



SIDS Regional Partnership Dialogue for the Caribbean

6 August 2018, San Pedro, Ambergris Caye, Belize

Held in support of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway in the Caribbean

Background

The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) regional partnership dialogue for the Caribbean was held on 6 August in San Pedro, Ambergris Caye, Belize, as part of the SIDS Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Caribbean.

The partnership dialogue is part of a capacity development project¹ by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), designed to support the work of the SIDS Partnership Framework² and the preparatory process related to the SAMOA Pathway mid-term review³. The work is undertaken with generous support provided by the government of Italy, and under the overall guidance of the Steering Committee on SIDS Partnerships, currently chaired by Belize and Ireland.

The dialogue was held to support SIDS in their deliberations around partnerships in the context of the preparatory process of the SAMOA Pathway mid-term review.

The dialogue was organized by UN DESA, Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG). It was presided over by H.E. Ms. Lois M. Young, Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations, co-chair of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS and Mr. Mícheál Tierney, representing H.E. Mrs. Geraldine Patricia Byrne Nason, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, co-chair of the Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS.

The dialogue was structured around three distinct but inter-related segments:

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sids/partnerships2018>

² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sids/partnershipframework>

³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sids/samoareview>

1. **Developing genuine and durable partnerships – good practices and lessons learned:** examining how SIDS partnerships in the Caribbean start and the process of developing and setting up partnership; who the main stakeholders and beneficiaries are; how the partnerships are structured, managed, governed and funded; challenges to implementation; and bright spots and critical ingredients for impactful partnerships.
2. **Identifying and addressing the gaps through partnerships for SIDS:** examining how partnerships can best address the gaps of the SAMOA Pathway priority areas; which priority areas for the Caribbean require more partnerships to be forged; and what types of stakeholders and sectors need to be more involved in partnership arrangements for SIDS in the Caribbean region.
3. **Strengthening the review and monitoring process of partnerships for SIDS:** examining how we can improve the current processes of monitoring and review of SIDS partnerships, ensuring the full participation of relevant stakeholders, and that no one is left behind; and how do we encourage the forging and launching of new, genuine and durable partnerships for the sustainable development of SIDS.

1. Developing genuine and durable partnerships – good practices and lessons learned – summary and key messages

This session's objective was to look at various partnerships for SIDS in the Caribbean, examining how they have been developed, how the partnerships are governed, what are the leadership roles, partnership evaluation methods, and challenges in implementation.

In their opening remarks, the co-chairs highlighted the importance of partnerships as a means for supporting sustainable development of SIDS, and as part of a new and more meaningful development paradigm for SIDS. Referring to the work being undertaken by UN DESA to assess partnerships, they noted the current largely environmental focus of partnerships, their uneven distribution across regions (with Pacific partnerships dominating), the absence of meaningful private sector engagement, and the lack of baseline data and metrics to monitor and assess partnerships. It is evident that there are challenges that need to be overcome, including defining what constitutes a genuine and durable partnership, fostering better stakeholder (private sector, civil society, youth, women, etc.) involvement in partnerships, improving available data for review and monitoring, and replicating good partnerships practices. The mid-term review will provide an opportunity for an honest discussion about lessons learned with a view to better design the next generation of durable partnerships.

The session heard experiences from the following panellists:

- Waitt Institute
- Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem project
- Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI)
- Government of Barbados
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

The speakers discussed both the challenges and successes of their partnerships, the creation of partnership structures, the ways in which they had involved different stakeholders in their partnerships, and issues related to financing partnerships.

The panellists noted the following challenges and put forward some ways in which the challenges had been overcome:

- **A genuine and durable partnership requires buy-in from all partners. All partners will need to agree on a common goals and objectives**, and understand what the partnership is trying to achieve. This is sometimes difficult, particularly in the beginning, as partners may not fully understand each other. It is important to get an agreement, such as a MoU or declaration, down on paper, so that everyone understands and agrees on partnership objectives. A regular collaborative review of progress will also help keep the partnership on track towards its goals and objectives.
- Partnerships are sometimes challenged by lack of trust between partners. **Trust is a critical ingredient of a successful partnership**, and needs to be fostered and built through joint action and shared responsibilities.
- **Successful partnerships are often highly participatory**. They will involve government entities and work across ministries and with civil servants to build political will and leadership. They will also engage other partners, including academia, civil society, private sector, women and youth.
- **Partnerships will have to be durable and be able to withstand shock**. They should find a way to be consistent, and remain a priority even when the government changes.
- **Financing is a major challenge for many partnerships**. Partnerships often require internal resource mobilization on the part of Governments. This could be a challenge for governments where there is limited fiscal space for investment in sustainable development. In such cases priorities have to be carefully defined as to where limited resources are to be spent. Some innovative solutions for financing involved the creation of the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund as part of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative. Each country participating in the Caribbean Challenge is encouraged to create its own trust fund (National Conservation Trust Fund), and will additionally be able to access funding from the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund. Other partnerships have involved the private sector, chambers of commerce, as well as received funding from UNDP, GEF, donor countries and other funding entities.
- **There is often overlap and duplication between partnerships, projects and other initiatives in the region**. There may not be a mechanism in place

for donors and others to know what type of work has been carried out in the region, and to ensure that lessons learned can be accessed. Regionally there is a need to do mapping of how institutional mandates and regional frameworks overlap, in order to identify areas of duplication and to establish a common monitoring framework. One way to avoid duplication is through the establishment of a regional information portal that contains information about projects, programmes and initiatives, including their scope, duration and funding arrangements. One example cited by a panellist was the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) portal, which is managed by the project coordination unit of CLME. Other regional information sources also exist, for example the regional coordination mechanism maintained by ECLAC.

