

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL VOLUNTARY REVIEW PROCESS – INDEPENDENT STATE OF SAMOA

The Government of the Independent State of Samoa strongly supports the launch of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to succeed the Millennium Development Goals. The overwhelming global support for the SDGs conveys renewed commitment by the UN to support global paths to sustainable development by 2030 with a key focus on people, peace prosperity partnerships and the planet. Samoa's performance with regard to the MDGs, was generally positive, it had clearly indicated areas where achievement of some targets was not possible by 2015 but that its intention was to accelerate progress and complete the unfinished business of the MDGs as part of the implementation of the SDGs. Some key milestones achieved post 2015 included significant progress in halving the proportion of the population living below basic needs poverty line from 27% (2008) to just over 10% (2015) and marked improvements in the representation of women in parliament following the 2016 elections. Samoa graduated out of Least Developed Country status in 2014 in the same year that it hosted the 3rd International SIDS Conference with the resultant outcome; the S.A.M.O.A. pathway which is the roadmap towards sustainable development for small islands developing states.

Samoa was affected by the food fuel and financial crises as well as natural disasters such as the 2009 tsunami and the 2012 Cyclone Evan which brought about significant reduction in growth rates. To date Samoa has not been able to achieve pre-crises economic growth rates. With the help of its development partners Samoa was able to implement a program of accelerated progress towards the achievement of the MDGs, through policy reforms and the implementation of targeted programs that clearly accorded priority to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable sectors of the population. Three MDG reports were prepared in 2004, 2010 and 2014 which were supported by annual Pacific regional MDG Tracking reports.

Samoa is currently implementing its national sustainable development strategy known as the Strategy for the Development of Samoa (SDS 2012-2016). The long term vision of the SDS is to ensure a quality of life for all and is based on seven National Outcomes which in turn are supported by sectoral outcomes reflecting the three dimensions of sustainable development, economic, social and environmental. The Mid Term review of the SDS began in 2014 with the intention that the new SDS 2016-2020 will come into effect on July 1, 2016. Samoa will continue to use its national sustainable development strategy and the resultant sector level plans to implement Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, the SAMOA Pathway, the Paris Accord, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and all other global platforms Samoa is party to. Likewise Samoa has opted to use the SDS to implement its smooth transition strategy following graduation out of LDC status.

The Processes towards implementation of the SDGs

SAMOA as part of the Mid Term Review of the Strategy for the Development of Samoa (SDS 2012-2016) conducted a preliminary Integrated Assessment of the SDS, against the SDGs. The assessment provides an indicative overview of the level of alignment between SDS and the SDG targets. The consultative processes followed covered the whole country. The review findings formed the basis for the development of the new SDS 2016-2020 which theme is 'accelerating sustainable development and creating opportunities for all.'

Methodology

The review of the SDS 2012-2016 was carried out initially at sector levels on an annual basis through a review of sector plans. The outcomes of the sector plan reviews are then mapped against the various national outcomes of the SDS. The information collated and data collected form the basis of the public consultations. Following the launch of the SDGs in September 2015, the Bureau of the Statistics issued the preliminary framework of indicators for the SDGs to all key sector stakeholders who were invited to comment on the relevance, and alignment of such indicators to the sectoral and national indicators of the SDS. There is a specific highlighting of targets that are not covered in the SDS and sector plans.

Overall Assessment

The SDS is generally aligned to the SDG goals and targets.. Goals 1-6 including Goal 10 remain as unfinished business of the MDGs and are prioritised for implementation. Based on regional prioritisation under the Pacific Framework for Regionalism, the following goals are given emphasis including at national level as well, under environmental considerations; Goals 13, 14 and 15. Goals 7, 8 and 9 are pivotal in the achievement of economic growth and livelihood opportunities. Goals 11 and 12 need further attention in particular the development of appropriate targets and indicators. Goals 16 and 17 are crucial to determining the means of implementation through meaningful and consolidated partnerships as well as the institutional development reforms that will continue in order to improve on accountability

Initial Findings

The following summarises an initial assessment of alignment for each goal.

