government has amended the Industrial Relations Act 1970 by enacting the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2017. The 2017 Act now inter alia, extends the powers of the Industrial Tribunal so that it can hear matters under the Employment Act.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG8 Programmes

The main challenges to the implementation of SDG8 emanate from:

- Reforming the educational and training systems to ensure a workforce that is better equipped for a modern Bahamas;
- The need to broaden a relatively narrow tax base to effectively fund development enhancing infrastructure; and
- Delivery of policy reforms efforts, particularly to improve the ease of doing business in The Bahamas.



Picture 29: Straw handicraft products from small businesses in Eleuthera Island

SDG9: Build Resilient Infrastructure, Promote Inclusive & Sustainable Industrialisation & Foster Innovation

In The Bahamas, public buildings, hospitals, roads, and recreation facilities are built under the auspices of the Ministry of Works. As with most countries, the demand for public infrastructure far outstrips the budget allocations. Presently, the country does not have a comprehensive national capital maintenance plan that lists the country's assets, their condition, rehabilitation schedules, the cost of new construction, and priorities for new investments⁹⁷. Nor does the country have a capital infrastructural plan. Additionally, the majority of The Bahamas' essential infrastructure - including its energy facilities, air and sea ports, major roads, and governmental agencies - is located close to the coast on many of the islands. As sea levels rise and coastal erosion continues, this infrastructure is at substantial risk of being damaged from the effects of climate change⁹⁸.

⁹⁷ Working Paper on State of the Nation, Infrastructure and the Environment p. 77

⁹⁸ IDB, 2011.



Picture 30: A New seawall being constructed on the Family Islands.

As a multi-island nation, The Bahamas relies heavily on its air and sea transportation networks, as well as effective Information and Communication Technology (ICT), for interactions between islands and with the world. All of these modes are critical to the economy, which is highly reliant on financial services and tourism⁹⁹.

With respect to telecommunications, The Bahamas has generally good telecommunications services and pricing is generally reasonable by standards elsewhere. There are now three main communications companies. However, there are also a number of smaller wireless broadband service providers in limited geographic areas. In 2016, the cellular mobile market was liberalised.

For the period ending 2016, the penetration rates for fixed telephony, broadband data and mobile telephony stood at 32.05%, 22.81% and 95.3% respectively. A more useful metric for broadband

⁹⁹ State of the Nation Working Paper on Infrastructure and the Environment p. 68

penetration, that is, the number of residential broadband subscribers per 100 households, was 73.8% at the end of 2016.

There are 31 free to air radio broadcasters, some of which only operate in limited geographical areas.¹⁰⁰.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG9

Strengthening of Building Codes



Picture 31: House destroyed by hurricane

In 2017, the Government announced that it would be reviewing the country's building code to ensure greater resilience of structures from climate change, flooding and sea surges. The government is also preparing a comprehensive hazards map to enable better planning including, where necessary, the introduction of no build zones. Requirements for elevated floors and concrete piles are also being

contemplated for new construction in flood vulnerable zones. Greater emphasis will also be placed on enforcement of the building code.

Digital Bahamas Initiative

The government is engaging in preliminary discussions with the IDB on an initiative that will enhance the country's competitive advantage by reducing the costs of conducting business with the Government. The project will enable Government to place emphasis on making government services available online, increasing the use of ICTs in the public sector and increasing transparency of Government activities while strengthening auditing and control mechanisms.

Energy

Included in the 2018/2019 agenda of the government are commitments of \$5 million for LED street lighting and \$5 million for a solar demonstration project on one of the Family Islands.

¹⁰⁰ Bahamas Information Services. 2017. BCB commissions Free to Air Transmission Tower. Press Release. April 25th 2017.

Sea Ports

Recently, a \$46 million project was approved for the construction of a modern port in Cooperstown, Abaco Island.¹⁰¹

Airports

In the last five (5) years, new modern terminals at the Lynden Pindling International Airport in New Providence have been constructed. Other Airport infrastructural programmes include a program aimed at improving air transport connectivity and flow of people to the Family Islands. Such connectivity will be done through infrastructure improvements by upgrading, rehabilitating and maintaining selected airports to comply with international aviation standards taking into account climate change considerations. The operation is also expected to generate travel time savings.¹⁰²

Highway Maintenance Management Plan (HMMP)

The Government intends to develop a Highway Maintenance Management Plan (HMMP) which will be updated on an annual basis. The HMMP will be a five-year plan and will provide a strategy to ensure that:

- Asset records are maintained and updated;
- Inspections are programmed and carried out;
- Reactive repairs are identified and completed;
- The condition of asset is assessed and reported;
- Repair works are prioritized;
- Long term condition of assets and budget options for maintenance of assets are prepared;
- and
- An emergency response plan for asset maintenance is activated.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Tribune Newspaper 27 March 2014

¹⁰² Inter-American Development Bank. 2017. PROJECT DETAILS. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.iadb.org/en/projects/project-details,1301.html?query=&topic=&country=BH>. [Accessed 22 September 2017].

¹⁰³ Ministry of Public Works; Submissions 3rd November 2017

With respect to long term plans for road development in the country, the Government intends to take steps to ensure the implementation of the New Providence Road Improvement Project Phase II (NPRIP II). The project is intended to promote the reconstruction of major roadway corridors throughout the island of New Providence. Reconstruction includes improvements to signage and markings, street lighting, traffic signals and sidewalks.¹⁰⁴

Climate Resilient Management Infrastructure Program

The Government has received a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank for the Climate Resilient Management Infrastructure Program, (BH-L1043). This project consists of 3 Components, as follows:

- **Component 1:** Sustainable Coastal Protection Infrastructure. This component envisions investments in coastal protection infrastructure on four different islands in The Bahamas
- **Component 2:** Natural infrastructure for hazard resilience in Andros. This component will deliver a priority investment from the Sustainable Development Master Plan for Andros,
- **Component 3:** Institutional Strengthening for Coastal Risk Management

Smart/ICT Interventions

In 2016, under the IDB-funded Sustainable Nassau project¹⁰⁵, a study was conducted, and recommendations were made on how smart/ICT solutions would have the greatest impact on the city's management.¹⁰⁶ The study showed that some city agencies had already implemented or planned technological solutions to enhance systems and service delivery, most notably:

- The use of centralized supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems by BEC and WSC¹⁰⁷ to better monitor, control, and respond to system challenges;
- The use of smart meters (residential and commercial) by BEC and WSC¹⁰⁸; and

¹⁰⁴ Ministry of Public Works' Submissions 3rd November 2017

¹⁰⁵ (also known as the Emerging Sustainable Cities Initiative) focuses on improving Nassau's sustainability under three pillars: urban development, the environment and climate change and fiscal sustainability.

¹⁰⁶ IDB. 2016. Smart City Readiness Assessment (Nassau, Bahamas). Emerging and Sustainable Cities Program. December 8th 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Bahamas Weekly. 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid 168

- The use of close-circuit television (CCTV) and centralized control, monitoring and emergency response systems by The Bahamas' national security services¹⁰⁹.

The study proposed an action plan for the city of Nassau to centralise critical information and facilitate real-time communication and collaboration across city agencies in order to address potential problems before they occur. The recommendations focused on the areas of natural disaster management, public safety, citizen security, energy and transportation services.

The Government is also working with the International Telecommunications Union and URCA to develop a Smart Bahamas Master Plan ('BSmart'), which will be national in scope. The main objective of the Master Plan would be the unified and integrated development of all elements related to Information and Communication Technologies that support The Bahamas' Vision 2040 goals.

Building Confidence and Security in the use of ICTs (Cybersecurity)

The critical nature of ICT infrastructure and associated applications to economic and social activities require adequate measures to address the risks and vulnerabilities that have an impact on confidence and security in the use of ICTs. A Cyber Crime Lab was created in the Central Detectives Unit of the Royal Bahamas Police Force to investigate criminal breaches of the following pieces of legislation: Computer Misuse Act, Electronic Transactions Act, Data Protection Act, Communications Act, Penal Code.

As discussed earlier, the Government in collaboration with the IDB will implement a three phased approach that will promote the benefits of the Digital Economy to Bahamian businesses. The aim of the project is to encourage the incorporation of digital technologies in the business strategies and the creation of new innovative technology based business models. It is presumed there will be a need to improve the existing ICT infrastructure and legal and institutional framework in order to promote investment in the digital sector as well as to use digital solutions to improve productivity in all economic sector

¹⁰⁹ Bahamas Weekly. 5 February 2016

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG9 Programmes

The key barriers to achieving SDG9 for The Bahamas relate to:

- Overcoming the challenge to increase the provision of clean and modern energy services;
- Structural reform to ensure greater ease of doing business to unlock innovative entrepreneurial activity;
- The development of research and innovation capabilities at the University of The Bahamas;
- The need for a greater emphasis on climate resilient buildings and other infrastructure;
- The need for greater private funding in transportation;
- Continued investment in the country's ICT infrastructure; and
- Better aligned and funded capital and infrastructure plans to support economic growth and diversification.

SDG10: Reduce Inequality within & among Countries

Over the last few years, there has been growing discussions about inequality and inequity within The Bahamas. There is the recognition that a country cannot grow sustainably while some groups are systematically being left behind.

One vulnerable group is migrants. The Bahamas is host to large populations of economic migrant groups from the Caribbean. Many enter, stay and work in The Bahamas without legal authorization. Children born in The Bahamas of non-Bahamian parents are sometimes unable to obtain the nationality of the parents, nor Bahamian citizenship until they reach the age of 18 years and some face considerable challenges meeting the requirements for citizenship because of a lack of requisite documentation.

Discrimination against persons with disabilities and the limited environment which allows them to participate fully in society remains a concern. The Department of Statistics 2010 Census of Population and Housing determined that there were 10,138 people with disabilities in the country and that men accounted for 51.8% of that population. The Census report also found that only 17% of persons with disabilities 15 years of age and over were employed and that 72% of persons with disabilities had no form of health insurance. The population of persons with disabilities is rapidly

growing due to the prevalence of non-communicable diseases which are a major cause of preventable disabilities. There is, therefore, a continuing need to ensure that people with disabilities have a voice, are afforded access to health care and employment and that laws are enforced. In 2014, the government enacted the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act, 2014 and in September 2015 ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the aim of ensuring that people with disabilities are treated equally under the law and can participate fully in society.

Cases of elder abuse and neglect are on the rise. The forms of abuse include: verbal abuse, physical and financial abuse¹¹⁰.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG10

Persons with Disabilities

In September 2015 the Government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the aim of ensuring that people with disabilities are treated equally under the law and can participate fully in society. Some provisions of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act, 2014 came into force in on the 1st of January 2016 and other provisions took effect on the 1st of January 2018. Proprietors of all buildings which members of the general public are permitted to enter, have until the end of June 2016 to ensure that their properties have adequate and accessible parking spaces for persons with disabilities and all public facilities have until December 2017 to ensure that their buildings are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Migrants Rights

There has been a policy commitment to expedite the processing of residency and citizenship applications for eligible non-Bahamians.¹¹¹

Pro-Poor Policies

The Government's 2017 Over the Hill initiative is a pilot project which targets communities which have been most left behind in terms of prosperity. Specific elements of this programme target

¹¹⁰ Maycock Denise, Ministry Considers Legislation To Protect The Elderly, 16 May 2016, Tribune Newspaper

¹¹¹ See <https://thenassauguardian.com/2017/12/19/un-rapporteur-urges-refugee-legislation/>

productivity improvements in this community. In 2015, the minimum wage was increased by 40% from \$150 per week to \$210 per week. The increase was agreed by the Tripartite Council consisting of the Government, Employers and Workers representatives.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG10 Programmes

The challenges associated with the implementation of SDG10 relate to the following:

- Limited public awareness regarding to the needs of vulnerable groups in the country.
- Sustainable financial models for strengthening the social protection floors.
- Negative stigma associated with being a migrant.
- Continuous productivity improvements related to education and training so that the most economically vulnerable are able to benefit from improvements in the economy.
- Limited data and research that highlights challenges and context of marginalised communities.

