

IMPROVING CAPACITY- STRENGTHENING EFFORTS

Perspectives on working
in partnership with
Small Island States

HIGHLIGHT REPORT

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Purpose of this report

This report summarises perspectives from Small Island Developing States (SIDS) on current experiences and opportunities to improve capacity-strengthening support, so it is more tailored, impactful, and sustainable.

Given the fast pace of global socio-economic development, more tailored, focused, and localised efforts to strengthen public sector capacity in small island developing states (SIDS) is increasingly important. SIDS have unique vulnerabilities, rich histories and contexts, and strengths that can be harnessed for sustainable development. Development partners need to adapt how they provide capacity-strengthening support, taking individual SIDS' circumstances and needs into account to better help them achieve their ambitions.

This report summarises perspectives from small island developing states (SIDS) on current experiences and opportunities to improve capacity-strengthening support to make it more tailored, impactful, and sustainable. The report uses the broad definition of capacity-strengthening as activities that improve the competencies and abilities of individuals, organisations, and broader formal and informal social structures in a way that boosts organisational performance. It concentrates on public sector capacity, including interactions with other stakeholders across sectors.

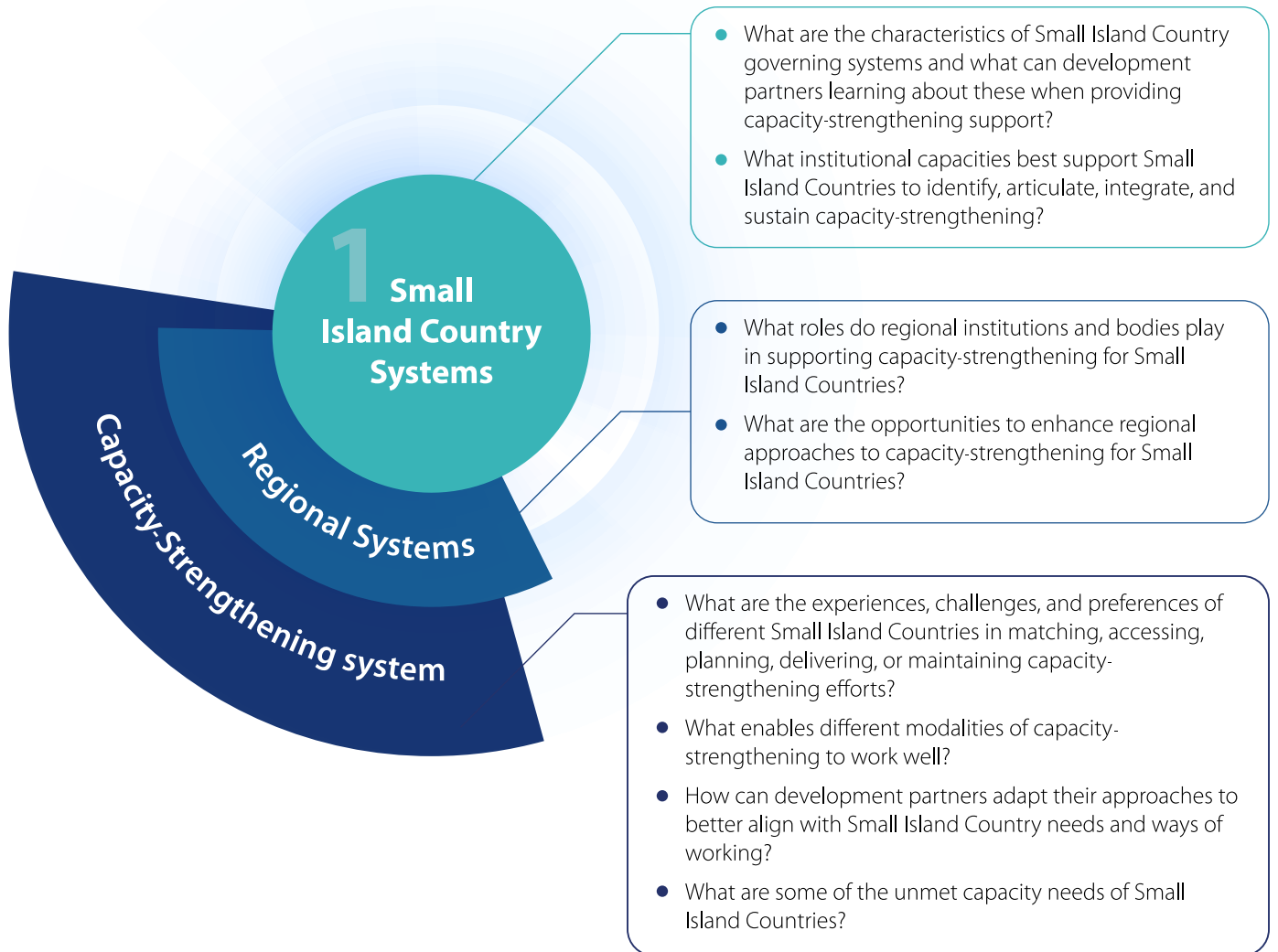
The report is structured in 5 parts, with the largest focus being on Part 3b.

Research approach

The research was guided by a framework as illustrated in Figure 1. Primary research was prioritised. It focused on perspectives directly from SIDS between June to December 2023, including in-country missions, involvement at preparatory meetings, online conversations and workshops, and a questionnaire. Secondary research included a desktop review of scholarly and grey literature, websites, articles, OECD products, and documents provided by participating SIDS, which have been used to support the findings of the primary research.

Further information on the purpose and background of the report, related work, research principles and language can be found in Annex 1.

Figure 1: Research framework and questions



Part 1

Improving capacity-strengthening through enhancing and leveraging SIDS public sector systems

Enhancing SIDS public sector organisational capacities

Given the key role the public administration plays in the advancement of any sector, SIDS recognise the importance of strengthening public sector organisational capacities and functions and sustaining the positive impacts of capacity-strengthening support from development partners. The latter should consider how to enhance governing or organisational capacities, drawing on international standards while leveraging the strengths and characteristics of SIDS. Priorities that emerged through primary research on SIDS include:

- **Enhancing capacities for addressing cross-cutting policy challenges.** Strong organisational capacities are key for designing and implementing climate policies. Building this capacity and making use of public governance tools is therefore paramount to enable the transformations needed for climate resilience. Many SIDS are seeking support to build their capacities in using new, more open, collaborative, and multidimensional approaches to addressing policy issues, many which align to the OECD Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (OECD, 2019). To achieve this, development partners could consider leveraging SIDS' relational working methods and proximity to the community and other structures, for example in utilising formal and informal collaboration mechanisms across the public sector, decentralised models of governing, networked governance, and open and participatory approaches. Some SIDS also support building stronger integration capacities, notably in view of achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While not all SIDS will have the enabling conditions to create stronger centre-of-government institutions, such models can play key roles in centres of government tackling climate issues and sustainable development (OECD, 2024), and could still be leveraged.
- **Enhancing strategic planning, co-ordination and policy coherence.** While some SIDS have existing strengths in this area, there is interest in bolstering their strategic planning capacities, including aligning internal strategies with national, regional and international development agendas. SIDS recognise that such capacities could help them better identify, articulate and focus development partners' capacity-strengthening efforts and give them greater power in influencing the scope and approaches of such efforts. The small administrations of many SIDS can be to their advantage in certain situations (easier coordination, stronger connections to communities, etc.); opportunities should be explored to leverage these advantages.

- **Streamlining bureaucracy and enhancing decision-making autonomy.** Often inherited from post-colonial histories, existing bureaucratic structures can be further optimised to foster a more responsive, agile, inclusive and innovative government. SIDS emphasise the importance of empowering the autonomy of public servants, enabling them to execute their duties without undue bureaucratic constraints. Sound workforce practices that create incentives for motivated, engaged and high-performing staff are also of interest.
- **Building data and statistical capacities while harnessing local knowledge and expertise.** SIDS all understand the importance of data and statistical capacities in good decision making, though many of them believe they lack the foundational infrastructure or technical capacities to do this. Consideration of local knowledge, data and expertise are also an important factor; this includes the development of monitoring and evaluations strategies and incorporating learning from these, for projects with development partners.
- **Empowering public servants and ministries in the digital era.** SIDS recognise strengthening public servants' capacities to thrive in the digital economy as imperative. Respondents highlight the need for training programmes to equip public servants with the skills needed for effective service delivery and good information sharing while supporting digitalisation and technology transfer.
- **Building good workforce practices and capabilities for sustainable development** (for example see (OECD, 2021) for recent work on individual civil servant capabilities required for SDGs), looking for socio-culturally appropriate ways to incentive good performance in public sector structures. Performance systems that clash with cultural norms have lower success (for example, in the Solomon Islands) (Ismail, 2019).



“We want to improve the way we work. We want to learn and be trusted as having international standards, but we need to make sure this works for us...”

In striving to enhance good governance and the organisational capacities of SIDS, development partners need to understand the local contexts, working methods and characteristics of the country they are working with. Subsequently, consideration should be given to how to view these factors as strengths and leverage them while drawing on international standards and regional frameworks when seeking to enhance public sector capacities.

Catalysing through addressing key capacity challenges

The public sector in each Small Island Country is as unique as the historical legacies and contexts that have shaped each country, despite a broad commonality in these public sector structures. This diversity is driven by many intersecting factors with population size being only one. To demonstrate the extreme variation in population sizes in the category of Small Island Countries, larger countries include Mauritius which has 1.3 million people,

Singapore which has over 5 million people and Papua New Guinea which has over 10 million. But a larger population does not account for sustainable public sector capacities or more sustainable development outcomes. While Singapore has been considered a high-income economy for many years, with average annual GDP growth among the world's highest since its independence in 1965 (citation), Papua New Guinea is a middle-income economy, with much of the population living below the poverty line (citation). At the other end of the spectrum, Small Island Countries include the four smallest countries on earth by population, including Tuvalu (11,000), Nauru (around 12,500) and Palau (18,000). Niue, in the Pacific, has only 1,900 people.

- **Options to adapt labour mobility or education programmes.** This is a challenging topic as such initiatives can both increase "brain drain" or risk worker exploitation and, at the same time, also create mutual advantages to both SIDS and development partners. With the growing impacts of skills loss in SIDS, however, robust dialogue should occur on whether certain changes to such programmes, even with trade-offs, need to be considered. For example, various options have been considered in the context of Australia's seasonal workers' programme, such as shifting away from recruiting workers from urban areas, setting up strategic recruitment strategies or placing restrictions on the recruitment of certain personnel (of course, this can create perverse incentives). Educational programmes can consider implementing such conditions, though SIDS may not have the capacity to follow up on them (this was, for example, voiced in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). Such conditions can also create perverse consequences.
- **Improving the value proposition of returning.** Return migration policies could be considered in conjunction with broader opportunities to create a favourable environment for skilled people to return, including investing in high-quality education (even within the region), research and development capacities to drive in-country development of technologies, recognising overseas qualifications, strategies to connect jobs with return migrants (OECD, 2017), improving the attractiveness of the civil service and improved business opportunities.
- **Diaspora engagement programmes that support skills transfer.** Many SIDS have existing strategies to engage youth and overseas persons through events, conferences, birth-right programmes or cultural solutions, for example. Conversations to enhance digital capacities and leverage these to engage with overseas persons could also be explored. Virtual exchanges could also allow a more rapid transfer of information and knowledge and, if coupled with the right enabling environment, could also offer opportunities for people to return and establish international businesses, and locally led employment opportunities.

While outside of the scope of this report, these issues cannot be uncoupled from broader international labour and financial systems. It is often stated that SIDS are economically fragile or vulnerable to events in international economic systems (Briguglio, 1995). Thus, seeking opportunities for changes to international financial policy and architecture, migration rules and trade rules could allow SIDS to retain the human and physical resources by driving up local wages and enabling economic growth (Staur, 2023). Such changes could also assist SIDS to mobilise, leveraging and supporting human resources domestically and compete with international markets.

Leveraging the innate characteristics and diversities of SIDS public sector systems



“We are dealing with one of the most important resources we have in this country... our people. There lies the importance of our Ministry.”

Development partners need to account for the context and operating environment of SIDS public sector systems and look for ways to work with and leverage this. While many SIDS have a similar set of structures in place to western democratic bureaucracies, there exist diversities and nuances across SIDS that are important to incorporate into capacity-strengthening approaches:



- **Independence and relational working cultures:** Following independence, many public services in SIDS shifted away from inherited procedures to de-neutralise public servants (UNDP, 2014). At times, this has meant that the lines between politics and the public sector began to blur. SIDS have indicated that this situation has posed the risk of the politicisation of the public sector and can result in public resources being controlled by politics rather than the administration. Additionally, the small size of the public sectors, and community and family values can affect the impersonality of public sectors in SIDS. In this context, proximity and relational ways of working can mean the standards of independence or impersonal models of public services that focus on merit and neutrality may not be fully applicable.

- **Proximity to community and social structures:** Another factor of public sectors and governing systems in some SIDS is the proximity that ministers, or the public administration, can have with citizens and their communities. This can enable rapid coordination, communication, and collective action by leveraging community and social structures (see case study on Samoa). This can have a great impact when combined with cultural attitudes of family, culture, and service, common across the Pacific (Lakisa, 2020). Public services can leverage strong social cohesion and community solidarity (Campbell & Hall, 2009)
- **Size:** while SIDS do have proportionally larger public sectors to their size, there still exist capacity issues such as low-capacity, over-extended personnel, challenges in attracting and retaining specialists, compensation challenges, limited mobility or promotions, shortage of management skills or excessive routine dependence (Maldives Reform Watch, n.d.). Current processes used by development partners do not always consider this in their processes. For example, coordination capacities in SIDS are often expected to navigate the scale of international support systems that use extensive reporting commitments drawn from western democratic and large governments. Yet, size also provides a range of strengths that development partners should leverage:
 - Trust and participatory approaches could be potentially easier.
 - Public services and policies have the potential to be more responsive to change and more flexibility.
 - Proximity to the population could enhance greater legitimacy for perceived fairness and equity.
 - Co-ordination can be easier, particularly when there are more homogenous populations.
 - The ease with which things can be done through relational ways of working (noting other challenges).



“There is thin capacity compared with the range of functions that the State is meant to provide. There is very limited ability to take advantage of economies of scale.”

Feature Case Study: Samoa

Samoa sits at the geographic center of the Pacific Ocean. It has a strong indigenous population with over 3,500 years of continuous history. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Germany, the United States, Great Britain and New Zealand each claimed Samoa at different times, leading to periods of local tension and dividing communities. In 1962, the Independent State of Samoa was established, founded as a constitutional democracy after a determined yet peaceful independence movement and representations to the United Nations.

In the 62 years since independence, the governing political party has changed twice. Public sector reforms have been implemented since the 1990s. In 2021, multiple political parties emerged for the first time, and current Prime Minister Fiamē Naomi Mata afa was elected as its first female Prime Minister. This election has been described as a coming-of-age for Samoa's post-independence government, a landmark moment in increased public sector impartiality. Many Samoans take pride in its democratic tradition and the ethos of its public sector, which helped the country through the 2021 election crisis. Samoa takes pride in its institutions, parliament and ethos of public service, underpinned by the rule of law, factors which add to its reputation as a stable, well-governed nation.

Today, Samoa has a population of 200,000 people across ten islands totaling 2,800km in size. With a middle-income economy, it maintains important relationships with New Zealand and Australia and active relationships with the US, China, Japan, Great Britain, the European Union, and UN agencies. The current government has put public sector reforms back on track with strong whole-of-government coordination and prioritization, and a focus on strengthening communities to support public services. This work builds on Samoan ways of working while the future goals and priorities of the Samoan government are outlined in the Pathway for the Development of Samoa (2022).

The Samoan Way

Relationships founded on respect and trust are integral to Samoan ways of working and are reflected in the people-centered ethic of its public sector.

Samoa culture prioritizes the building of relationships based on reciprocal trust and respect and the promotion of indigenous/traditional knowledges is central to the Samoan way. Respect is demonstrated by taking the time to listen, learn and discuss the perspectives, needs and contexts of others and then putting this into practice. It can be demonstrated by behaving in alignment with what you say, by considering the needs of others and preparing to support those needs

without being asked. These behaviors build relationships of trust.

Trust is a central theme throughout Samoan strategic guiding documents, including the Pathway for the Development of Samoa (2022), which contains a key outcome in security and trusted governance. The Samoan Public Administration Sector Plan (2021) aims for "a trusted, citizen- focused public administration" that values honesty, service and respect.

Respectful and trusted relationships can be powerful in enhancing diplomacy, cooperation, and collaboration, as well as in driving genuine community action towards system-wide development. The risks of a relational culture are well documented, and

favoritism or self-interest have featured in Samoan political history. However, Samoa also demonstrates that the strengths of its relational ethos can be powerfully directed into public good when focused on the collective welfare of all. Strong relational approaches also come through in remittance flows which are a sizeable share of the economy. A people-centered ethos is also common to regional organisations in the region, such as The Pacific Community, and to countries like Samoa.

In Samoa, the government has a large footprint, being the foremost contributor to GDP. The Samoan ethos connects public sector structures to community. Relational social practices that exist in family units and communities are reflected in Ministry structures and ways of working.



“The love and care you have for family; you bring to the service of the community. You bring the value of being Samoan to bringing value to your community as a public servant.”

Respectful partnerships in the Samoan public sector use agreed channels of communication, value discussion and honor the decisions of senior staff, and generally adhere to established processes. Development partners who truly understand the Samoan way and leverage this have seen greater impact and sustainability in their support.



“You are representing family and village because it’s a communal society. When you come as a public servant; you bring that environment with you. You know that if you do something successfully, everyone benefits.”

Government

Samoa is clear about its priorities and leverages central coordination capacities to ensure alignment in development with partners and Ministries.

Samoa has strong public sector capacities in setting and coordinating development priorities. This allows Ministries, local NGOs, the private sector and communities to understand and align with national priorities. A good example is the Samoa Ocean Strategy (SOS), which represents a key step towards integrated ocean management. Samoa has also created a National Ocean Steering Committee to facilitate the coordination of their ocean priorities. Samoa can further integrate the SOS with other planning instruments and with development partner coordination efforts.

While some growth opportunities remain, strengths in these capacities allow development partners to match opportunities to needs and allows Samoa to be selective in its development partners. In this way, Samoa exercises some power to choose whom it works with and avoid support that may not be aligned with foreign policy, development priorities, or yield negative impacts on its national debt.



“All countries have the power to say no, but you have to be clear on your priorities and planning to do that.”

Samoa has built up its central coordination approach to development partners. This operates across prioritization, quality review, reporting and financial administration of development support. Line ministries can and do have direct interactions with development partners on operational and implementation matters but understand and engage with centralized decision-making approaches. This approach reduces confusion of messaging and fragmentation of development efforts between the Samoan government and development partners. It increases coherence and alignment of development support, ensures the right support is sourced, the burden of reporting is lowered, and maximises the benefits of development support.

This capacity addresses challenges Samoa faced after independence, when external systems of governance were imposed (Amosa, 2003). While most partners align with centralised capacities that have brought positive results, Ministry staff say that the frequency with which partners use Samoan government systems or provide budget-level support has declined in recent years. Partners of Samoa should consider working with government systems and provide support at the sector or budget levels.



“Many development partners don’t trust our systems in country to channel their funds or to implement things.”

Community

Samoa is taking a holistic, sectoral approach to development and this includes leveraging community structures.

Samoa has established Sector Coordination Forums to enable listening, learning and discussion between Ministries, community, non-government organisations, and the private sector. These are for multi-directional communication and learning for all stakeholders across a sector, enabling feedback loops between community and government. They address capacity challenges in response to citizen needs as identified in the Samoan Public Administration Sector Plan (2021). Government structures are also transitioning to include sector-focused units. Project-focused contractors are now embedded in broader structures, allowing for sustained knowledge and holistic and integrated approaches.

Community engagement has been a salient feature of Samoan ocean work. Their ocean strategy and marine spatial planning has involved extensive community-level stakeholder consultation. Community/ local-level ownership is also evident in their resource management practices, e.g., their community/village fisheries management.



“Project units are staffed with contractors so once a project contract finishes, there’s not much knowledge transfer. With Sector Coordination Units, contractors are embedded in lead government agencies. The structure around them will still be there after they leave, and the people will be permanent with government. That provides long-term retention of knowledge.”

Samoa incorporates community as an important part of achieving outcomes across the broader system. The Samoan government is devolving decision-making and governance outwards to communities. District Development Plans have been created by each community, outlining needs and a planned roadmap of development actions. This initiative has highlighted that communities require capacity-strengthening to realise these plans.

These arrangements can be extended further to community mobilization in support of public services. Public sector capacities may be thin in Pacific countries, but social structures can be strong. Reestablishing community activities can enhance public services, such as women's groups that once coordinated health clinic days. In this way, strong social structures can enhance public service capacities in a small island context and partners can build upon this is feature of Samoan development.

ONE MILLION TALA PROJECT

The One Million Tala program provides support to local communities for economic development and is fully funded by the Samoan government. To achieve this, governance capacities in 51 electoral districts are being strengthened to implement their local District Development Plan (DDP). These are aligned to central planning instruments, and functions in the Ministries support overall coordination and quality checking of these plans. The Ministry for Women and Social Development took over the program from the Ministry of Finance with the aim of reaching women and disadvantaged groups.

Each district first receives funds to support operational costs of governance positions in each community. These positions oversee development projects in the community as identified in District Development Plans (Talamua News, 2022). A second round provides funds for projects approved by District Committees. A final round will be disbursed once program audit reports are provided to the Ministry of Women, Community & Social Development (Talamua News, 2023).



"The funds are not handouts to be distributed but rather to provide development funding for individuals, collective groups and village projects to help lift their standards of living."

All districts have District Development Plans developed with support from the Samoan Umbrella for Non-Government Organisations. The One Million Tala Project ensures these Plans can be implemented by communities. These Plans can also support elected Samoan government representatives to advocate for the priorities of their constituency nationally, at the regional level and with development partners.



"It's about community capacity support. If you give money to a community, and they don't have the right capacity to utilize it, then that money will go somewhere else. If you have the right capacity to utilize it, I can guarantee that will be utilized properly."

Development partners

Samoa has evolved its public sector capacities during the pandemic and development partners can evolve how they work to align with what works in Samoa.

Samoa public finance management and aid coordination is strong and commended by regional institutions. Constraints driven by the COVID-19 pandemic have led to significant capacity development in Samoa. The most intense years of the pandemic meant that borders were closed. To continue working with overseas technical assistance, work was provided via remote channels and a local counterpart was paired with assistance. Local Samoan skills were required to deliver under remote guidance, leading to significant skill development.

There is precedent for this positive outcome. Samoan capacities have been strengthened in similar past arrangements. Pacific regional institutions once pioneered counterpart arrangements such as peer-to-peer learning, twinning, secondments, placements, and Ministry staff visits between Pacific or other Global South countries. Samoan Ministry staff would like to see these recommenced.



“Due to COVID, we were forced to tap into our local pool of expertise. It pushed us to step up and build our capacity. There is a lot of learning there for development partners.”

Samoa academic, Desmond Amosa (2003), observes the demand for authentic country-led approaches comes against a historical backdrop of imposed or coercive reforms linked to eligibility for assistance. Studies show imposed reforms are most

likely to fail because they need to address complex socio-political environments. However, partner-led practices for public sector development in Samoa have historically mobilised consultants with limited experience and understanding of the Samoan context. This has contributed to reform approaches characterised by a lack of knowledge and awareness of Samoan social and political environments that influence the realities of sustainable development and government work.

Samoa practices have a significant influence in the design of development projects due to customary land ownership. For this reason, communities have a strong role in shaping development projects. It is critical that technical assistance sourced offshore is delivered by people who have experience working in Samoan or Pacific Island contexts. Samoans want support to develop themselves, build sustainable capacity and maintain the Samoan way. If partners are sourcing candidates for technical assistance, recruitment and procurement decisions should be made by appropriate Samoan Ministry staff.



“Partners want it to be ‘country driven’... But it’s not country-driven if it’s duplicated requests for the same information. That’s a burden. All that means is information is provided and validated by us. We say, ‘go and use data that’s already published.’”

Successful partnerships in Samoa are more than contracts or the exchange of data or funding. Respect, trust and genuine understanding is fundamental and should be reciprocated. Good partners demonstrate trust in proven Samoan capacities and systems, and the knowledge of the Samoan people of what is needed. Country-led development in Samoa means



not merely listening but also understanding and being ready to adapt to match local needs, even if that takes more time.

Samoan counterparts reiterated on several occasions that they are looking for long-term partnerships (financial and otherwise), that support them through the entire capacity-strengthening lifecycle, not just one-off development interventions.

Systems-level support, in which capacity development occurs across sectors, can enable Samoa themselves to make positive shifts, rather than generic technical assistance without sustainable internal capacity development.



“At the moment, it’s always treated as the donor and recipient relationship. But we’re in this together, we know the problem definition. We know what we want to achieve at the end. And then designing the development program in such a way that it’s a system, rather than its your process versus our process.”

