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PARTNERSHIP  
ACCELERATOR  
2030 AGENDA  
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

# Accelerating partnerships to support the Sustainable Development Goals in Maldives

## Summary of online workshop

### **Background**

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On 2 November 2020, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), UN Resident Coordinators' Office Maldives and The Partnering Initiative (TPI), in collaboration with the Development Planning & SDG Coordination Section of the Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Republic of Maldives, organized a webinar as part of the 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator support to advance partnerships in Maldives. The webinar served as a starting point to get people involved and excited about the "*One Maldives*" - which purpose is to catalyze a new era of collaboration to accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Maldives. The online partnership dialogue was the start of a bigger conversation on how to build strong partnerships in Maldives and eventually build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting was attended by around 60 participants, which included representatives from the President's Office, government ministry SDG focal points, UN agencies, as well a number of representatives from independent institutions, CSOs, academia, private sector.

Throughout the event, participants stressed that all sectors have something significant to bring to the table for advancing the SDGs in Maldives. Since the SDGs affect every sector of society, it is evident that all partnerships matter in moving us towards a thriving society, a healthy environment and a prosperous business for the sustainable development of Maldives.

The webinar is part of the 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator, a project by the United Nations and The Partnering Initiative, which aim is to assist all stakeholders in accelerating and scaling partnerships to achieve transformational impact for the SDGs.

### **Opening**

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His Excellency Mohamed Aslam, Minister of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure of the Republic of Maldives, welcomed the participants to the workshop, and stressed the importance of engaging all stakeholders in a productive and efficient way to achieve the SDGs. His Excellency further highlighted the important role all sectors have played during the COVID-19 pandemic and expressed hope that this cooperation will continue in supporting the advancement of the SDGs in Maldives.

As part of the opening, Ms. Catherine Haswell, United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Republic of Maldives, encouraged all stakeholders to “*think different, act different and have a joined vision for moving Maldives towards a sustainable future*”. Ms. Haswell further emphasized that the social and economic impact of COVID-19 should make us think of new ambitious forms of partnership, for which this meeting could be very useful.

## **Presentation: Introduction to Partnerships for the SDGs**

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As part of an introductory presentation, Dr. Darrian Stibbe, The Partnering Initiative, explained the value partnerships have on development by aligning and combining resources and investments in ways that deliver on the SDGs and maximize value for all.

Mr. Stibbe further explained that the interlinked nature of the SDGs is a demonstration that all sectors have something significant to bring to the table. If input is combined, more than the sum of its part can be delivered. Furthermore, partnerships are essential in bringing together different stakeholders’ unique aspects to sustainable development, to work effectively with each other and to join resources in order to deliver the SDGs and benefits to all.

The spectrum of partnerships can be divided into three categories.

- **First**, leverage/exchange type of partnership which brings value to partners. An example is the SPREP – Moana taka partnership, where the China Navigation Company works together with the Pacific Regional Environment to address critical waste management issues in the Pacific islands. The shipping company brings cargo to its destination, and on the way back carries containers of recyclable waste from eligible Pacific island ports, pro bono, to be sustainably treated and recycled in suitable ports in Asia Pacific. This is an example of a company donating a partnership.
- **Second**, combine/integrate type of partnership which has an impact on beneficiaries and brings value to partners. An example is the Regional Tourism and Health Programme, a partnership between the Caribbean Tourism Organization and the Caribbean Public Health Agency. By building an early alarm system for communicable diseases, health problems and challenges which are alarming for both the health and tourism sector, can be detected more easily.
- **Third**, the most ambitious form of partnership, a system transformation type of partnership. This brings value to partners, impact on beneficiaries and a system transformative value. An example is the Blue Economy, where the public and private sectors are combined in tackling challenges in renewable energy, tourism, climate change, fisheries, maritime transport and waste management.

## **Partnerships in Maldives**

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Through consultations with Government SDG focal points, CSOs and UN agencies, Ms. Ibrahim Athifa, consultant for UN DESA, conducted a partnership landscape assessment. The Partnership Assessment was divided into thematic areas:

### ***People (SDGs 3, 4, 5 and 10)***

Overall partnerships are limited within government agencies, and private sector. Partnerships exist with CSOs to some extent, particularly those NGOs working with specific vulnerable population groups. However, the level of engagement in the partnership is unequal. Good partnerships exist with development partners and multilateral agencies. There are emerging partnerships between government and private sector in the areas of health care and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), higher education and empowerment of women and PWDs (Persons with Disabilities). Partnerships are also emerging within the CSO sector forming cause specific alliances. Mechanisms for government support is weak and there is the need to orient all actors on transformational partnerships, and to establish formal mechanism and networks that can sustain the partnerships.