SDG11: Make Cities Inclusive, Safe, Resilient & Sustainable

More than 70% of the Bahamian population resides in New Providence, the country's most urbanized island. Indeed, this is consistent with contemporary trends in global urbanization.

In New Providence, transport challenges tend to be similar to those faced by many urban areas around the world. Public ground transportation is limited to privately-owned buses referred to as "jitneys" operating on government defined routes and government regulated fares. There is limited bus coverage for unprofitable routes and during the evening hours. This has led to over-reliance on personal vehicles and traffic congestion. Additionally, cycling is almost non-existent particularly with a lack of designated cycling lanes¹¹².

The management of solid waste is an ongoing concern throughout the country and particularly in New Providence due to the condition of the landfill. The Department of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) estimates that in The Bahamas, 660 million pounds (300,000 tonnes) of solid waste are discarded from packaging, waste food, and other thrown away items annually¹¹³. The

¹¹² McDonald Mott 2000 p.22

¹¹³ Thomas, A et al., 2015.

country has limited recycling practices with landfills taking up valuable space that becomes unusable for extended periods after the landfills reach maximum capacity¹¹⁴. Dump fires in The Bahamas have become an almost annual event, with as many as 17 acres burned in January 2015¹¹⁵. A recent request for proposals (RFP) was issued in 2017 to seek new management for the landfill.

There is a need to address sanitation and housing challenges, particularly in urbanized areas. Over the years there has been a steady increase in informal settlements. The majority of these informal settlements are found on Crown or Public land. They exist in the capital Nassau, Abaco Island, Exuma Island and Eleuthera¹¹⁶. The housing structures in these towns are generally informally organised, overcrowded with illegally-constructed structures built with non-durable hazardous material, without proper sewage disposal systems and access to water.¹¹⁷ The results of a 2018 survey of informal settlements on New Providence revealed that there were 1,410 residents residing in the Shanty Towns and a total of 428 households. Thirty eight percent (536) of the residents were under the age of 18 and sixty two percent (874) are adults. Among the 428 heads of households who were interviewed, 71% had legal status in The Bahamas, 23% unknown and 6% were undocumented. Sixty eight percent (68%) or 600 of the adult population reported working in the last six months and 76% of the households reported total weekly income of under \$400.¹¹⁸



Picture 32: An informal settlement in New Providence. Photo Credit: D.E.H.S Shanty Town Project 2013

¹¹⁴ Thomas, A et al., 2015.

¹¹⁵ Scavella, Nico 2015

¹¹⁶ Ministry of Environment and Housing 2013, Shanty Town Project. Accessed at: [<http://eh.gov.bs/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Shanty-Town-Bahamas-Report.pdf>]

¹¹⁷ Department of Environmental Health and Services 2013 p.26

¹¹⁸ See Shanty Town Statement and Report

There is also a need for more green and public spaces in New Providence, particularly in the historical and often marginalised communities. Green and public spaces will not only incentivise community strengthening but provide an enabling environment to enhance the quality of life of residents and encourage physical activity, creativity and innovation.

There is a need to strengthen land use planning in New Providence. The United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) images in Figure 7 show urban growth in New Providence from the time of independence in 1973 to 2006. The images illustrate the deforestation of mangrove swamps for development has made the island more vulnerable to storms¹¹⁹. The report further highlights that the coasts show more construction, especially in the northwest section of the image (see **Figure 3**).

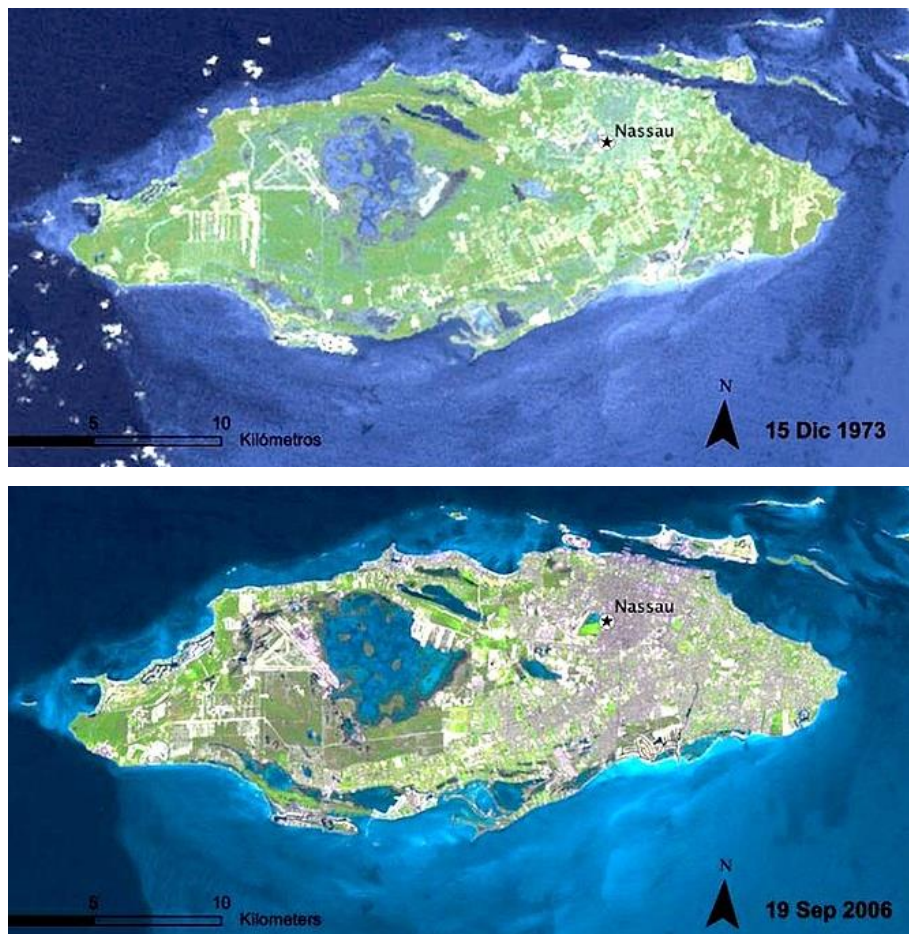


Figure 3: NASA images show urban growth in New Providence
(Source: NASA Satellite Image)

¹¹⁹ Tribune 242, 18 March 2015, <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2015/mar/18/nasa-images-show-urban-growth-new-providence/>

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG11

Public Bus Unification

A public Bus Unification Project which forms part of the New Providence Road Improvement Programme and funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) was approved by The Bahamas Cabinet in 2010. The project's aim is to streamline the public bus system supply of the approximately 400 privately owned public buses serving 23 corridors under a single corporate entity¹²⁰. In 2011, an Implementation Committee was formed to unite all stakeholders (government, bus franchise and individual owners), towards the service unification discussion¹²¹. In September 2014, a valuation of the unification of the public bus system was completed with the involvement of the relevant parties namely, the Ministry of Transport and Aviation, the Road Traffic Department, bus owners and an accounting firm¹²². In March 2016, the IDB confirmed that the Government would start the implementation of the bus unification process through a pilot project funded by the Bank to demonstrate how the bus unification scheme will work¹²³. It is expected that in addition to uniting the franchise owners and buses under a single entity, the unification of the bus system will streamline public bus transport and inter alia, upgrade the buses to make them more energy efficient and ensure that there is a good routing system so that areas in New Providence not currently serviced by buses are covered¹²⁴.

¹²⁰ IDB 2012 p. 4

¹²¹ IDB 2012 p. 4

¹²² Brown Geoffrey 2014

¹²³ IDB Report as referenced in The Tribune Newspaper (McKenzie, Natario and Hartnell, Neil 9 March 016)

¹²⁴ Ibid and Lowe, Alison 19 October 2013

Solid Waste Management: Recycling Programmes



Picture 33: Recycling operation set up by the One Eleuthera Foundation in Rock Sound, Eleuthera Island, Bahamas

Recycling programmes currently under way in the country include “Cans for Kids”, which engages 40 schools across the country in a collection drive; it ships 150,000 soda cans annually to Florida¹²⁵.

Other Civil Society Organizations also promote recycling. Bottling companies and breweries also collect, sterilise, and reuse their glass bottles. However, more widespread collaboration is required,

given that just one local soda company generates five million cans of soda

annually¹²⁶.

Sustainable Nassau Project

The Emerging and Sustainable Nassau Project in 2016 launched a Nassau Urban Design Lab, an urban regeneration plan for the city of Nassau, Central Nassau Regeneration Plan, which envisions a rehabilitation of the housing stock in the economically depressed Grants Town community. The proposed housing improvements would be complemented by interventions for community and local economic development¹²⁷. Additionally, the Ministry of Environment and Housing in 2012 established a Special Project Unit to investigate, design and implement a policy on addressing informal settlements in the country.

¹²⁵ Smith, Larry 2014. as referred to in the Working Paper State of the Nation on the Environment p. 76

¹²⁶ Thomas, A et al., 2015.

¹²⁷ Inter-American Development Bank, July 2016, Nassau Urban Lab, Central Nassau Plan Prepared for The Government of The Bahamas.



Picture 34: Rendering of a revitalized city block in the Over the Hill area of New Providence Island as part of the Sustainable Nassau project.

The Ministry of National Security in New Providence, as part of ongoing efforts to combat crime in 2011 and during the first phase of the CCTV program, installed 243 CCTV cameras under a USD 4.6 million contract. Introduction of an additional 1000+ cameras is imminently planned for the New Providence¹²⁸.

As part of the Emerging Sustainable Cities Project, a study was prepared on natural hazards and risks (specifically inland flooding, coastal flooding and salinization of the fresh water table) to the island of New Providence, where the majority of the population resides. Recommendations in the study included interventions such as urban drainage, infrastructure upgrades, urban green roof installations and mangrove restoration to reduce the risk of storm surges along the southern coastline¹²⁹.

¹²⁸ Smart City Readiness Assessment, Dominguez, September 2016

¹²⁹ Sustainable Nassau Action Plan Hazard and Risk Study, Environmental Resources Management Inc., March 2017

Marine Managed Area. Work continues to ensure safe and informative access for the public, as well as opportunities for sustainable entrepreneurship.

Local Government Initiative for New Providence

Local Government was introduced to The Bahamas in 1996 in the major populated islands outside of New Providence. In 2017, the Government of the Bahamas committed to bringing local government to New Providence by the 2020 cycle of local government elections. Building on studies completed as part of the Sustainable Nassau project, a committee has been established to make recommendations on the form of local government to be introduced to New Providence. Moreover, the Government in its 2018/2019 budget communication committed \$100,000 to support this initiative.

Shanty Town Action Task Force (SATF)

In 2018, the Government appointed a Shanty Town Action Task Force (SATF). This Task Force conducted a survey of all ten Shanty Towns in New Providence over a four-week period with a view of assisting residents in finding alternative accommodations and closing these informal settlements by 31st July, 2018.