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS WITH SAMOA

- Invest to understand Samoan needs and how a project can work with local practices
- Communicate responsively and apply partnership decisions consistently to demonstrate mutual respect
- Consideration of long-term sustainable support and partnership building is critical
- Reconsider risk thresholds to work more with Samoan government systems where possible
- Consider sector-based flexible and long-term funding to leverage the whole of system approach Samoa is taking
- Understand broader Samoan systems across a sector and provide support to all the elements, not just the project
- Leverage social structures when providing development support and capacity-strengthening, and promote support from local communities
- Work with development partners such as Australia and New Zealand to minimize the negative effects of labour mobility schemes
- Value civil servants and local contractors with equal remuneration as international assistance
- Allow Samoan Ministry staff to make decisions about who is procured for technical assistance
- Ensure local counterparts are coupled with international experts so that capacity stays in Samoa once work is completed
- Take time during work to understand development impacts in Samoa including intangible activities, such as jobs creation or sustainable livelihood adaptation
- Proactively use existing information and data published by Samoa for M&E
- Work with prioritization and coordination processes to simplify reporting and use Samoan ways of providing evidence
- Continue to invest in the long traditional of regional collaboration in the Pacific islands, to play a larger role in pooling capacity and sharing knowledge

Part 2

Improving capacity-strengthening through regional approaches and institutions

Regional institutions

Regional institutions and approaches present opportunities and challenges for capacity-strengthening. Regionalism emerged to strengthen capacity, coordinate development projects, amplify SIDS' voices (Carter, Fry, & Nanau, 2021), and deal with cross-border issues (Bishop & Payne, 2010). This can include peer learning, seeking supplementary capacity support, and exploring shared government systems (Global Affairs Canada, 2022). Regional approaches can also strengthen the position of larger programmes, often more desired by development partners. Regional approaches are important as they can achieve a level of scale, which can in turn, support comparative advantage, that is otherwise very difficult.

Both the Pacific and the Caribbean have multiple strong regional institutions, many of which are mandated by member countries, and both regions feature well-regarded tertiary universities. Meanwhile, SIDS in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) region have far fewer regional bodies, possibly due to its makeup of many sub-regions that share little or no historical, geographic, or cultural connection.

In the Pacific, regional approaches can be shaped by how dispersed countries are within a geographic area (Ng Shiu, Carter, Pilisi, Fehoko, & Corbett, 2023), by cultural homogeneity or shared interests or histories. Fora such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), have thus played a key role in helping to consolidate and communicate clear regional priorities, for example, through the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2022). Other regional organisations, such as The Pacific Community (SPC), have a strong advantage when distributed in-place across many Pacific locations to service its 22 member countries. Their approach to developing country-level plans reinforces country-owned support that is tailored to each member.



“The fact that SPC is in the Pacific, not just in one country, but spread over several ones, is a huge advantage. It’s important to have this direct contact and interactions, otherwise you can’t get anything done and you can’t build trust.”

Regionalism in the Caribbean is supported by a strong foundation for regional cooperation and shared historical ties resulting from colonial legacies (Griffith-Charles, 2016). Regional cooperation remains instrumental in addressing shared challenges and opportunities among Caribbean SIDS, fostering policy coordination and coherence, resource mobilisation and collective action. Regional institutions such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have significantly furthered economic integration, trade liberalization among neighbouring small islands, and bolstered technical and institutional capacities to support sustainable

development. However, CARICOM continues to face challenges to implementation of comprehensive economic integration initiatives (Al-Hassan, et al., 2020).

The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) has also shaped regional capacity-strengthening initiatives in the Caribbean with a strong emphasis on education and training programmes to enhance knowledge exchange and technical capacity among member countries. There is an extensive list of additional regional institutions that are not listed here support the region in different ways.

The AIMS region has far fewer regional institutions, and none represent all SIDS in the grouping. Some regional institutions with a specific focus do exist, such as the Indian Ocean Commission. Countries in this region may not have access to the same advantages as other regions. Inter-regional SIDS bodies may also help to bridge this gap. Inter-regional governance mechanisms, such as the Alliance of Small Island States, have succeeded in areas of global advocacy, such as climate advocacy (Bishop, et al., 2021).



“We were thinking of a catastrophic fund for the Indian Ocean, but it never worked. While different small islands have common catastrophic threats, the different ways of working across those islands make it difficult.”

Yet, SIDS can also experience challenges in regional approaches for capacity-strengthening. This can be due to the evolution of the roles of institutions, limited organisational capacities of regional institutions themselves, divergent national interests, governance inefficiencies and heightened dependency upon regional institutions (141). Some examples raised through the research included:

- the scope of some regional institutions has been overstretched which can impact capacity
- divergent interests and inability to achieve required political integration
- challenges in establishing the necessary collective governance structures (Bishop & Payne, 2010)
- view that regional approaches can dilute finance that reaches countries, or the contextualisation of projects
- regional institutions can perpetuate power imbalances or loss of resources (Chittoo, 2011)
- need for existing regional institutions to be more inclusive, including with community organisations (Newton Cain, 2015)

Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts to strengthen regional institutions, enhance coordination mechanisms, foster inclusive stakeholder engagement, and promote local ownership in initiatives (OECD, 2023).



“If [regional institutions] are donor funded and are lacking transparency, then island countries might not see the benefits. They can become just another layer and further fragment support.”

Opportunities to expand on regional approaches

Opportunities to expand on regional approaches would be useful. This would need careful design of governance mechanisms, information and resource flows, data implications, consideration of inputs and workforce capacities. Regional approaches should not diminish sovereignty and avoid adding layers of complexity (for example, a third layer of differing reporting, data requirements or rules). Striking a balance between national and regional needs and ensuring that initiatives are responsive to each country will remain important (OECD, 2023). Areas for exploration could include:

- **Identifying sectors with the most opportunities for regional collaboration.** Some SIDS noted that regional approaches should be used more effectively for common interests, comparative advantage, or untapped opportunities. Disaster management, the blue economy and technology were noted.
- **Regional, or global networks of regional hubs for specific sectors.** Sector-related regional hubs, such as climate (see the 5Cs) and sustainable energy (UN-DESA, n.d.), could be expanded and designed for other sectors, such as infrastructure. Hubs could provide myriad services, such as knowledge sharing, capacity building and technical experts to provide advice or assistance in creating standards or regulations.
- **Regional expert pools or centres of excellence.** These pools could provide services with low barriers to access, for example, in building programmes like Tax Inspectors Without Borders. Expert pools can sit across technical, sector or even organisational capacities such as procurement, project management, development applications and concept proposals or digital or data capacities. It can also be used to support SIDS in adopting and adapting contemporary approaches to policy making and governance, such as agile management, national listening exercises, foresight and anticipation approaches and national risk assessments. Many of these already exist and consideration can be given to expanding their impact and reach. These could leverage existing bodies, such as the Pacific Community.
- **Regional approaches to statistical strengthening.** In this regard, opportunities could be explored, such as augmenting the statistical human resource needs of SIDS through expert pools, providing tailored training and technical assistance to SIDS, information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure support either through identification of needs or through regional data processing facilities, national and regional statistical strategies (for example, see the regional strategy for the development of statistics [RSDS] approach) or data governance and rules development, including the preparation of regional guidelines.
- **Data hubs or regional data collection approaches.** Development partners could develop the capacities of existing bodies, such as the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre or the OECS, in these issues. Regional and inter-regional data hubs could support across a range of areas that can enhance SIDS' decision making. Regional data hubs could also act as a filter between development partners requiring data directly from SIDS and reduce duplication of data infrastructure ((Gasparini, Masters, & Carswell, 2021)). Data hubs need to consider issues of what data will be used, how they will be

collected, data quality and ownership and governance of data across the region. The establishment of the inter-regional platform, the SIDS Global Data Hub, is already being discussed.

- **Leveraging regional institutions for triangular co-operation.** Regional approaches can lower transaction costs, making it easy for development partners to support a number of SIDS through this modality.
- **Extend on regional programmes through banks.** this can finance activities SIDS that have already graduated from ODA. This is a way for graduated SIDS to continue to benefit from concessional finance.

Feature Case Study: Mauritius

Mauritius is situated in the Western Indian Ocean. Located off the coast of Africa, the island was uninhabited by humans until the 16th century, with distinct flora and fauna.

Numerous peoples landed in Mauritius initially, including Arab and Berber peoples from Northern Africa and the Portuguese. From the 15th to 19th centuries, the Netherlands, France, and Great Britain colonised Mauritius at different times. In 1968, Great Britain facilitated Mauritian processes to become independent, giving way to strong constitutional provisions to ensure democratic representation of its diverse population. In 1991, Mauritius achieved further liberties by becoming a republic within the Commonwealth. Since independence, Mauritius has achieved high rates of sustained, albeit uneven, growth through economic diversification and in international markets.

Today, Mauritius is one of the most densely populated countries, with a population of 1.25 million people on a landmass of around 2000km. Its diverse history has led to an equally diverse population, with Mauritian Creole being the local spoken language, among many others. It has a robust democratic system, though the governing political party changing regularly. Mauritius is often described as an economic success story, despite concerns about a rapidly ageing population and a high rate of youth emigration. The diversity of Mauritian society and its economic evolution means Mauritius has unique needs for development support as the country considers pathways towards its ambitions to become a high-income and inclusive economy.

The Mauritian Touch

Adaptability is a hallmark of Mauritian multicultural society, and this drives progress towards its development goals.

Since independence, adaptability has enabled disparate groups in Mauritius, brought together through historical legacies of oppression and liberation, to achieve sustained development. This is apparent at a national level across political, social, and economic spheres.



"It's the Mauritian touch – adaptability. We have had no choice but to adapt. This is one element that sometimes defines what a Mauritian is. Given the very short history we have since independence – we have made quite a lot of strides and been very vocal about Mauritius being pro human rights and supporting freedom in diversity. We have largely achieved that."

The density of the Mauritian population leads to a physical proximity which enhances adaptability. The unevenness of development across Mauritian society has been noted with rising unemployment amongst some cohorts (Ramtohol, 2018). Nonetheless, in the social support sector, Mauritian Ministries are adept at tailoring their services and practices to many different cohorts, which resulted in strong social support during COVID-19.

In the economic sphere, Mauritius has demonstrated adaptability through a focus on diversification, moving away from a historical dependence on the sugar industry through agricultural reforms, and supporting the creation of manufacturing, tourism, fashion, and international outsourcing industries (Ramtohol, 2018).

Adaptability in individuals, and as a community are core to the cultural values of Mauritius. Mauritius has a dedicated Ministry dedicated to promoting cultural

interactions between different parts of the society, to both preserve cultural heritage at the individual as well as the collective level – recognizing that these roots support their adaptability development.



“Maybe development partners fail to understand completely our local context, our specificities. They fail to understand vividly and rapidly the local context. For example, our language, our respect for human rights and different communities and sensibilities in religion.”

It has been said that Mauritius “has to deal with managing complexity at all times” (MRC, 1999). Successful partnerships in Mauritius are adaptable to this complexity by being flexible, responsive, and long-term. They support Mauritius to look to national before international resources. They are responsive to changing needs and reachable when needed. They are guided by Mauritian Ministries to deliver development in a diverse Mauritian context. They respect and acknowledge the journey and evolution that Mauritius has been on. They adequately assess how to provide the most customized support with stakeholders that reinforces this adaptability.

Achieving Mauritian ambitions

Mauritius has a strong vision for growth and ambitious priorities set out in the Government Program, however more clarity its chosen development pathway and articulating this would support more focused support.

Mauritius has strong visions and commitments for their future growth. The Mauritian economy is in transition from middle to high income status. The country has clear aspirations to become an inclusive, high-income economy (President of the Republic of Mauritius, 2020). This ambition has proven fruitful, with Mauritian leaders originally declaring in 2014 that it would become a high-income country and then achieving it briefly in 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2017 Public Sector Business Transformation Strategy and the Government Program remains the guiding document for public sector development. The current 2020-2024 Government Programme builds on the Transformation Strategy, featuring continual promotion of skill development through capacity building programs and training. Mauritian Ministries use the government program and international commitments to shape their priorities.



“On the international front, we shall assert our role as a key actor in the region and the world, connecting Africa and Asia. It’s a matter of ambition, political ambition. Like all countries, we started from nowhere, we were doomed to be a failed state. We want to go higher. We need that vision. We have no other alternative, if you don’t have this, how do you create the space for reforms?”

Yet, there remains some debate internally about the best pathways towards national goals to ensure they can remain on a sustainable path, for example their positioning in the international context. This can dilute clear messaging at the national level about priorities and preferred development pathways for development partners.

Articulating clear national-level needs, pathways and preferred approaches for capacity-strengthening relies on strong coordination and planning capacities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Financial Services both have internal coordination, prioritisation, data, and workforce assessment capacities. Other line Ministries, such as the Ministry of Social Integration, are now working to develop systems approaches and digitizing functions. Yet, as the public sector has evolved, there is no single or centralised institution to identify national capacity-strengthening needs. Mauritius acknowledges that whole-of-government capacities would better enable the identification and coordination of needs at a national level, support clear messaging to development partners required for good support.



“If it is clear in our mind what we need - if we are clear on our needs – then the contribution of development partners is excellent.”

Ministry staff are working to expand these capacities. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates an SDG Steering Committee with a supporting SDG Unit. This centralised coordination structure also seeks to align efforts internally towards the SDGs and provide a holistic monitoring approach. These efforts would be enhanced by identifying and implementing

a digital monitoring platform to support reporting. Relevant digital platforms will enhance whole-of-government initiatives, improve consistency across individual Ministries and allow staff to be mobilized to other activities. Digital transformation is a pillar in the 2017 Mauritius Public Sector Transformation Strategy. Ministry staff have also emphasized the importance for support from development partners on such national strategic planning and long-term economic planning capacities.

The development journey

Mauritius recognises they are still on their development journey and that long-strengthening support from development partners is essential

While Mauritius has achieved strong economic growth, they recognize that they are still on a journey for stable and sustained growth into the future. Given they are not eligible for some funds given their transitioning position, this has made it more complex for them to access supports. Mauritius has had to look for nontraditional modes of financing as traditional modes have become more difficult.

Mauritius does continue to receive overseas technical assistance, often in different forms of training, reviews or technical assistance for strategic documents, plans and roadmaps. This can leave staff with a strong need for implementation support in many areas.



“Our roadmap is still useful for us. The partner has not supported implementation. This is something we would like to raise.”

Given where Mauritius is in its development journey, implementing strategies or plans often requires specialized technical capacities and ability to exploit new technologies or approaches. In this way, Mauritius requires development partners to walk with them on the journey of development. This includes design and planning but also inception, implementation and measuring impact and continuous support to level-up their capacities. To date, long-term bilateral relationships have worked best, in which development partner countries help Mauritius to achieve sustainable outcomes.

This challenge can also be seen at times with training modalities offered by partners. At times, training programs are generic, not tailored to the diverse context and needs of Mauritius, and not taking a whole-of-system approach, and not in specialized enough areas. Training needs to be considered at the systems level and for the levels of maturity of the sector and people being trained. The right people need to be trained across a system to ensure sustained strengthening, such as front-line staff along with policy makers and regulators. Tailoring training and ensuring a systems-approach that enablers and empowers individuals to be effective in their own context is important. Including long-term follow ups and mentoring will also help to enhance sustained growth of capability.



"In terms of capacity development, this doesn't come overnight. It's a journey - a process. It's important we bring this element of change management, such as how to engage, implement, adapt. These aspects of capacity building are important."

Mauritius is committed to embracing innovation across its industries to help catalyze its development journey. Many examples have been offered. Mauritius has wanted to learn about ways to improve eVisa and border control improvements from countries such as Australia. They are also looking to build on their strong manufacturing industries and include 3D technology for manufacturing. Mauritius is seeking to adopt digital capabilities to enhance transparency of their communication to citizens. Other areas include the use of AI or to create cultural immersive experiences, technical expertise in fields of aquaculture, specialized forms of policing and better town and infrastructure planning.

Strengthening institutional capacities

Mauritius has strengths in its public sector capacities, supporting its economic growth and social development.

Mauritius and its Ministry staff are highly committed to economic growth as well as social wellbeing of the country. In this light, it has strong priorities and has been successful in creating the appropriate enabling environment for enabling various sectors to flourish. For example, the operators in the manufacturing sector to enhance their productivity and competitiveness as well as sustain industrial growth over the years. Many Mauritian manufacturers have become reputed global suppliers for high-end products. Strong public-private partnerships have been established to facilitate industrial growth and contribute to the economic prosperity of the country.

In this regard, development partners should continue to support Mauritius to accelerate and catalyze this growth, through strong research and innovation and economic planning and development, as well as sector-based financial support and infrastructure to catalyze the sustainability of manufacturing. Mauritius continues to look for opportunities to use science, innovation, and technology to enhance its services and growth as such assistance can help to grow more emerging markets and entrepreneurs.



“Mauritius has established processes and has identified key institutional capacities which will reinforce their foundations.”

Given where Mauritius is in its development journey, implementing strategies or plans often requires specialized technical capacities and ability to exploit new technologies or approaches. In this way, Mauritius requires development partners to walk with them on the journey of development. This includes design and planning but also inception, implementation and measuring impact and continuous support to level-up their capacities. To date, long-term bilateral relationships have worked best, in which development partner countries help Mauritius to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Processes and procedures guide Ministry staff in how they should perform their function, ensuring consistency across the public sector and adherence to global standards. They are committed to improving their governing standards and are working with development partners on this.

Yet, Mauritius also acknowledges that certain capacities hold them back. For example, digital technology and

transformation. Many Ministry staff recognised the inefficiencies that a lack of digital connectedness can cause, or the need for better databases (for example in the cultural sector or spatial database infrastructure) to inform more comprehensive planning and strategic decision-making. Several have also expressed the need for continued enhancements of good workforce and recruitment practices. Further, rigorous monitoring and evaluation practices to enable staff to better capture the progress and impacts of the initiatives while doing this in a way that is culturally tailored.

Sharing knowledge

Mauritius wants to share its knowledge and learn from other countries but needs more meaningful regional or global mechanisms to do this.

As Mauritius continues its sustainable development journey, Ministry staff are increasingly valuing the importance of learning and gaining insights from their global partners. Mauritius has already learned much from its development journey and is eager to share knowledge via international forums and learn from others about ways to continue its journey. Ministry staff are eager to learn from countries that have experienced similar and understand future goals and opportunities. For example, individuals want to be connected to the global community, to network, to enhance knowledge or even undertake collaborative research and development that can contribute to economic growth.

Ministry staff want to continue to innovate and are aware of initiatives in other countries relevant to their development journey but have little access to learn

about them. This particularly includes sectors that are trying to leverage new or emerging technologies or markets, data and AI capabilities or specialized capacities to undertake key public services, such as security and policing. Ministry staff have suggested study tours, internships, secondments, and peer-to-peer arrangements that either focus on short-term specialized needs, or long-term peer learning systems.



"In 2017, we wanted to benchmark with Commonwealth countries – because they have different progress made in their public sectors. Australia was well ahead. We wanted to know what the gaps were and how to fill it, but we didn't have an avenue to do this."

Yet, many staff do not feel that they have ample visibility of, or opportunities to participate in, meaningful knowledge sharing. Mauritius is active in regional forums (including in the Indian Ocean or African region), depending on shared goals such as the blue economy, but these could better focus on knowledge exchange. For example, individuals emphasized their desire for regional learning through secondments in aquaculture or fisheries, or around competition regulations, or even new approaches for integrating and preserving cultural values into society.

Continuing to consider regional approaches and global approaches to facilitate structured and meaningful learning. Mauritius also has ambitions to be leaders in sharing knowledge. The country is establishing a civil servant academy to ensure a more consistent quality of capacities across its public sector and Ministry staff wish to contribute to global knowledge sharing.





“This might be one of our recommendations – get the island countries to set up a global Centre of Excellence catering to our public sector and the specifics of island countries. Can’t we have it housed in Mauritius? We are so multi-lingual here.”



“Development partners should adapt their technical support to the specificities of Mauritius as a SIDS faced with the challenges of an ageing population, strain on public finance to sustain the increasing costs of cash transfers, local migration from Rodrigues due to lack of opportunities, to address multi-dimensional aspects of poverty.”

Development partnerships

Mauritius genuinely appreciates its development partners and the overall application of the principles of effective development cooperation.

Ministry staff understand the benefit to their own growth journey that international partners have supported. Their commitment to initiating and maintaining collaborative partnerships to foster formulation of projects contributes to this. Ministries believe that this is also fundamental for capacity-strengthening activities to truly be tailored to their differentiated needs and their progress made.

Development partners require a holistic approach, considering the interconnections between different sectors and enhancing capacities in all parts of the system (for example, on gender issues, ensuring that this is considered in child protection, early childhood development and social welfare). The impact of capacity-strengthening would also be bolstered if development partners took a long-term partnership approach, considering a holistic framework and how different modalities are used within it. Many staff prefer strong bilateral partnerships that supports flexible and highly tailored support, and that have open communication and more simplified processes.

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, SPORTS & RECREATION

Mauritius recognises the importance of empowering their community as part of an inclusive, sustainable growth. Many ministries are working in modes that better enable their community to be part of this journey, such as the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation.

Mauritius is a country facing economic and workforce challenges driven by a rapidly ageing population. In 2010, around 60 per cent of university educated graduates emigrated overseas (Kerr et al, 2016) while the national fertility rate is below replacement levels (Ramtohul, 2018).

Youth centres are one avenue for engaging younger generations in Mauritius. The Ministry of Youth Empowerment

operates 25 centres across Mauritius, including the island of Rodrigues. These operate as hubs and are used to conduct community outreach. Ministries across the Mauritian government work with the Ministry of Youth Empowerment to reach communities and deliver health and social inclusion initiatives.



"We have proximity via the youth centres. People come for activities - training is very important to us. 20 years ago, I was selected for training in Madagascar. In turn, I give training to young people here. This is how we are reaping the seeds we have sown."

In a country where a future focus and adaptability are key, the Ministry of Youth and its network of youth centres are working to increase inclusive support across communities. Their training supports young people to be workforce-ready and tackle the drain caused by young people departing overseas. While not all youth interact with it yet, they offer an important pathway.

Staff in the Ministry of Youth have a strong sense of leadership, with their Minister frequently participating in events with young people. Ministry staff coordinate events each year for World Walking Day, which is strongly supported by Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth

and delivered in partnership with local organisations. In this way, the Ministry of Youth leverages the proximity of its diverse community afforded by its island context.

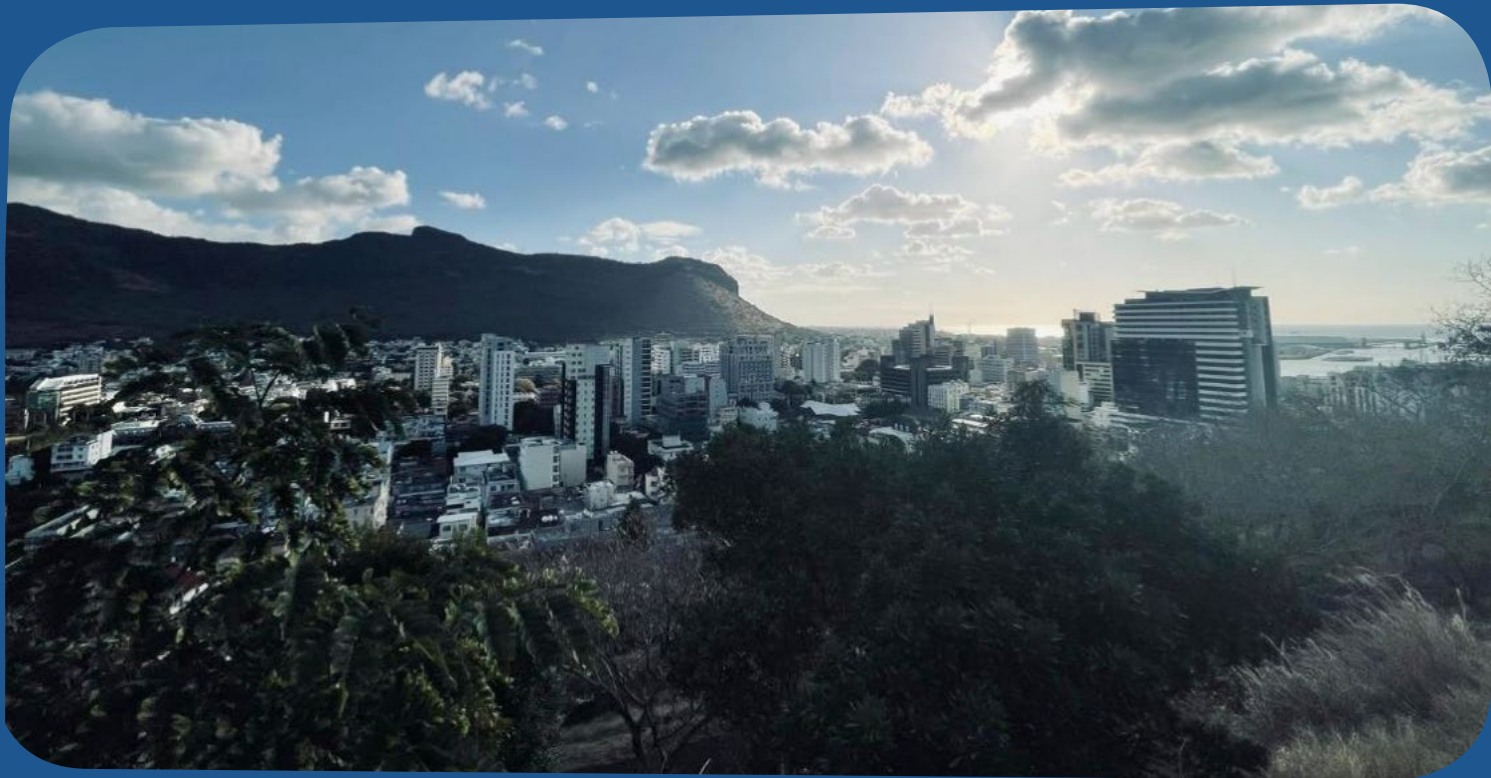


"Our Ministry is scattered all around – in every district. We connect north to south, east to west, especially on World Walking Day."