Goal 1 – Poverty

The SDS does not have a separate national or organisational outcome on poverty reduction. Poverty and inequality rates have been increasing as per the HIES and Poverty analyses and this increase was mostly prevalent in the rural areas. National outcomes related to poverty reduction, include the

- Key Outcome 1 Macroeconomic stability with a focus on inclusive growth
- Key Outcome 2 Reinvigorate agriculture with emphasis on the use of technology to build value addition to agriculture and exports as well as capacity building at community and village level.
- Key Outcome 5 Focused support on rural businesses
- Key Outcome 6 Strengthening health systems based on health promotion and that primary health care orients its structures and functions towards the values of equity social justice and human rights.
- Key Outcome 7: Universal access to primary education as well as the Years 9-11 secondary level.
- Key Outcome 8: Highlights the strengthening of social safety nets and protection measures, and enhanced resilience of all communities as well as strengthen poverty alleviation programs for communities
- Key Outcome 9: Sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation Poverty also does not feature specifically in the Key Performance Indicators.

Goal 2 – Hunger and food security

The SDS does not have a separate national or organisational outcome on hunger and food security.

- Key Outcome 2: Re-invigorate agriculture through encouraging investment to improve food security through enhanced production in livestock and selected crops
- Key Outcome 6: A Healthy Samoa with a focus on level partnerships for addressing social inclusion. Food security and nutrition targets are evident in the SDS but more so in the sector plans.

Goal 3 – Health

The SDS Key Outcome 6: A healthy Samoa provide a strategic focus for the health sector and commitment towards such status through a focus on the 6 pillars of good governance and leadership, quality service delivery, human resources for health, health information systems and medical products and technology and strengthened health financing. The Outcome also recognises the increasing trends of NCDs and a corresponding fall in life expectancy and HDI performance as a result. As well there is also recognition of the importance of reducing the risk factors in NCDs which with others are the prerequisites for equitable access to quality health services.

Goal 4 – Education

The SDS Key outcome 7: Improved focus on access to education, training and learning outcomes provides direction to the achievement of quality education and training to meet the socioeconomic and cultural goals. Improved education and training providing life time learning is directly relevant to the goal and highlights the need for expanding vocational training. The successful implementation of the key strategic areas will lead to improvements in other social areas such as improved nutrition, better livelihood opportunities and reduced criminal activities.

Goal 5 – Gender

While the SDS Key Outcome 8.2: focuses on empowering communities for sustainable development including mainstreaming gender equality in policy development, the focus on improving women's rights and participation in public life is not sufficiently reflected. Ongoing work for the MDGs reflects a more proactive position on the participation of women in parliament as evident in the recent elections results. Community development sectoral outcomes include the importance of addressing violence against women and children through more socially and culturally acceptable approaches.

Goal 6 - Water and sanitation

The SDS Key Outcome 9 stresses sustainable access to safe and affordable drinking water and basic sanitation for the whole population particularly as the health of the nation and control over the prevalence of water borne diseases depend greatly on improved access to safe and reliable drinking water.

Goal 7 – Energy

The SDS Key outcome 12: Sustainable energy supply including targeting an increased contribution of renewable energy for energy services and supply by 20% by the year 2030. There is also promotion of energy efficient practices and enhanced public awareness of conservation of energy that can also be covered under Environment and climate. Governance issues are also covered through the establishment of regulatory functions as well as extensive infrastructural investments in the energy sector

Goal 8 - Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all

Key Outcome 1 Macroeconomic stability with a focus on inclusive growth as well as Key Outcome 2 Reinvigorate agriculture with emphasis on the use of technology to build value addition to agriculture and exports as well as capacity building at community and village level and Key Outcome 5 Focused support on rural businesses. Additionally the Government is focusing on the implementation of a Youth Employment Program involving many partners including the ILO and UNDP.

Goal 9 – Infrastructure

The SDS priority Area 3 encompasses Key Outcome 9 Access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, Outcome 10 efficient and sustainable transport system and networks, Outcome 11 universal access to reliable and affordable ICT services and Outcome 12 sustainable energy supply: Key Outcome 14 is also relevant as it focuses on building the resilience of Infrastructure, such as roads and drainages involved in upgrading the economic corridor for the country,

Goal 10 – Inequality

Inclusion is reflected in the SDS vision and agenda. Key Outcome 11 of the SDS focuses on universal access to reliable and affordable ICT services and will also support increased competitiveness of the productive sectors as well as improve the delivery of social and emergency services to the whole country. One of the key principles of the SDS is that ‘what is good for the urban areas are the same for rural areas. Key Outcome 1 on achieving macroeconomic stability is also premised on inclusive growth as well as the extensive reforms that have been implemented which enabled graduation from least developed country status.