Access to Affordable Housing

In 2018, the Government introduced a landmark bill to provide affordable housing for Bahamians titled Access to Affordable Homes Bill, 2018. Under this bill, the Government intends to provide service-ready parcels of land to individuals at a reduced cost on the islands of New Providence, Andros, Abaco, Exuma and San Salvador. As of June 2018, the first sale of these lots was made available in New Providence with Family Island expansion beginning on Abaco. The average lot that will be sold has a value of \$100,000 and will be sold for approximately \$30,000. With additional savings incurred as a result of duty free concessions on certain building materials for home building, the Government intends to “significantly increase home ownership throughout The Bahamas,”¹³¹.

¹³¹ *Bahamians to get another chance at affordable homes*; Bahamas Information Services Updates May 9, 2018: Accessed on June 7 2018 http://www.thebahamasweekly.com/publish/bis-news-updates/Bahamians_to_get_another_chance_at_affordable_homes58030.shtml

City Clean Up Efforts



Picture 36: Launch of the Over the Hill Clean Up Effort

The Government launched a clean-up initiative for New Providence and the Family Islands in October 2017. The scope of the clean-up will involve removal of derelict vehicles and waste within neighbourhoods and incorporation of rodent control mechanisms¹³².

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG11 Programmes

The specific challenges to implementing SDG11 includes:

- The devolution of governance and decision-making in favour of local actors.
- Strengthening the country's urban planning institutions to ensure that cities are inclusive safe,

resilient and sustainable with disaster planning at the forefront;

- Resolving issues of overlapping and unclear property claims, particularly in New Providence, to allow for the upgrading of residences in economically depressed communities.
- Better funding and policy reform to address the challenges of the public transportation systems.
- Allocating the necessary fiscal resources to major infrastructural works such as drainage and innovative solid waste management solutions for the urban centres,

¹³² Ministry of Environment and Housing August 2017, Minister Ferreira calls on Bahamians to join Keeping Our Bahamas Beautiful initiative.

SDG12: Ensure Sustainable Consumption & Production Patterns

The issue of sustainable consumption and production is a major challenge for The Bahamas. The structure of a tourism-based economy facilitates a ‘one-time use’ production flow. The tourism sector is also a major generator of food waste and large source of energy consumption. To promote sustainable consumption and production, it is critical to ensure that all stakeholders are involved.

As a country with a small manufacturing base, almost all goods are imported resulting in an abundance of packaging materials such as cardboard and wooden pallets. There is very limited recycling of any materials (glass, tires, plastics, wood, paper and cardboard, etc) with the exception of independent pickers who work the open face of the landfill recycling mainly metals, glass bottles and gently used items that could be re-used. Sustainable packaging and consumption in recent times has begun to receive greater focus.

For The Bahamas, SDG12 can only be achieved when sustainable production and consumption frameworks are integrated in public policy to influence public procurement for governments, sustainable business practices within the private sector and consumer behaviour.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG12

Food Waste Legislation

Hand for Hunger, a Non-Profit Organization in the country has drafted Food Waste Reduction Legislation to encourage large food distributors and retailers to donate food products, which would ordinarily be disposed, to non-profit organisations through provision of tax incentives to those who donate products.

Single-Use Plastic and Styrofoam Ban

In collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and Employer’s Confederation, the Government of The Bahamas announced in April 2018 its intention to ban single use plastics and Styrofoam use in The Bahamas by 1st January, 2020. The Ministry is also planning to develop a national waste management strategy. The Bahamas will also become a signatory to the United Nations Clean Seas Campaign. This initiative will involve a major education and awareness campaign.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG12 Programmes

The key challenges to implementing SDG12 are:

- Limited public awareness on the importance of sustainable consumption and production practices; and
- Lack of a sustainable consumption strategic plan and accompanying policies to govern economic actors.

SDG13: Take Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change & its

Impact



Picture 37: Aerial view of hurricane flooding on Long Island, Bahamas

Climate change will have a significant impact on all aspects of society within The Bahamas and remains a key concern for the Bahamian government and people. The Bahamas is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change given its geographical vulnerabilities (limited land masses, low-elevations and dispersion of islands) and environmental vulnerabilities (high temperatures, storm surges, sea level rise, flooding, increased tropical storm activity, and rising water tables)¹³³.

The low elevation of The Bahamas, with over 80% of land mass within one metre of sea level, coupled with the reality that the majority of the country's settlements and development occur near the coast, means that the country is extremely vulnerable to flooding particularly as a result of more intense tropical storms, rising sea levels and water tables due to climate change. There has already been an increase in 100-year flooding events in The Bahamas and several studies have correlated the effects of climate change to the increased, more intensified and destructive tropical

¹³³ Working Paper on Environment p.10, IPCC, 2014; Simpson et al., 2012; McSweeney et al., 2009; BEST Commission, 2001.

cyclone activity in the past few decades within the Caribbean Basin, with an expected increase of category 4 to 5 hurricanes in The Bahamas.¹³⁴

Higher sea surface temperatures and increasing ocean acidity will lead to the bleaching of coral reefs and the erosion of coastal areas which can have an adverse effect on both terrestrial and marine biodiversity, with the loss of coral reefs putting coastal areas at greater risk of exposure to incoming waves and storm surges. Water security will be at risk as saline intrusion and decreased overall precipitation will contaminate and cause shortages to water supplies and groundwater.



Picture 38: Coastal Erosion on Andros Island

Essential infrastructure, which is mostly located near coastlines, such as energy facilities, air and sea ports, major roads and government agencies will therefore be at high risk to these effects. Sea level rise threatens 36% of major tourism properties, 38% of airports, 14% of road networks and 90% of sea ports. This continues to put financial constraints on the Bahamian government and will have significant impacts on core industries, especially tourism which contributes over 60% of GDP, with expected losses of \$869-\$946 million in 2050¹³⁵.

¹³⁴ Emanuel, K., Scudarajan, R. & Williams, J. (2008). Hurricanes and global warming. American Meteorological Society: 347-367.

¹³⁵ Simpson et al., 2010.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG13

Paris Agreement

The Bahamas implemented the Paris Agreement on November 4th, 2016, a step forward in the fight against climate change. This agreement is now in full effect, meaning that states are bound to curb their carbon emissions in order to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Critically, the special needs of small island developing states are preserved in the Agreement.¹³⁶

National Emergency Management Agency



Picture 39: Disaster relief shipment

The Bahamian government continues to concentrate its efforts to build an adaptive and resilient country; and climate change measures continue to be streamlined into national policies, strategies and planning. In 2006, a National Disaster Preparedness and Response Act was passed to establish the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). The agency is responsible for disaster preparedness and response

policies, emergency operations centres, shelter management, identification of and precautionary planning for vulnerable areas, disaster alerts, and hazard inspections. This has resulted in a more comprehensive disaster risk management strategy which includes six steps of which four are pre-disaster phases for risk identification, mitigation, risk transfer and preparedness and two are post-disaster phases of emergency response and rehabilitation and reconstruction.

National Policy for Adaptation to Climate Change

The National Policy for Adaptation to Climate Change developed in 2005 established objectives for adaptation and key actions that are needed to address climate change in various sectors;

¹³⁶ See http://eh.gov.bs/gov_initiatives/climate-change/

although progress in the adoption of the policy has been slow. The University of the Bahamas has established a Climate Change Initiative (CCI) to conduct research relevant to the issue. Current work themes of the CCI include: climate-induced displacement and migration, management strategies for loss and damage in small island states, as well as the impacts of international agreements on both the Pacific and Caribbean.¹³⁷

The Bahamas continues to participate and receive support at the international level to address issues surrounding climate change. The Bahamas established a National Climate Change Committee in 1996 as part of its obligations under the United Nations Framework for Climate Change (UNFCCC). A public education and outreach subcommittee was established in 2010 to increase public education about climate change which includes local NGOs and environmental institutions. A project sponsored by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) focuses on integrated coastal zone management to support the country in adapting to climate change and reduce its vulnerability to coastal hazards.

Ministry of Environment Programmes/Policies/Activities



Picture 40: Participant discussing the delivery of energy reform actions with the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit

The Bahamas Climate Change Unit within the Ministry of the Environment has been providing leadership in combating climate change through a number of initiatives. The Bahamas has passed legislation, advanced policies and programmes to ensure that the country is doing their part to reduce emissions. The Bahamas has reduced and/or eliminated tariffs on solar systems and energy efficient appliances to encourage a move to the consumption of clean energy. In addition, The Bahamas has joined international organizations that focus on increasing the use of renewable energy, including the International Renewable Energy Agency and the Carbon War Room.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ See the Climate Change Initiative's website for a description of activities at http://climatechangebahamas.org/?page_id=69

¹³⁸ Ministry of Environment & Housing, 2017. Bahamas Climate Change Unit. http://eh.gov.bs/gov_initiatives/climate-change/

Bahamas National Trust

Ecosystem-based adaptation is the Bahamas National Trust (BNT)'s strategy for addressing the adaptation needs in The Bahamas. By ensuring that there are ecosystems protected, managed and healthy, we are able to ensure that they can adapt and provide beneficial functioning services into a changing climate. The BNT currently manages over 2.2 million acres of protected land and sea, and is working with the Government of The Bahamas (GOB) and other partners to establish more protected areas; research and monitor the areas using species identified as sensitive to climate change; develop climate-smart management plans; enforce the management strategies; restore areas as needed; and adapt the plan as circumstances change. The BNT has this integrated into its latest strategic plan. The BNT will also be developing policy for the GOB to consider to assist with reducing the human activities that exacerbate the impacts of climate change.

National Emergency Warning System

In 2017, The Bahamas launched a pilot emergency/early warning system to further build the resilience of residents in the country during natural disasters. This emergency warning system allows for the National Emergency Management Agency, the Royal Bahamas Police Force, the Department of Meteorology, and Bahamas Information Service to disseminate emergency and informative alerts to residents and visitors via SMS, email and social media platforms. The pilot, and the subsequent consideration of a long-term solution, aims to increase access to information, particularly through the use of ICT, to help in efforts to reduce exposure of the population to environmental, economic and social disasters.¹³⁹

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG13 Programmes

SDG 13 is a call for global action on climate change and its effects. Within the NDP, Goal 11 deals with the recommendations for climate change, natural disasters and resilience. The Government of The Bahamas recognizes that integration of disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies and planning is critical to build resistance to these natural hazards. The country needs to overcome the challenges of managing and using natural resources sustainably, while guarding against the negative impacts of human activity on the environment, unsustainable

¹³⁹ www.alertbahamas.com

practices and invasive species which undermine the terrestrial and marine ecosystems. These recommendations are critical for the survival of this nation.

The specific implementation challenges related to SDG13 for The Bahamas are:

- Lack of collection of comprehensive spatial data and lack of a sea level and climate monitoring network.
- Lack of adequate financing for building resilience to climate change.
- A lack of complete economic valuations of all of the country's coastal and marine resources.
- Limited public awareness on the impacts of climate change – although this awareness has been increasing given the increase in the frequency of climate related events such as catastrophic hurricanes.

SDG14: Conserve & Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas & Marine Resources



Picture 41: View of the ocean from Acklins Island, Bahamas

The Bahamas is overwhelmingly a marine country in both location and biological diversity and is highly vulnerable to environmental threats to its marine resources. The sea comprises of about 95% of the Bahamas' geographical area¹⁴⁰. Yet, like many other Caribbean islands, The Bahamas ranks among the most water scarce small island developing states in the world. In the Bahamas, marine ecosystems include seagrass beds, coral reefs, blue holes and open oceans which all provide refuge and feeding grounds for fish and other marine life and supports habitats and vast oceanic food webs. Corals and seagrass beds provide numerous ecosystem services such as shoreline protection, shelter, food, sand production, tourist attractions, and educational and scientific opportunities. However, since the 1990s, environmental degradation and ecological vulnerability has drastically increased, with many Bahamian ecosystems already depleted or under threat of further degradation due to over extraction and fragmentation of natural habitats.