- **Capacity challenges remain in the Caribbean**, and there are limited monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess progress. Access to information, managing data, and knowledge transfer are issues both within the region and nationally. One panellist noted the development of a capacity building and innovation platform for SIDS, supported by UNIDO, which will enhance knowledge transfer between all SIDS and foster innovation and small enterprises,
- **Engaging with the private sector is often viewed to be difficult.** Technical people may not know how to approach the private sector, including appropriate language to use and the motivations that drive the private sector. One solution offered was the development of a strategic action programme for private sector engagement within a partnership.

Common to the successful partnerships discussed during this session was the development of a robust **governance structure**, which provided for a leadership group (such as a steering committee), a decision-making process and regular dialogue between partners. One example of effective dialogue cited was the “solutions dialogue” built into the Caribbean Challenge Initiative, which allows partners to share problems and solutions. All of the successful partnerships also had in place a **review and monitoring process**. The larger partnerships had developed both regional frameworks and national level structures that allow for action on both levels.

Regarding the environmental focus of the majority of partnerships, it was noted that the human and social aspects of nature protection are also important, and should be taken into account to a larger extent. For example, how do conservation projects impact employment, inequality and poverty? Ideally, projects have integrated objectives to address both social and nature protection. In regards to protected areas, it was noted that while establishment of protected areas can be relatively straight forward, their management remains a considerable challenge.

2. Identifying and addressing gaps through partnerships for SIDS – summary and key messages

This session focused on gaps in partnerships and looked at the priority areas where further partnerships could be forged for the sustainable development of SIDS in the Caribbean. The session also addressed the types of partners from sectors and groups that are underrepresented in partnerships in the region.

The session heard a presentation from UN DESA relating to the status of SIDS partnerships in the Caribbean. The presentation noted that there is an increasing trend in SIDS partnerships in the Caribbean, with a high degree of implementation that included many already completed partnerships. The need to strengthen the reporting process was noted. All SAMOA Pathway priority areas have been addressed through partnerships, but unevenly. Areas that seem to be less addressed include trade, sustainable transportation, NDCs, gender equality, land-based biodiversity, recycling, sanitation and waste water management. It was also noted that a smaller number of partnerships doesn't necessarily imply a gap if the existing partnerships are effective and inclusive.

The session also heard perspectives from the following panellist:

- Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu – High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
- Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)
- Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE)
- Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA)
- ECLAC
- Marine Institute of Ireland

The presentations and ensuing discussions identified a number of gap areas and proposals for partnerships that could fill those gaps. These gap areas included:

- **Engagement with private sector**, which is being strengthened by the creation of the SIDS Global Business Network. The SIDS Global Business Network has led to the launch of some fifty new partnerships, and the network has the potential to serve as a mechanism for multi-country partnerships, enhance knowledge transfer, and address constraints related to financial resources.
- **Sourcing development finance for SIDS**, which is an area that has not seen previous partnerships. One possible approach could be to engage in partnerships with the insurance industry, which could also be a way to mobilize innovative financing for the region for sustainable development. In addition, SIDS are highly dependent on fossil fuels, and the use of electric vehicles and development of Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) would reduce the amount of petroleum that needs to be imported.
- **Development of an integrated regional emergency response**, including in relation to pests and animal diseases. Diseases and pests move quickly and

- there is a need for a regional action plan in this regard. In addition, there is a need to ensure the safety of the food supply in an emergency situation.
- **Building resilient health systems**, including physical and mental well-being is important for the achievement of the SAMOA Pathway. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs – cancer, heart attack, stroke, physical inactivity) are more significant than communicable diseases in the Caribbean. Climate change is also a significant threat to human health, and something that SIDS are vulnerable to.
 - **Fostering innovation in the maritime domain**, and maximizing socio-economic benefits of open science and open data towards developing blue economies are important for SIDS. In addition, and fostering small and medium enterprise relating to ocean innovation can help develop ocean economies.

In addition to specific gaps, the review of partnerships was also discussed. **There is a need to define what is meant by durable and genuine partnerships**, and to develop an ability to measure, monitor and evaluate them. Developing norms about effective partnership may help define them. This would then allow for an identification of the types of partnerships that can be replicated, and for a distinction to be made between donor driven projects and genuine partnerships. The SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) can provide a general basis for articulating norms, but more specificity may be needed to better understand the components of genuine, durable and effective partnerships.