Goal 11 – Cities

Under Priority Area 2 (Social Policies) and Outcome 8 Social Cohesion there is emphasis on a safe and secure Samoa including a balance of good governance practices in both formal and customary processes and services.

Under Priority Area 4 The Environment and Outcome 13 there is emphasis on the promotion of good land use management practices, promotion of green technologies, development of an urban agenda and policy, effective waste management strategies and community engagement in the management of the environment .

Goal 12. Sustainable consumption and production

The SDS reflects more on the production aspect rather than on sustainable consumption. The Key outcomes on reinvigorating agriculture and exports, Key Outcome 13 on Environment sustainability and Key Outcomes under Priority Area 1 Economic policies are all relevant.

Goal 13 – Climate action

The SDS has a focused agenda on climate action. The outcome in SDS is Key Outcome 14: which emphasises an integrated approach to climate change and disaster resilience. Key Outcomes under Priority Area 3 Infrastructure are all relevant and focus on enhancing resilience through safe and secure infrastructure, choices for resilient agricultural practices and livelihood opportunities.

Goal 14 – Marine resources

The relevant national outcome in SDS is Priority area 4 with Outcome 13 and Outcome 14: through increased efforts by communities to protect marine areas, critical ecosystems and endangered species as well as developing and implementing tracking systems for chemicals and hazardous waste.

Goal 15 – Land and ecosystems

The relevant Key Outcomes in SDS are 13 and 14: that deal with improved land use planning, management and administration for private & public spaces and improved use of natural resources for long term flow of benefits are directly relevant to the goal.

Goal 16 – Governance

The SDS has a strong focus on promoting governance across all 4 priority areas and across all 14 Key Outcomes Good-governance principles reflected in the SDS include: more appropriate social & cultural practices, more efficient, effective, affordable, honest, transparent and apolitical public service focused on clear priorities, strengthened law & order and community security measures appropriately applied, appropriate decentralization of government administration with enhanced scope for engagement with the public, the application of standards and improved use of research & development focussing on priority needs and identification of those most in need.

Goal 17 – Global partnerships and Means of Implementation (MoI)

The SDS has prioritised partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships are built on principles of a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the centre.

Though there is still some dependence on external support there are efforts taken to mobilize, domestic resources including private resources to deliver on sustainable development objectives. There is determination to attract foreign direct investment, in critical sectors. These include sustainable energy, infrastructure and transport, as well as information and communications technologies. The public sector is expected to set a clear direction through the development of review and monitoring frameworks, regulations and incentive structures that enable such investments and reinforce sustainable development. National oversight mechanisms such as supreme audit institutions and oversight functions by legislatures continue to be strengthened.

The Challenges faced

During the consultations in late 2014, stakeholders identified common challenges in making progress against the MDGs as including human and institutional capacity constraints, lack of ownership and political will, lack of awareness and engagement of stakeholders and the challenge of localizing the MDGs, lack of alignment with global and regional actions, insufficient resources and capacities of resource implementation, lack of baseline data and capacities to collect and analyse data, etc. It was also noted that some MDG indicators were not relevant for Pacific Islands countries or are unable to be measured. In addition, more efforts are needed to strengthen development partner coordination and to strengthen aid effectiveness tracking.

Some of the key issues for Samoa include:

1. There is a need to localise the indicators for relevance and greater accountability. It is also possible that the government may set its own national targets and indicators to take into account national peculiarities. In order to stimulate the Governmental exercise, sectors and lead ministries are encouraged to propose a series of indicators deemed important in the context of Samoa. Such indicators are proposed as well as additional ones that are likely to come up in the forthcoming months, either from the dedicated sector work on mapping indicators with the Statistics Bureau of Samoa and Development Partners as well as civil society.
2. Given the breadth and depth of the 17 goals and 169 targets, the demand for quality statistics will increase significantly and will be a challenge for many of the small island countries, Samoa included that are already low capacity and resource poor.

3. All countries need to tailor the SDG indicators to their respective contexts; as well there is a need to prioritise the goals for implementation that are suited to capacities and ensure relevance to addressing needs.

4. One of the key lessons learned from monitoring the MDGs at the regional level was the difficulty in monitoring progress against the official MDG indicators as many indicators were not suitable in the Pacific context. In selecting the relevant global SDGs indicators to the Pacific context, it is important to ensure an open and inclusive consultation process, accounting for national priorities, that ensures country ownership towards the SDGs. Given that the SDGs are also universal, it is an opportunity to demonstrate the solidarity of Pacific countries, as a group of developed and developing countries, working together to achieve the SDGs in the region.