One of the world's first land and sea parks, the Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park was established in 1958 and is managed by the BNT. Today Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are managed by both the BNT at a total of 2.5 million acres, and by the Department of Marine Resources at 84,173 acres. The Department of Marine Resources has identified land-based impacts and coastal development as a significant threat to coastal and marine environment. This is seen through the direct impacts of dredging, removal of mangroves, landfilling, altering of beaches for human activities, construction of unregulated buildings on coastlines and indirect impacts from pesticides, sewage discharge and runoff. The removal of mangroves and dunes and destruction of coral reefs further increases the vulnerability of local populations to storm surges and rising sea levels and removes critical habitats for juvenile marine species.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, including poaching by foreign commercial vessels, recreational fishermen and violations by domestic fishermen, are common, with increased fishing activities continuing to deplete stocks. There also continues to be concerns of oil spills from existing oil plants and offshore drilling and gas which pose significant risks to the marine environment, exacerbated by the many shipping lanes present within the Exclusive Economic Zone¹⁴¹.

¹⁴⁰ Breef. Conservation Matters Retrieved from <https://breef.org/marine-conservation/>

¹⁴¹ Working Paper on the Environment p.11

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG14

Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), through investment lending and a technical cooperation grant in January 2015, supported The Bahamas to build resilience to coastal hazards, mainly to: “(i) strengthen the policy, legal, regulatory framework and institutional capacity for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) to address current and future vulnerabilities including an ICZM plan and financial strategy for managing coastal risk; (ii) increase the scope of and access to coastal risk information and risk assessment methodologies, and tools for use in development planning and decision making; and (iii) promote the design and construction of climate and other hazard resilient coastal infrastructure with a view to reducing vulnerability and controlling erosion, flooding and other hazard impacts”¹⁴².

In recent years the Government has addressed some of the environmental concerns by introducing various initiatives including:

- i. Cabinet approval for the expansion of the marine protected areas to 10 % from 3% in 2014¹⁴³;
- ii. The release of a draft Environmental Planning and Protection Bill 2015 to the public for commentary.¹⁴⁴ The Bill is intended to consolidate and strengthen environmental protection and planning by establishing a new Department of Environmental Planning and Protection (DEPP) and an Environmental Advisory Council. The positive aspects of the Bill include:
 - Provisions empowering the Minister for Environment to make regulations for environmental protection including, as specified under section 20 of the Bill, regulations for:
 - prevention or control of pollution or contamination of air and land;
 - protection of ecosystems integrity and diversity
 - protection of water resources and prevention or control pollution of any waters

¹⁴² IDB Country Strategy with the Commonwealth of The Bahamas 2013–2017. Accessed at: [http://www.best.gov.bs/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Country_Strategy_with_The_Bahamas_2013-2017.pdf]

¹⁴³ Ministry of Environment and Housing, Fulfilling the Charter, A Progress Report 2012-2015. Government of The Bahamas. p. 6

¹⁴⁴ Ibid p.8

- The consolidation of environmental protection and planning measures under one entity, a new Department of Environmental Planning and Protection. This means that there is increased opportunity for cohesive planning and coordination with respect to environmental planning and protection.
- iii. The Department of Environmental Planning and Protection will have both protection and planning functions. Protection functions include:
- Responsibility for environmental emergency preparedness and prevention;
 - Environmental education and regulation and oversight of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) program; and
 - Environmental monitoring.

Planning functions under section 7 of the Bill include:

- development and application of land use plans for land resources;
- development and application of a plan for conservation and development of surface waters, wetlands and mangroves;
- development and application of a national conservation strategy and action plan;
- development and application in collaboration with the Bahamas National Trust and the Department of Agriculture and Marine Resources of management plans for protected areas and parks;
- oversight and approval of activities of water and sewage which could affect ground water quality;
- the enactment of the Bahamas Public Parks and Public Beaches Act in 2014¹⁴⁵ establishing the Public Park and Public Beach Authority. The Authority's functions include: managing public parks and beaches, maintaining public access to beaches and conserving parks and beaches;
- the preparation of draft Natural Resources Protection By- Laws for the island of Grand Bahama by the Ministry of the Environment and Housing. The legislation

¹⁴⁵ Ministry of Environment and Housing, Fulfilling the Charter, A Progress Report 2012-2015. Government of The Bahamas p. 9

seeks to promote efficient management of coastal resources, particularly sand, coral, and other calcareous substances¹⁴⁶;

Bahamas National Trust (BNT) and Partners

The Bahamas National Trust (BNT) continues to work towards marine resources conservation through the expansion of the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) system; MPA management plans; and marine resources research, monitoring and policy development. The project, entitled Bahamas Protected, is led by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the BNT, and the Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF) and is working to ensure that The Bahamas meets its obligation to have 20% of the nearshore marine environment protected by the year 2020. This project will also seek to progress towards effective management of these areas through the development of a co-management policy and developing science-based bylaws for the MPAs.

- The BNT, BREEF, Shedd Aquarium, the Perry Institute for Marine Science (PIMS) and other partners are working to ensure that the commercially important, Nassau Grouper, is better managed through research and policy development, resulting in the enactment of a closed season during their most vulnerable time.
- The BNT and TNC is working on a pilot project entitled A Community-based Management of Conch in the Family Islands, to help reduce the severe decline on conch stocks across the archipelago. This project has begun on Grand Bahama and will seek to improve the livelihoods of fishers, involve fishers in the management of conch stocks locally, and create a sustainable fishery market for conch.
- The BNT, Pew Charitable Trust and the Shedd Aquarium continue to work towards the conservation of sharks. Sharks were fully protected in 2011 following the amendment of the fishing regulations. The BNT continues to: work with the Department of Marine Resources to have rays included into these regulations; conduct ongoing education and outreach on these animals; and is working to ensure better protection throughout the region by supporting other countries in the West Indies also seeking to protect sharks and rays.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid p. 18

- The BNT along with the Bonefish and Tarpon Trust are working together to ensure the sustainability of bonefish, tarpon and permit through research, monitoring, protected areas expansion and policy development.
- The Bahamas has committed to realizing the 2020 goal to effectively manage and expand Bahamian Marine Protected Areas through a collaborative effort between The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Bahamas National Trust (BNT) and the Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF)¹⁴⁷. This will be through “the creation of 15 new parks and three park expansions comprising over 11 million acres in total¹⁴⁸”.

National Maritime Policy

A national maritime policy to regulate maritime activities and use of marine resources has been developed to provide a framework to guide maritime planning and development. The National Maritime Policy addresses the following key thematic areas:

- Ocean governance to support future economic investments;
- Regulation and enforcement of maritime space and activities;
- Healthy and productive marine environment;
- Climate change and resilience; and
- Education, awareness and participation for coastal inhabitants and visitors to the islands.

Cabinet approved the implementation of the National Maritime Policy in September 2017. A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to guide the implementation of the National Maritime Policy has been created.

Additionally, a National Oil Spill Contingency Plan has been designed to mitigate damage in the event of an oil spill.

¹⁴⁷ Nature Conservancy, August 2015, The Bahamas Expands Marine Protected Areas by 11.1 Million Acres. Accessed at: [\[https://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/caribbean/newsroom/caribbean-bahamas-expands-marine-protected-areas.xml\]](https://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/caribbean/newsroom/caribbean-bahamas-expands-marine-protected-areas.xml)

¹⁴⁸ Nature Conservancy, August 2015, The Bahamas Expands Marine Protected Areas by 11.1 Million Acres. Accessed at: [\[https://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/caribbean/newsroom/caribbean-bahamas-expands-marine-protected-areas.xml\]](https://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/caribbean/newsroom/caribbean-bahamas-expands-marine-protected-areas.xml)

Gerace Research Centre

With respect to marine research, the Gerace Research Centre, based on the island of San Salvador, conducts research on environmental matters including in the area of marine biology and geology. Gerace receives about 50 groups per year to participate in its programmes mainly from the United States in the months of January, March and May. Gerace collaborates with the University of The Bahamas in its research work and it is anticipated that the collaboration between the University of The Bahamas and Gerace will be formalised through the enactment of policies which facilitate the recruitment of University of The Bahamas students to take classes at Gerace including, exchange programmes at Gerace and the recognition of courses offered by Gerace by the University of The Bahamas.

Grant from Japan's Poverty Reduction Fund

The Government is the beneficiary of a \$500,000 Grant from Japan's Poverty Reduction Fund (in-kind contribution from BNT of \$56,000). The objectives of the three (3) year grant is to:

- increase and diversify sources of income for conch fishermen and communities through value-added conch products and alternative livelihoods;
- generate local benefits from community-based marine protected areas; and
- improve community access to sustainable conch markets.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG14 Programmes

The following challenges are likely to be faced in the implementation of SDG 14:

- *Fisheries management* face various challenges including: a lack of logistical capability, personnel and funding and to enforce fisheries legislation.
- *Funding challenges*: the 2008 Sustainable Finance Plan for Effective Management of Protected Areas placed the National Protected Area System budget needs \$13.1 million, a financial gap of \$7.1 million.¹⁴⁹ Today the funding needs are estimated at \$10-\$15 million annually, with an annual funding gap of \$7-\$12 million.¹⁵⁰ The innovative Bahamas

¹⁴⁹ Higgins, K 2008.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas, A et al., 2015.

Protected Areas Fund was established by statute in 2014 to address this shortfall, but since it was passed there have been significant administrative delays in implementing the fund.¹⁵¹

- The Government of The Bahamas has indicated its interest in expanding natural resource mining as part of its exploitation of natural resources. Mining will need to be sustainably balanced to reduce unsustainable pressure on this natural resource, further exacerbating ecological vulnerabilities and social tensions.



Picture 42: Local fish for sale on Eleuthera Island

¹⁵¹ Moultrie, S 2015, Weech, personal communication, February 24, 2015.

SDG15: Protect, Restore & Promote Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems, Sustainably Manage Forests, Combat Desertification & Halt the Reverse Land Degradation & Halt Biodiversity Loss

The Bahamas has many terrestrial ecosystems, including pine woodlands (forest), coppice (mixed woodlands), and wetlands. Wetlands have five main categories - mangrove swamps and marshes, beach vegetation, swashes, pine forests/barrens, and broadleaf coppice which can all help buffer storms, support marine habitats, filter water and provide sanctuaries for birds and bees. Pine forests are ecologically important and support a variety of plants and animals, including the endangered Bahama parrot. Coppice hosts hundreds of species per acre and supports many ecosystems, for example by preventing nutrient loss in soil; providing wildlife habitats for birds, reptiles, and mammals; and by trapping and storing rainwater¹⁵².



Picture 43: Native Forest at the Levy Preserve on Eleuthera Island

¹⁵² Working Paper on the Environment p. 90

The Bahamas, like other Small Island Developing States, is highly vulnerable to invasive alien species, largely due to its import-based economies. As an archipelago, The Bahamas has multiple and often porous borders, making it highly vulnerable to the introduction of invasive species. This can have many negative, potentially irreversible, environmental impacts and requires significant economic costs to control. These can also have negative multiplier effects on the many terrestrial species in the Bahamas, including endangered species such as the Bahama Parrot and West Indian Flamingo.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG15

The Forestry Act

The enactment of the Forestry Act 2010 was a legislative step forward to enforce the Government's comprehensive plan for land-use and for the conservation and control of forests. In 2014, the Government enacted the Forestry (Amendment) Act 2014 which amends the Forestry Act 2010¹⁵³ to strengthen forest management and conservation. The 2014 Act: (a) establishes a permanent national forest estate; and (b) vests power in the Minister of Environment to designate land as 'forest reserves, protected forests and conservation forests.' These provisions are meant to strengthen forest management and conservation, safeguarding against future land degradation on Pine Forest Islands by improving the provision of forest ecosystem goods and services, reducing GHG emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and increasing carbon sequestration¹⁵⁴. Appropriate resources to regulate development in zoned forestry areas are however still needed¹⁵⁵.

