



Global Sustainable Development Report

Brief 7

Relevance for the Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Background

In 2012, at the Rio+20 Conference, UN Member States decided to establish a universal, intergovernmental high-level political forum (HLPF) that would, as one of its functions, “strengthen the science-policy interface through review of documentation bringing together dispersed information and assessments, including in the form of a global sustainable development report, building on existing assessments”.

In response to this call, the Division for Sustainable Development of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs produced the Prototype Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR). The report is based on inputs from a wide range of UN entities, scientists, experts and government officials. It aims to present how future editions of the Global Sustainable Development Report could address a range of relevant topics, including reviewing recent assessments, measuring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reviewing long-term sustainable development scenarios and taking stock of emerging issues. The Prototype GSDR was launched during the second session of the HLPF on 1 July 2014.

The Prototype Report focused on global sustainable development, and therefore did not provide an in-depth analysis of sustainable development at the regional, national and local levels. However, it highlighted suggestions that could be taken into account in future editions of the report such as: i) considering systematic channels of input from countries in special situations and from smaller economies and sub-regions that are not so well represented in the global level debate; and ii) analysing country groups including countries in special situations or with high vulnerabilities (e.g. SIDS, Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and countries in sub-Saharan Africa), and/or country groups categorized by development stage (e.g. developing countries, developed countries, economies in transition) or by income (e.g. high-income, middle-income and low-income countries).

This brief provides a short overview of the Prototype GSDR and, based on its content, outlines some ways in which future editions could inform SIDS on a range of issues linked with their sustainable development challenges.

Assessments for sustainable development

The Prototype GSDR mapped the landscape of sustainable development assessments based on international assessments, UN flagship publications, outlook reports and national sustainable development reports.

As part of this exercise, a crowd-sourcing approach was used to collect views from thousands of scientists across the world and

highlighted international assessments that scientists would like to bring to the attention of decision-makers. The top-10 of these assessments included, *inter alia*, the following assessments that are directly relevant for SIDS: the assessment of assessments on oceans (led by the UN), the Scientific Synthesis of the Impacts of Ocean Acidification on Marine Biodiversity (led by CBD), the Global Energy Assessment (led by IIASA) and the Global Biodiversity Outlook (led by CBD).

Future editions of the GSDR could periodically synthesize lessons learned from assessments relevant to SIDS as well as SIDS-specific assessments or national reports such as those submitted in preparation for the 2014 SIDS Conference in Apia, Samoa. Such an exercise could result, for example, in a better understanding of approaches and resources used to carry out assessments as well as related needs and capacities.

Review of progress

The Prototype Report provided a review of global sustainable development progress from 1950 to 2013. It presented inter-linkages between trends (e.g. growing world population) and sustainable development issues (e.g. poverty and hunger, income inequality), and it examined policy trade-offs (e.g. between short-term growth and environmental objectives) and synergies (e.g. between social investments and economic growth as well as between energy efficiency and environmental objectives).

Inter-linkages between trends and sustainable development issues, 1950-2013 (selection)

Trends in... (list below)	...have not impacted ("o"), supported ("+") or negatively impacted ("-") sustainable development progress in these areas [list on the right]	To develop																					
		People								Economy													
		World population	Life expectancy	Global health	Poverty and hunger	Education	Access to basic services	Aging	Migration	Intergenerational social mobility	Human rights and human security	Overall well-being	World GDP	Economic welfare	Trade and economic integration	Money supply, reserves, financialization	Global household wealth	Income inequality	Aid flows				
Growing world population	o	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Extended life expectancy	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Better global health	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
More relatively poor in an absolutely less poor world	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
More hungry people	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Almost reached universal primary education	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Billions lack access to basic services	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Aging societies	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Increased int'l migration	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
No significant change in intergenerational social mobility	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Notes: “o” indicates that the trends have had no or no clearly identifiable impact on sustainable development, “+” (green colour) indicates a trend that supported sustainable development, and “-” (red colour) indicates a negative impact on sustainable development in the listed area over past decades. The table refers to the particular global context 1950-2013 and cannot be generalized. Inter-linkages at the national level or for other time periods may be different.