### ***Planet (SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15)***

Overall partnerships are limited within government agencies, CSOs and private sector. Good partnerships exist with development partners and multilateral agencies. Although, there is frequent engagement with CSOs on a number of issues and projects, it is on a temporary and short-term basis. There are emerging partnerships between government and State Owned Enterprises (SoEs) with regards to sustainable water, energy and waste management that has potential. Mechanisms for government support is weak and need to orient all actors on transformational partnerships and establish formal mechanisms and networks that can sustain the partnerships.

### ***Prosperity (SDGs 1, 2, 8 and 9)***

A number of partnerships exist in this area within government institutions, some CSOs and private sector. However, these partnerships are mostly ad hoc and short term. Collaboration with academia for the national workforce needs research and innovation is weak. There appears to be no partnerships with media to develop a narrative for decent work and productive citizenry. However, there is potential to bring the stakeholders together and to work towards progress towards the goals of prosperity.

### ***Peace (SDG 16)***

Partnerships are almost non-existent in this area and are limited to some aspects of crime prevention such as juvenile justice. Independent institutions, judiciary and the parliament appear to have the notion that joint work may result in public's loss of confidence in the institutions and question the independent nature of the institutions. However, there are emerging efforts to partner with CSOs. However, CSOs are reluctant to engage in this area due to lack of trust and possible backlash that may affect their work. Only a few partnerships are taking place with development partners and regional bodies particularly with regard to terrorism and crime prevention. However, the need for partnerships to reduce corruption and build confidence in public institutions is critical to make progress in this area.

In sum, the Assessment suggested some potential areas for partnership in mental health and psychosocial support (people), safe water (planet), occupational health and safety (prosperity) and anti-corruption (peace). Although there have been some very effective partnerships in the Maldives, the Assessment concluded that the government support was limited due to low capacity and the shortage of a formal mechanism. Moreover, there are limited partnerships where most stakeholders are represented and very few partnerships with the private sector, academia and media. There is a lack of understanding of SDGs and the value of partnerships to make progress on the SDGs. This is a missed opportunity.

In order to create partnership acceleration for the SDGs, a mechanism and support for durable partnerships is needed. Good communication, creative collaborations and champions from Government, CSOs, private sector, academia and media as accelerators for partnerships are key. The more is known about the development of partnerships; the more effective partnerships will happen.

### **Partnering in practice exercise: HEAL Maldives**

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As part of an interactive exercise, participants were divided into groups to discuss what resources each stakeholder and sector could bring to the table in developing a fictional partnership. The fictional partnership was introduced as HEAL Maldives – Healthy Eating Acting Living in Maldives, which objective is to inspire, engage and support children and adults to eat more healthily and to live more active lives, with the ultimate goal of reducing incidence of chronic disease such as heart disease, obesity and cancer.

The aim of the exercise was to think through the range of societal actors, including companies from different industries, public sector, civil society, academia, media etc., and discuss:

1. What resources of all kinds could each stakeholder bring to the table?
2. Come up with one example where combining resources could deliver real impact.

The exercise provided an opportunity for stakeholders to think outside their own perspectives. This led to a fruitful conversation about accessibility, awareness and the creation of platforms for fostering partnerships. It was discussed that open data and access to information by the government is crucial. In addition, the government and media, or other means of communication, should start awareness campaigns. By building more awareness around national efforts towards the achievement of SDGs and providing knowledge on how to get people on board, transformational change and the achievement of sustainable development in a more collective matter can be reached.

## Stakeholder resource map



## Moving forward: How do we move towards One Maldives - to build back better and deliver a prosperous economy, a thriving society and a flourishing environment?

In closing, an open dialogue, moderated by Ms. Aishath Saadh, Republic of Maldives, was held on how to take forward some of the ideas that emerged from the workshop. The online partnership dialogue itself served as a key ingredient for nurturing understanding and building awareness on the importance and the need for developing inclusive and effective partnerships in Maldives, a sentiment that was echoed by many participants. The COVID-19 pandemic provides a unique situation that provide impetus for new and innovative partnerships, where all sectors have stepped up in order to contribute to the development of the country. This should be similarly done for the achievement of the SDGs in the Maldives.

Ms. Aminath Shaliny, UN Resident Coordinators' Office in Maldives stressed that [INSERT].

In closing, Mr. Ola Goransson, project coordinator of the 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator at the Division for Sustainable Development Goals at UN DESA pointed out that it is clear that all partnerships matter, and the more we know about how to go about developing them, the more action will happen. Mr. Goransson further stressed that it is evident, by listening to the many good examples from participants, that there is already a great deal of partnerships happening in Maldives. The need seems to be around providing more opportunities and dialogue for scaling up and developing new partnerships, which should be done in broad consultation with all relevant stakeholders, building them from the ground up. He further noted that the

2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator stands ready to support the UN country team and the Government of Maldives in making this happen. As His Excellency Mohamed Aslam and Ms. Haswell accurately put it, this webinar serves as first step on the journey towards **One Maldives**.

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