National Invasive Species Strategy

To manage and control the spread of invasive species, a National Invasive Species Strategy was created in 2003, however, a lack of capacity and legislation to support the Strategy has prevented its successful implementation.

¹⁵³ Ministry of Environment and Housing, Fulfilling the Charter, A Progress Report 2012-2015. Government of The Bahamas. p 3

¹⁵⁴ Government of The Bahamas Communication to UNFCCC 17 November 2015 p. 7-8.

¹⁵⁵ Thomas, A et al., 2015.

Bahamas National Trust (BNT)

The Bahamas National Trust (BNT) currently manages several protected areas that exceed the 10% (approx. 1 million acres) Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) goal to protect terrestrial ecosystems by the year 2020. Additionally, the BNT is working with the Government of The Bahamas (GOB) and several partners to ensure the conservation of many species of international and national concern.

- A new species of snake, the Silver Boa, was discovered within the Conception Island National Park and the BNT is currently creating a species conservation plan with the University of North Carolina Asheville.
- The BNT and the University of Maryland are working together on the Bahama Oriole Project which seeks to have a species conservation plan.
- The BNT is working with National Audubon and Birdlife International on the conservation plans for shorebirds, including the Piping Plover.
- The BNT is working with The Nature Conservancy on the execution of a species conservation plan for the Kirtland's Warbler.
- The BNT is working with Island Conservation on eradicating invasive invertebrates from the small islands with endemic species on them and also working towards the development of a Biodiversity Management Database.
- The BNT is working with the Shedd Aquarium on iguana conservation plans throughout the country. A Management Plan is currently being drafted by the BNT in collaboration with The San Salvador Living Jewels and the Gerace Research Centre to outline how the 5 National Parks in San Salvador will be managed. The 5 National Parks include:
 - i. Graham's Harbour Iguana and Seabird National Park – is internationally recognized as a Key Biodiversity Area, and will protect iguanas, the highest diversity of seabirds in The Bahamas, in addition to healthy reef systems and seagrass beds.
 - ii. West Coast Marine Park –will protect an extensive coral reef system, including a spectacular coral wall and vertical drop to more than 13,000 ft, popular dive sites on San Salvador, the critically endangered hawksbill turtle, tropicbirds, shearwaters and a migratory route for humpback whales.

- iii. Pigeon Creek & Snow Bay National park –will protect the only tidal creek on San Salvador, Pigeon Creek, and an indispensable nursery area to support fisheries stocks.
- iv. Southern Great Lake National Park – also recognized internationally as a Key Biodiversity Area, will protect an extensive mangrove system, nesting seabirds, and another population of the San Salvador rock iguana, and
- v. Green’s Bay National Park – which will protect seagrass beds, and a major iguana population.

Andros Sustainable Development Master Plan

The Government recognises the importance of the ecosystem and commenced work on a sustainable development master plan for the island of Andros in June 2015. The project focused on ecosystem services valuation and land use in Andros. This project is expected to be used as a model plan for other Family islands, tailored to the specific needs of each individual family island and involved the following activities:

- The measurement of the economic value of Andros’ ecosystem services;¹⁵⁶
- The assessment and development of realistic development scenarios for Andros in consultation with Androsians (for example conservation development¹⁵⁷, sustainable development¹⁵⁸ or intensive development¹⁵⁹;
- The development of a proposal for a viable physical development plan that optimizes the economic value of Andros’ natural capital; and
- The identification of public and private investment opportunities, policy recommendations, land and sea zoning guidelines, and other management actions to guide sustainable development of the island both for its people and its environment¹⁶⁰.

¹⁵⁶ For example, its coastal and marine ecosystems, pine forests, mangroves, sea grass beds and tidal creeks

¹⁵⁷ Development which allows limited sustainable development while protecting the island's natural environmental features

¹⁵⁸ Development which strikes a balance between conservation and economic development

¹⁵⁹ Development which shifts from conservation to generating economic development

¹⁶⁰ Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), 2016. Sustainable Development Master Plan for Andros Island.

http://www.vision2040bahamas.org/media/uploads/AMP_EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY_FINAL_VERSION_FEB_2017__1_.pdf

10,000 Fruit Trees Campaign

As of January 2018, the Forestry Unit (supported by the Trees that Feed Foundation), launched a new 10,000 Fruit Trees Campaign aimed at covering the entire Bahamas. The Forestry Unit intends to repeal and replace the Forestry Act 2010 with a Forestry Act 2018 which will, inter alia, institute a Forestry Development Fund to pay for forestry programmes.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG15 Programmes

The specific challenges for The Bahamas in implementing SDG15 include:

- Having an import-based economy with multiple and often porous borders which make it administratively challenging to prevent proliferation of invasive species and poaching.
- Capacity development for ecosystem services valuation and modelling.
- Capacity development to access funding mechanisms which support research on biodiversity and ecosystems.

SDG16: Promote Just, Peaceful & Inclusive Societies

Rule of Law:

Just, peaceful and inclusive societies are crucial for the realisation of the sustainable development goals. Crimes against both persons and property have increased significantly in The Bahamas in recent years, with a notable spike following the 2008-2009 economic crisis and subsequent increase in unemployment¹⁶². There are also reports of significant incidences of violence against women; and the abuse of children and alleged discrimination are other areas of concern.

Public Institutions:

Strong institutions are necessary for a prosperous country. The Bahamas has, in the past, had limited central planning and coordination capacity within Government. Another area of concern is a reported lack of coordination around budgeting for initiatives,¹⁶³ and limited planning that occurs at the level of individual ministries. Certain key skill sets, such as engineering and technical skills, policy analysis, economics, accountancy and programme management must be strengthened within the Public Service.

¹⁶² For statistics pertaining to crime see Strategic Policy and Planning Branch, 2013.

¹⁶³ IDB, 2014b.

The limited use of strategic and operating plans and performance metrics, and the historic absence of integrated and programme-based budgeting pose operational challenges and represent important gaps in reporting to parliament and ultimately the public. Formal monitoring systems have not been institutionalized, although systems do exist for externally funded projects (using externally generated tools)¹⁶⁴.

The existence of the Auditor General and Public Service Commission (PSC) as independent guardians of the integrity of key public functions adds to the capacity of parliament to hold the government accountable; but Freedom of Information Act 2012 (FOIA 2012) while already enacted, is not yet in force.

Corruption

The Bahamas signed the Convention on Corruption in 1998, ratified it in 2000, and is considered by the Organisation of American States to have ‘substantially implemented’ it through a wide-reaching legal regime¹⁶⁵ that includes, among many other legislative and non-legislative elements, the *Prevention of Bribery Act 1976* and Prevention of Bribery (Amendment) Act 2014 which are applicable to all public officers and employees of public bodies and the *Public Disclosure Act 1977* which requires all parliamentarians (Senators and MPs) to declare their (and spousal/familial) assets, liabilities, and income on an annual basis. Nevertheless, corruption remains a problem at various levels of Government and senior officials have faced allegations of administrative graft, with some having even been prosecuted¹⁶⁶.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG16

Public Defenders Unit

In an effort to strengthen the institutional capabilities of the justice system, the Government opened a Public Defenders Unit staffed with experts and fully equipped in January 2017. The Unit’s launch was part of a \$20 million Citizen Security and Justice Programme loan facilitated by the Inter-

¹⁶⁴ Diagnosis of Institutional Capacity to Implement Management for Results Using the PRODEV Evaluation Tool Methodology (PET) Progress Report (Inter-American Development Bank, July 2014), pp. 9, 18.

¹⁶⁵ Macro-Economy Meter. <http://mecometer.com/whats/the-bahamas/gdp-decomposition-by-sector/>

¹⁶⁶ Freedom House, 2014; Miller et al., 2015; and The Bahamas Chamber of Commerce, 2008.

American Development Bank (IDB). The work of this Unit is expected to accelerate access to justice for those groups who would ordinarily be unable to afford defense counsel in criminal matters and will help reduce court delays often occasioned by non-availability of criminal defense counsel. The Citizen Security and Justice Programme also aims at contributing to the reduction of crime and violence (homicides, armed robberies and rapes) in the country by implementation of programmes to: (i) improve behaviours for non-violent conflict resolution in New Providence; (ii) increase employability and employment of the at-risk youth population in New Providence; and (iii) reduce the recidivism rate among persons within the prison system¹⁶⁷.

Independent Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)

In June 2018, the Government appointed the country's first Independent Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). Being marked as a historic appointment, the newly constitutionally protected office of the DPP ensures that any policy directives given by the Attorney General is written and published in the Gazette for the public's viewing.

Ministry of National Security

The Ministry of National Security, in an effort to align with its mandate, has restructured the agency and introduced new areas specifically: Communications, Liaisons, Inspectorate and Research and Development. The new areas are expected to promote the mission and vision of the Ministry, increase transparency and open communication between the Ministry and respective agencies and provide input to underpin policy making decisions.

Other upcoming initiatives that will be undertaken by The Ministry include the establishment of the National Neighbourhood Watch Council, the reestablishment of the National Intelligence Agency.

Project Cycle Management (PCM) and Public Policy Analysis and Management (PPAM)

In early 2016, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) provided the opportunity for the Government to participate in its training programme in Project Cycle Management (PCM) and

¹⁶⁷ Inter-American Development Bank. 2017. PROJECT DETAILS. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.iadb.org/en/projects/project-details,1301.html?query=&topic=&country=BH>. [Accessed 22 September 2017].

Public Policy Analysis and Management (PPAM). Over 100 public service employees subscribed to online and face-to-face training in project management and policy analysis. The aim of the CDB PCM and PPAM Training Programme is to support institutional reforms needed to enable more effective management of policy, programmes and projects¹⁶⁸.

Prime Minister's Delivery Unit

In 2018, The Bahamas established a Prime Minister's Delivery Unit which will serve as a mechanism to coordinate key priorities of the Government and ensure that results are achieved. This initiative is financed through a \$3 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank as part of the Public Financial Management/Performance Monitoring Reform programme (PFM/PMR),



Picture 45: Prime Minister, Dr. the Hon. Hubert Minnis addresses the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit Launch press conference at the Office of the Prime Minister, May 8, 2018. Also seated at the table, from left: Minister of Health Duane Sands, Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs Carl Bethel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Peter Turnquest, IDB Country Representative Florencia Attademo-Hirt, Canada's Minister of International Development Marie-Claude Bibeau, and Chief Operating Officer/PMDU Viana Gardiner. (BIS Photo/Peter Ramsay)

¹⁶⁸ CDB Training Guide PPAM and PCM Brochure 2016-2018 p. 4

Ministry of Finance Interventions

A key agenda for the Government during the 2018/2019 fiscal period is to ensure accountability and transparency of the Ministry of Finance. In this vein, there are several initiatives proposed to achieve this goal such as:

- Enhancing tax administration and compliance;
- Fostering entrepreneurship; and
- The seminal creation of two senior positions (i.e. Deputy Financial Secretary and a Deputy Permanent Secretary will strengthen the operational capacity and delegation of economic and fiscal responsibilities within the Ministry). Additional efforts to restructure and recruit Bahamian professionals will be undertaken.
- Enhancing transparency and integrity in the Government by increasing the amount of data shared and used across ministries and departments which improves the quality and quantity of Government information published and used by its citizens. Finalisation of the project details are expected early in the 2018/2019 fiscal year.
- Pursuing the implementation of the \$33 million IDB financed Public Financial Management and Performance Monitoring Reform project which will enhance the capacity for evidence-based policy making and improve allocation and tracking of public funds.
- Introduction of accrual accounting and systems following international Public Sector Accounting Standard (IPSAS) and adoption of new budgeting and accounting software and standards are all components of the loan that will be implemented.
- Strengthening the Revenue Enhancement Unit to enhance revenue collection efforts and ensure that revenue is properly allocated across major tax segments. This action will require an amendment to Financial Administration and Audit Act which will allow the Ministry of Finance to form an inter departmental unit that will have responsibility for revenue enhancement. Moreover, monitoring and analysis of specific major area of revenue.