In addition, the Prototype Report reviewed progress of implementation of sustainable development commitments in the 19 focus areas identified by the General Assembly Open Working Group on SDGs during the stock-taking phase of its deliberations, including, *inter alia*, on: poverty eradication, food security and sustainable agriculture, water and sanitation, health, education, employment, oceans, biodiversity, sustainable consumption and production, means of implementation, needs of countries in special situations and middle-income countries, energy, sustainable cities and transport, climate change and disaster risk reduction. It concluded that progress was off-track for 11 focus areas, that it was on track for 4 focus areas and that mixed progress characterized 4 focus areas out of the 19 considered.

Drawing on the above, future editions of the GSDR could, for instance, highlight inter-linkages between sustainable development trends related to SIDS priority concerns as identified in the Barbados Programme of Action, the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. This could include, for example health and non-communicable diseases, climate change, oceans and seas, sustainable tourism and disaster risk reduction. The report could also review progress on: i) international sustainable development commitments that are specifically relevant to the SIDS or ii) SIDS-specific multi-stakeholder partnerships and voluntary commitments.

Future pathways toward sustainable development

Based on scenarios from leading modelling teams, the Prototype Report looked at two different possible pathways for the future (from 2010 to 2050): a “dynamics-as-usual” scenario, assuming a world with economic growth as the main goal for the coming decades and a sustainable development scenario in which the world follows an integrated approach to economic, social and environmental goals. For these two scenarios, it outlined projections related to specific issues (e.g. economic growth, water access and basic sanitation, access to modern energy services, universal primary and secondary education). It also discussed investments and technology needs for sustainable development, specifying orders of magnitude estimates for investment requirements in various sectors.

In the coming years, the GSDR could review existing scenarios most relevant to SIDS, including by extracting relevant messages from global scenarios on areas of critical importance to SIDS such as vulnerability to climate change, oceans, ecosystems and biodiversity, and sustainable consumption and production. It could also review regional or sub-regional scenarios that cover SIDS regions. Such an exercise could foster a better understanding of resource needs and capacity gaps in terms of sustainable development scenario modelling for SIDS. This exercise could also result in a better understanding of investment needs for coming decades in SIDS in various areas such as infrastructure, energy, climate change adaptation, resilience building, and others.

Integrated approaches: the CLEWD nexus

The Prototype GSDR reviewed a sample of case studies based on integrated modelling of the climate, land, energy, water and development (CLEWD) nexus. The CLEWD approach allows planners and policy-makers to see the impact of specific choices that one sector (e.g. energy) has on the other ones (e.g. water, land use, food production), thereby highlighting the interdependence that exists among them. Given the often acute constraints that SIDS face in terms of availability of natural resources and energy, this type of approach is of particular relevance.

One of the first studies which applied integrated modelling was Mauritius, where CLEWD modelling has exposed how a national biofuel policy that made sense from a best practice energy, land and water planning point of view could be jeopardized by adverse climate change outcomes – specifically, reductions in precipitation. Based on these insights, the Mauritius Government appointed a high level CLEWD panel to ensure consistency among its climate, land, energy and water strategies.

The Mauritius case study inspired many similar nexus applications worldwide. In SIDS, CLEWD applications have been identified in Comoros, Jamaica, Tarawa/Kiribati, and Seychelles. Lessons learned from case studies and support to studies in other countries could be a focus of capacity-building efforts targeted at SIDS countries interested by the approach. The CLEWD nexus is one amongst a number of clusters of strongly interlinked issues of great relevance for sustainable development. Future reports could address other clusters of relevance for the SIDS that involve integrated decision-making at the national and other levels and highlight lessons learned from national or local case studies.

SIDS engagement in future GSDRs

The GSDR is the result of collaborative efforts. Inputs and perspectives from regions, countries and groups of countries are therefore needed to reflect realities on the ground. In this context, substantive contributions and inputs from the SIDS to future editions of the GSDR, as well as involvement of SIDS representatives in the preparation of future editions of the report, would be highly appreciated.

More information

The Prototype GSDR, its Executive Summary and other related briefs and documents are available on the following website:
<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1621>