This sense of community does not stop in the youth sector. Other Ministries, for example, on topics of transport or gender, emphasize the need for development partners to empower officers to engage with communities.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS WITH MAURITIUS

- Understand the success, strengths, and ambitions of Mauritius and how to assist in achieving national development goals
- Longer-term development relationships that are flexible, use a range of modalities and responsive to changing needs are best
- Partnerships that are prepared to 'walk with' Mauritius through implementation and impact will lead to greater impact for Mauritius
- Support Mauritius to strengthen its institutional capacities, such as through national articulation of priorities, and its coordination functions
- Supporting Mauritius to access climate funding and assistance, particularly reducing the required level of administration
- Support a funded global pool of consultants or experts that SIDS can draw from, across a range of sectors and for specialized areas
- Support staff to map system changes to enable training participants to share their new knowledge to others
- Consider peer-to-peer learning modalities for Mauritius, whether it be Mauritian Ministry staff learning in other contexts or peer country staff visiting Mauritius



- Support Mauritius to host global forums for sharing learning between SIDS to support development and learning
- Tailor training content with Ministry staff to Mauritian needs and contexts, and ensure the right people are trained, and that this enables people to be empowered in their jobs
- Support the implementation of pillars in the Mauritius Public Sector Transformation Strategy, including digital transformation
- Utilize peer learning, study tours, training and triangular cooperation modalities, to catalyse capacity areas of priority, including:
 - Conformity testing, assaying of metals, technology transfer
 - Policy coordination, digitization skills (including infrastructure) and data and research capacities, and support for AI transfer to create more efficient services and regulation across sectors, research and innovation, and communications expertise
- Models of pedagogy, replicated practices to help people exit poverty
- Unlock the blue economy through technology transfer, marine protection, and aquaculture
- Waste, management & boosting recycling industry, circular economy
- Technology transfer and training for use of drones for land planning and ariel mapping
- Specialised and advanced policing techniques, cybercrime, prison security, correctional services models and approaches
- Data analytics for SDGs, and SEEA models and measurement against indicators

Part 3a

Catalysing the impact of capacity-strengthening for SIDS: untapped, cross-cutting opportunities

It is out of the scope of this report to cover detailed capacity requirements of SIDS across all sectors, and this topic is well covered in other literature and the lead-up to the 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4). However, three priority themes that can be applied across several sectors emerging from the primary research are worth raising:

1. Exploiting innovation and technology advancements
2. Leveraging partnerships with the community and the private sector
3. Expanding south-south and triangular cooperation approaches

Exploiting innovation and technology advancements

Advancing technology, greater connectivity and crises like the COVID-19 pandemic create opportunities for SIDS to innovate across many sectors. The primary research highlighted this as a top priority for SIDS, looking for more visibility of current trends and holistic support to explore and exploit emerging technologies. Advancing and emerging technologies can catalyse capacities in SIDS:

- climate resilience (for example, the protection of marine environment, remote sensing (Anisimov & Gulyaeva, 2021); (Halais, 2019))
- catalysing different industries which can help SIDS achieve inclusive economic development (Labrunie & Chang, 2023)). For instance, survey participants were highly interested in adopting 3D manufacturing processes, using precision technologies for agriculture, renewable energy for tourism, AI for analytics or cybersecurity, new spatial mapping, digital learning, and automated financial and banking software.
- Enhancing governance or public service practices (for example, the Marshall Islands' push to encode all its rules and governance in a digital format, or the use of digital IDs or electronic-government in Seychelles)

Exploiting technologies to strengthen capacities demands a holistic approach, including considering:

- the development of technologies and related infrastructure (and repair or maintenance) that are adapted to the SIDS' context and enabling environment
- accessing new and appropriate financial flows
- facilitating access to required data and technical knowledge

- building research, development, and innovation capacities (including ability to absorb, disseminate and use relevant technology or innovations (United Nations, 2023); see (Halais, 2019) for information on research capacities of SIDS)
- capacity building of relevant stakeholders (including citizens who may interact with new technologies)
- broader changes to regulatory or trade or investment frameworks, or enabling environments of industries
- political will and policy consensus or change (including looking at potential risks such as loss of jobs)

More broadly, development partners should also prioritise the SIDS' overall innovation capacities to harness existing and future opportunities. At a national level, people science is already improving ocean quality and data aggregation tools are supporting the health sector and disaster responses. SIDS also have regional and global innovation opportunities to drive comparative advantage across the states (Meddeb, 2022). For example, in utilising community datasets, pioneering ethical or trusted digital approaches (closing the gap between citizens and governments) and using digital currencies. Innovation could also support untapped sectors such as the blue economy or enhance the services sector.

To support SIDS to exploit innovation and technology, development partners should consider:

- **Whole of systems approaches** that consider elements outlined above, adapted to the context of SIDS
- **Leveraging south-south and triangular cooperation modalities** to learn from countries in similar contexts and to test trial technologies in a new context
- **Supporting financial flows** through shifting climate funds towards adaptation technologies, support SIDS in pursuing public-private partnerships (PPPs) and diverse financing opportunities (for example, crowd funding or blended financing, (UNEPCCC, 2022))
- **Building research, development, and innovation capacities** including the broader enabling conditions:
 - cross-border frameworks and foundational data infrastructure, including the internet (UNCTAD, 2022)
 - facilitating dialogues to identify shared priorities and principles that balance regional or global advantage with sovereignty and self-determination
 - identifying broader shifts to the economic enabling environment to support innovative options (SIDS discussed subsidies, incentives, and reviews of taxes)
 - embedding innovation policies into national development strategies
 - enhancing governance approaches, for example to build citizen trust in public institutions
- **Leverage regional and sub-regional governance:** for example, in establishing academic programmes and partnerships (201), centers of excellence, or pools of experts that can be easily drawn upon by SIDS.

Leveraging partnerships with community and the private sector

While national ownership is vital for sustainable capacity-strengthening, there are opportunities for development partners to better build leverage partnerships with the private sector and community. These actors play important roles in helping with knowledge production, overcoming capacity or absorption constraints of national public administrations (OECD, 2023), and supporting collective action at the local level. This concept is reinforced in the United Nation's work around genuine and durable partnerships, which recognises that "multiple actors work together through collective action to tackle complex challenges usually through system transformation" (Yezza, Prescott, Stibbe, & Goransson, 2021).

Strengthening capacity through partnerships with community and civil service

SIDS strongly agree that working with local structures, such as community and citizens is vital to strengthen capacities. If capacity-strengthening can leverage local social structures (Pritchett, 2013), then that initiative will likely have more a sustained impact. Initiatives at the local level can perform well as they are familiar with local context and socio-cultural nuances and cultural specificities. Development partners already support SIDS through partnerships with community and civil society organisations (CSOs) to deliver education and health care services, or to support prevention awareness initiatives in health or climate change (see for examples (The World Bank, 2021); (UNDP, 2020); (OECD, 2023); (Hassell, Hutton, & Barnett, 2020). In the Comoros, local associations have been instrumental in enhancing small-scale fisheries management effectively. Effective partnerships with these actors could also better support improved coordination and whole-of-system approaches, positive spillover effects to social or economic areas, and scaling up of successful pilots or approaches. One example (WHO, 2018) is the Locally Managed Marine Areas Network, which has expanded from a single village in Fiji to incorporating 600 villages in 15 Pacific Island States and some Indian Ocean countries, providing benefits on fisheries and community livelihoods. In Samoa, CSOs deliver training to citizens and businesses (including women entrepreneurs), supporting their broader business and technical capacities.



"If society is strong in an island, don't fragment it. Don't deny it. Don't duplicate it. Churches, women's groups, and non-government organizations can be critical for providing public services."

However, to successfully engage community organisations and CSOs, development partners should consider:

- **Using local experts or structures** where possible with direct and accessible engagement methods
- **Work with the political context** to enable other actors having more responsibilities
- **Ensuring financing reaches CSOs or community organisations;** national subsidies may not always be provided and funding from development partners often get 'stuck' at the national level

- **Considering required shifts to governance models.** For example, SIDS may need to utilise more decentralised governing models to allow community organisations to play a great role. It is not appropriate to assume that national public administrations can cope with greater roles.
- **Providing capacity-strengthening for all actors,** including the organisational capacities required for CSOs and community organisations to play a greater role in policy or the delivery of public services.

Public Private Partnerships

SIDS could also benefit from PPPs across a range of sectors and support the unlocking of different financing opportunities (this can be important for countries who have graduated in status and thus have limited access to concessional financing) (186). For example, positive models were identified such as supporting renewable energy through the Sustainable Energy Financing Project or utilising Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT)/ Design-Build-Finance-Operate (DBFO) models for infrastructure gaps or greenfield projects (generally, major risks are borne by the private company) (187). However, there can be structural constraints such as a lack of enabling environment, isolated or small private sectors, insufficient capacity to access such opportunities, issues of scale, the regulation environment, etc. (180). Establishing effective PPPs is a complex process and requires comprehensive legal, institutional and financial management frameworks. These need to be considered when attempting to leverage such opportunities. Further, SIDS may need to be supported in generating the systemic evidence base necessary to make the case to potential private sector investors (particularly larger or global investors) (WHO, 2018).

Research and academia

Universities, research think-tanks, and other academic institutions can play positive roles in capacity-strengthening, through delivery of education or training, research, and innovation development, and in gaining local needs or data for different sectors such as in climate change (Khan, Mfitumuzika, & Huq, 2020); (Ensor & Harvey, 2015)). Supporting local and regional universities can also help retain talent within countries. Yet, many face challenges in allowing them to undertake research or implement sustainable capacity-strengthening activities. These challenges include a lack of financial support, co-ordination and staff training, and insufficient monitoring or follow-up tools to evaluate their programmes. Further, universities and academic institutions are often excluded from development partner-led support (Westoby, et al., 2020) or funding is only short-term, resulting in the training to stop (for example, the ocean sustainability training in Comoros).

Development partners should therefore support and empower universities and academic institutions to better enhance capacities for SIDS. For example, through:

- **Using these institutions to leverage local knowledge and resources,** including regionally or sub-regionally. SIDS have noted the positive opportunities that institutions such as the University of the West Indies and the University of the South Pacific offered, and these could be funded and leveraged in capacity programmes.

- **Helping to strengthen the connection between research and policy decisions.** For example, SIDS have noted the importance of better applying research to innovate across areas of manufacturing or climate change, while others noted the importance of establishing national science capacities and systems.
- **Sharing innovative practices, technology advances or scientific research with SIDS,** for example through global centres of excellence, knowledge-sharing platforms or existing networks.
- **Enhancing the organisational capacities** of academic institutions.

Expanding south-south and triangular cooperation approaches

South-south and triangular cooperation approaches are of increasing importance and should be further exploited for SIDS. These approaches acknowledge that all countries are sources of rich knowledge and experiences. They are also enabling SIDS to have a wider choice of development partners (OECD, 2023). They can help in deploying local, culturally relevant practices by identifying models of service delivery that are suited to the local context and that can be scaled. Numerous examples have been identified, such as disaster risk reduction across the Pacific Islands, reef restoration in Mauritius and Seychelles, maritime training in Singapore and the International Maritime Organization, and even strengthening governance capacities across islands (UN-OHRLLS, 2021). Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Fiji, Guinea-Bissau and Haiti are also often involved in green triangular co-operation projects (OECD, 2023). The triangular and south-south cooperation approaches could be applied to the different types of capacity-strengthening needs for SIDS, for example:

- In short-term approaches that can be lower-cost and used for pilot projects or to explore new partnerships.
- Through regional or sub-regional approaches and institutions to knowledge sharing or training, for example through utilising existing centres of excellence and creating regional hubs.
- For scaling up capacities or technology transfer from other countries.
- As part of long-term capacity-strengthening partnerships or programmes.
- As part of longer-term, flexible, sector-wide approaches (for example, German development agency GIZ provides a regional fund for triangular co-operation, which can allow more than three partners).

For SIDS, triangular co-operation approaches could be considered outside traditional government-to-government initiatives and include more than three partners. Establishing models with robust debate and innovation processes could also help reduce the risk of reproducing one-size-fits-all narratives. One of the benefits of such approaches includes enhancing the capacity of all partners to tackle cross-cutting global challenges while fostering partnerships (OECD, n.d.). Although further research is needed, development partners should invest in establishing these approaches and trialling different models. Some key considerations include:

- **Building ownership and trust** by supporting common interests of actors and countries, and focusing on benefits for all partners, rather than just beneficiaries.
- **Embracing a multi-stakeholder partnership approach**, including different sectors where it may offer value.
- **Mutual accountability across all partners and actors** while supporting condition-free approaches.
- **Leveraging innovation, experimentation and digital opportunities** which can enhance technology transfer (for example, Indonesia was able to transfer its technology on solar-power boats to Fiji, 191).
- **Supporting SIDS in embedding such modalities in their own organisations** helping to create legitimacy for these modalities, inserting them in national and regional strategies and establishing co-ordination units.
- **Undertaking systematic reporting and sharing of learnings** to raise awareness of these modalities' value and practical applications.
- **Working with regional institutions to establish governance mechanisms** to formalise these approaches.
- **Providing better visibility on triangular initiatives** through publishing opportunities or through global calls.



"We have things to share, and we should do more peer-to-peer learning through south-south cooperation."



Part 3b

Catalysing the impact of capacity-strengthening for SIDS: improving the process and approaches from development partners

Priority cross-cutting themes to improve processes and approaches

The processes and approaches that development partners use in working with SIDS can be just as influential on the quality, contextualisation and sustainability of capacity-strengthening. This part summarises 5 key themes:

1. Longer timescales and modalities for flexible and sustainable capacity.
2. Taking a co-ordinated, whole-of-system approach to capacity-strengthening.
3. Tailoring approaches to needs, context, culture and systems.
4. Existing knowledge, practices and ability to absorb and integrate new capacities.
5. Importance of meaningful partnerships between SIDS and development partners.

Longer timescales and modalities for flexible and sustainable capacity

SIDS discussed the importance of long-term, sustainable approaches to capacity-strengthening. Most recognised the value of short, sharp training for specialised capacities or specific needs but indicated preferences for flexible long-term support. This is important given the types of challenges SIDS face are very complex. At times, SIDS can experience an abrupt conclusion to support at the end of a project or programmes being delivered and short-term gains fail to be institutionalised or used. This can be exacerbated by a broader structure of development assistance that can encourage SIDS to bid for short-term project funds that bring temporary injections of funds but do not offer sustainable solutions (Bishop, et al., 2021). A more nuanced lifecycle for capacity-strengthening should be considered a default that focuses on a continuous and long-term process, enabling SIDS to strengthen their capacities more sustainably. Figure 2 demonstrates what this could look like, with more emphasis on delivery and maintenance.

While at times, long-term supplementation is required due to lack of resources, there was general agreement that supporting knowledge transfer and capacity-strengthening of local staff was crucial (for example through combinations of modalities with mentoring, coaching and continuous development or follow ups). Where supplementation or technical assistance is provided, equitable pays and twinning of local counterparts were raised as good practice (90% of respondents to the questionnaire for this survey preferred the presence of local counterparts). Exit strategies should consider that activities may require longer timeframes in SIDS than in other settings.



“I want to know that the next time they come back, that I can do a little more. They aren’t showing me the same thing but are showing me more complex things.”

Long-term approaches should employ flexible and adaptive design and implementation. The current architecture of projects is considered overly rigid from project design to implementation (Mikulewicz & Podgórska, 2020). A flexible approach is crucial for delivering capacity-strengthening, especially given the long gaps between project approval and implementation, and realities on the ground that might change. Some positive examples have been given; however, for example, the support Japan is providing to Mauritius in their oceans sector, or New Zealand’s approach in Vanuatu has shown flexibility in delivering a package of support to the country’s recovery from tropical cyclone Harold in 2022 (OECD, 2023). These were done through long-term, programmatic modalities.

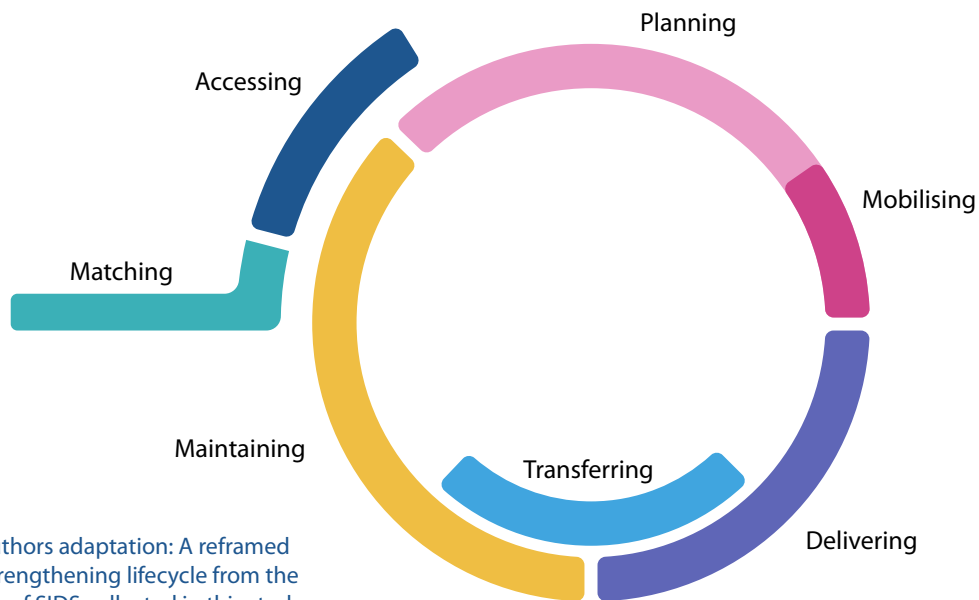


Figure 2: Authors adaptation: A reframed capacity-strengthening lifecycle from the perspective of SIDS collected in this study

Taking a coordinated, whole of systems approach to capacity-strengthening

SIDS have emphasised that development partners should take a more whole of systems approach to capacity-strengthening. This is supported by a range of academic and practice literature discussing the importance of contexts and systems (see for example (Stiles & Weeks, 2007); (Doran & Pryke, 2017); (Schulz, Gustafsson, & Illes, 2005)). Several considerations surfaced from the research as to how development partners could do this practically:

- **Better identifying the right individuals or actors to be involved.** It is important to provide capacity-strengthening to frontline staff, policy makers and organisational functions (for example, budgeting, administrative, regulatory or information and communication technology [ICT]). This also means ensuring that other organisations or stakeholders that play a key role are involved (for example, in the health or education sector, where community organisations, women’s groups or civil society organisations play a key role).

- **Providing training needs alongside infrastructure or resources** (such as computers or software). Further, infrastructure or equipment provisions also need to consider capacities to maintain or repair the infrastructure (whether this is in-country or provided through development partner services such as, at times, information technology support) and, potentially, specialists for operating the infrastructure.
- **Engaging with the broader inputs, processes or institutional settings that need to be shifted.** For example, building overall capacities in climate change action may require shifts to regulatory frameworks, policy changes, incentives, infrastructure, workforce skills and finance. Institutional settings can be the most difficult to change, and yet the most important to enabling successful efforts.
- **Being cognisant of the broader environmental or contextual factors,** such as politics, the macroeconomic landscape, political systems, laws, rules, power, values, or attitudes. These elements can enable or hinder the success of any effort.
- **Better co-ordinating efforts.** This ensures alignment and coherence of action and reduces unnecessary burden on SIDS (OECD, 2023). Currently, approaches usually reflect development partner practices (or their intermediaries) in working methods, priorities, and approaches. Knowledge gaps among partners also prevent synergies required for whole-of-system transformation and create duplicities in investments, implementation and data collection and analysis. This is particularly important when working with multilaterals, which can unlock greater expertise but also place a greater burden on SIDS.
- **Considering how to enable SIDS to effect whole-of-system change.** This takes a slightly different paradigm from the typical approach where development partners may take a whole-of-system approach but still see themselves as the experts or responsible for enacting the change.





“We’re not dealing with just one donor anymore, but several donors. We have a new donor that has come onto the scene, I asked who are the donors? Which countries? They don’t even know how many partners and countries are involved. Having to deal with many kinds of donors and agencies at the same time, can be quite daunting for us.”

Tailoring approaches to needs, context, culture, and systems

SIDS engaged in this research raised frequently the need for development partners to provide more tailored and contextualised capacity-strengthening:

- **Approaches tailored to the needs of SIDS:** SIDS say that they often adapt development partner priorities rather than receiving support that reflects their needs (see Part 4 for additional reasons that can contribute). This is a challenge, even for SIDS with clear national strategies and capacity assessments. Further, training or other advice is often generic and does not take into account their existing capacities or local context. This results in a lack of ownership of the projects or a lack of implementation or maintenance of new practices.
- **Approaches tailored to context:** Every SIDS has its own history, political economy and institutional frameworks. Their context is also shaped by dynamic and often difficult-to-control external forces, such as politics, that can enable or hinder the impact and sustainability of capacity-strengthening efforts (Pritchett, 2013). Some practitioners have used approaches such as thinking and working politically (TWP) to better grapple with topics of politics. TWP has three principles: 1) strong political analysis; 2) detailed appreciation of, and response to, the local context; and 3) flexibility and adaptability in programme design. Tools such as political economy analyses have also been of growing interest. Yet a few challenges can arise in practice:
 - The instruments often used by development partners do not account for the political economy of their own agencies (Hout, 2015) and the implications of this on capacity-strengthening support.
 - These approaches often require changes to how development partners work – to be more adaptive, responsive, and agile at all phases of the lifecycle and better incorporate formal and informal sources of knowledge and evidence. It may conflict with traditional or more inflexible ways of working of some development partners (Hudson & Marquette, 2015)
 - These tools are best used in collaboration with SIDS but can at times feel overburdensome (when combined with the extent of planning tools, checklists, and frameworks). Further, at times SIDS do not feel these exercises inform practically the design and approaches of support.
- **Approaches tailored to cultural practices and values:** Culture and traditions are very important for and yet diverse across SIDS. Capacity-strengthening approaches from development partners often prioritise best practices from contexts that may push out more traditional ways of working, knowledge or social structures. Many SIDS are prioritising leveraging traditional ways of working while working closely with development partners,

which often see best practices from other contexts applied (Smith, 2021); (Vaiolati, 2006); (Helu-Thaman, 1997). Several examples were given through the research, including Samoa revitalising traditional approaches in its education sector.



At first, all ideas were good ideas and you tended to accept them, not realizing that many of these ideas were eroding the wonderful ideas that our culture had... There is integration of some of our cultural values in how we run public administration now. Which is a strength in my view, because there are some good principles that we have introduced." We sat down and said, 'we've tried all these models for all these years, and we really need to talk about why these are not working.' We have a school of thought in academia, its Pacific Islanders going into their own culture, 'these are things we value; this is the way we do it' and bring it all together."

- **Tailored to country systems:** Use of country systems can drive country ownership and the sustainability of results. Most SIDS find themselves adapting to development partner systems, even when they had national systems that passed international standards. (SIDS also acknowledged the importance of building integrity and good international standards in their own systems to also foster trust from development partners). Literature also suggests that quality of a partner country's systems is often not indicative of development partners' use of these systems. Conversely, some SIDS did prefer to use development partner systems (procurement), as they found it faster or easier to engage with and faster than their own processes. It was also noted that development partners could tailor results frameworks more to local systems and knowledge.



"We are really good at ICT for example, while another country might be better at something else, so if we continue to grow these expertise, we can be the hub and be the experts in this area and share this with others."

When assessing capacities and designing approaches, the broader context is important; therefore, contextual analysis tools could also be employed at this point. For SIDS, additional considerations surfaced through the research. Approaches should still support the principles of country ownership and mutually trusted partnerships (see section on country ownership and the principles of effective development for SIDS on page 29). Further, SIDS noted that at times, it can feel that development partners over-prioritise time and resources on these parts of the process, instead of focusing more on delivery and implementation (in whichever modalities); balance is key.

Some SIDS also note that they do not always absorb, integrate and sustain new capacities: allocating more funding or efforts to a certain area may not achieve the intended goals. It is out of scope of this report to fully detail the theory on absorptive capacity. However, a few considerations emerged from the discussions. As part of the contextual analysis and capacity assessments, consideration should be given to:

- The individual or organisation(s) ability to identify, acquire and make sense of new knowledge
- The ability for new knowledge to be used and applied in a meaningful way
- The ability for broader shifts to organisational processes or structures or institutional factors that will allow the successful integration and sustainment of new capacities (including technologies).