5. In terms of follow up and review, there was value in tracking progress towards the MDGs both at the regional and national level. Countries generally faced difficulty in tracking progress on an annual basis at the national level so regional monitoring helped fill in the gaps and retained the focus of the Pacific leaders on MDGs progress each year. However, tracking progress on the SDGs on an annual basis will likely prove difficult given the increased number of goals, targets and indicators.

To mitigate this, a thematic area could be considered each year, with complete reporting done every five years. Given the importance of political leadership in the implementation of the SDGs, it is critical that Pacific Leaders continue to oversee the monitoring of the SDGs at the regional level. At the national level, it is important to focus on mainstreaming the SDGs into national plans, budgets and monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

From these challenges, lessons can be drawn to inform the post-2015 agenda. Such lessons include: early and wide consultations to raise understanding and commitment; attention to proper planning and budgeting and the use of budget support for SDG implementation; capacity building and successive planning; using simple language; building and sustaining capacity in data collection/analyses and utilization; attention to the basics such as infrastructure and social services; properly analysing aspects of growth – inclusivity, vulnerable groups in society, social protection, etc.

A specific lesson from the MDGs in the Pacific is the need to not only address the symptoms but rather the root causes of structural inequalities underpinning poor development. To do so may require an alternative model of development other than a conventional “growth” model, to one that puts the humans at the centre and is linked to justice. This may also be facilitated by reconnecting with values expressed in the Millennium Declaration.

6. Specific points were raised about the means of implementation. In the Pacific there was limited direct funding to countries to achieve MDG targets and global and regional funding mechanisms were not easy to access. Coordination of donor support was also lacking. On the technology side the relevance and sustainability (such as maintenance costs) of technology were obstacles in their role as contributor to MDG achievement. Capacities, including statistical capacities, have been stretched and further tailoring of capacity building initiatives to the national level is needed. Finally, for trade the cost of compliance versus the benefits received from trade agreements was questioned for the Pacific.

What to do to overcome the challenges

From the initial consultations, addressing the challenges as indicated above requires the identification and development of effective and sound institutions, and putting in place a monitoring and early warning and response mechanisms to respond to risks and threats

accordingly as well as build on strengths and applying critical lessons learned. Samoa has a well-incentivized public service system, a well established system of physical infrastructure conducive to the promotion of opportunities and growth, is known for political stability and enjoys contributing to peace keeping efforts regionally and globally. Samoa has been undergoing reforms since the mid-eighties and has been proactive in remaining updated with regional and global issues and contributing successfully as a global partner.

At the regional level Samoa has been a key participant and supporter of the peer review and peer learning processes which have been key to countries efforts to execute south south cooperation in order to exchange information, experiences and expertise amongst themselves on key development issues as well as reforms necessary towards effective and durable partnerships with the development partners and institutions working in the region. All of these initiatives have been implemented under the aegis of the Pacific Forum Compact. Samoa to date has led the process of capacity building through offering its institutions for attachments of Pacific country officials particularly for public finance management reforms, the use of country systems and governance processes such as the conduct of fair elections.

Given the interrelatedness of the goals and targets supported by the implementation of the cross cutting issues, there will be consideration of the synergies, trade offs and policy coherence. Every attempt will be made to collect disaggregated data to determine the distributionary impact of policies with a particular focus on 'vulnerable groups'. The strategic direction through policies developed will need to be linked to the budget and development finance – this may result in further prioritisation based on need, capacities, outreach and gaps.

The SDGs will be implemented within the existing framework of implementing our national development plan both current and new with emphasis on the gap areas.

The domestication/localisation of SDGs in Samoa takes into consideration the principle of leaving no one behind, as development is already inclusive.

Accession to the voluntary review and progress in national adaptation of SDGs

It is against the above background that Samoa views and perceives the SDGs as a timely opportunity to address the development challenges ahead. A review report is under preparation to inform the UN at the July 2016 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) about the progress that Samoa has made in integrating the SDGs into our national development processes. Samoa in being the only small island developing state and a Pacific member country to be part of the initial voluntary review process is hopeful that it can provide a SIDS perspective to the discussions and also encourage other Pacific SIDS to follow suit.