Anti-Corruption Regime

In order to promote accountability and transparency by public officials within government and government ministries, departments, agencies and corporations, the Government in 2017 enacted legislation to strengthen its existing anti-corruption regime as follows:

- **Anti-Corruption Commission Bill 2017**
- **Ombudsman Bill 2017**
- **Corruption Investigation Bureau Bill 2017**

Transformation of State owned enterprises

As a cost reduction effort in the 2018/2019 fiscal period, the Government has mandated State Owned Enterprises (SOE) to become self-sufficient.

Public Safety and National Security

The Ministry of National Security in New Providence as part of ongoing efforts to combat crime in 2011 as part of the first phase of the CCTV program installed 243 CCTV cameras under a USD 4.6 million contract. Introduction of an additional 1000+ cameras is imminently planned.¹⁶⁹ The issue of public safety and crime has been elevated to one of the Government's key priorities to be monitored by the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit.

Immigration and Border Control¹⁷⁰

The Government is in the process of implementing an Immigration Integrated Management System (IIMS), comprising the following systems:

1. Border Management System, which has already been installed at the international airports in New Providence, Grand Bahama, Marsh Harbour and Exuma, as well as the administrative offices connected to those airports. Five automatic passport control kiosks have also been deployed at the airport in New Providence. The Advanced Passenger Information System (APIS) legislation was passed in August 2016, and the Government is in the process of developing the governing regulations so that the APIS can be integrated with the BMS to require all aircraft and vessel operators entering the country

¹⁶⁹ Smart City Readiness Assessment, Dominguez, September 2016

¹⁷⁰ Symonnette, The Honourable Brent. 2017. 2017/2018 Budget Contribution. June 20th 2017.

to submit passenger and crew manifests in advance of their arrival in the country in order to facilitate security screening.

2. Watch List Management System, which establishes a link with INTERPOL and has already improved the efficiency of watch list searches.
3. ID Management System, which will allow for the production of new high security tamper resistant identification documents to replace the permits cards and certificates currently being issued by the Department, will reduce the dependency on paper documents and streamline the processing of applications for various immigration matters. The Department will soon launch an online immigration application service for submission of applications, progress notifications and online payment.
4. Detainee Management System that will serve as a tool to track and manage all persons who are apprehended in the country (from apprehension to deportation or release).
5. Document Management System for the computerization of all records.

The new IIMS will also integrate seamlessly with the new Passport and Visa System being developed by the same vendor.

Included within the Digital Bahamas Initiative is the establishment of a single national identity number and identity card that will allow for ease in transacting business in the public and private spheres of the country.

Procurement Management¹⁷¹

The Government will begin deploying an electronic procurement tendering system by mid-December 2017 so that all procurement activities throughout the public service will be conducted online. Companies seeking to provide goods and services to the Government will be required to register with the e-tendering system.

¹⁷¹ The Tribune Newspaper. 2017. E-Procurement System to launch in December. October 16th 2017.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG16 Programmes

SDG16 deals with promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. This important goal is contained in four of the NDP goals on governance. The specific challenges for The Bahamas relate to:

- Strengthening government's internal decision-making processes to better deliver results.
- Strengthening the public service's capacity to execute programmes.
- Improving transparency and accountability within government service.
- Using ICT to better deliver services.
- Strengthening the integration of government decision making with the business community, non-governmental organizations, civil society and academia.
- Strengthening of local government, of state owned enterprises, and facilitating the use of business development zones and associations and other innovations to involve more citizens in governance.
- Designing effective interventions for youth at risk.
- New enhanced training for the security forces.
- Rehabilitation programmes in the correctional facilities and support for those who leave those facilities.
- Strengthening the court system through better case management.
- Supporting the independence of the judiciary.



Picture 46: Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit Chief Operating Officer, Mrs. Viana Gardiner conducts a tour of the new unit at the Office of the Prime Minister, May 8, 2018. (BIS Photo/Peter Ramsay)

SDG17: Strengthen the Means of Implementation & Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

The Government recognises that although it plays a central role in development; partnerships between governments and non-state actors such as civil society organisations, the private sector, local and religious leaders are necessary for the achievement of sustainable development. Presently the country has a growing number of registered civil society organisation. Nevertheless, the country does not, at present, have a legislative framework for Civil Society development and a formal policy on Civil Society engagement.

With respect to strengthening global partnerships, The Bahamas benefits significantly from its participation in international trade and investment to support development. However, as a relatively high-income country – based on GDP per capita, the country has been graduated from many concessional financing programmes or deemed ineligible for grant funding programmes, notwithstanding its developing country and SIDS status. Partnerships are often only accessible

via regional envelopes or through regional programmes. While GDP per capita is high in The Bahamas, the economic reality is much more complex reflecting significant disparity of quality of life within each island and between the various islands of the archipelago.

Good fiscal management is critical for economic growth. It is therefore important to have strong domestic resource mobilisation institutions and mechanisms, fiscal discipline through the development of strong monitoring tools such as budgeting and accountability processes, debt management, policy coherence and availability of high quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data.

Key Interventions for Implementing SDG17

Financial Management, Policy Coherence and Statistics

In February 2016, the Government of the Bahamas signed a loan focused on institutional strengthening with the Inter-American Development Bank for \$33million Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) to fund the Public Financial Management/Performance Monitoring Reform programme (PFM/PMR). The key objective of the PFM/PMR is the strengthening of the Government's capacity to allocate, manage and monitor resources and has two specific goals - (i) improving financial management in the public sector and (ii) increasing governments' capacity to monitor and implement key projects. It is anticipated that this programme will be achieved largely through four (4)-projects, namely:

- a. The introduction of a Delivery Unit model and the implementation of the necessary training through the implementing Ministries and Agencies.
- b. The reform of the current statistical system to allow for the introduction of a National Statistical System, inclusive of a revision of the Statistics Act and the implementation of necessary infrastructure to facilitate the use of micro-data and allow The Bahamas to move closer to open data.
- c. The reform of the public financial system and the introduction of a new Integrated Financial Management Information System to manage all government finances. This will include the reform of the Chart of Accounts, the move from a cash system to an

- accrual system, the revision of supporting legislations, the introduction of a new business model and the implementation of an intensive training program; and
- d. Restructuring of the government procurement system to make it more open and transparent. This includes a revision of the supporting legislation, the adoption of an E-tendering system and the institution of a centralized procurement department.

The project will be implemented over a period of 5 years beginning 2017.

International Partnerships

On the 21st to the 23rd of February, 2017, in an effort to mobilise partnerships and build institutions to achieve the SDGs, the Government of The Bahamas hosted a United Nations Symposium on “Implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Equipping public institutions and mobilizing partnerships” with the support of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), in Nassau, Bahamas. The Symposium focused on the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into the national planning processes and enabled Small Island Developing States present, to share their experiences on the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into their national plans.

Emanating from the Symposium, partnerships were strengthened with the United Nations Development Programme in the form of a grant to the University of The Bahamas to assist with the drafting of a National Sustainable Development Goal Report, including the development of a Statistical Compendium for Tier 1 SDG indicators and a Thematic Report on “Leaving No One Behind”. Second, a partnership was also developed with the United National Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) with respect to assistance in the design of the institutional framework for the SDG process and continued assistance with SDG statistical indicator monitoring.

Partnerships through Trade

In 2008, The Bahamas became a signatory to the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), the trade agreement between members of the European Union and CARIFORUM. The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) enhances trade between Europe and CARIFORUM by providing

market access to a wide range of products and services. This improves the way products and services are imported and exported to and from The Bahamas and facilitates ease of doing business.¹⁷² Building on the lessons learned during the EPA process, The Bahamas has relaunched its efforts towards WTO accession.

Civil Society Partnerships

The Economic Development and Planning Unit within the Office of the Prime Minister participated in the 2018 Civil Society Conclave which focused on bringing civil society together to determine how their organisations can assist in the achievement of The Bahamas' National Development Plan and Sustainable Development Goals.

Domestic Resource Mobilization

Measures aimed at improving The Bahamas' fiscal situation have included: improving tax compliance, boosting collections and reducing arrears, stronger spending controls, and the introduction of a value added tax (VAT) of 7.5%, which began January 1, 2015. Described as the “cornerstone of the government's fiscal consolidation agenda,”¹⁷³ the new tax was successful in significantly increasing government revenues and has emerged as an efficient means of broadening the tax base. In an effort to further secure the fiscal situation, the VAT rate will be increased to 12% commencing July 2018.

Several additional measures aimed at supporting resource mobilization were introduced, including the establishment of a Central Revenue Agency, which is designed to be the driver of the broader goal of improving the effectiveness of tax administration. The adoption of tax identification numbers played a critical role in ensuring improvement in this area. The government also has undertaken a package of customs administration reforms. The existing system was considered ineffective, due to overreliance on manual procedures and outdated information systems. These deficiencies were estimated to be costing the system around 50% of the revenues that a more efficient tax administration system would be able to collect. Modernisation of the real property tax

¹⁷² Excerpted from The Bahamas Info Trade. 2017. Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.bahamastradeinfo.gov.bs/trade-agreement/economic-partnership-agreement-epa/>. [Accessed 22 September 2017].<https://www.bahamastradeinfo.gov.bs/trade-agreement/economic-partnership-agreement-epa/>

²³ IMF (2014).

system is also planned. In brief, extensive upgrades to, and automation of, revenue assessment and collection activities are expected to bring significant improvement in collections.

Challenges Faced Implementing SDG17 Programmes

The key challenges for the Bahamas in implementing SDG17 relates to:

- Some expected institutional resistance to organizational change from the various IFMIS loan projects.
- Project fatigue as the IFMIS project will be implemented over 5 years.
- Continued prudent fiscal management from both the revenue and expenditure perspective to mobilize significant resources for development, in the face of vulnerability to external shocks.
- The absence of a coordinated framework to effectively coordinate and seek out international technical cooperation.



Picture 47: Members of the Economic Development and Planning Unit meeting with representatives from the Inter-American Development Bank

7.0 Means of Implementation

The Bahamas recognises that to continue to achieve the meaningful development that its citizens and residents expect, there needs to be a marked strengthening of the country's institutions to garner the necessary resources.

The Current Situation

Notwithstanding the relatively high GDP per capita of the country, The Bahamas remains a vulnerable, developing country. The Bahamas' geographical location and the scarcity of raw materials have resulted in a specialisation of production geared towards services. Tourism is the main activity with a total direct and indirect contribution of 60% of GDP. Financial services follow in importance with a total contribution of under 20% of GDP.

With respect to fiscal policy, total government expenditures grew steadily from below 20% of GDP in FY 2007/8 to a high of 26.1% of GDP in FY2014/15 and slightly decreasing to 22.4% in 2016/2017. Government revenues, which depended heavily on taxes and duties on imports, averaged about 17.6% of GDP between FY 2007/8 and FY 2013/14 before growing strongly in FY2014/15 to 21.3% of GDP as a result of the increased revenue from Value Added Tax (VAT) collections introduced in 2015 and averaging out to 17% in 2016/2017. Deficits remained high, with deficit financing needs underpinning the significant growth in the national debt. In order to relieve some of the dependence on international activity and customs duties, a value added tax of 7.5% was implemented with effect from 1 January 2015, shifting to taxation of domestic consumption. As mentioned previously, this rate will be increased to 12% in the 2018/2019 budget year.