Country ownership and the principles for effective development co-operation in SIDS

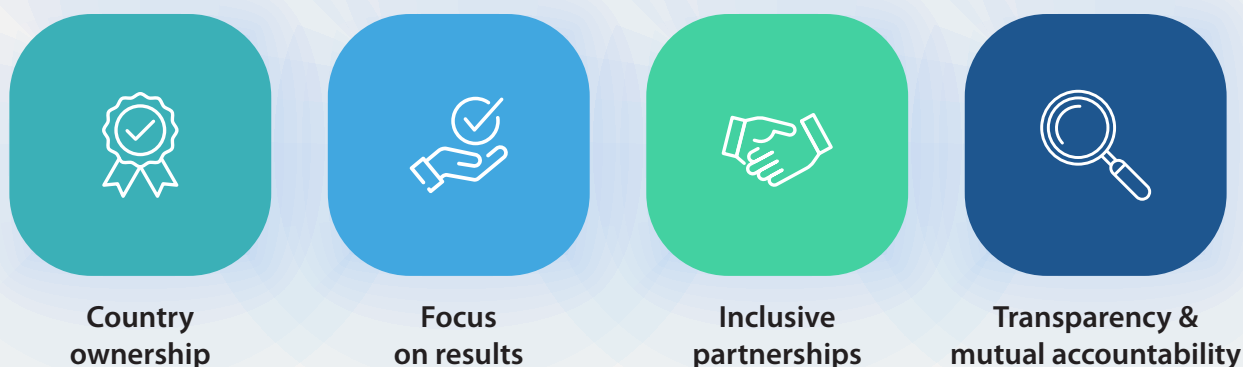


Figure 3: The four Principles for Effective Delivery

Country ownership

The importance of country ownership in development co-operation or capacity-strengthening efforts is not new. Yet, a consistent understanding of what country ownership really means is still unclear: what should be owned and by whom? The concept has been used for different issues, including ensuring alignment to country priorities, political ownership, decision-making power, ownership by communities or other stakeholder groups, use of data or other evidence of countries, etc.

While the primary research demonstrated that ownership was important at all stages of the lifecycle, from planning to implementation and beyond, further discussion needs to be had about how the concept should be applied in different case scenarios. As an example, where there is strong involvement of community structures (in decision making or implementation) of a function, what is the balance of “ownership” between national governments, local governments and other such structures? Another example is in the use of modalities such as sector budget support, which logically demands more “ownership” from countries. Yet, if there are strong pressures from financiers (for political reasons or due to programme conditions), will this diminish the ownership of strategy, ideas and thus the process?

Leveraging the Principles for Effective Delivery (Global Affairs Canada, 2022) for better capacity-strengthening

Country ownership is core to the agreed four principles that aim to catalyse impact and effectiveness in development work, including capacity-strengthening (shown in Figure 3). Yet, primary research conducted for this report indicates that current development partnerships do not consistently apply these principles. A few possible reasons could explain this:

- **Development partners and SIDS may have different interpretations** of the principles and what they mean in practice. For example, “focusing on results” often raises questions about what success looks like, and what types of data and evidence demonstrates this success. “Country ownership” also raises questions around the use of country systems, the required standards of these systems and differing risk thresholds. In the name of “Country Ownership”, SIDS may be asked to validate data that others have created or repeatedly share information to researchers.

- The presence of long-term meaningful, reflective, trusted and mutually respectful partnerships plays an important role in perceptions about the extent to which the principles are applied or understood. See above for additional details.
- The principles may not fully consider the underlying power dynamics in development partnerships that shape, and are shaped by, capacity-strengthening work. “Inclusive partnerships” may be undermined by these dynamics which can emerge through internal agendas, rules, requirements, and other processes.
- A proliferation of frameworks and guidance can dilute a focus on action. Many frameworks and principles, often different across development partners, are all promoted for use in capacity-strengthening. It can be difficult to integrate these practically and can incentivise an over-focus on processes and checklists.

Importance of meaningful partnerships between SIDS and development partners

Meaningful partnerships are one of the top enablers of good capacity-strengthening reported by SIDS during the research. Some of the words and phrases used by SIDS around what constitutes good partnerships included respect, mutual trust, good listening, understanding and genuine desire to help, responsiveness, easy communication, long term, co-creation, collaboration, mutual accountability, transparency, and support outside of finance (illustrated in Figure 4 below).

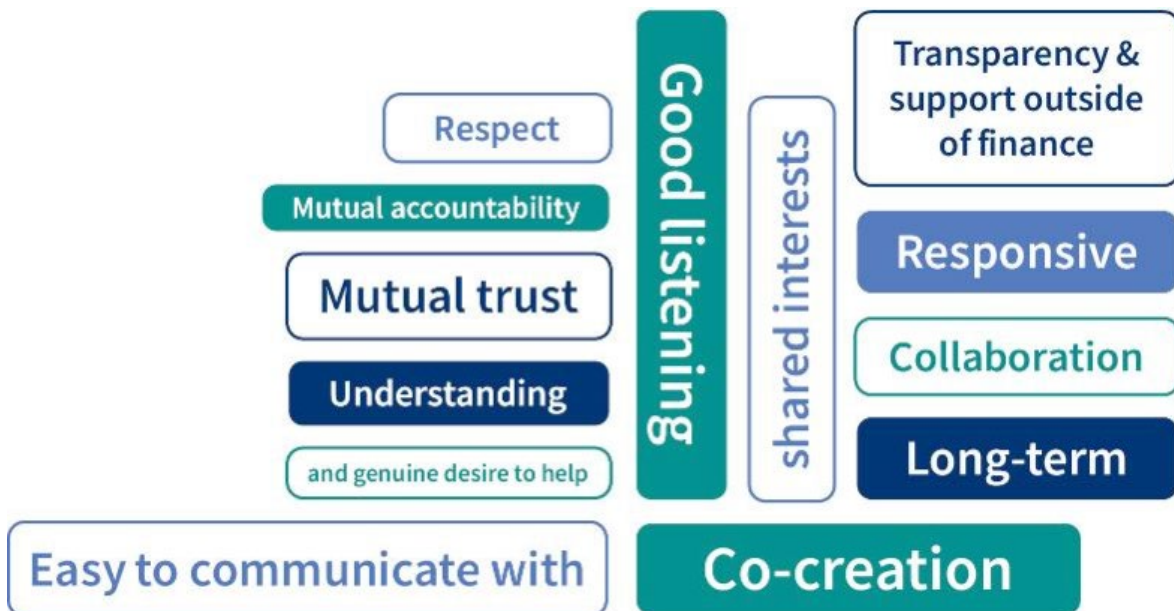


Figure 4: Common phrases used during research engagement with SIDS

Partnerships often get thought of as organic; while in some sense this is true, partnerships where there exist dynamics, tensions, and complexities (see Part 1 and 2) require work. They are more than a quick one-off project - they require considerable time and effort to develop (Yezza, Prescott, Stibbe, & Goransson, 2021). While all the sections of the report aim to contribute to good partnerships, below are further considerations SIDS and development partners can use:

- Identify and acknowledge individual and shared objectives
- Identify and engage with common and different values between actors in the partnership;
- Shift towards principles and values-based partnership agreements or guidance that can help to remove challenges such as hidden powers and enable more equitable and respectful partnerships
- Create spaces to discuss and navigate the external dynamics amongst stakeholders in SIDS (Yezza, Prescott, Stibbe, & Goransson, 2021)
- Build the skills, processes, and broader capacities to build and manage partnerships (Kelly & Roche, 2014); (Yezza, Prescott, Stibbe, & Goransson, 2021)
- Create feedback processes for learning and adapting the partnerships



“Partnerships is not just about money, it is about trust, support, being there for each other, understanding each other, and genuinely wanting to help.”

Growing momentum on the importance of partnerships has seen some development partners reorient their approach to supporting SIDS. In 2022, the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office launched the Small Islands Developing States Strategy 2022-2026 (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2023). In 2023, the UNDP put forward the Rising Up for SIDS Offer to strengthen its programmatic engagement with SIDS, strengthen their capacity to respond to urgent and emerging challenges, and provide tailored, human-centred development support (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). Other organisations, like the World Bank, also now have dedicated units to help create and foster partnerships with SIDS.

Specific challenges SIDS experience across the lifecycle process

The table below details the common challenge points, and the organisational capacities that SIDS typically require at each phase of the lifecycle from matching to maintaining capacities.

Matching	Accessing	Planning
Scope		
SIDS work to identify their priorities and match these with development partners. Development partners that seek to understand and help refine and articulate these needs are preferred. In this phase, an understanding of existing capacity is required (see above)	SIDS apply to access different types of development partner capacity support. This stage involves all stages of the application process including concept preparation, eligibility responding to partner requirements, data collection, feasibility assessments and demonstrating the impact of efforts.	After successfully accessing support, SIDS generally work with development partners to scope and plan a project or programme within the bounds of approved support. This stage may also include working with development partners to mobilise resources and learn local contexts and ways of working.
Common challenges		
<p>SIDS and development partners' lack of a shared understanding of needs, scope, priorities, goals, capacity-strengthening approaches and ways of working</p> <p>Challenge in advocating for needs at the national, regional and global levels</p> <p>Geopolitical and other external influences creating tensions in who to work with, fragmented efforts or priorities shaped by external forces</p> <p>Intense reporting requirements to balance national, regional, and international demands</p>	<p>Lack of visibility of development partners and their offerings</p> <p>Need for funding meaning some countries find it difficult to say no to development partners even when a mismatch of priorities exists</p> <p>Complex, varying and resource-intensive processes</p> <p>Challenges in meeting eligibility criteria, conditions or requirements</p> <p>Differing views about what constitutes the success of efforts, and what forms of knowledge and data can be used as evidence (for example, local and tacit knowledge should be considered)</p> <p>Application processes or monitoring that require data repeatedly</p>	<p>Approach and risk do not account for uncertainties and change</p> <p>Challenges in identifying which stakeholders to involve, and how to involve (assessments of the SIDS partnership frameworks showed private sector and youth groups need more attention)</p> <p>Mismatch between scope and context</p> <p>A feeling of SIDS not being heard, trusted, or listened to or their expertise not respected</p> <p>Narrow or siloed support</p> <p>Challenges in obtaining the required political leadership or commitment</p>

Organisational capacities commonly required		
<p>Strategic planning, prioritisation, and articulation of priorities (often islands have plans in place, but may not have associated articulation of technical assistance or capacity-strengthening needs.</p> <p>Organisational and workforce capacity needs assessment.</p> <p>Coordination and sequencing</p> <p>Financial planning and budgeting</p> <p>External stakeholder engagement and relationship management</p>	<p>Concept development and project and programme design</p> <p>Design of administration, reporting, monitoring, learning, and evaluation approaches using international and local methodologies</p> <p>Proposal and application writing</p> <p>External stakeholder engagement and relationship management</p> <p>Feasibility assessment</p> <p>Risk assessment and planning</p>	<p>Project or programme scoping</p> <p>Risk management</p> <p>Procurement and recruitment</p> <p>Financial planning and budgeting</p> <p>External and internal stakeholder engagement</p> <p>Data and statistics</p> <p>Monitoring, evaluation, adult learning, and capacity-strengthening design</p> <p>Reporting and baseline evaluation</p> <p>Workforce planning</p>

Delivering	Transferring	Maintaining
Scope		
<p>Activities, outputs and data collection are delivered to support reporting, monitoring and evaluation. Usually, a mix of modalities is utilised and it also relies on the capacities of SIDS, both in the sectors as well as in the national ministries.</p> <p>There can be several cycles in this stage, including when monitoring and reporting identifies required changes that are then addressed through additional research and planning or when additional financing is sought to address a newly identified need and a sub-cycle begins again at the Matching stage.</p>	<p>Transferring should strongly overlap with and join the Delivering and Maintaining phases. This phase is intended for development partners to gradually shift from a primary focus on implementation to a secondary one: enabling SIDS to take greater autonomy and leadership in certain capacities or functions.</p> <p>While transferring knowledge occurs at all stages of the lifecycle, it is the primary focusing of development partners during this phase to realise sustained capacities and identify risks of non-sustainability.</p>	<p>Sustained capacities and capabilities are most required during this phase, and improvements made in projects may be at risk of stalling or declining.</p> <p>Many partners conduct long-term impact assessments during this phase. However, at all stages, more active support from development partners is required to consider and support maintenance as part of sustainable capacity-strengthening efforts. Maintaining trusted, responsive relationships and being ready for the lifecycle to start again is critical. Partner support during this phase may also include supplementary support or surge support modalities.</p>

Common challenges		
<p>Country systems not leveraged</p> <p>Consultants that do not meet the needs of the work or local contexts, or are unable to identify weaknesses in the expert advice provided or how to incorporate it into local contexts</p> <p>Principles of effective delivery not genuinely applied</p> <p>Perceived competition between development partners</p> <p>Development partners' focus on outputs for delivery rather than the maintenance phase</p> <p>Modalities not contextualised, flexible, holistic or sustainable</p> <p>Balancing the benefits of regional approaches to national needs</p> <p>Lack of mutual accountability, transparency or communication</p>	<p>Insufficient focus on transferring at all stages of the project</p> <p>Project KPIs and targets do not incentivise transfer of knowledge</p> <p>Development of documents, systems or procedures that not led by SIDS</p> <p>The right people with key roles important to strengthening that capacity are not involved throughout (either in terms of role, seniority, community position or expertise)</p> <p>A feeling that that external consultants or development partners are not incentivised or accountable for supporting this phase.</p>	<p>Insufficient time in the partnership or project to support maintenance and sustainment</p> <p>Insufficient sustainability strategies and associated accountability mechanisms to maintain new or enhanced capacities</p> <p>Differing views of what maintenance and sustainability look like in practice</p> <p>Lack of monitoring or follow through approaches to support maintenance</p> <p>A lack of incentives, both formal and informal, which are part of the enabling environment which affects the behaviours of individuals and the performance of organizations (Stiles & Weeks, 2007)</p> <p>Challenges in integrated and contextually informed monitoring tools</p>
Organisational capacities commonly required		
<p>Project management</p> <p>Data collection</p> <p>Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting</p> <p>External and internal stakeholder management</p> <p>Public financial management and budgeting</p> <p>Contract administration</p>	<p>Monitoring, evaluation, adult learning</p> <p>Capacity assessment and follow ups</p> <p>Risk management</p> <p>Staff and human resource management</p> <p>Contract administration</p> <p>Public financial management and budgeting</p> <p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Statistical and data capacities</p>	<p>Internal stakeholder management and leadership</p> <p>Programme or functional governance</p> <p>Capacity assessment and follow ups</p> <p>Planning and strategies for sustainability and continuous improvement</p> <p>Data collection and analysis to inform monitoring, decision making and continuous improvement</p>

Exploring different modalities including SIDS views on what works and what doesn't

This section lists capacity and capability strengthening modalities identified in literature and from SIDS during research activities, including what works and what does not work.

Modalities have been grouped into a series of categories, guided by existing frameworks for capacity-strengthening applied in the Pacific (Pacific Community, 2023) and by the nature of their delivery and impact. The table below notes the level of capability or capacity impact each modality is suited to, and the layers of capacity:

- **Knowledge**, through individuals or groups of individuals gaining new information in the short term.
- **Practice**, through individuals or groups of individuals applying this knowledge in practice and embedding it into the system over the short to medium term.
- **Attitude**, through people or groups of people changing their underlying approaches to work and sustaining this in the system over the medium to long term.

Developing	Knowledge	Short term
<p>This category increases knowledge of individuals. It is often provided by development partners in North-South arrangements as an efficient way to grow group knowledge of perceived best practices in SIDS.</p>		
Description	What works	What doesn't work
<p><i>Training (pre-prepared, in the field or across the system)</i></p>		
<p>Training that is designed and then provided by external international specialists to SIDS. This can be done virtually, in person, in the field, and across the system.</p>	<p>Efficient for development partners in the delivery of capacity-strengthening and if delivered well, can support specific and narrow training gaps. Training also needs to target the right people, in the right roles. Training can have greater impact when conducted in the field, as it powerfully demonstrates the value of a skill or capacity. Learners can see the impact in real time rather than learning theoretically.</p>	<p>Packages can be generic and lack the tailoring required to successfully apply and practice new knowledge in specific SIDS.</p> <p>Training in the field requires confident trainers who can adapt to the context. Whole of system training can require more preparation or coordination, and consultation to identify the appropriate people who should be involved. Training without longer-term follow ups or approaches to embed practices.</p>
<p><i>Train the trainer</i></p>		
<p>Training provided with the intention that trained participants are then capable of sharing this knowledge with colleagues.</p>	<p>This can be effective for enabling SIDS to develop capacities across an organisation or system, especially when accompanied by appropriate system interventions.</p>	<p>Generic packages can be delivered without accompanying system interventions. Training participants often work in very stretched SIDS contexts and are not given recognition for the training, and explicit permission, time or incentives to share the knowledge.</p>
<p><i>Training around a role</i></p>		
<p>An emergent training approach provided to a person fulfilling a role or function as well as people or teams around that role. SIDS would like to see more of this modality applied with development partners.</p>	<p>The departure of one person leaves a larger gap in SIDS ministries than in comparable contexts for development partners, and this modality can help to reduce this. If implemented in advance, it can help to reduce capacity and capability gaps left by departing staff by training colleagues in a role and across a system to fulfil these capacities.</p>	<p>All staff cannot be trained in all functions and SIDS ministry colleagues are frequently already stretched across many functions and lack the capacity to learn or perform more roles. This modality cannot completely fill gaps in capacity or capability and is not an appropriate long-term solution.</p>

Supplementing	<i>Knowledge to Practice</i>	<i>Short to medium term</i>
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This group of modalities provides additional human capacity and technical capabilities to help develop new initiatives or solve specific technical problems. It is the primary group of capacity-strengthening modalities used in development work today. Combining these with supporting modalities enables them to have an impact on applying new knowledge in practice. On their own, supplementing modalities do not bring sustained capacity-strengthening beyond a programme or project.

Description	What works	What doesn't work
<i>Technical assistance or advice</i>		
Experts are provided to help solve problems in areas of a technical specialization, or in the form of policy development, or to provide advice.	This modality helps to initiate or establish new areas of work with SIDS, providing capability and capacity that are otherwise absent in a local ministry context. It can also be useful for on-demand support or advice in more specialist areas and can be used in combination with other modalities. SIDS have a desire for local experts, or for local counterparts to be appointed alongside overseas counterparts. During the COVID-19 pandemic, remote delivery of Technical Assistance was done with a local counterpart to implement technical work with online guidance from overseas expertise. The practical framing of the task by is important. KPIs and ToRs used in TA need to support and incentivise skills transfer.	Knowledge transfer can be undermined by significant disparity in remuneration of overseas technical advisors (TAs) in comparison to local staff. International consultants can be used to conduct research containing information sourced from local staff, or to conduct planning that may not be tailored or flexible to local contexts. It can also mean that significant portion of funding being routed back to overseas consultancies, local staff being repeatedly requested to share the same information with consulting missions, and less contextualised advice.
<i>Procurement for in-line Ministry roles</i>		
Occurs as part of development programmes that operate over multiple years with roles reporting to development partners embedded in country ministries. This modality requires incumbents to have or develop knowledge of local ministry processes, ways of working and existing working relationships.	Primary research conducted for this report heard multiple accounts of projects having greater sustained impact when recruitment decisions were made by local Ministry staff. SIDS were better able to assess cultural capabilities of candidates and identify suitable local talent. While some development partners have experienced project delays when in-country staff do not have available capacity to undertake the recruitment, this approach significantly increases country-ownership, suitably tailored delivery of development projects, knowledge transfer and sustained in-country capacities.	Development partners often recruit candidates, and the selected person is not always a suitable match for local contexts and ministries. Subsequent relationship building lacks strength, and this limits knowledge transfer and capacity-strengthening impacts. Development partners also attract local candidates to exit the local consulting market or public sector and work directly for development partners. In this way, development partners can perpetuate the reduction of local talent available. To alleviate this, in-line appointments should report directly to ministry staff.



Supporting	Knowledge to Practice	Medium term
<p>These modalities focus on helping individuals develop confidence in applying new knowledge and skills, thereby growing individual capabilities and overall national capacities.</p>		
Description	What works	What doesn't work
<p><i>Coaching, mentoring and follow up advice</i></p>		
<p>Formal or informal arrangements in which individuals are paired with experienced or knowledgeable individuals to transfer knowledge and guide the learner to apply it. Provided in on-the-job contexts, coaching or mentoring can be delivered remotely or in person.</p>	<p>This approach obtains best results in longer-term arrangements in which the coach or mentor has proven capacities in these modalities, is familiar with the operating context and is established in a mutual or two-way learning approach. It can complement other modalities to support the transfer of knowledge into practice and support required shifts in attitudes.</p>	<p>Coaching and mentoring modalities are often not applied to sustained effect in practice due to remuneration inequities, a lack of cultural competency, coaching and mentoring skills in TA and in-line candidates. This modality requires incentivisation, monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the knowledge expert is effectively transferring knowledge and adapting to the local context.</p>



Surge or on-demand	Practice	Long term
<p>These modalities respond to country demand and needs by providing pre-established pools of capacity that can be mobilised to expand applied practice or capabilities temporarily. While they operate in long-term arrangements, they can be mobilised to meet short-term needs. Some existing models provide precedents to build on and there is strong scope for expanding the use of these modalities in response to SIDS requests.</p>		
Description	What works	What doesn't work
<i>Shared or pooled services</i>		
<p>These arrangements often occur as part of long-term trusted relationships between North-South partners or are provided at a regional level. Additional capacity support is made available at times of surging need or when local capacities are temporarily reduced. These arrangements typically focus on specific technical areas.</p>	<p>Shared services can work well when provided as part of longer-term trusted partnerships and currently operate effectively in both the Caribbean and Pacific regions. Larger countries in the Pacific region provide forensic pathology services for SIDS during surge periods. Regional island institutions in the Caribbean also provide shared services to SIDS across the region who may not have the population to sustain such capacities independently (see feature case study on Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for more detail).</p>	<p>These services are less suited to organisational capacities that cut across government Ministries or for longer term domestic capacity-strengthening.</p> <p>This approach can also create certain dependencies that could hinder longer-term development journeys and thus need to be considered as part of an intentional overall approach.</p> <p>Conflicts between member states or inadequate consultation are risks to success for this modality (Ismail, 2019).</p>
<i>On-demand talent pools</i>		
<p>Pre-available registers of qualified or experienced individuals that can be mobilised to a country that requests assistance to build capacity are established.</p>	<p>This flexible modality can operate outside of programme lifecycles, is responsive to the needs identified by requesting countries (so are therefore country-led) and pre-qualifications can include cultural competencies. Primary research indicated this was a desirable option and can be done regionally, inter-regionally or globally. Existing models include Tax Inspectors Without Borders.</p>	<p>So far, programmes that have worked successfully usually have targeted and focused expertise, have low access requirements, and require exchange of data to support a more successful working relationship. This modality requires careful consideration of how this mechanism works, who can access it and the two-way mutual requirements for it to be successful.</p>

Knowledge sharing	<i>Practice</i>	<i>Medium term</i>
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These modalities involve the exchange of knowledge between SIDS or immersive learning opportunities through secondments or visits to development partner countries. Many SIDS have conveyed a lack of opportunities for knowledge sharing, most significantly in the AIMS region where no regional island institution exists to facilitate these opportunities.

Description	What works	What doesn't work
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Outgoing secondments and visits

Staff from SIDS visit locations in other countries to learn about technical practices or initiatives	This enables learning about technical approaches in the context in which they were developed or are being applied, providing innate explanations for their application, what contextual factors are required for success, and where adaptations can and cannot be made in other contexts, such as SIDS. They are well suited to the science, research, and innovation sectors. Longer-term secondments of multiple months can enable immersion and deeper knowledge exchange that is more likely to be sustained.	This modality removes a resource from SIDS for the duration of the secondment and can limit the benefits to only the people going on the secondment or visit. Incentives to ensure knowledge are shared on return and associated capacity-strengthening to fill roles in SIDS for the duration for the secondment help to mitigate these limitations. There can be a risk of the secondee not returning (brain drain).
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Incoming secondments or visits

Experts from other countries visit SIDS to share about technical practices or initiatives.	This enables learning about technical approaches for multiple people in SIDS, as visiting experts can mentor, coach, or train multiple local people during their visit. This provides greater value for money for local Ministries and development partners, especially when neighbouring SIDS are also invited and supported to attend.	Visiting experts need to have capabilities in training and other knowledge sharing or supporting modalities. Visiting experts must be open to adapting their practices and knowledge to the local context for the knowledge transfer to be sustainable and relevant. This modality also limits local staff ability to comprehend required contextual factors enough to adapt to local environments.
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Peer to peer (including south-south)		
<p>This modality can take many forms but essentially supports knowledge sharing between SIDS. It can take the form of visits to SIDS ministries to learn about initiatives, events at which learning is shared and discussed, or training programmes where SIDS share and exchange their areas of strength.</p>	<p>Primary research conducted for this project heard many requests for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing opportunities across all SIDS and regions, echoed by development partners.</p> <p>Precedents for expansion exist, for example, the Te Whare Pasifika Public Service Centre of Excellence was established in 2020 with 16 Pacific Island Country members facilitated by New Zealand, and Mauritius is establishing a civil service college with the goal of offering regional and global specialisation for SIDS. Other examples of peer-to-peer sharing frequently occur between peers at a regional level or sub-regional level.</p>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic slowed progress towards establishing mechanisms for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing.</p> <p>With far fewer regional institutions in the AIMS region, there are few to no peer-to-peer opportunities for SIDS.</p>

Formal or certified	Knowledge to Practice to Attitude	Short, medium and long term
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Formal or certified modalities can range from the building of basic functional knowledge through to theoretical understanding and the development of new knowledge. They are unified by formal recognition of the qualification by industries and institutions, certifying that the education has been of a specific standard.