3. Strengthening the review and monitoring process of partnerships for SIDS – summary and key messages

This session's objective was to review the current processes for monitoring the progress of partnerships for Caribbean SIDS, and to consider how monitoring and review and the participation of stakeholders in these processes could be improved.

The session heard presentations from the following partnerships:

- Government of Jamaica
- Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
- Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC)
- CaribInvest WI Ltd
- DIGICEL

The panellist agreed that there is a need to strengthen the review and monitoring of partnerships. **Monitoring and evaluating of partnerships should be mandatory**, and should be built into partnerships from the outset. In this way the cost of monitoring becomes part of project costs. A serious challenge to monitoring and evaluating partnerships in the Caribbean is the lack of baseline data as well as

indicators. Capacity strengthening may be needed both for collecting and using evidence-based data.

The monitoring process should assess the weight and impact of partnerships, including how a partnership interlinks with Samoa Pathway priority topics outside of its main area of focus. Spillover effects of partnerships should also be understood and monitored. A regional coordination mechanism for the Caribbean, maintained by ECLAC, can assist in reviewing and monitoring partnerships in the region. It is well established and supported by focal points in each country, but lacks funding.

Effective partnerships have shared benefits and commitments, as well as a sense of ownership by all partners. Collaboration is essential for partnerships. While there is already capacity in Caribbean SIDS, strengthening that capacity is important, and international partnerships can provide for this. In international partnership there needs to be a focus on issues that are most critical for the country, rather than donor priorities.

There is a need for more rigorous evidence-based criteria for how to establish partnerships, and more concrete baselines for measuring progress. Some challenges in this regard for the Caribbean include:

- The lack of baseline data for partnerships
- Lack of appropriate data for monitoring and evaluation, which does not allow for measuring impact of partnerships
- SMART criteria in partnerships
- Evidence-based criteria for evaluating partnerships

Partnerships must be inclusive of all stakeholders, and an effort must be made to include marginalized groups. They should be based on a common understanding of objectives, collaboration, trust and accountability. Successful partnerships bring together all stakeholders from the very beginning, ensuring ownership in the process. In order to have buy-in from communities, NGOs and civil society need to be involved. Partnerships must work and cooperate with government and government entities. Successful partnerships should be replicated, so as not to reinvent the wheel.

The lack of meaningful engagement of civil society and other groups such as trade unions, has, in many cases, been a critical gap in the development of partnerships in the Caribbean. Too often it is the powerful and entrenched interests, which have easy access to policy-makers. Civil society organizations have made a strong contribution to the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway priority areas. Civil society organizations have provided and continue to provide both financial and human resources to assisting Caribbean SIDS to meet their sustainable development goals.

Private sector involvement was also discussed at length. Some key lessons for greater inclusion of the private sector involved the following:

- Private sector in the Caribbean consists mainly of small and medium-sized enterprises, with services, such as tourism, being the largest contributor to economic growth.
- Access to finance is a key challenge for the private sector, and this limits their ability to finance sustainable development at the national level.
- Private sector has little understanding of instruments such as the SAMOA pathway, and other SIDS policy frameworks and instruments. It is difficult for the private sector to understand the language in these documents.
- If partnerships want private sector involvement, they need to translate the UN-oriented language in policy documents into something that the private sector can understand. This language needs to be action-oriented and results-focused.
- In order to foster private sector involvement, government needs to clearly express their needs and priorities over the short, medium and long term, and articulate strategies in language that is understandable to the private sector. Evidence-based data is also needed to demonstrate impacts and to show measurable results.

Summary of key points from the Partnership Dialogue

At the end of the partnerships dialogue, the co-chairs noted that similar issues and concerns were expressed in all of the three SIDS regions. They highlighted the following key points and expectations as take-away messages from the Caribbean Partnership Dialogue as well as the previous regional dialogues.

- Monitoring and evaluation is necessary for partnerships, and should be built into the partnerships.
- There is a need to develop a set of norms for defining partnerships. The SMART criteria can provide a basis for this.
- There is also a need to define inter-linkages in how partnerships address not only the actual partnerships focus area, but also other issues that the SAMOA pathway is concerned about, such as gender equality, poverty and unemployment.
- Successful partnerships should be replicated so as not to reinvent the wheel.
- There is a need to distinguish between a partnership and non-partnership (e.g. development assistance)
- As part of the evaluation process, partnerships need to be weighted. How does the partnership interlink with other issues that need to be addressed?
- Involve private sector in partnerships through the use of evidence-based information and data. In the Caribbean there is a serious data deficiency. Capacity enhancement is needed to get evidence-based data.
- Partnerships must target the marginalized. There is also a need to better understand who the beneficiaries are. The direct beneficiary is not always the main beneficiary.

- Regional coordination mechanisms exist, such as the one coordinated by ECLAC. There is a need to involve regional coordination mechanisms in monitoring and evaluating partnerships.
- It is recognized that genuine and durable partnerships are based on mutual collaboration, trust and accountability. All partners are equal. The DIGICEL example is a good one – a classic win – win.
- Projects need to have the buy-in of communities, and this can take place through NGOs and civil society. In addition, partnerships must cooperate and work with government and government entities.