As the fallout from the 2007/8 financial crisis spread to The Bahamas, adversely impacting the key sectors of the economy, there was considerable pressure on the government to increase its spending to compensate for the reduction in domestic demand resulting from the economic downturn. This led to a steep growth in the fiscal deficit and a corresponding increase in the debt levels. The fiscal deficit peaked at 6.9% of GDP in FY2012/13, but fell to 4.8% of GDP in FY2014/15 in response to the improved revenue picture and even lower to a rate of 2.6 in

2016/2017. The national debt, which was below 40% in 2007, rose to 66.8% of GDP in 2017. This debt burden and associated costs reduced the government's ability to tackle broader issues.

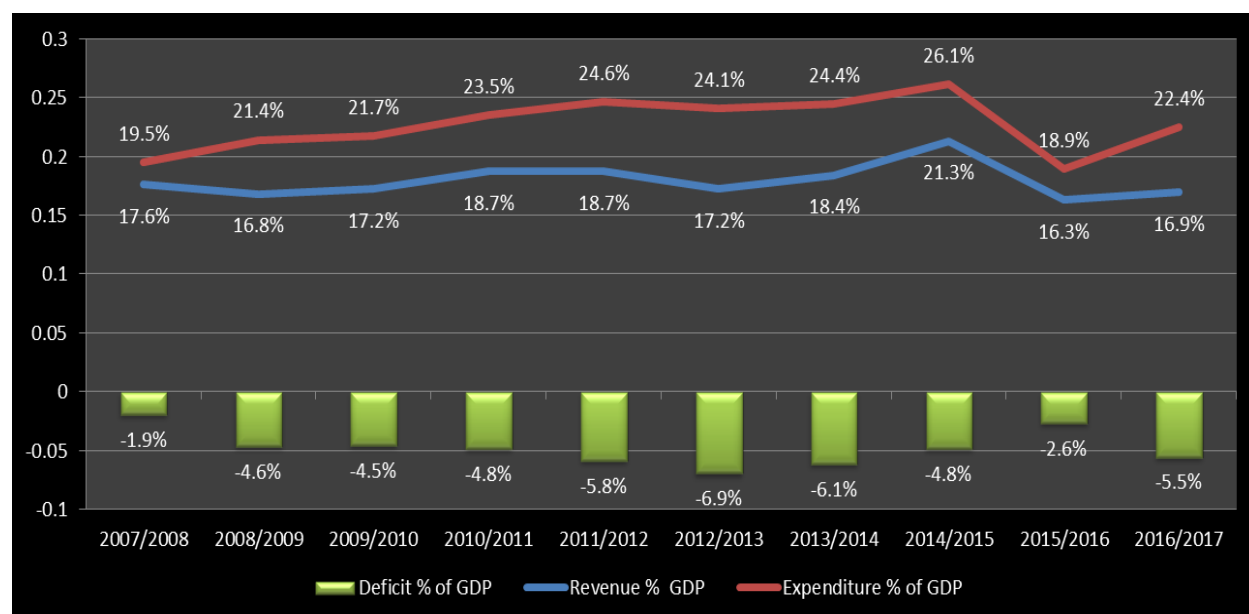


Figure 4: Key Fiscal Indicators. Source: The Central Bank of the Bahamas, the Department of Statistics

Key development challenges facing public finance and fiscal operations include:

- *Debt sustainability.* High and increasing public debt.
- *Fiscal sustainability.* Need to contain deficit spending. (However, considerable efforts are already underway through the Ministry of Finance to improve debt and fiscal sustainability).
- *Constrained fiscal flexibility* due to high costs of growing debt. The costs of debt impose constraints on the fiscal budget at the expense of social and infrastructure investment and other critical areas.
- *Limited policy reach.* The government faces the difficult reality that since domestic investment is not a principal driver of the Bahamian economy, economic recovery remains significantly reliant on external factors.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Miles, Nicholas and Simpson, Jamie, 2014, Effective Government and National Development Planning in The Bahamas

Mechanisms for Mobilizing Domestic Resources

Domestic resource mobilization for the SDGs is viewed as a key approach by the Government of The Bahamas. One avenue towards strengthening domestic resource growth would be improving the culture of savings and productive domestic investment. Efforts are underway to improve financial literacy and to promote greater savings as a means to strengthen household and personal financial resilience; while enhancing local ownership of the economy.



Picture 48: The Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Members of the Cabinet and House of Assembly walk to Parliament to deliver the Budget Communication

The 2018/2019 National Budget released in June 2018 has been presented as the most transformative budget in the nation's history. It supports stronger fiscal management and increased transparency and accountability in public spending. This approach is supported by Fiscal Responsibility legislation, a legally-binding framework for responsible fiscal management as well as effective parliamentary and public scrutiny of the fiscal performance of the Government. The Government has also established a sound and credible fiscal plan that:

- Addresses the fiscal pressures and provides for the implementation of the Government's socio-economic growth and development agenda in a fiscally responsible way;
- Secures the achievement of the proposed legally mandated annual deficit reduction objectives; and
- Sets the course toward the legislated, longer term goal of reducing the burden of Government debt to no more than 50 per cent of GDP.

The Government continues to take steps to strengthen its public institutions including, the introduction of a new programme to strengthen its financial and budgetary management systems, programme delivery capacity

Mechanism to Address Internal Resource Gaps for Implementing the SDGs

It is recognized that domestic resources alone will not be sufficient to fund the implementation of meaningful, sustainable development in a reasonable timeframe. Indeed, other mechanisms must be utilized.

Global Integration

There is need for more strategic use of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and stronger integration into the global economy through trade to enable stronger growth. The World Investment Report (UNCTAD, 2012), for example, identifies The Bahamas as being below expectations in FDI effectiveness despite having a high FDI to GDP stock. The country is a party to the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union and is in the process of becoming a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). While the accession process has been protracted, a renewed push has accelerated the process since 2017. Improving productivity is also critical to long-term economic growth and development. The Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) in examining Total Factor Productivity identified the inefficient utilisation of resources as a major hurdle for The Bahamas.

Development Assistance

The Bahamas has been graduated from concessional financing and non-reimbursable financing with respect to the majority of international financial institutions due to its high per capita GDP.

In various forums, The Bahamas has argued that the per capita GDP should not be the only consideration for this financing. Indeed, the country remains a developing country, with a high degree of vulnerability and variability in the levels of development.

The Bahamas, however, is being more strategic with respect to its engagement with the International Financial Institutions and Development Agencies. Through the collaboration of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Planning Unit of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there has been a greater definition of development needs being communicated to the international organizations. This has resulted in tangible technical assistance. Indeed, the National Development Plan provides a menu of development projects to meet critical needs. For example, the Government is currently seeking the assistance of an international development organization with respect to technical guidance for a “Water for All Strategy by 2025” for one of the most challenged communities in New Providence. Such a strategy would involve the expansion of the sewer system, the design of model bathroom units, and the expansion of piped water to homes along with prepaid or smart metering.

In general, for The Bahamas to be more effective at seeking and obtaining development assistance, the public sector must enhance its ability to generate strong project proposals, improve project implementation and execution and strengthen monitoring and evaluation processes.

Next Steps

The Government of The Bahamas intends to take the following steps towards the realization of the SDGs:

- Undertake a capacity assessment of Government Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Corporations to determine resource gaps for SDG implementation;
- Undertake capacity building efforts within Government Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Corporations with responsibility for the implementation of relevant SDGs;
- Analyse the national budget in order to track resource mobilization by SDG;
- Prepare sectoral SDG implementation plans to guide the implementation of each of the SDGs and associated targets;

- Intensify public campaigns throughout the country to further create ownership of the SDGs;
- Reform of the National Statistical Systems to improve collection of data overall, including data for the SDG indicators; and
- Institute SDG reporting via the Voluntary National Review process every two years.

8.0 Conclusion

The Bahamas is a nation of 700 islands and cays stretching from the coast of Florida (in the United States) to the island of Hispaniola. While the vast majority of the population resides on the island of New Providence (over 70%), where the capital Nassau is located, around 14% resides on Grand Bahama island, home to Freeport, which residents commonly characterize as the nation’s second city. The remaining population is spread across more than 20 other islands throughout the island chain.

One of the country’s principle challenges to development has been its geographic make up. The multi-island configuration, makes transportation of goods and people, by both air and sea, within the vast archipelago, very costly. As a consequence, ensuring accessibility to even the most basic utilities and public services, to comparatively smaller populations in far flung islands has been difficult – resulting in uneven development throughout the islands. Highlighting these disparities in development achievements will be critical to future policy development.

As The Bahamas seeks to continue to develop socially and economically, inequalities and inequities must be dealt with. These include: the uneven development in the Out Islands, also known as the “Family Islands”; gender disparities, the issue of vulnerable groups across the archipelago; poverty; youth at risk; the challenges of the educational and health systems, urban centres and the challenges of persons with disabilities to ensure that **No One is Left Behind**.

It is recognized that the implementation of the SDGs, in line with the NDP goals, can yield encouraging results in many areas. Therefore, it is essential that the pace of implementation be accelerated as the tasks facing the nation are critical.

This Report provides an indication of The Bahamas' resolve to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Bahamas looks forward to working towards the realisation of all of the 17 SDGs and associated targets in collaboration with its international partners. The Government also understands that the 2030 Agenda is ambitious, and its successful realisation will require the involvement of all national stakeholders including the public and private sectors, civil society, academia and members of the public.

The Bahamas remains committed to Agenda 2030.



Picture 49: Meeting on the National Development Plan with Trade Unions

9.0 Annexes

Table 20. NDP Goals and Strategies (Action Number) – Governance

<p>Governance</p>	<p>Goal 1: Modern, Open and Accountable Service Oriented Government that is well trusted by citizens, residents and the business community</p> <p>1.1 Strengthen internal government decision-making processes to deliver results for the people of The Bahamas and promote equal representation in all decision making levels</p> <p>1.2 Create a skilled, responsive and accountable public service that provides value to Bahamians, investors and visitors</p> <p>1.3 Increase the transparency of government decisions and transparency in campaign financing to improve confidence in public institutions and political actors respectively</p> <p>1.4 Increased accountability for government spending</p> <p>1.5 Implement a one window service-to-citizen strategy under the auspices of a new Agency: Service Bahamas</p> <p>Goal 2: Well Governed Public Institutions</p> <p>2.1 Strengthen the Corporate Governance of Public Boards and Committees</p> <p>2.2 Strengthen operations of public utilities corporations</p> <p>2.3 Ensure transparent and accountable operations of government-owned or funded agencies</p> <p>2.4 Strengthen the effectiveness of local government</p> <p>2.5 Strengthen the effectiveness special zones, business development zones, freeports and export processing zones</p> <p>2.6 The Bahamas will promote greater civic engagement and education at all levels of society to strengthen democracy</p> <p>Goal 3: Respect for the Rule of Law</p> <p>3.1 Develop, test and implement policies that encourage the creation of a law-abiding society</p> <p>3.2 Implement programmes that detect at-risk youth at an early stage and employ innovative techniques to deter criminal activity</p>
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	<p>3.3 Strengthen the capacity of communities to participate in creating safe neighbourhoods</p> <p>Goal 4: Administration of Justice</p> <p>1.1 Strengthen the enforcement of the law by the Royal Bahamas Police Force and the Royal Bahamas Defence Force</p> <p>1.2 Establish a national “zero-tolerance” strategy for violent crimes – specifically murder, sex-related violence, crimes against children and the elderly and home invasions</p> <p>1.3 Enhance service delivery at the Office of The Attorney General</p> <p>1.4 Enhance service delivery of the Courts</p> <p>1.5 Strengthen the Independence and Impartiality of the Courts</p> <p>1.6 Build greater capacity within the prison system to reduce recidivism while creating more humane conditions for prisoners</p>
<p>Human Capital</p>	<p>Goal 5: Modern, Sustainable & Universally Accessible Health Care System</p> <p>5.1 Ensure universal access to health</p> <p>5.2 Ensure sustainable funding for National Health Insurance (NHI)</p> <p>5.3 Deliver integrated people-centered health care, services and programs focused on maintaining healthy individuals within an efficient, well governed system. Improve focus on wellness and the determinants of health</p> <p>5.4 Rationalize and integrate health care governance, administration and service delivery including through the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT)</p> <p>5.5 Increase the national focus on Reproductive and Sexual Health</p> <p>5.6 Increase the national focus on Mental Health</p> <p>Goal 6: Education</p> <p>6.1 Ensure that there is adequate funding for education</p> <p>6.2 Enhance Teacher Training and Quality Assurance</p> <p>6.3 Deliver education infrastructure at all levels to deliver quality education</p>