Description	What works	What doesn't work
<i>Regional universities</i>		
<p>A long-established modality offered by existing regional university institutions in the Caribbean and the Pacific.</p>	<p>Regional university institutions are a strong partner in capacity-strengthening for SIDS. Their scholars have contributed to the published literature about local contexts for capacity-strengthening (Amosa, The challenges to sustaining public sector reform in Samoa, 2007); (Amosa, An overview of public sector management reform in Samoa, 2003); (Ramtohl & Eriksen, The Mauritian Paradox: Fifty years of Development, Diversity and Democracy, 2018); (Ramtohl, Identity, Citizenship and Belonging in Postcolonial Mauritius, 2022); (Kava Bowl Media, 2020). Some SIDS work with regional universities to adapt qualifications in specific areas to retain more locally qualified people.</p>	<p>Equipment is required to provide education in very technical areas, such as nautical science and marine engineering (both areas important for ocean economies). Simulators and similar types of equipment can be lacking in SIDS or there is a lack of support to maintain this equipment.</p>

<i>Scholarships to partner universities</i>		
<p>A well-established modality primarily offered in bi-lateral arrangements.</p>	<p>Bilateral partners support scholarship programmes across SIDS, which are starting to use these programmes to target organisational and public service capacity-strengthening needs specifically. This modality is well suited for longer-term capacity-strengthening that greatly impacts human resource development over time. It can enhance relationships and understanding between SIDS and their development partners.</p>	<p>Scholars need support to apply conceptual learnings into practice. Development partner contexts do not always readily apply to SIDS. While scholarships can include bond arrangements requiring scholars to return for set periods, these conditions can be hard to impose, thereby enabling emigration from SIDS.</p>
<i>Chartered or certified education</i>		
<p>This modality recognises and promotes the development of skilled professionals through formal education that is aligned to industry standards and is designed to be conducted alongside day-to-day roles.</p>	<p>Often developed and delivered in partnership with private sector industries, these modalities provide units of learning that bridge the conceptual and practical contexts for work. SIDS are exploring these modalities in partnership with regional institutions and private sector organisations to encourage continuous improvement in local workforces and expand skillsets beyond siloed roles. Consideration needs to be given to retention to reduce the risk of brain drain</p>	<p>This modality may assume some level of tertiary education for students and requires strong involvement in partnership with industry. While such modalities can support individuals to embed and use their knowledge as practice, often broader organisational factors may still need to be addressed. Incentives that support individuals who have certifications should also be considered.</p>
<i>Micro-qualifications</i>		
<p>An emerging modality increasingly offered by tertiary institutions as flexible formal education enabling learners to keep up with practice changes. They have an assessment component that requires participants to demonstrate capacity and are developed with sector input to ensure professional relevance.</p>	<p>Units of assessed learning smaller than standard forms of accredited tertiary learning, completed individually or contribute to a qualification. This allows greater flexibility and pathways toward higher education. Some regional institutions are using this modality to improve the quality of sectors, such as the Pacific Community (SPC) Educational Quality and Assessment Programme, which is accrediting micro-qualifications. The service was pursued after several Pacific education organisations raised the need. It has successfully piloted three regional micro qualifications which are now being delivered by approved higher education institutes.</p>	<p>This modality requires a transparent organisational framework for recognition shared with industry. As a newer modality, there are varied definitions of micro-credentials and fewer frameworks for accreditation. While such modalities can support individuals in embedding and using their knowledge as practice, broader organisational factors may still need to be addressed. Incentives that support individuals who have certifications should be considered.</p>

Programmatic or other	Knowledge to Practice to Attitude	Medium to long term
This category of modalities considers more contemporary modalities of capacity-strengthening or those that can incorporate multiple types of approaches.		
Description	What works	What doesn't work
<i>Sector wide assistance</i>		
<p>This modality is used to provide a support to a single sector-wide programme that usually has a country-led and results focused approach that can bring multiple development partners and stakeholders together. They focus on building capacity through multiple entry points, including policy and planning.</p>	<p>This modality was well-received by SIDS, particularly when delivered through trusted and long-term partners. They can provide whole-of-systems approaches, alignment with national goals, utilisation of country systems and stronger ownership by the country (Global Affairs Canada, 2022). For example, this has been adopted in Samoa in the water and education sectors.</p> <p>Some SIDS also noted that this can work best when it utilises their own systems for the disbursement of funds (thus, this can work best when countries have strong financial systems).</p>	<p>Depending on the model used, SIDS and development partners can incur high transaction costs. Some technical assistance may also be required to support different ways of working, such as policy dialogues. Some criticisms heavily prioritise upstream policy processes and less on implementation.</p>
<i>Budget assistance</i>		
<p>Budget assistance can be provided to different levels (for example, to a project, programme, or to the national or sectoral budgets). They can also have different types of conditions applied to it.</p>	<p>Primary research conducted for this report demonstrated that countries welcomed more flexible types of financial assistance for specific sectors (sector budget support).</p>	<p>Conditionalities can create challenges for SIDS, and there can often be tensions on how much freedom and flexibility can exist within these supports. There can also exist conflicts on accountability and reporting, and how decisions should be made on its use.</p>



<i>South-South or Triangular Cooperation</i>		
<p>Triangular co-operation helps to achieve development goals in innovative and collaborative ways. It usually relies on three roles (the beneficiary partner, the pivotal partner with proven experience in an issue, and the facilitating partner who can act as a broker technically or financially). There can be more than three partners, and actors can come from all sectors in a country.</p>	<p>The triangular and South-South cooperation approaches could be applied to SIDS' different types of capacity-strengthening needs, for example short-term, through regional approaches, for calling up new practices or in flexible or sector-wide support. These approaches can support technology transfer and innovation.</p> <p>This modality can work best when partners have good ownership and trust, mutual accountability, good mechanisms for knowledge sharing and good coordination capacities across all partners and with other projects.</p>	<p>There needs to be understanding of the mutual gain to all partners. This modality can risk having high transaction costs and there is still growing evidence based on what works.</p>
<i>Organisational behaviour change</i>		
<p>This emergent modality focuses on utilising frameworks of how human behaviour influences organisations and how organisations influence the way people act and think.</p>	<p>These modalities have not yet been widely used within SIDS but are often used in the business sector (Stiles & Weeks, 2007).</p>	<p>Change management is a modality focused on the underlying factors and efforts required for individuals or organisations to go through change.</p>



Continuous learning	<i>Knowledge to Practice to Attitude</i>	<i>Medium to long term</i>
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This category of modalities helps inspire and drive continuous improvement within a sector by offering flexible learning units often recognised by the industry through certification. Certification also provides ministry staff with evidence that can be mobilised to reassure development partners about having the required capabilities.

Description	What works	What doesn't work
<i>Continuing Professional Development (CPD)</i>		
An established modality to improve skills and standards of individuals and their industries, typical in specialised professions such as law, general medical practice, accounting, and engineering. This modality can combine many learning formats, including training, webinars, conferences, coaching, external certifications, and degrees.	<p>This modality can offer flexible yet structured incentivisation for continuous improvement. SIDS which responded to the survey research for this project ranked CPD as a desired modality. Offering professional development opportunities as part of employment can help to retain and motivate staff towards improving and adopting up-to-date practices, countering public sector cultures in some SIDS which disincentivise improvement and low remuneration.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given to retention to reduce the risk of brain drain.</p>	Certification for recognition as CPD carries an overhead investment in establishing content, teaching standards and CPD recognition systems for industries in which this has not yet been established. This can be navigated by working in partnership with local industry representative groups, regional universities and training institutions.
<i>Online colleges or training institutions</i>		
The institutions offer flexible platforms to support continuous improvement for working professionals.	Expanding rapidly since COVID-19, these platforms can offer flexible learning to accommodate professional commitments, keeping learners in country while also strengthening capacities. These platforms can also be more accessible to people on low-income or in isolated locations and can be tailored to provide practical skills in local sectors, such as recordkeeping for small farming or fishing businesses.	<p>This modality has the potential to reach more students but can struggle with lower participation and completion rates (Goodman, 2020).</p> <p>Such institutions need to also consider approaches to follow-ups, and mentoring or coaching that can complement them.</p>

Feature Case Study: St Vincent & the Grenadines

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is located in the Caribbean. The country has served as a crossing point and homeland for Indigenous peoples over 5,000 years, most notably the Kalinago and Garifuna people. Today, St. Vincent has a population of over 100,000 people, with 90 per cent living on the Vincentian main island.

After gaining independence in 1979, St Vincent has since maintained a stable parliamentary democracy, which has been led by Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves for 22 years. Vincentians have a strong sense of Caribbean identity, and the country is an active member of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

SVG is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change such as more frequent natural and man-made disasters, which includes an active volcano. SVG has made some progress in implementing disaster resilient infrastructure although resource gaps persist. SVG, similar to other SIDs is also affected by youth migration and the accompanying brain drain. Measures to mitigate this include the creation of the ministry of tertiary education in 2022.

Vincentianness

Creativity drives Vincentian resilience in response to limited resources and environmental challenges.

A creative and industrious spirit permeates St Vincent. Small and medium enterprises thrive in the private sector, operating in national and regional markets. While turning these into profitable international ventures remains out of reach due to unfavorable trade rules (Hickel, 2022), the strength of local entrepreneurialism showcases Vincentian creativity and the ability to forge ahead with limited resources and a changeable natural environment. For example, the start-up Seafields responded to an influx of sargassum seaweed by developing off-shore farming methods (Searchlight, 2023); Expanding annual Vincy expositions allow local businesses to promote their products (Beache, 2023).



“Because we don’t have a lot of things on hand, we get very creative in how we can solve problems.”

Creativity is also apparent in the country’s semi-privatized system of mini vans which operate as a public transport system, often displaying distinctive murals. The government regulates fares, but routes respond organically to public demand. Moving further into the public sector, the government reframed challenges posed by high rates of youth emigration through the development of a Diaspora Policy in 2013, articulating the distribution of Vincentians globally as “one people in many lands, we shape our nation with many hands” (2013). The Vincentian Development Plan works towards a public sector that is “productive and innovative” (2013).

Vincentians also work creatively at a regional level to manage environmental impacts on infrastructure, livelihoods and quality of life. For instance, an eruption of *La Soufrière* which caused 20,000 people to evacuate in 2021.

Support was sourced from Caribbean neighbors who accepted Vincentian evacuees, cruise line companies sent vessels to transport people, and Venezuela sent supplies (CNN, 2021).

Notwithstanding strength and resilience in the face of adversity, the tropical climate of St. Vincent has challenged recovery, compounded by climate change, with rainfall and ephemeral rivers causing erosion and more infrastructure loss.

This context is suited to development partners who are authentically committed to Vincentian outcomes and responsive to adaptive problem-solving. While signage across the island showcases partners who assist with reconstructing infrastructure,

partners can also enhance the rebuilding of local livelihoods. Supporting St. Vincent through equitable participation in international trade markets will expand economic opportunities.



“The small business sector is very innovative... we can compete regionally, but not internationally. We can’t compete with other places at certain levels, so we have to be creative.”



Private minivans participate in informal public transport network of Saint Vincent, with murals and artwork used to distinguish vans.



SeaFields start-up has had success farming sargassum seaweed after an influx of the aquatic plant on the beaches of Saint Vincent.

BALANCING NATIONAL INTERESTS WITH REGIONAL APPROACHES

The Caribbean has strong regional infrastructure supporting a diversity of small island states. Vincentians often see themselves as Caribbean first and foremost. This solidarity reflects a strong sense of shared Caribbean histories and strengthens resilience across all Caribbean countries, which emerged from the short-lived West Indies Federation, a politically autonomous grouping of Caribbean islands that formed as Great Britain withdrew from colonial control of the region (CARICOM, 2023).



"It's hard to live every aspect of life alone. I consider myself a Caribbean. I've lived away for many years, but I do feel a sense of achievement to be on par with everyone else."

Strong regional infrastructure in the Caribbean makes regional cooperation an attractive approach for development partners. When well-resourced and with good institutional capacities, regional institutions can provide a crucial 'floor' of public sector capacities for member countries. These capacities can be challenging for individual small nations to provide independently.

An example is the Caribbean Court of Justice, which settles disputes between CARICOM member states and can act as a court of appeals when national judicial avenues have been exhausted (CCJ, 2023). In this way, regional cooperation allows for the pooling of resources, expertise, and efforts to address shared issues and needs.

In operating as one group, regional alliances can amplify and advocate for regional needs and coordinate access to financing and support that individual countries may not otherwise be able to.



"One of the things you find, when you have regional initiatives, is that everybody has to operate at the pace of the slowest member, so programs don't move as fast as some members would."

Realizing the full benefits of regionalism requires a nuanced balance between the strength and coordination of a regional approach with country-specific priorities, contexts and ways of working. Each country in the Caribbean has its own distinct historic, cultural, economic, and environmental landscapes, requiring tailored approaches to address specific challenges and opportunities.

One recurring conversational theme from officials of several government offices highlighted that regional projects need to enable individual countries to progress at different speeds in relation to their existing capacities. For example, countries may require different levels of training, however at times, the choice is made to offer the same basic training to all members rather than tailor it to the requirements of individual countries.

Consequently, whilst regional collaboration provides a strong foundation for development it should include mechanisms that allow adaptation to local in-country contexts.

Ways of working

Rapid informal working methods operate alongside formal processes in Vincentian Ministries.

Personal connections and informal networks are essential to progressing tasks across Vincentian Ministries. Ministries and government can move more rapidly when there is collective will. This is reflected in high-level bilateral relationships, which work best when established on relationships between the Prime Minister and foreign leaders.



“There are personalities with good networks that can effectively get things done across sectors. Relationships are very critical.”

Generally, civil servants in SVG would like to conduct more data analysis to inform and drive public sector improvements. They note that whilst data exists, sharing or sourcing it can rely on knowing that it exists, who has it and being able to contact the right person. Interpersonal and verbal ways of working can pose challenges for retrospectively assessing policies and performance with a lack of documentation. In light of this, development partners can support monitoring and evaluation approaches that are more suited to oral contexts while supporting data platforms that enable sharing. They can also support data strengthening initiatives and data infrastructure.



«Relationships are very critical. You require a certain amount of local knowledge for data collection.»

Informal Vincentian ways of working operate in tandem with formal government processes. Vincentian Ministry staff are adept at building strong interpersonal relationships that operate quickly alongside slower formal processes. This ensures public services are delivered on time while required documentation and approvals are generated. In this context Ministries have found greater success with development partners who invest in the creation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Like many Caribbean states, Prime Minister Gonsalves has attempted constitutional reforms to tailor some of these public sector processes and requirements to its small island context, many of which have been inherited from colonial rule (Bishop, 2010). Transforming institutional approaches will help to leverage relational approaches while working towards National Development Plan goals of good governance and a productive public sector.



“There are procedures to be followed as per regulation. Some things do need to be written, but a lot of interactions are done verbally.”

Local expertise

Vincentians have a wealth of local expertise and there is need to enhance their role in shaping development projects.

Universal education and high-quality regional tertiary institutions mean St Vincent has an educated populace which understands community needs, local requirements, and ways of working. Ministry staff remarked on the development of their country during their lifetimes and are deeply invested in improved life outcomes for their communities. Ministry staff are eager to shape and contribute their knowledge to capacity-strengthening work and development projects with partners.



“All of the knowledge does not exist outside the region. There is tremendous knowledge here, we are here, we live it. Sometimes it is like we have a greater stake in development projects than you do. For consultants, it sometimes feels like it’s about getting a promotion or getting another consultancy. There can be an unwillingness in some cases to listen and to appreciate us for who we are.”

Development partners currently rely on international consultants to conduct research, project design reviews or feasibility studies. These enable partners to understand Vincentian contexts or adjust project plans to accommodate changes. However, this approach can rely on local Vincentians and Ministry staff to share their knowledge while being unable to directly influence development projects. In comparison, local

ownership looks like Vincentian Ministry staff being able to directly shape development projects with partners and tailoring projects to local contexts as they change.

Trusting Vincentian expertise and understanding of their context creates mutual trust in development partnerships. Development approaches that rely on consultant review have unintended consequences that are broad and multi-faceted. Reviews conducted by international consultants often do not consider research that has already been conducted, data that exists or recently completed reviews. The requirement for repeated reviews can delay project implementation, thereby increasing costs beyond budgets and causing review processes to start again. International consultants may also repurpose reports without tailoring to St Vincent. This results in development projects that have little local ownership and less sustained outcomes, reducing mutual trust and respect in development partnerships, and rerouting development funding away from St Vincent.

With development partners

Development partnerships require genuine partnerships and a whole-of-system and sustainable approach to strengthening capacity

St Vincent has a development plan and Ministry staff have clarity on their priorities. This positions St Vincent well to create long-term and genuine partnerships with donors. Relationships like these work towards sustainable development due to their innate responsiveness, long-term nature, and mutual trust which makes systems approaches to development easier

to achieve. It allows for Vincentian Ministry staff to convey when changes are required to development work and partners to adapt in response, in support of sustainable results.



“We find when the State or the Ministry knows what it is looking for, knows what it wants, then we’re in a better position to advocate to the donors what we want.”

Development partnerships based on genuine listening enables tailored capacity support that is more likely to meet local needs and have sustainable outcomes. With local ownership, whole-of-system strengthening can be achieved.

Where this does not occur, challenges can be faced. For example, St Vincent has received IT equipment from some partners without the accompanying capacities for maintenance or repair, which reduces the sustainability of efforts. Similarly, training has been provided but without the additional required IT equipment or broader administration capacities to enable the training to be applied.

Development partnerships need to balance focus on individual country needs with donor goals or multi-project or multi-country projects

In multi-lateral or multi-country approaches contexts, there is a need to ensure that collectively shared development agendas do not overpower local Vincentian needs or drive competition between individual partners. While pooling different development partners together or leveraging regional or cross-country approaches can

gather a larger pool of support, they can sometimes be perceived as a competition for positive publicity.



“We find that among and between donors there’s a lot of competition for the issues... we end up with several people doing the same thing. And then we leave with not getting what we want. But there’s all these partners saying, “we helped the Ministry.”

With the diaspora

Youth emigration in Saint Vincent has created a large and educated diaspora that can support national development.

St. Vincent established a Diaspora Policy in 2013 that raises awareness of Vincentian national identity and facilitates contributions to the national economy in the form of remittances. Diaspora members can play a key development role as major direct investors in critical and emerging industries, philanthropy and first movers in the growth of sectors such as tourism. To facilitate this, the country was the first Caribbean state to set up a Regional Integration and Diaspora Office.



“The belief is that migration would lead to a better life – to job positions that match our training, experience and career ambitions, a higher income, better homes, better lifestyle choices, better healthcare and so on. We all seek to live a life more fulfilling abroad.”

Many young Vincentians depart the country to seek tertiary and professional opportunities aligned with their qualifications and ambitions. This is a common phenomenon in small island countries. With limited employment opportunities at home, Vincentian graduates remain overseas as part of the country's diaspora. The resulting brain drain leads to a shortage of skilled local workers which reduces the capacity and effectiveness of the public sector. However, members of the diaspora also send home remittances to friends, family, and communities, averaging about 8 per cent of the national Vincentian economy (World Bank, 2022).



"We export people to the world. We have a net migration out of SVG... 2000 people graduating every year, 200 go to university, 20 come back to SVG."

Development partners offer international education opportunities on the condition that recipients return to St. Vincent. However, many recipients manage to avoid this requirement. Development partners can provide broader support to enhance Vincentian capacities to monitor and enforce scholarship conditions and enhance institutional capacities in performance models that motivate continuous improvement in the public sector.



"There are limited incentives for capacity building. Donors come in and give you xyz, but won't show you how you support your own structures. Following where donors have helped us, we should be able to walk on our own."



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS WITH ST VINCENT

- Support current Vincentian focus areas for growth, such as tourism, the blue economy, and education
- Consider long-term sustainable support and partnership building that leverages the relational nature of Vincentians
- Consider sector-based flexible and long-term funding and leverage a whole of system approaches that focus on all stages of the project equally, rather than underprioritizing implementation and sustainment
- Ask Ministries to identify relevant reviews, existing information, and data to support projects
- Prioritise and support local expertise and talent at all stages of capacity-strengthening
- Allow staff within ministries to make decisions on procurement and allow more flexibility in procurement rules
- Consider supporting monitoring and evaluation methods that suit oral and interpersonal ways of working
- Customise planned development packages in collaboration with Ministry staff to efficiently provide what St. Vincent needs
- Invest to understand Vincentian needs and how projects can adapt with local contexts and leverage their care and creativity
- Work with regional institutions and individual countries to find solutions so that regional projects can also be tailored to individual country needs, speeds and contexts
- High-income development partners can support trade rule and other system reform to enable the Vincentian private sector to compete internationally
- Support the development of public sector performance models that motivate continuous improvement
- Coordinate with other development partners to align and amplify (rather than duplicate or compete for) support to ensure needs are well supported

Actions towards improved capacity-strengthening support

This study surfaced a range of desired shifts across the system, with actions that could be incorporated now or that need further exploration to advance successfully. These shifts and actions are visualised in the diagram below and then outlined in more detail on the following pages. They have been structured across the three focus areas of this study (see Research approach). The shifts have been summarised in Figure 5 below.

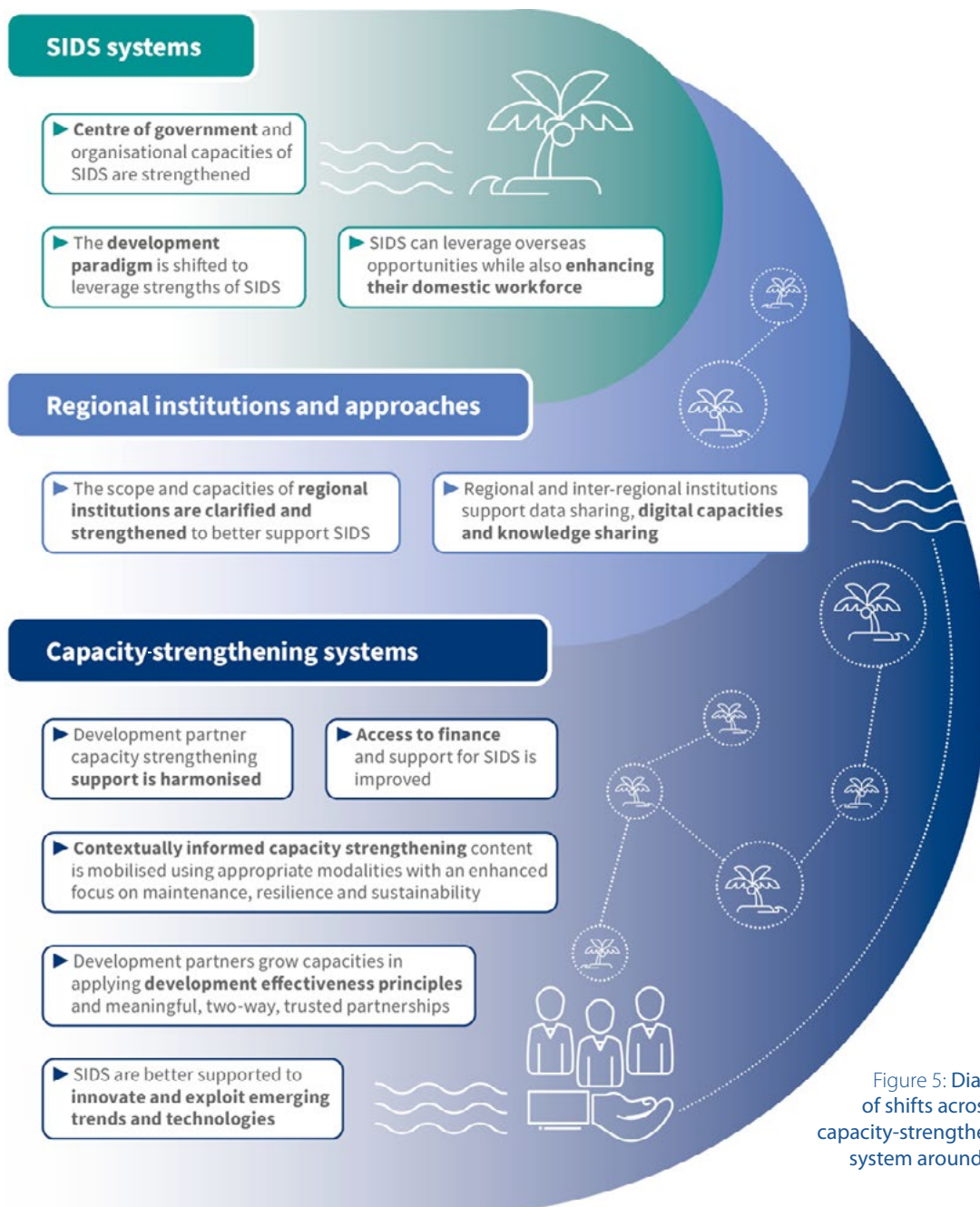


Figure 5: Diagram of shifts across the capacity-strengthening system around SIDS

Small Island Development States systems

Centre of government and organisational capacities of SIDS are strengthened

1.1	From	Multiple areas in SIDS work to articulate capacity-strengthening needs in response to many development partners who are offering many different supports, and may not be able to sustain and leverage new capacities	To	Strong organisational capacities enable SIDS to coordinate needs that are aligned with development priorities, and that can support ownership of capacity-strengthening and sustainment of new capacities
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Actions now

- Support SIDS to develop country-level capacity needs assessments that is linked to planning and workforce functions. These should consider existing capacities and ensure that the right people are selected for capacity-strengthening activities, and that workforce policies reinforce these efforts.
- Support SIDS to enhance organisational capacities as outlined in Part 1. For statistical and monitoring capacities, consideration of harmonising results frameworks, and using local data and knowledge is key.

Actions to explore

- Design an international platform that can clearly communicate national SIDS development plans, capacity-strengthening priorities, and preferred ways of working.

The development paradigm is shifted to leverage the strengths of SIDS

1.2	From	Support provided by development partners reflects perceived best practices, modalities, goals, and requirements applied in other countries	To	Support provided recognises, leverages, and strengthens local governing systems, social structures, workforce, ways of working and cultural values
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Actions now

- Review and refine capacity-strengthening processes and scopes to shift the paradigm of low capacity of SIDS, instead leveraging and localising characteristics such as size and values, identified in Part 1.
- Development partners support SIDS to strengthen, tailor and innovate their inherited governing models while learning with SIDS how to apply this to their own context.

Actions to explore

- Cultural awareness training for development partners before all projects.

SIDS can leverage overseas opportunities while also enhancing their domestic workforce

1.3	From	A large skilled population migrates away from SIDS for higher wages, economic opportunities, and improved life outcomes	To	International settings, programmes and domestic policies or strategies incentivising skilled people are returning to SIDS, attracted by economic opportunities and quality of life, or can leverage skills transfer of overseas persons
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Actions to explore

- Development partners to offer equitable remuneration to local consultants in SIDS and international consultants to improve respectful and equal working conditions and relationships.
- Development partners to consider adjusting labour mobility schemes, migration policies or skills transfer opportunities to support domestic workforces, while being cognisant of the advantages of these schemes.
- Development partners to support SIDS to better implement scholarships that incentivise graduates to return.

Regional institutions and approaches

The scope and capacities of regional institutions are clarified and strengthened to better support SIDS

2.1	From	Some regional institutions have good capacities, clear scope and work processes that adapt to needs at national level, while others are expanded to work and support across many areas in response to many different partners, creating thin capacity or overlapping areas of responsibilities	To	All regional institutions work with development partners and SIDS to facilitate strong core capacities aligned with clear scope that enables both unified advocacy and responsive capacity-strengthening support at national level across a network of regional institutions
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Actions now

- Regional institutions, development partners and SIDS to map and publish a network of regional institutions and collectively agree on roles and working practices, considering appropriate governance mechanisms.
- Development partners to work with regional institutions to conduct regional level capacity assessments to distil regional capacity needs, while being cognisant of how this aligns with national level needs assessments.
- Development partners to enhance the benefits of regional and sub-regional approaches and institutions for the AIMS region, including collaboration with AIMS region countries and existing regional institutions to identify and facilitate connection and enable desired knowledge sharing and learning. Development partners could also work with AIMS region countries to identify and design appropriate regional organisational arrangements.
- Development partners to work with regional institutions during planning of regional projects, to consider capacity-strengthening that maximises regional impact, while being adaptable to country context and needs.

Regional and inter-regional institutions support data sharing, digital capacities and knowledge sharing

2.2	From	Large amounts of data and information are repeatedly generated about and by SIDS in many different formats and at different levels to serve development partner needs while some SIDS have access to regionally facilitated knowledge sharing modalities, such as peer-to-peer or secondment	To	Large amounts of data and information are repeatedly generated about and by SIDS in many different formats and at different levels to serve development partner needs while some SIDS have access to regionally facilitated knowledge sharing modalities, such as peer-to-peer or secondment
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Actions now

- Development partners and SIDS to consider opportunities outlined in Part 2 for regional approaches.
- All stakeholders to co-create a network of data or statistical hubs for SIDS at regional and global levels, leveraging existing successful models, ensuring that data governance and processes are well-designed. Agreed structures for data collection and analysis will be required.
- Development partners to support SIDS in developing aligned regional and national strategies for the development of statistical capacities, aligned with overall agreed approaches to working.
- Co-create or build on current CoE (and the Global CoE) or regional forums to undertake structured peer-to-peer knowledge sharing with accompanying framework to support knowledge application (such as the Te Whare Pasifika Public Service Centre of Excellence and regular thematic Pacific forums).

Actions to explore

- Development partners and SIDS to explore an online platform or compendium that can collect capacity needs for SIDS at a national and regional level, and share lessons learned from use of new modalities or innovations.
- Development partners to consider further leveraging regional approaches for triangular cooperation, technology transfers and for advancing sectors of comparative advantage for SIDS.

Capacity-strengthening system and development partnerships

Development partner capacity-strengthening support is harmonised				
3.1	From	Capacity-strengthening support is provided from a wide range of individual development partners with overlapping, fragmented or narrow areas of focus	To	Development partner support is coordinated and aligned to efficiently meet the self-determined development needs, priorities, and goals of SIDS

Actions now

- Foster international forums of major development partners to make explicit the national agendas of development partners, and to identify and reduce overlapping or competing priorities.
- Harness international forums for structured learning from evaluations and experiences from capacity-strengthening, to make better decisions and adjust approaches into the future.

- Strengthen the use of national coordinators, that provide holistic management support across all support.

Actions to explore

- Development partners to establish a unified platform that communicates available development support and priorities to provide greater visibility for SIDS.
- Development partners to work together to identify how to increase coordination and to harmonise and reduce unnecessary reporting and research engagement burden on SIDS. This could be done by starting a mapping of procedures and requirements across various stages of the project or programme process, identifying what are hard rules and what could be more easily changed to identify quick wins.

Access to finance and support for SIDS is improved

3.2	From	Official Development Assistance is linked to the economic status of a receiving nation and accompanied by rigorous application processes and strong reporting to enhance accountability for public funds	To	Streamlined reporting and application processes for flexible funding that is responsive to changing island contexts, suited to island country scales and capacities, and accommodates the diversity of nuanced country contexts
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Actions now

- Development partners to provide clearer and simpler guidance, forms, and processes for accessing support, and support novel tax or other financial opportunities that may unlock opportunities.
- During core finance application times, provide an expert pool of technical assistance to support SIDS on the development of concept notes or proposals that meet the needs of development partners (for example, setting up climate finance experts in national organisations or regional institutions)
- Development partners to build capacity within their SIDS units to ensure they have better understandings of needs so they can better act as brokers between sources of finance and SIDS.

Actions to explore

- Development partners to reconsider financing paradigms built on the premise that assistance should be temporary for self-sufficiency and consider more sustained and appropriate assistance. This could also include continuing discussions on the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index.

Contextually informed capacity-strengthening content is mobilised using appropriate modalities with an enhanced focus on maintenance, resilience and sustainability

3.3	From	Development partners develop capacity-strengthening content that can be delivered in multiple contexts efficiently and apply familiar modalities that are focussed on effectively and efficiently planning and delivering funded work	To	Development partners utilise more contextually, complexity and politically informed approaches, that leverage different support modalities that strengthens capacity across the whole system and in a sustainable way
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Actions now

- Development partners should use political and contextually informed approaches that take account of the realities at play and that emphasise more participatory and adaptive management approaches with clearly agreed directions, while maintaining flexibility on content and approach.
- Development partners to utilise whole of systema approaches to support capacity-strengthening (including relevant people, infrastructure or governing processes).
- Development partners to work with SIDS to consider the most suitable modalities for any capacity-strengthening goal, while allowing flexibility and consideration of longer-term capacity-strengthening journey. This should draw on the feedback of what works and what doesn't across modalities in Part 3.
- Development partners should look to engage local or regional consultants. Where international consultants are used, SIDS should have decision-making authorities, consideration for equal remuneration should be given and terms of references should incentivise sustainable capacity building.
- Development partners and SIDS to explore shared service arrangements to enable continuous delivery support of technical services in SIDS (where acknowledgement for longer-term support is required).
- Establish mutual accountability frameworks that set and track progress together, that outline the roles and expectations of actors involved, and ensure incentives to support skills transfer and local counterparts.
- All stakeholders to consider guidance on Exiting Sustainably and ensure that all projects include a plan and documented guidelines and procedures for the sustainment of new knowledge or capacities.
- Development partners to use approaches that supports implementation and maintenance.

Actions to explore

- Develop an integrated guidance document for contextually informed and sustainable capacity-strengthening efforts, that integrates the effectiveness principles, PEA, systems thinking and adaptive approaches. This guidance should consider these approaches at all stages of the lifecycle, including project implementation and monitoring. This guidance can also serve to harmonise development partner approaches.

- Development partners to increase flexible budget support for SIDS at higher levels of systems, such as at national and sectoral budget levels that can enable flexible, iterative, and holistic support.
- Explore partnerships with regional universities or global centres of excellence to progress capacity-strengthening components over medium and long term, including accredited micro-qualifications.



Development partners grow capacities in applying development effectiveness principles and meaningful, two-way, trusted partnerships

3.4	From	Development partners are unclear about how to adjust development practices to apply internationally agreed Principles of Effective Development Co-operation, particularly for Country Ownership. SIDS work to understand and adapt local ways of working to development partner priorities, processes, and reporting requirements	To	Development partners have a high-level of understanding of the internationally agreed Principles of Effective Development Co-operation and support the self-determined development of SIDS through their application, in partnerships based on mutual trust and featuring responsiveness and adaptation to changing circumstances
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Actions now

- Development partners and SIDS hold structured dialogues focussed on the interpretation of the Principles of Effective Development Co-operation, drawing on real life examples and to understand underlying power-imbalances and tensions, considering how to share risk and accountability equitably.
- Development partners to learn from SIDS by co-creating a good practice guide and awareness courses for the application of the Principles of Improving Development Impact in SIDS.

- Invest in long-term partnerships and agreements. Utilise the UN SIDS Partnership framework and other guidance on partnerships to establish genuine partnerships that support capacity-strengthening (Yezza, Prescott, Stibbe, & Goransson, 2021); (Stibbe & Prescott, 2020)
- Development partners to demonstrate greater trust by refining rules and risk thresholds to align with what is effective in a country’s context and that enable SIDS to fulfil decision making roles.

Actions to explore

- Establish standards to enable collaborative learning and accountability on the application of the principles.
- Consider how to integrate these principles with other approaches and frameworks such as localisation, TWP and PEA.

SIDS are better supported to innovate and exploit emerging trends and technologies				
3.5	From	SIDS can miss out on untapped opportunities of new and emerging technologies, innovative financing or support models, or new solutions to enhance capacities in their organisations or across sectors.	To	SIDS are supported to have the innovation strategies, capacities and enabling conditions to acquire and exploit new technology advances, and to identify and pursue national or regional innovative solutions that can offer advantage.

Actions now

- Extend and expand on triangular and south-south cooperation modalities, particularly for piloting and experimentation, technology transfer and long-term, programmatic opportunities.
- Identify national and regional innovation opportunities and support broader research, development, and innovation capacities for SIDS.

Actions to explore

- Work with SIDS to identify opportunities to shift their enabling environments (such as regulations) to allow for the exploitation of innovations, while identifying new models for financial flows.

Part 5

Acknowledging the implications of broader system of development and development partnerships

Capacity-strengthening is part of a long-term process and partnership between SIDS and development partners (El-Waliawi & Van Der Wal, 2018). Development partnerships need to acknowledge the dynamics that exist in the system if they are to be mutually respectful, trusted, and genuine. These dynamics, shown in Figure 6, can drive both opportunities and tensions in development partnerships.



“The whole concept of partnership in development has to be interrogated over and over and over again, so that donors or whatever number are in the partnership, that they all understand each other.”



Figure 6: Three key dynamics to successful partnerships between SIDS and development partners

This part outlines some of these complexities, dynamics and tensions identified from the primary research and their implications for capacity-strengthening efforts, including:

- **Impacts of politics of development partnerships and systems on capacity-strengthening**
- **Nuancing the special case narrative**
- **Reframing development as mutual dependency and collaboration for global outcomes**

Impacts of politics on development partnerships and systems for capacity-strengthening

A key lesson in development support is that institutions (the explicit and implicit rules of the game), politics and power matter for development (Rocha Menocal, et al., 2018). It is widely acknowledged that development support cannot be untangled from politics, national interests and global dynamics. Thus, political and contextual realities are also critical to effectively advance capacity-strengthening efforts that may not be explicitly political in nature.

Recent developments in global interests are creating implications for SIDS capacity-strengthening. Some of these are outside the responsibilities of SIDS, yet they can have an influential effect on development partnerships and capacity strengthening. For example, development partners and SIDS share an increasing interest in peace and security in oceanic regions. Development partners regard access to geographic areas as increasingly important for regional stability and security (Beck, 2020). Yet, differing perceptions of what “security” means between different groups can mean that the real needs or interests of SIDS are ignored. Ahmed Khaleel, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in the Maldives, said, “For a lot of other countries, the threats [such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and climate change] are on the margins. But for a country like the Maldives, it’s life or death itself” (Khaleel, 2021). This can be exacerbated by recent crises or wars between countries, which have reduced the perceived threats of issues like climate change to certain development partners, while for SIDS are still paramount.

Another example is the global tensions around climate change. The global community shares an interest in cutting carbon emissions and building resilience to the impacts of climate change (see various agreements and international commitments). Yet, differences in global views about goals for carbon emissions and how to achieve these goals exist. While SIDS make negligible contributions to global emissions, they are harder hit due to their defining characteristics and reliance on their coastal zones for development (Bishop, et al., 2021). This means that adaptation is more urgent for SIDS. However, while financing opportunities have increased globally, Small Island States generally are often at a disadvantage in accessing it (Robinson, 2017); (Halais, 2019) and funding is still heavily skewed towards reducing emissions (Bishop, et al., 2021). The range of responses to the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28) agreement demonstrates the disparity between development partners and SIDS (McGrath, 2023). Such issues can negatively impact on capacity-strengthening or the strengths of partnerships.

Further, the focus of global attention on climate change has been observed to often overshadow awareness, and support that may be more pressing in some SIDS. These include poverty eradication, health promotion, infrastructure development, and human resources and skills enhancement (Baldacchino, 2018).



“We need to identify what unites all SIDS – and that is the seas and the oceans. What have we done for it? Not much. What is the potential? Enormous.”

Some of the impacts of such dynamics can be implicit. Many development partners or donors may not dictate what governments spend, per se, the behaviour of both development partners and recipients can be fundamentally affected by the existence of money flows (Deaton, 2013). The reality is that politics and power mean that SIDS still design plans to mimic what they think development partners would have proposed. The national and global interests can also result in more support from certain partners or support being implicitly exchanged for alignment on political topics. Some SIDS believe they have the power to say no, yet others do not feel empowered in the same way.



“We are in a totally different environment now. That has affected how we work. Because... underneath there’s competition. For us now, security is the overall issue that governs how we interact with our partners. We have one partner that whenever there is mention of other partners working with us that they’re not happy with, we get a message to meet with them.”

At a more local level, politics play a key role in how capacity-strengthening needs to be approached. For instance, financing healthcare, education or market regulation needs to consider politics, as reforms will create winners and losers. Additionally, in some SIDS, the real powers and influence that community ties and community leaders have can outweigh the formal structures of decision making.



“Donors need to come with humility – recognition that current approaches are not working, and this isn’t because island countries aren’t trying. Donors need to be more honest, transparent, and retrospective about their competitive agendas and histories.”

Some SIDS also feel that development partners are competing for the best “good news story” on the global stage and to reinforce affiliations, rather than genuinely wanting to help countries. This can be compounded by a lack of coordination or alignment between development partners, causing duplication or fragmentations. It can also drive a higher rate of communications and in-country visits, adding further pressure to already thin capacities.



“We also find that among and between donors, there’s a lot of competition for the big issues... so for example, we say the big issue for food security is agriculture.”

While it is outside of the scope of this report to undertake a full analysis of the “politics” at play in the development system, what is important is that capacity-strengthening efforts cannot ignore such issues.

Nuancing the *special case* narrative

The collective framing of “Small Island Developing States” has been used to draw attention to the “special case” of this group of countries, focussing on shared environmental, social and economic vulnerabilities. These shared needs have been extensively canvassed in preparatory meetings leading up to the 4th International Conference in which the “special case” narrative is used to drive more international development assistance for SIDS (readers can visit the literature and debates on this concept). However, the narrative can also drive an implicit paradigm that shapes development partner approaches to capacity-strengthening, which can acknowledge the diversity of SIDS, their needs and their contexts, or reinforce a negative connotation about their capacities.



“It was surprising to hear that some development partners don’t understand the circumstances of small islands. We’re not saying we’re special and we need to be given everything. We’re just asking for equal footing.”

Research for this report indicates that the ‘special case’ framing should be applied with caution to understand that:

- SIDS should not be defined by their deficits (Chan, 2018), rather consideration of smallness and inherent characteristics should be used as imperatives or opportunities for development.
- Capacity-strengthening cannot be delivered in the same way across the group of SIDS (Pritchett, 2013)
- Approaches cannot always be transplanted from other contexts (Pritchett, 2013); consideration should be given to when such replication can work and in what contexts or enabling conditions
- SIDS are capable of leading development work (Chan, 2018); (Pritchett, 2013) and this ownership across all phases of the capacity-strengthening lifecycle is important (see part 3)

Reframing development as mutual dependency and collaboration for global outcomes

Examining what sustainable development really means for SIDS is important as it can mean reframing the goals around capacity-strengthening, the modalities used, and the underlying paradigms used.



“Development partners and island countries need to rethink what they’re aiming for. What is currently being aspired to is not possible and the goal generates long wish lists.”

Traditional narratives around development for SIDS have usually focused on self-sufficiency – supporting countries to achieve economic growth that would self-generate development and thereby minimise or remove the need for external assistance (Doumenge, 1983). This is further compounded with fears of dependence on financing as well as the vulnerability-resilience debate (see (Bishop & Payne, 2010)).

Yet, more recent discourse has acknowledged that development that focuses on self-sufficiency does not reflect the realities of the global landscape or development co-operation (for example, see (Bishop, et al., 2021)). SIDS, while resilient, have shown, in many cases, strong economic growth but are also more vulnerable to external shocks, and limited opportunities or capacities to exploit in the global economy. Self-sufficiency is almost impossible in the interconnected, mutually dependent, and globalised world we live in today. This has been a core factor in the reason many SIDS have had good economic or societal success (Bishop, et al., 2021).

This framing has also sparked wide-spread debates about Official Development Assistance (ODA) for SIDS, which will not be covered here in detail, however, was raised multiple times. SIDS believe that the gross national income (GNI) per capital measure that is the basis for ODA eligibility may neglect the realities and specific challenges facing SIDS. SIDS on an imminent path to ODA graduation have also questioned the legitimacy of ODA rules (see work by Bishop and others on GNI being a misleading measure of progress for Small Island States). At the point of transition to the high-income category, ODA represents 26% on average of external finance for SIDS versus 1% for their income-level peers. Development partners should thus work to garner evidence and generate dialogue to understand the effects of various graduation processes on financing prospects in small countries (OECD, 2023). New indices are recently being explored to better account for the different factors that contribute to development, and to enable fairer comparison between national income levels (see for example (United Nations, 2023)), which has been of great discussion amongst SIDS vis-à-vis their development partners.



“You can graduate from being a ‘Least Developed Country’, but you can’t graduate from being a Small Island.”

Further, historical contexts have left an enduring imprint on the development of SIDS. Many SIDS grappled with economic exploitation during European colonial subjugation, with certain regions within SIDS prioritised over others, reinforcing lasting disparities within their contemporary economic structures (Baldacchino, 2018). Natural resources were often extracted at an unsustainable rate, continuing to yield significant challenges to sustainable development in SIDS. Cultural and social consequences were also significant, as indigenous cultures faced marginalisation or suppression as social structures were often reshaped to serve colonial interests. Human capital development in SIDS faces barriers as access to education

and skills development was often restricted during colonial occupation, with a focus on skills needed for administration and economic activities controlled by colonial institutions.

Thus, it is important to recognise these historical issues and reframing what sustainable development in SIDS really means. This could have a range of impacts and benefits for capacity-strengthening, for instance more equitable and longer-term financing, longer-term partnerships, and approaches, or more opportunities to consider mutual benefits (such as realising the potential of the blue economy). Longstanding partners such as Australia's DFAT and the World Bank acknowledge that for the smallest, most remote, and dispersed states without possibilities of economic diversification, there will be a need to provide long-term financial support and capacity supplementation (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2019).



“We must break the present growth model... SIDS shall constantly remind you of this because islands remain the moral compass of the world, because our own agenda is inextricably linked to that of humanity.”

Moving forward

Achieving the shared vision of the 4th International Conference on SIDS and the ambitions and potential of each Small Island Country requires more attention to untapped opportunities for capacity-strengthening, and a more relational and whole-of-system approach. It requires the intentional building of genuine and respectful partnerships.

This report has sought to summarise the perspectives and experiences from SIDS, drawing on primary and secondary research to elaborate on key themes. While no silver-bullet solution exists, some opportunities can be implemented now. Others should be discussed and advanced through co-creation by SIDS and partners together.

Consideration needs to be given to the roles across the system and how these roles must work together to ensure that actions have the right support, leadership, and investment to be advanced, implemented and adapted:

- those who have ownership and accountability
- those responsible for the implementation or delivery
- those who provide financial investment
- those who advocate, challenge or have significant influence
- those who are partnership brokers, and can facilitate the right connections between actors
- those who monitor and work to make sense of the data to inform better assessments of progress and enhance policy coherence.

By **acknowledging the system forces and dynamics** that exist, we can be humbler and bring a more nuanced paradigm to capacity-strengthening and its role in the development journeys of SIDS.

By **being committed to long-term, genuine, and mutually respectful partnerships**, we can shape more positive, impactful, and sustainable relationships that help to catalyse capacity-strengthening efforts.

By **recognising the unique strengths and potential** in the diverse contexts of SIDS, we can work with countries to be more innovative, resilient, and adaptive, catalysing better life outcomes for citizens.

By **focusing on the real needs and context** of SIDS, and applying principles of sustainability and effective development, we can improve the quality and impact of capacity-strengthening work.

By **working together and genuinely acknowledging our mutual dependencies**, we can play a role in shaping better futures for SIDS and globally.



“We can listen to what the system tells us and discover how its properties and our values can work together to bring forth something much better than could ever be produced by our will alone.” – Donella Meadows.

Annex A: Research approach

Authorship and usage

This report was led by Misha Kaur, Senior Lead and Specialist, OECD, with Timothy Tennant, consultant, OECD. We would like to acknowledge the extensive contributions of SIDS, development partners and other stakeholders in the development of this report.

This report is intended to support co-creation activities between representatives of SIDS, regional institutions, stakeholders, and development partners during an event to be held in February 2024. This event focuses on contributing opportunities in the lead up to the SIDS4 in May 2024, and aims to achieve practical actions to implement or pilot with SIDS and development partners.

Related documents

This report acknowledges and builds on current and previous work:

- the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A) Pathway (UN-OHRLLS, 2014)
- the 4th International Conference for Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) (United Nations, 2023); (United Nations, 2023)
- a commissioned report by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom Government in 2019, focusing primarily on the views of development partners.
- the Principles of Effective Development Co-operation jointly authored with SIDS in 2022.

Research scope

Research activities reviewed over 150 documents and engaged with over 200 people through 20 interviews online, 5 multi-day in-country visits, and questionnaire responses from eight SIDS. Representatives from all 47 SIDS were engaged through participation at workshops and events or attendance at UN preparatory meetings. Sensemaking was guided by key research questions, outlined in the framework illustrated in Figure 7.

Power of language

Language in this report is consistent with the strengths-based and power-aware approaches applied throughout the research process. Some commonly used terms on this topic can perpetuate power imbalances which hinder the success of capacity-strengthening work.

To address this, this report has been informed by the Oxfam Inclusive Language Guide in its choice in terminologies (Oxfam International, 2023).

The following table defines the terms used throughout this report:

Term	Summary definition
Small Island Developing States (SIDS)	This term refers to the 57 UN-OHRLLS listed countries referred to as 'Small Island Developing States' or SIDS and is used in this report. However, it should be noted that such acronyms can drive tensions. For example, there is an implied vulnerability associated with the use of SIDS and the associated language of 'special case' and 'developing' that can undermine the strengths of countries.
Development partners	This term is used to refer to organisations that provide development assistance cooperation. This includes multilateral and bilateral partners (often referred to as donors).
Global North and Global South	These phrases are used in place of the traditional 'developed' and 'developing' terms. Global North refers, largely to countries that are in a higher income category, that often provide development funding. Global South refers, largely to countries that are in a lower income category and often receive development funding.
Capacity-strengthening	This term is used in this report to mean activities that improve the competencies and bandwidth of individuals, organisations, and broader formal and informal social structures that help to enable, foster, and sustain functioning and high performing organisations. Capacity-strengthening encompasses both the growth of new capabilities and skills, as well as the broadening of human resource capacity. 'Organisational capacities' is also used to refer to public sector such as strategy, data analysis, prioritisation, coordination, and communication.



Annex B: On the OECD event “Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States”

On February 26th and 27th, 2024, the OECD hosted a pivotal event marking ongoing efforts to enhance capacity-strengthening in SIDS. The event brought together a diverse array of stakeholders, including representatives from SIDS public administrations, development partners, regional institutions, and academia, with a focus on co-creating solutions tailored to the unique conditions of SIDS. Set against the backdrop of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development at the UNESCAP headquarters in Bangkok, the event aimed to leverage this congress of stakeholders and amplify the voices and priorities of SIDS on the global stage.