	<p>6.4 Introduce universal preschool and enhance early childhood education</p> <p>6.5 Improve basic education (numeracy and literacy) across all levels of the education system</p> <p>6.6 Continue to promote STEM Education for a modern world</p> <p>6.7 Enhance the provision of special education to ensure equity in education and enhance the employability of students with special needs</p> <p>6.8 Improve the accessibility of quality higher education</p> <p>6.9 Improve the accessibility of quality technical and vocational education and apprenticeships to ensure employable skills and to meet the needs of the economy</p> <p>6.10 Strengthen programmes aimed at work force readiness, adult education and second chance education opportunities.</p> <p>6.11 Institute policies and programmes to close the achievement gaps between boys and girls and public and private schools</p> <p>Goal 7: Poverty and Discrimination</p> <p>7.1 Achieve food security, end hunger and improve nutrition for all</p> <p>7.2 Create policies which enable full participation of poor and vulnerable groups in economic opportunities for sustainable livelihoods</p> <p>7.3 Create a level playing field for the youth to realise their fullest potential by implementing programmes geared to assist their entry into the labour market and to aid in their educational and social development</p> <p>7.4 Promote policies which encourage participatory governance and community engagement in policy development and service delivery</p> <p>7.5 Strengthen Civil Society and position The Bahamas as a leader for social entrepreneurship and a model for development for small islands states through partnerships between government, the private sector and civil society</p> <p>7.6 Develop and revitalize neglected and marginalised communities across the country to ensure that these communities have access to improved housing, water and sanitation</p> <p>7.7 Eliminate inequality by removing discriminatory laws, policies and practices to ensure social, economic and</p>
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	<p>political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, and religion, economic or other status</p> <p>7.8 Strengthen the provision of social protection to ensure that all vulnerable groups have access to adequate safety nets</p> <p>7.9 Build Capacity of Agencies Serving Vulnerable Groups (Gender Equality SDG 5 Target 5.C, Peace Justice and Strong Institutions</p> <p>7.10 Strengthen the provision of social protection to ensure that all vulnerable groups have access to adequate safety nets</p> <p>7.11 Improve data collection to accurately analyse the nature and depth of poverty and discrimination in The Bahamas</p>
Environment	<p>Goal 8: Land Administration</p> <p>8.1 Create an efficient land administration system and efficient land agencies</p> <p>8.2 Create comprehensive solutions to address land ownership and development challenges in New Providence and the Family Islands</p> <p>8.3 Strengthen the administration of Crown Land and increase transparency in the allocation of Crown land</p> <p>8.4 Create a land use plan that guides The Bahamas’s physical development over the next 25 years. (Strategy 8.4 should also be read together with Goal 11 which also addresses land use.)</p> <p>Goal 9: Modern Infrastructure</p> <p>9.1 Implement a strategic framework that guides infrastructure decisions</p> <p>9.2 Ensure Bahamians have long term access to reliable power, water, sewer, services at a reasonable price</p> <p>9.3 Enhance the country’s electronic communications infrastructure to facilitate universal access to affordable and reliable communications (including broadcasting) services that will promote the achievement of the Bahamas’ smart and sustainable nation development goals.</p> <p>9.4 Create a robust ICT infrastructure (networks, systems, etc.) that would facilitate the ubiquitous use of ICTs that would result in improvements to the quality of life of citizens, more efficient and competitive enterprises</p>

	<p>and the effective delivery of services in a sustainable manner</p> <p>Goal 10: Interconnected Transport</p> <p>10.1 Create and implement a National Transportation Strategy including strategic investments and effective policy environment</p> <p>10.2 Create and implement a Public Transit Strategy on New Providence</p> <p>10.3 The Bahamas will have a modern postal system that provides adequate domestic and international services to New Providence and the Family Islands</p> <p>Goal 11: Natural Environment</p> <p>11.1 Position The Bahamas as a leader in researching and implementing climate change adaptation and mitigation measures and as an incubator of green technologies</p> <p>11.2 Integrate disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies and planning and build resilience to hazards</p> <p>11.3 Sustainably manage and use natural resources while guarding against anthropogenic influences, unsustainable practices and invasive species which undermine terrestrial and marine ecosystems</p> <p>11.4 Successfully implement a modern waste management strategy that includes public education and new services to sustainably manage waste</p>
Economy	<p>Goal 12: Healthy Macro-Economy</p> <p>12.1 Maintain the Strength of the Bahamian Dollar vis-a-vis the US dollar</p> <p>12.2 Strengthen the debt sustainability framework</p> <p>12.3 Improve national fiscal management</p> <p>12.4 Create a more progressive and efficient tax system</p> <p>12.5 Create a more transparent/reporting fiscal relationship between the Central Government and local communities and island districts</p> <p>12.6 Improve financial literacy and personal financial management such that personal saving, investments, financial resilience and ownership in the local economy are improved</p>

	<p>12.7 Strengthen and enhances measures of economic growth and GDP</p> <p>12.8 Continue to strengthen financial sector stability and regulation</p> <p>12.9 Develop a comprehensive Industrial Policy aimed at encouraging the development and growth of high impact sectors, innovation and research and development and logistics services to support trade Promote the use of public and private partnerships to substantially increase The Bahamas economic performance and promote Bahamian workers and owners, linkages between economic sectors, sustainable business practices</p> <p>12.10 The Bahamas will continue to attract high levels of FDI in sectors which promote sustainable economic development. The FDI policy should seek out investment in targeted areas to ensure its maximum effectiveness and impact on the overall economic wellbeing of the country and to reduce the risk of FDI enclaves</p> <p>Goal 13: Competitive Business Environment</p> <p>13.1 Introduce the necessary legislative, policy and procedure reforms that will enable The Bahamas to be one of the most business friendly countries in the World</p> <p>13.2 Government to implement a one window service-to-business strategy</p> <p>13.3 Improve access to financing for Entrepreneurs</p> <p>13.4 Establish several business empowerment zones which attract business and investment in targeted sectors to encourage the formation of clusters, innovation and knowledge exchange to increase competitiveness and ease the complexity of doing business</p> <p>13.5 Improve worker productivity and soft skills to lower the cost of doing business in The Bahamas to better compete on an efficiency basis</p> <p>13.6 Strengthen trade policy to creates advantages for Bahamian entrepreneurs, exporters and consumers</p> <p>13.7 Introduce development focused Immigration policies that encourage the best global minds to live and work in The Bahamas to encourage the growth of the Bahamian economy in a manner which promotes the prosperity of Bahamians</p>
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- 13.8 Ensure that the Bahamian workforce is appropriately tooled to meet the needs of a revitalized Bahamian economy
- 13.9 Introduce an investment and project framework that allows The Bahamas to maximize value from the utilization of its resources. This includes improving the environment for developing entrepreneurship opportunities.

Goal 14: Diversified Economy

Goal 14a: The Bahamas will have a sustainable tourism sector which positively and significantly contributes to economic growth and development; is an engine for stable job creation and a source of entrepreneurial opportunities

Tourism Economy

- 14.1 Improve visitor satisfaction, encourage repeat visitors and improve the competitiveness of The Bahamian tourism product by strengthening the basic foundations of the Bahamian tourism sector: a service oriented well trained workforce; high quality, modern tourism infrastructure and a clean and beautiful environment
- 14.2 Increase The Bahamas’ market share of global tourism through strategic planning, stronger promotions activities and improved access
- 14.3 Ensure that the tourism sector provides greater value added services and linkages with the rest of the economy and that the sector is a source of innovation and entrepreneurship through well-formed tourism clusters

Goal 14b: The Bahamas will become a leading global financial services centre which is internationally connected, diversified and resilient.

International Financial Services

- 14.4 Improve the competitiveness of the International Financial Sector by ensuring that the best talent (human capital) and infrastructure (business and quality of life) is readily available to the sector
- 14.5 Position the prudent and responsive policy and regulatory environment of The Bahamas’ financial services sector as a key asset for the growth of the sector Ensure that the international financial sector provides greater value added through a diversification of its products and innovation in the market and the creation of supporting clusters
- 14.6 Ensure that the international financial sector provides greater direct and indirect value added and employment through an increase in high quality business establishments, diversification of its products; innovation in the market; the creation of supporting clusters and stronger Bahamas brand recognition

Goal 14c: Leveraging its technical capabilities, natural endowments and human talent, The Bahamas will develop new growth sectors to encourage opportunities for entrepreneurship and expand the knowledge and creative economy and its industrial and agriculture base.

ICT, Science and Technology

- 14.7 Leverage the existing bandwidth access and infrastructure and mobile penetration that the Bahamas has in order to catalyse investment in ICT industries and services and improve productivity across all industrial, administrative and governmental sectors

Agribusiness

- 14.8 Identify the best use for the natural endowments of the Bahamas so as to maximise the potential for high value added agribusiness industries

14.9 Create an enabling microeconomic environment for agribusiness development through improvements in human capital, effective funding and the creation of related developmental clusters

14.10 Attract domestic and foreign investment by through the creation of an enabling macro-environment

Maritime Sector

14.11 The Bahamas will have a vibrant maritime sector inclusive of world class port infrastructure and service on Grand Bahama and a system of good marinas throughout the family islands. One that encourages yachting, ship and yacht registrations and development of the full spectrum of maritime services to generate new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for Bahamians

Educational and Research Services

14.12 The Bahamas will become an international and regional hub for educational services

Goal 15: Fair and Flexible Labour Regime

15.1 Undertake a full analytic review of labour regimes in similar economies including benefits, hours and minimum wage to ensure the Bahamian worker is fairly rewarded for his or her contributions

15.2 Evaluate the future skills needs of the country and ensure that they are met.

15.3 Strengthen the labour laws and the adjudication of labour disputes Improving the Meritocracy in the Governance and Management of the Labour force in the civil service

Goal 16: Culture shall be recognised as a driver and enabler for the sustainable development of The Bahamas

	<p>16.1 Build and develop the cultural infrastructure and opportunities of The Bahamas to encourage strong, inclusive and cohesive communities, the preservation of Bahamian heritage and the growth and evolution of Bahamian cultural expression</p> <p>16.2 Strengthen the Creative Economy of The Bahamas to become a hub for creative entrepreneurs and companies</p>
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