Through two days of intensive, interactive, and interpersonal workshops, participants engaged in candid dialogue and co-creation to drive systemic change in how development stakeholders craft more tailored, sustainable, and impactful capacity-strengthening initiatives. This addendum summarises the context of the event, the activities undertaken, and the key outcomes achieved, highlighting the collective efforts to foster self-sustaining capacities and drive meaningful progress in SIDS development agendas.

Purpose of the event

The event aimed to address the critical need for enhancing capacity-strengthening in SIDS and served as the culmination of the OECD-FCDO report “Improving capacity-strengthening efforts: Enhancing capacity-strengthening for Small Island Developing States: Perspectives on working in partnership with Small Island States”. Through extensive engagement with the SIDS community across the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIMS) regions, the event sought to:

- **Co-create practical and actionable solutions** tailored to the unique conditions of small island states. In bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from small island public administrations, development partners, regional institutions, and academia, the event aimed to stimulate a spirit of innovation and co-creation among participants to enhance capacity-strengthening efforts.
- **Surface nuances of development partnerships** often overlooked in development co-operation. The event sought to shed light on practical opportunities to enhance natural governing systems in SIDS and foster sustainable capacity-strengthening initiatives that can effectively address the specific needs and priorities of SIDS.
- **Amplify voices and priorities of SIDS on the global stage** to create sustained momentum for systemic change in the lead-up to the UN 4th International Conference on SIDS to be hosted in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024.

What was done at the event

The event unfolded over two days, commencing with a pre-event, dynamic study tour organised by the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) on Saturday, February 24th. Participants had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with their peers while engaging

with Thailand's sustainable development strategies, particularly private sector agricultural initiatives spearheaded by the Mitr Phol Group, Thailand's largest producer of sugar and bio-energy. This opportunity equipped attendees with innovative, applicable approaches to sustainable development to inspire domestic initiatives.

At the commencement of the event on Monday, February 26th, participants engaged in a plenary session featuring opening remarks from key participants. This session served as a foundational moment, setting the tone for collaborative dialogue and action-oriented discussions throughout the workshop.

- **Mr. Hirohito Toda, Deputy Executive Secretary for Partnerships and Coordination, UNESCAP:** Mr. Toda emphasised the collaborative nature of the workshop, bringing together key stakeholders from various sectors to address the multifaceted challenges confronting SIDS. He highlighted the partnership between UNESCAP, the OECD, the FCDO and TICA as crucial in endeavours to generate inclusive economic growth, secure climate finance, and accelerate the digital transformation.
- **Ms. Misha Kaur, Senior Lead and Specialist, OECD:** Ms. Kaur delved into the findings of the OECD report "Improving capacity-strengthening efforts: Enhancing capacity-strengthening for Small Island Developing States: Perspectives on working in partnership with Small Island States", which provides crucial insight into understanding the nuanced dynamics of capacity-strengthening in SIDS and offers actionable insights to inform policy and practice.
- **Mr. Tumasie Blair, Deputy Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations:** Mr. Blair contextualized the workshop within the broader trajectory towards the 4th International Conference on SIDS (SIDS4), highlighting the pivotal role of collective action in advancing the development agenda of SIDS. As the national host of the upcoming SIDS4 conference in St. John's, Mr. Blair outlined the conference's theme of "Charting the course toward resilient prosperity" and noted that the conference would result in a focused, forward-looking, and action-oriented political outcome document that empowers SIDS to strengthen their capacity through enhanced multilateral and regional co-operation.

The core of the event centred around a two-day informal co-creation workshop designed to facilitate interactive exercises in small, diverse stakeholder groups. Participants delved into the analysis and definition of solutions for key focus areas outlined in the OECD report. Through robust dialogue and peer review, attendees collaboratively refined their solutions, fostering an environment that acknowledged and embraced diverse perspectives and interests. These workshops served as a crucible for innovative thinking and pragmatic problem-solving, enabling participants to co-create actionable strategies for capacity-strengthening in SIDS.

Throughout the event, informal reflection sessions provided invaluable opportunities for knowledge sharing and introspection. Participants seized these moments to disseminate their findings, reflect on the solutions crafted, and identify further avenues for exploration. Attendees expressed a deep appreciation for existing knowledge and the enduring relevance of SIDS' needs and desires. Participants pondered on the possibility of SIDS building their capacities through internal, self-sustaining systems, sparking contemplation about the future trajectory of capacity-strengthening support for SIDS. There was thus strong consensus on the urgency of action at SIDS4, with participants emphasising further delay as detrimental

to decades of efforts. Concerns were raised about the fractured development partner landscape, highlighting the need for better coordination and a shift away from redundant information dissemination. Amidst these discussions, reflections echoed the need for new, agile approaches to coordinated work, with the workshop serving as a platform for mutual learning and shared experiences. These sessions not only catalysed intellectual exchange but also fostered a sense of collective commitment towards advancing the development agendas of SIDS.

In addition to structured sessions, the event featured various networking opportunities, including luncheons, coffee breaks, and a cocktail dinner event. These informal gatherings facilitated organic interactions, allowing participants to forge meaningful connections, exchange ideas, and cultivate collaborative partnerships beyond the workshop table.

At the end of Tuesday, February 27th, stakeholders gathered for closing remarks delivered from a diverse array of participants. These remarks encapsulated the spirit of collaboration that permeated the event, outlining next steps to ensure that the momentum generated would translate into tangible actions and sustained support for capacity-strengthening in SIDS.

- **Mr. Sudip Ranjan Basu, Deputy Head, UNESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific:** Mr. Basu conveyed appreciation for the collaborative learning experience, emphasising the wealth of knowledge exchange among participants. He highlighted the historical context of capacity building workshops at the United Nations, citing the inaugural UN workshop in 1949 as a testament to the journey of progress in this field.
- **Ms. Peseta Noumea Simi, CEO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Samoa:** Ms. Simi expressed gratitude for the inclusion of the Samoa case study in the OECD report, expressing optimism that it would inspire future initiatives. She stressed the importance of in-depth analysis in addressing the challenges faced by SIDS, emphasizing the need for tailored solutions that align with each country's unique capacities.
- **Ms. Nabila Suria, Head of Multilateral and Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to UNESCAP, British Embassy Bangkok:** Ms. Suria acknowledged the evolving nature of capacity-strengthening efforts, recognizing the ongoing need to transcend conventional approaches. She highlighted the significance of building connections among participants, fostering collaboration beyond the confines of the event.
- **Ms. Arunee Hiam, Deputy Director-General of TICA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand:** Ms. Hiam emphasized the value of the study tour and extended an invitation for participants to explore TICA's support programmes and scholarships tailored for SIDS. She advocated for a SMART approach to partnership building, underscoring the importance of strategic collaboration in achieving shared goals.

Co-creation methodology

The workshop followed a structured approach to foster collaboration and problem-solving among participants. Initially, participants selected questions targeting key focus areas outlined in the OECD report, utilising two key canvases among their groups: a solution canvas and a stakeholder canvas. The solution canvas guided participants in co-creating innova-

tive solutions tailored to address the identified problem. This canvas provided a framework for defining the functionalities and requirements of proposed solutions, ensuring alignment with the overarching goal. The stakeholder canvas allowed participants to evaluate how each stakeholder would relate to the proposed solutions. Each group designated a scribe to document discussions and outcomes, ensuring clarity and coherence in the solution development process.

In the co-analysis phase, participants sought to define the overarching problem and establish the desired goals of the solution. Through stakeholder analyses, participants mapped out interactions with the issue, identified current pain points, desires, and constraints. Additionally, design principles were formulated to guide the development of solutions, with one participant acting as a scribe to document discussions and outcomes.

Transitioning into the co-design phase, participants focused on designing solutions aligned with the identified problem and goals. They defined functionalities and requirements for proposed solutions while considering stakeholder perspectives and potential conflicts or trade-offs. Discussions were aimed at ensuring alignment with design principles and addressing any discrepancies to refine the proposed solutions effectively.

As the workshop progressed into the co-implementation phase, attention shifted towards practical considerations for implementing the proposed solutions. Participants identified the necessary resources, including personnel, finances, and data, and outlined the initial steps required for execution. Stakeholder perspectives were once again considered, with critical enabling factors and necessary changes or actions identified for each stakeholder group to ensure successful implementation.

During a World Café session, participants engaged in a pre-mortem analysis of the proposed solutions. New participants provided critical feedback by examining potential challenges and barriers to implementation. Discussions revolved around past attempts, potential reluctance or opposition, regulatory hurdles, cultural norms, and interests that could impact the success of the solutions. Collaboratively, participants identified adjustments and solutions to address these challenges, culminating in a collective visual assessment of each solution's desirability, fundability, and feasibility.

Co-creation exercises

Table 6.1. How might we reduce the impacts of innate challenges that SIDS experience in sustaining capacity-strengthening, including brain drain, skill loss, or the potential need for long-term supplementation?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Addressing brain drain and skill loss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement retention strategies such as offering competitive wages, professional development opportunities, and mentorship programs to retain talent within SIDS. • Establish partnerships with educational institutions and industry stakeholders to develop specialized training programs that address skill gaps and promote knowledge retention. • Create incentives for skilled individuals to return to SIDS by offering opportunities for career advancement, research collaboration, and involvement in policy development.
	<p>Long-term supplementation strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop comprehensive plans that address the specific needs of SIDS, focusing on sustainable development, infrastructure improvement, and economic diversification. • Leverage partnerships with international organizations, development banks, and donor agencies to secure funding and technical assistance for supplementation initiatives. • Implement policies and programs aimed at reducing reliance on external assistance over time, promoting self-sufficiency and resilience within SIDS communities.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS express the urgent need for sustainable solutions, emphasizing the importance of retaining talent and fostering local expertise. They advocate for increased support from partners to implement effective capacity-strengthening programs and supplementation strategies.</p>
	<p>Development partners acknowledge the significance of addressing brain drain and skill loss in SIDS. They commit to providing assistance in the form of technical expertise, financial resources, and capacity building initiatives. Development Partners also collaborate with SIDS governments and regional institutions to design and implement long-term supplementation strategies that promote sustainable development and economic growth.</p>
	<p>Regional institutions support SIDS in developing and implementing capacity-strengthening programs that enhance institutional resilience, promote knowledge exchange, and address innate challenges. They advocate for regional cooperation and resource sharing to foster inclusive growth and resilience within the region.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Strategic partnerships:</p> <p>Foster partnerships among SIDS, development partners and regional institutions to leverage resources, expertise and best practices in addressing challenges.</p> <p>Promote collaboration between sectors to develop innovative solutions and sustainable approaches.</p>
	<p>Resource mobilisation and coordination:</p> <p>Enhance coordination among partners, financial institutions and donor agencies to mobilise resources and support initiatives.</p> <p>Explore innovative financing mechanisms to support long-term sustainability and resilience in SIDS.</p>
The Risks	<p>Implementation challenges:</p> <p>Potential challenges include limited capacities, competing priorities and bureaucratic hurdles, which may hinder the effective execution of programmes.</p> <p>Fiscal constraints, economic vulnerabilities and external shocks may pose risks to sustainability.</p>
	<p>Policy alignment and coordination:</p> <p>Divergent policy priorities, conflicting interests and tensions among stakeholders may impede collaboration, undermining efforts to address challenges faced by SIDS.</p>

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.2. How might we better collect, articulate and have visibility of SIDS national priorities, capacity-strengthening needs, and desired ways of working alongside development partners’ priorities and offers?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Sustainable policy coherence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate structured policy dialogues between SIDS governments, development partners, and regional institutions to ensure coherence and alignment of development priorities. • Establish a mechanism for regular joint reviews and updates of national development plans, incorporating inputs from all stakeholders, to foster inclusivity and transparency. • Foster partnerships between SIDS and development partners to jointly develop and implement policy frameworks that address shared challenges and opportunities.
	<p>Capacity-strengthening and knowledge exchange:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in capacity-strengthening programs focused on building institutional resilience, enhancing policy analysis and formulation, and promoting knowledge exchange and peer learning among SIDS. • Establish knowledge-sharing platforms and networks to facilitate the exchange of best practices, lessons learned, and innovative solutions across SIDS, development partners, and regional institutions. • Foster partnerships between academia, research institutions, and policymakers to co-create evidence-based solutions and support evidence-informed decision-making in SIDS.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS express the desire for customized solutions tailored to their specific socio-economic and environmental challenges. They emphasize the need for enhanced financing from development partners and regional institutions to support priority projects. Additionally, SIDS prioritize strengthened partnerships based on mutual respect and shared responsibility.</p>
	<p>Development partners aim for aligned priorities with SIDS to ensure effective resource utilization. They seek strategic engagement with SIDS governments and regional institutions to promote inclusive growth and address common challenges. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of results-oriented partnerships that deliver tangible outcomes.</p>
	<p>Regional institutions advocate for deeper regional integration among SIDS to leverage economies of scale and promote resilience. They prioritise institutional strengthening initiatives aimed at enhancing governance structures and policy coherence. Additionally, they promote south-south cooperation initiatives to address common challenges and foster inclusive growth.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Multi-stakeholder partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster collaborative partnerships among SIDS, development partners, and regional institutions to leverage complementary strengths, resources, and expertise. • Promote inclusive governance structures and processes that engage all stakeholders, including marginalized groups, civil society organizations, and the private sector, in decision-making and policy formulation.
	<p>Enhanced coordination for financing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance coordination among development partners and regional financial institutions to mobilize resources and leverage investments in critical sectors, such as renewable energy, climate adaptation, and sustainable infrastructure.
The Risks	<p>Implementation challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential implementation challenges, including limited institutional capacities, competing priorities, and bureaucratic hurdles, may hinder the effective execution of proposed solutions and delay progress towards sustainable development goals. • Fiscal constraints, economic vulnerabilities, and external shocks may pose significant financial risks to SIDS, development partners, and regional institutions, impacting their ability to mobilize resources and sustain investments in priority sectors and programs.
	<p>Policy divergence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divergent policy priorities, conflicting interests, and geopolitical tensions among stakeholders may impede consensus-building, coordination, and collaboration, undermining the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder partnerships and regional integration efforts.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.3. How might we develop data and statistical capacities to facilitate evidence-informed decision-making that integrates local knowledge and sustainably addresses long-term capacity gaps in this field?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Building robust data capacities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop robust capacities for creating, using and maintaining data platforms to address the challenges of accessing and collecting data effectively. • Implement a comprehensive approach encompassing regulatory frameworks, political commitment and community involvement to create an environment conducive to effective data utilisation.
	<p>Facilitate local knowledge integration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote mechanisms for integrating local knowledge into data collection and analysis processes, ensuring that decision-making is informed by diverse perspectives and contextual insights. • Establish platforms for collaboration between data experts and local communities to facilitate knowledge exchange and ensure that data-driven decisions are culturally relevant and responsive to community needs.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS prioritise the development of robust data and statistical capacities to inform evidence-based policies, address socio-economic challenges, and achieve sustainable development goals. They seek support from development partners and regional institutions to enhance data literacy, strengthen data collection mechanisms, and foster collaboration in data utilization efforts.</p>
	<p>Development partners recognize the crucial role of data and statistical capacities in achieving development objectives and express readiness to provide support despite potential challenges. They aim to collaborate with SIDS and regional institutions to allocate resources, build technical expertise, and promote data-driven decision-making for sustainable development outcomes.</p>
	<p>Regional institutions advocate for regional initiatives aimed at fostering cooperation, resource sharing, and capacity building efforts among SIDS to address data and statistical capacity gaps effectively, despite challenges such as limited funding, bureaucratic hurdles, and coordination complexities. They prioritize leveraging economies of scale, promoting collaboration, and enhancing regional integration to ensure evidence-informed decision-making and sustainable development outcomes.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Supportive regulatory frameworks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish supportive regulatory frameworks to govern data collection, management, and sharing processes, ensuring compliance with privacy and security standards.
	<p>Political commitment and community engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure political commitment at both national and regional levels to prioritise investments in data infrastructure and capacity building initiatives, fostering coordination among stakeholders. • Engage local communities in data collection processes to ensure the incorporation of local knowledge and perspectives into decision-making.
The Risks	<p>Implementation hurdles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex bureaucratic processes and administrative barriers may delay or hinder the implementation of data capacity-strengthening initiatives, leading to inefficiencies and project setbacks. • Lack of institutional support and resistance to change could impede the adoption of new data practices and hinder progress in strengthening data capacities.
	<p>Resource constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited funding availability or budgetary constraints may restrict the allocation of resources necessary for the development and maintenance of data platforms and training programmes, impacting the scalability and sustainability of initiatives. • Insufficient investment in technical infrastructure and human resources may limit the effectiveness of data capacity building efforts and hinder the integration of local knowledge into decision-making processes. • Challenges in accessing and retaining skilled professionals with expertise in data analytics and statistical analysis could hamper efforts to develop and utilize data capacities effectively.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.4. How might we develop data and statistical capacities to facilitate evidence-informed decision-making that integrates local knowledge and sustainably addresses long-term capacity gaps in this field?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Ensuring high-quality data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen accountability of policymakers to ensure the maintenance of high-quality, reliable data for evidence-informed decision-making. • Promote the use of data for evaluating country performance across various sectors, fostering a culture of data-driven governance and accountability.
	<p>Promoting data utilization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasise the importance of data-driven decision-making in policy formulation and implementation processes, highlighting the value of evidence-based approaches to address socio-economic challenges. • Facilitate cultural change within government institutions to promote the effective use of data in policymaking, encouraging stakeholders to integrate data insights into decision-making processes proactively.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS face challenges related to funding gaps, capacity limitations and cross-agency coordination in owning and managing data. Prioritising financing for data initiatives, advocating for increased support, and fostering greater engagement and co-operation are essential actions for SIDS to support the solution effectively.</p>
	<p>Development partners encounter issues related to data quality, timeliness and alignment of priorities. They intend to focus on producing high-quality, useful data, improving data sharing agreements and enhancing cultural understanding and appreciation.</p>
	<p>Regional institutions face challenges such as limited funding, bureaucratic hurdles, and coordination complexities. They desire increased support and collaboration among SIDS to address these challenges effectively and promote regional initiatives aimed at fostering cooperation, resource sharing, and capacity-strengthening efforts in data utilisation.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Cultural change towards data-driven decision-making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster a cultural shift towards data-driven decision-making through comprehensive education and awareness raising initiatives targeting policymakers, stakeholders and citizens. • Establish training programmes and capacity-strengthening workshops aimed at enhancing data literacy and promoting the understanding of the value of data-driven approaches in informing policy decisions.
	<p>Resource allocation for implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate sufficient financial investments to procure advanced technological infrastructure required for data collection, storage, analysis, and dissemination. • Invest in technical expertise by recruiting and training local skilled professionals proficient in data management, analysis and interpretation.
The Risks	<p>Funding gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient funding may hinder the implementation of data-capacity building initiatives, leading to delays or discontinuation of essential projects and affecting the availability and quality of data necessary for decision-making. • Limited financial resources may restrict investments in critical areas such as technology infrastructure, training programmes, and data management systems, impeding efforts to develop robust data and statistical capacities.
	<p>Data quality and timeliness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges related to data quality and timeliness, including inaccuracies and delays in data collection and processing, may undermine the credibility and utility of the data. • Poor data quality and outdated information can compromise the effectiveness of data-driven decision-making processes, leading to sub-optimal policy outcomes.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.5. How can we support SIDS to better understand and assess existing capacity-strengthening requirements to help them prioritise capacity-strengthening?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Allocating resources to address gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the allocation of resources to bridge the gap between identified needs and available capacities, acknowledging the importance of comprehensive support. • Ensure adequate provisions for human resources, financial investments, technological infrastructure, and data management systems to effectively address capacity gaps and support development efforts.
	<p>Collaborative analysis and plan formulation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a comprehensive gap analysis to precisely identify existing deficiencies, providing a clear understanding of the specific capacity-strengthening requirements of each SIDS. • Formulate detailed implementation plans in collaboration with stakeholders, accompanied by well-defined mobilization strategies to efficiently allocate resources and ensure the seamless execution of capacity-strengthening initiatives tailored to the unique needs of each SIDS.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS emphasise the importance of improved governance, transparency and inclusivity in decision-making processes to effectively support capacity-strengthening efforts.</p>
	<p>Development partners seek to foster national development and better coordinate resource mobilization efforts, but face challenges such as accountability and project sustainability.</p>
	<p>Regional institutions play a vital role in resource pooling and policy harmonization but face constraints such as regional diversity and limited resources.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Harnessing technology and financial resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify technology and financial resources as fundamental enablers for effective implementation, ensuring access to necessary tools and funding to support capacity-strengthening efforts. • Prioritise the allocation of substantial financial backing to address critical gaps and invest in advanced technology infrastructure to facilitate data management and analysis processes.
	<p>Embracing change management strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement change management strategies to foster a culture of data-driven decision-making and promote organizational readiness for capacity-strengthening initiatives. • Encourage the involvement of local consultants to provide contextual expertise and support the integration of local knowledge into capacity-strengthening efforts, enhancing relevance and effectiveness.
The Risks	<p>Challenges in accountability and sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development partners may face challenges in ensuring accountability through project lifecycles, leading to inefficiencies in resource allocation and utilization. • Unsustainable projects could strain long-term support for capacity-strengthening initiatives, jeopardising their continuity and effectiveness.
	<p>Impact of regional and national diversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The diverse socioeconomic and environmental contexts across SIDS may complicate efforts to harmonise policies and strategies, impeding collaborative initiatives. • Variation in resource availability and institutional capacity among SIDS may hinder equitable distribution of support and implementation of capacity-strengthening programmes.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.6. How might we enhance organisational capacities such as planning, coordination and policy coherence to effectively tackle complex policy challenges?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Establishing an autonomous platform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an autonomous platform dedicated to engaging the private sector in the policymaking process to bridge the gap between the public and private sectors. • Embed mechanisms for structured engagement, such as regular working groups or advisory committees, to facilitate effective collaboration in addressing complex policy challenges.
	<p>Ensuring inclusive policy development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a legislative framework for co-design, ensuring active stakeholder involvement from all sectors in policy development. • Implement comprehensive stakeholder mapping to identify key actors and promote their engagement in the policymaking process. • Enhance data collection and analysis capabilities to inform policy decisions and support evidence-based approaches.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS prioritise strengthening organization capacities to tackle complex policy challenges and achieve sustainable development goals. They emphasise the importance of inclusive governance, transparency and knowledge sharing in policy formulation and implementation to enhance organisational capacities.</p>
	<p>Development partners encounter challenges such as high transaction costs and shifting priorities in providing technical assistance and financing. Adhering to principles of mutual accountability and transparent engagement can help overcome these obstacles and enhance the effectiveness of their efforts.</p>
	<p>Private sector stakeholders play a crucial role in leveraging their expertise and insights to inform policymaking decisions, encountering challenges such as bureaucratic obstacles and a lack of transparency in decision-making processes.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Transparent engagement and collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster transparent engagement and collaboration among stakeholders to enhance organizational capacities such as planning, coordination and policy coherence. • Create a conducive environment for open dialogue, knowledge sharing, and joint problem-solving to address complex policy challenges effectively.
	<p>Dedicated resources and strategic planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate dedicated resources, including establishing a Secretariat, to support the deployment of the autonomous platform and oversee its operations. • Conduct baseline and gap analyses, formulate a strategic plan, and enact relevant legislation and policies to support the initiative's implementation and long-term success.
The Risks	<p>Bureaucratic challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex administrative processes, such as lengthy approval procedures and red tape, may delay or hinder the effective implementation and coordination efforts of the platform. • Divergent priorities and objectives among stakeholders may lead to conflicts and challenges in aligning strategies and actions, potentially impeding progress.
	<p>Stakeholder conflicts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicting interests among stakeholders, stemming from differing agendas or competing goals, could impede transparent engagement and collaborative decision-making within the platform. • Political interference from external actors or vested interests may undermine the autonomy and effectiveness of the platform, affecting its ability to tackle complex policy challenges impartially.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.7. How might we enhance organisational capacities such as planning, coordination and policy coherence to effectively tackle complex policy challenges?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Establishing clear priorities and coordination mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop mechanisms to monitor changes in political cycles, ensuring timely adjustments to policy priorities and strategies. • Establish robust legislation, enforcement mechanisms, and allocate adequate resources to support coordination efforts, enhancing accountability and effectiveness.
	<p>Ensuring effective policy implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure buy-in from all political parties to ensure alignment and commitment to policy objectives and priorities. • Conduct comprehensive data analysis on contributions to national development, informing evidence-based decision-making and resource allocation. • Establish a monitoring and evaluation system to track progress, assess impact and promote accountability in policy implementation.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS public administrations oversee policy implementation but struggle with limited resources and political influence. To support solutions effectively, they must prioritise national plans, focus on monitoring, and ensure manageable priorities.</p>
	<p>Political parties often grapple with financial limitations and ideological differences that can hinder their ability to fully engage in collaborative efforts. Achieving unity on common priorities and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders are imperative steps to ensure effective support for addressing complex policy challenges.</p>
	<p>Development partners navigate challenges such as the high costs associated with supporting initiatives and the need to balance shifting priorities. Therefore, it's essential for them to uphold principles of accountability and transparent engagement, ensuring that their support efforts align with the evolving needs and priorities of the stakeholders involved.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Legislation framework for coordination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish comprehensive legal frameworks to support coordination efforts, ensuring clarity, consistency, and accountability in policy implementation. • Implement legislation to provide a clear mandate for policy coordination and establish mechanisms for enforcement and compliance.
	<p>Financial and technical support resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate adequate financial resources to support capacity-building initiatives, enabling stakeholders to implement policies effectively. • Provide technical expertise and training to enhance stakeholders' capabilities and promote innovation in policy development and implementation.
The Risks	<p>Political ideology and resistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political parties may resist the implementation of coordination mechanisms, leading to delays or obstacles in policy formulation and implementation. • Conflicting ideologies among political parties may hinder consensus-building and collaboration, impacting the effectiveness of coordination efforts and policy coherence.
	<p>Resource constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited availability of financial and technical resources may impede the establishment of effective coordination mechanisms, affecting the implementation of policies and initiatives due to insufficient funding and expertise.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.8. How might we better design regional approaches to both reap economies of scale whilst ensuring that programmes are tailored to the speeds and ways of working of individual SIDS?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Preserving individuality while enhancing collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a robust regional framework with shared principles to harmonise efforts while respecting the sovereignty of individual SIDS. • Identify specific areas for collaboration, such as resource pooling and knowledge sharing, tailored to the unique needs of each SIDS. • Implement standardised practices to simplify processes and promote cohesion, ensuring inclusivity and equitable participation.
	<p>Fostering mutual understanding and trust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote regular dialogue and communication channels among SIDS to build mutual understanding and trust. • Facilitate capacity-building initiatives focused on enhancing cooperation and collaboration skills among regional stakeholders, fostering stronger partnerships.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS face multifaceted challenges, including limited resources and capacity disparities, as they endeavour to enhance their flexibility, adaptability, and reliance on national systems. Their quest for inclusive regional solutions reflects a commitment to addressing common challenges collectively while respecting individual country contexts.</p>
	<p>Development partners play a crucial role in providing support, expertise, and resources to facilitate regional initiatives. Their involvement is instrumental in fostering collaboration to tackle shared challenges effectively. However, they may be hindered by challenges such as shifting priorities and limited resources.</p>
	<p>Regional institutions serve as essential facilitators of cooperation among SIDS, offering platforms for dialogue, sharing best practices, and fostering knowledge exchange. However, their effectiveness is contingent upon addressing disparities in readiness and responsiveness across countries, thereby promoting inclusive and equitable regional collaboration.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Alignment of policies and political will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that country policies are in harmony with regional objectives to foster seamless collaboration and coherence in decision-making processes. • Demonstrate unwavering political will and commitment from all participating countries to support regional initiatives, ensuring sustained momentum and progress towards common goals.
	<p>Enhancement of public sector capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen governmental capacity by providing necessary resources, training and institutional support, empowering countries to actively participate in and contribute to regional initiatives effectively. • Foster a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing among government agencies, enabling them to leverage each other's strengths and expertise to address common challenges and achieve shared objectives.
The Risks	<p>Shifting governmental priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in administration may lead to shifts in governmental priorities, potentially disrupting regional cooperation efforts and hindering progress towards shared objectives. • Strong leadership continuity and sustained commitment to regional initiatives are essential to mitigate the risk of policy fluctuations and maintain momentum in regional cooperation efforts.
	<p>Capacity disparities and regulatory challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variations in capacity and priorities among SIDS within regions pose challenges to achieving uniform progress and consensus on regional initiatives, impeding effective coordination. • Unaligned regulatory frameworks across regions present significant barriers to achieving seamless integration and effective cooperation, exacerbating capacity disparities and regulatory complexities.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.9. How might we support SIDS to better partner with CSOs, academic institutions and the private sector and leverage these partnerships for unlocking financing, or the delivery of certain capacities, services or programmes?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Establishing genuine partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen coordination mechanisms involving all stakeholders and establish an independent entity funded by development partners to facilitate collaboration. • Foster engagement with CSOs, academic institutions, and the private sector to unlock financing and deliver capacities, services, or programs through collaborative efforts. • Develop legislative frameworks that support and facilitate partnerships between SIDS and various stakeholders, ensuring transparency and accountability in collaborative endeavours.
	<p>Promoting sustainable engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement capacity-strengthening initiatives to enhance the ability of CSOs, academic institutions and the private sector to effectively participate in partnerships. • Foster a culture of mutual trust, understanding, and alignment of goals among stakeholders through transparent communication and inclusive decision-making processes.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS public administrations are essential drivers for partnerships in their role as principal coordinators but often encounter challenges related to trust, limited resources and outdated legislation. Their proactive engagement with external stakeholders is crucial for fostering sustainable partnerships.</p>
	<p>CSOs and academic institutions are pivotal partners for SIDS in unlocking financing and delivering capacities, services, or programmes, yet face challenges due to limited technical and financial capacity. Strengthening collaboration with these entities involves fostering trust, aligning priorities, and overcoming financing and legislative constraints to maximize the impact of partnerships.</p>
	<p>Private sector stakeholders are significant drivers for economic growth but face constraints from restrictive legislative environments. Improving coordination and communication channels, creating conducive regulatory environments, and exploring innovative financing mechanisms are essential steps in leveraging private sector partnerships for sustainable development.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Skilled human resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the availability of skilled individuals capable of fostering effective partnerships and managing collaborative efforts. • Invest in capacity-strengthening programmes to enhance the skills of stakeholders involved in partnership initiatives.
	<p>Securing adequate financial support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide adequate financial resources to sustain partnership initiatives, including funding for operations, capacity-strengthening activities and project implementation. • Establishing innovative financing mechanisms such as public-private partnerships or impact investing to diversify funding sources and ensure long-term sustainability.
The Risks	<p>Challenges to building trust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mistrust or lack of confidence among stakeholders can hinder effective collaboration and partnership-building efforts. • Overcoming trust issues requires transparent communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to common goals. • Trust issues among stakeholders may hinder effective collaboration and partnership-building efforts.
	<p>Financial constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited financial resources and funding constraints pose a significant risk to the sustainability of partnership initiatives. • Insufficient funding may impede the implementation of planned activities and hinder the long-term impact of partnerships.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.10. How might we build consistent and reusable approaches to coordinating development partner efforts in SIDS?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Establishing a SIDS Partnership Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt existing rules and processes to national contexts, needs, or priorities to ensure alignment with the unique circumstances of each SIDS, fostering greater relevance and effectiveness of development efforts. • Standardise reporting requirements, promote knowledge sharing, and align efforts with SIDS' specific needs to streamline communication and coordination among stakeholders, enhancing transparency and accountability in partnership initiatives.
	<p>Fostering collaboration and accountability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as a structured platform for collaboration, reducing bureaucratic hurdles and fostering accountability by providing clear guidelines and mechanisms for engagement between development partners and SIDS. • Formalise reporting standards and encourage knowledge exchange to address common challenges effectively, leveraging collective insights and experiences to inform evidence-based decision-making and enhance the impact of development interventions.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS are challenged with navigating and meeting development partner rules and processes. To address this, they prioritize enhancing data presentation and developing effective communication channels. Their primary focus is on articulating needs and priorities clearly to foster mutual understanding and alignment with development partners.</p>
	<p>Development partners face the challenge of undergoing internal reviews of systems to ensure alignment with SIDS. Their priority lies in consulting with SIDS to gain deeper insights into their unique contexts, challenges, and priorities. Establishing effective communication channels with SIDS is essential for ongoing dialogue and information exchange, enhancing transparency, trust, and collaboration in partnership initiatives.</p>
	<p>Regional institutions focus on consulting with SIDS to understand their unique contexts, challenges, and priorities better. Their priority is to improve communication channels and conduct independent reviews to ensure alignment across partners, as well as foster transparency, trust, and mutual understanding in partnership initiatives.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Government support and leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide authority and support to drive the establishment and adherence to the partnership framework, ensuring commitment and compliance. • Foster political will as a driving force behind sustained commitment and investment in collaborative efforts.
	<p>Capacity-strengthening and knowledge management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equip trained personnel with requisite skills and knowledge for executing tasks competently, ensuring effective implementation. • Ensure interventions are grounded in empirical data and analysis, facilitating evidence-based decision-making and resource allocation. • Promote a culture of cooperation and trust by facilitating seamless coordination and mutual understanding among stakeholders.
The Risks	<p>Challenges in collaboration and partnership building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust issues among stakeholders may hinder effective collaboration and partnership-building efforts, leading to delays or breakdowns in communication and coordination. • Mismatches in priorities and poor communication channels between SIDS and development partners can result in misunderstandings and inefficiencies in project implementation. • Limited financial resources and funding constraints may impede the sustainability of partnership initiatives.
	<p>Financial sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited financial resources and funding constraints may impede the sustainability of partnership initiatives, compromising their ability to achieve long-term impact and meet the evolving needs of SIDS. • Uncertainty surrounding funding availability and allocation may lead to project delays or cancellations, undermining the continuity and effectiveness of development efforts.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.11. How might we in practice streamline, or harmonise, or provide support for, application and administrative processes to make it easier and less burdensome for SIDS to access capacity-strengthening support?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Design and Reporting Portal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a user-friendly online platform to centralise proposal submissions and administrative procedures, reducing the burden on SIDS by providing a streamlined process for accessing capacity-strengthening support. • Develop targeted capacity-strengthening programmes to enhance SIDS' administrative capabilities, ensuring they are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively navigate the application process and utilize the portal efficiently. <p>Streamlined application processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop standardised application processes tailored to the specific needs of SIDS, ensuring consistency and coherence across all capacity-strengthening initiatives. • Establish clear guidelines and criteria for accessing support, simplifying the application requirements and reducing administrative complexities for SIDS seeking assistance.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS struggle with navigating the diverse requests and requirements from different development partners, leading to confusion and inefficiencies. Additionally, their limited capacity in reporting, implementation, and procurement poses significant barriers to accessing support effectively. Inequity in accessing support further compounds the challenges faced by SIDS.</p> <p>Development partners encounter difficulties in obtaining timely and comprehensive information from SIDS, which hampers effective collaboration. Furthermore, ensuring the visibility of support efforts presents challenges, impacting their ability to showcase the impact of their interventions. Data constraints also pose significant hurdles in monitoring and evaluating initiatives.</p> <p>Regional institutions encounter difficulties in achieving alignment and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Harmonising efforts and priorities across various entities poses a significant challenge; addressing the unique and varied needs of SIDS emerges as a priority, essential for facilitating effective support mechanisms and ensuring streamlined processes throughout the region.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Skilled personnel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training programmes to enhance the administrative capabilities of SIDS, ensuring they have the necessary skills for effective development, management and training tasks. • Establish mentorship programmes to support the professional growth of personnel involved in capacity-strengthening efforts, ensuring availability of skilled personnel for development, management and training purposes. • Establishing multi-user interfaces and interoperability to support the Design and Reporting Portal.
	<p>Enhanced IT infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop user-friendly interfaces for the Design and Reporting Portal to ensure accessibility and ease of use for all stakeholders. • Implement robust data management systems to ensure interoperability and seamless data sharing across platforms and stakeholders.
The Risks	<p>Resistance to change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders may resist adopting new administrative processes and procedures due to inertia or fear of unfamiliar systems. • Cultural resistance within organisations may impede the successful implementation of streamlined processes, requiring change management strategies.
	<p>Resource constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient funding may pose a significant risk to the effective implementation of streamlined processes, limiting investment in necessary IT infrastructure, training programs, and personnel. • Shortages of skilled personnel or high staff turnover rates may hinder capacity-strengthening efforts, resulting in delays and inefficiencies in administrative streamlining initiatives.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.12. How might we in practice streamline, or harmonise, or provide support for, application and administrative processes to make it easier and less burdensome for SIDS to access capacity-strengthening support?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Streamlining administrative processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a programmatic approach to planning capacity development initiatives, ensuring alignment with SIDS’ needs and priorities. • Incorporate capacity development components into existing funds and programmes, reducing the need for separate application procedures and administrative burdens. • Continuously improve processes through feedback loops, soliciting input from stakeholders to refine and optimise administrative procedures.
	<p>Prioritising sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailor capacity-strengthening support to emphasise long-term sustainability, focusing on building local capabilities and institutional resilience. • Ensure that capacity development initiatives are designed with the flexibility to adapt to evolving challenges and priorities, fostering resilience in SIDS’ development trajectories.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS grapple with resource constraints, making it difficult to access and prioritize capacity development initiatives aligned with national strategies. Their priority lies in addressing inter-ministerial communication gaps and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration to ensure coherence in capacity-strengthening efforts. They aim to balance competing priorities by leveraging partnerships and coordinating with stakeholders to optimise resource allocation and maximize outcomes.</p>
	<p>Development partners encounter difficulties in harmonizing administrative processes and coordinating with country systems, potentially hindering the effective delivery of capacity-strengthening support. Their focus is on aligning support mechanisms with SIDS’ development priorities and capacity building needs to ensure that interventions are relevant and sustainable.</p>
	<p>Regional institutions face challenges in accessing capacity-strengthening support due to unclear policies and administrative complexities, hindering their ability to engage and coordinate effectively. Their priority is to advocate for streamlined administrative processes and harmonised support mechanisms, aiming to reduce duplication of efforts and alleviate administrative burdens for SIDS.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Training and development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide regular training and development opportunities for stakeholders involved in capacity-strengthening efforts, enhancing their skills and capabilities to effectively navigate administrative processes and requirements. • Develop comprehensive dissemination plans to ensure efficient sharing of relevant information and best practices among stakeholders, fostering continuous learning and knowledge exchange.
	<p>Technology infrastructure and knowledge management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise current technology for communication and collaboration among stakeholders, facilitating seamless interaction and information sharing to streamline administrative procedures. • Implement structured documentation and knowledge management systems to enhance efficiency in accessing capacity-strengthening support, enabling stakeholders to easily access and utilize relevant information and resources.
The Risks	<p>Limited funding prospects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget constraints and competing priorities may hinder the acquisition of adequate funding to support project implementation. • Meticulous planning and strategic resource allocation are essential to address funding constraints effectively and ensure the sustainability of capacity-strengthening initiatives.
	<p>Obstacles to implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving robust stakeholder engagement and collaboration, crucial for successful implementation, may encounter hurdles such as conflicting interests and communication barriers. • Overcoming feasibility concerns demands tailored approaches that can effectively address the specific administrative complexities and resource limitations of SIDS, ensuring that capacity-strengthening efforts are appropriately targeted and impactful.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.13. How might we institutionalise longer-term, whole-of-systems approaches to capacity-strengthening for SIDS, ensuring that support is iterative, flexible and promotes country ownership?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Institutionalising robust systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement regular evaluation and reporting mechanisms to track progress, identify areas for improvement, and ensure accountability in capacity-strengthening efforts. • Engage in evidence-based decision-making by collecting and analysing data to inform policies, strategies, and resource allocation effectively. • Establish clear coordination mechanisms, such as inter-agency committees or task forces, to facilitate communication, collaboration, and alignment of efforts across government departments and agencies.
	<p>Promoting inclusive processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage diverse stakeholders, including marginalized communities and civil society organizations, in decision-making processes to ensure that national needs and priorities are accurately identified and effectively addressed. • Foster participatory approaches, such as town hall meetings or public consultations, to solicit feedback, gather insights, and promote ownership of capacity-strengthening initiatives among all stakeholders. • Prioritise capacity building and knowledge sharing to empower local communities and strengthen their ability to contribute meaningfully to the development and implementation of policies and programs.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS face internal political dynamics, including resistance to change and competing interests, hindering the adoption of longer-term approaches to capacity-strengthening. Inadequate capacity and limited evidence-based decision-making pose significant challenges to effective implementation. SIDS prioritise fostering ownership and participation in decision-making processes, promoting inclusivity, and building capacities to drive institutional change and resilience.</p>
	<p>Development partners encounter challenges related to aligning support with national priorities, ensuring flexibility and responsiveness to SIDS needs, and fostering partnerships based on trust and accountability. Additionally, limited financial resources and competing interests may constrain their ability to provide sustained support. Development partners prioritize aligning their support with SIDS' national priorities, promoting flexibility and responsiveness in their assistance, and fostering partnerships based on mutual trust and accountability.</p>
	<p>Regional institutions face challenges in providing guidance, coordination, and technical assistance to SIDS, particularly in aligning support with regional priorities and objectives. Limited resources and capacity constraints may also hinder their ability to effectively support capacity-strengthening initiatives. Regional institutions prioritise leveraging their expertise, networks, and resources to support SIDS in adopting longer-term, whole-of-systems approaches to capacity-strengthening.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Financial and infrastructure investment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate resources strategically, prioritizing areas with the highest potential for impact, such as critical infrastructure projects and capacity-building initiatives. • Invest in human resources development through targeted training, mentorship, and professional development programs tailored to the needs of government officials, civil servants, and other stakeholders. • Prioritize investments in infrastructure development to enhance access to essential services and support economic growth and development in SIDS.
	<p>Supportive cultural and legal frameworks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster a culture of collaboration and innovation by promoting open communication, knowledge sharing, and continuous improvement among stakeholders. • Implement supportive legal frameworks that facilitate effective coordination and collaboration by enacting laws and regulations that promote transparency, accountability, and information sharing among stakeholders. • Promote a mindset change among development partners and stakeholders to embrace new approaches, methodologies, and technologies that enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of capacity-building efforts.
The Risks	<p>Internal political dynamics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to change from stakeholders may stem from competing interests, power struggles, or entrenched bureaucratic processes, hindering the adoption of longer-term, whole-of-systems approaches to capacity-strengthening. • Addressing internal political dynamics requires fostering a culture of collaboration, inclusivity, and transparency, and engaging key stakeholders in decision-making processes to build consensus and overcome resistance to change.
	<p>Capacity challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate capacity, including limited data availability and insufficient technical expertise, may pose challenges to effective implementation of longer-term, whole-of-systems approaches to capacity-strengthening. • Overcoming capacity challenges necessitates targeted investments in human resources development, capacity-building initiatives, and knowledge sharing to build the skills and expertise needed to drive evidence-based decision-making and institutional change.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.14. How might we practically and sustainably design and expand triangular and south-south cooperation modalities to strengthen the most appropriate capacities for SIDS?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Leveraging digital technology for enhanced visibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement digital platforms and communication tools to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among stakeholders involved in triangular and south-south cooperation modalities. • Utilize online repositories and databases to store and disseminate best practices, case studies, and resources related to capacity-strengthening initiatives for SIDS. • Establish virtual learning environments and webinars to facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges and interactive training sessions, enhancing the accessibility and reach of capacity building efforts.
	<p>Establishing a Centre of Excellence for knowledge sharing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a dedicated Centre of Excellence to serve as a hub for knowledge sharing, research, and capacity building activities tailored to the specific needs of SIDS. • Develop partnerships with academic institutions, think tanks, and international organizations to leverage expertise and resources for capacity-strengthening initiatives. • Offer tailored training programmes, workshops, and seminars conducted by subject matter experts to build technical skills and enhance institutional capacities in priority areas identified by SIDS.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS often struggle to access examples of best practices and solutions to coordination challenges among donors, which hinders their capacity building efforts. Their priorities revolve around agreeing on a common approach to cooperation and fostering collaboration among themselves to address their unique challenges effectively.</p>
	<p>Development partners encounter difficulties in navigating geopolitical interests and complex organizational structures, which can hinder their support for capacity building efforts in SIDS. Their priority lies in adapting to the changing landscape and providing comprehensive support through education and flexibility to address the evolving needs of SIDS.</p>
	<p>Regional institutions, despite resource constraints and legitimacy issues, play a crucial role in facilitating effective cooperation among SIDS. They prioritize aligning with principles of responsiveness and harmonisation to promote sustainable development and capacity-strengthening initiatives in the region.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Financial and human resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the availability of adequate financial resources to support the design and expansion of capacity-strengthening modalities, including funding for training, infrastructure development, and knowledge sharing initiatives. • Allocate human resources effectively, providing skilled personnel to oversee and implement triangular and south-south cooperation projects, ensuring their success and sustainability.
	<p>Institutional support and infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster the development of supportive institutions at both regional and national levels, establishing governance frameworks and coordination mechanisms to facilitate seamless cooperation among stakeholders. • Invest in infrastructure development to enhance connectivity and accessibility, ensuring that SIDS have the necessary tools and platforms for effective engagement and collaboration in capacity building efforts.
The Risks	<p>Resistance to change and bureaucratic processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders may resist adopting new modalities due to entrenched bureaucratic processes, power struggles, or competing interests, which could impede the implementation and effectiveness of capacity-strengthening initiatives. • Overcoming resistance to change requires proactive communication, stakeholder engagement, and consensus-building efforts to garner support and alignment towards the adoption of innovative approaches.
	<p>Resource constraints and funding challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited financial and human resources may pose significant challenges to the sustainable design and expansion of capacity-strengthening modalities, potentially resulting in delays or suboptimal outcomes in addressing the capacity needs of SIDS. • To mitigate resource constraints, stakeholders must explore alternative funding sources, prioritize capacity building investments, and leverage partnerships to maximize the impact of available resources and sustain capacity-strengthening efforts over the long term.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Table 6.15. How might we design a practical and desirable guide for development partners for commencing capacity-strengthening projects and existing sustainably, that integrates the principles and other better practice frameworks?

<p>The Solution</p>	<p>Develop a pipeline for project outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a structured pipeline for project outputs such as legislation and training materials, ensuring that capacity-strengthening initiatives yield tangible and sustainable results over the long term. • Design the pipeline to facilitate continuous progress and learning, enabling stakeholders to track outputs, measure impact, and make informed decisions about resource allocation and future priorities
	<p>Integration of capacity-strengthening objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed capacity-strengthening objectives within projects from their inception, ensuring that initiatives are designed to address country-specific needs and long-term development priorities effectively. • Foster collaboration among project stakeholders to identify capacity gaps, set clear objectives, and integrate capacity building activities seamlessly into project plans, maximizing the impact and sustainability of interventions.
<p>The Stakeholders</p>	<p>SIDS are central to the solution due to their ownership of institutions and desire for the retention of knowledge and partnership co-development. They seek alignment of capacity building projects with long-term national priorities, emphasizing the importance of sustainable outcomes and institutional resilience to address their unique challenges effectively.</p>
	<p>Development partners provide technical assistance and funding for capacity building projects but encounter issues such as staff turnover, lack of long-term visions, and bureaucratic hurdles. Their support hinges on alignment with development effectiveness principles, long-term partnership approaches, and mainstreaming capacity building in programs to ensure sustained impact and effectiveness.</p>
	<p>Regional institutions play a crucial role in facilitating knowledge sharing, project coordination, and networking among member states to enhance capacity-strengthening initiatives. However, they face challenges related to resource constraints, governance differences, and alignment of priorities, necessitating strategic collaboration and communication to overcome barriers and promote effective implementation.</p>

The Enablers	<p>Invest in country ownership and leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote country ownership and leadership in capacity-strengthening projects to ensure that initiatives are tailored to national priorities and sustainable in the long term. • Conduct scenario planning exercises to anticipate future needs and challenges, enabling proactive decision-making and adaptive management of capacity building initiatives.
	<p>Allocate sufficient resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate adequate financial and human resources for capacity building projects, including funding for human capital development, infrastructure improvements, and institutional reforms. • Implement institutional reforms to enhance governance structures, streamline processes, and promote accountability and transparency in capacity-strengthening efforts.
The Risks	<p>Navigating implementation challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureaucratic hurdles, including complex procurement procedures and administrative red tape, may prolong the project initiation phase, leading to delays in implementation and increased project costs. • High turnover rates among project personnel, particularly key staff members, could disrupt project continuity and knowledge transfer, potentially impacting the effectiveness and success of capacity-strengthening efforts.
	<p>Sustaining momentum and collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining stakeholder engagement throughout the project lifecycle requires proactive communication strategies, regular updates, and inclusive decision-making processes to ensure continued support and participation. • Flexibility in project management, including the ability to adapt to unforeseen challenges and changing priorities, is essential for sustaining momentum and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, enabling the project to remain responsive to evolving needs and circumstances.

Source: Author's own elaboration, adapted from solutions co-created by participants of the OECD event "Co-creating solutions for enhancing capacity-strengthening support for Small Island Developing States"

Moving forward

The event stands as a testament to the collective commitment towards enhancing capacity-strengthening in SIDS. It served not only as a platform for dialogue and collaboration but also as a symbol of solidarity and shared responsibility in addressing the multifaceted challenges to development support in SIDS. By bringing together diverse stakeholders from small island public administrations, development partners, regional institutions, and academia, the event fostered a spirit of cooperation and innovation, emphasising the importance of tailored, sustainable solutions for SIDS.

The event embodied the principle of inclusivity, ensuring that the voices and perspectives of SIDS can be heard and valued on the global stage. It underscored the significance of partnership and mutual support in advancing the development agendas of SIDS, recognizing that no single entity can address the complex challenges alone. Through candid dialogue and co-creation exercises, participants reaffirmed their commitment to driving systemic change and fostering resilience in SIDS communities.

Beyond the practical outcomes and actionable strategies generated, the event held deeper significance as a symbol of hope for the future of SIDS. It served as a reminder of the resilience and ingenuity inherent within SIDS communities, inspiring confidence in their ability to overcome challenges and achieve sustainable development. Moreover, the event generated momentum that extends far beyond its duration, laying the groundwork for continued collaboration and collective action in the lead-up to the SIDS4 in May 2024, where the report will be launched. This event will present the report's findings and recommendations, initiating discussions on practical strategies for enhancing capacity-strengthening in SIDS. It will also serve as a catalyst for launching pilot programmes, aiming to implement innovative approaches identified in the report.



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