



CASE STUDY

Institution Building in Sri Lanka:

Establishment of the SDGs Monitoring and Coordination Unit

Background Information

Sri Lanka made great strides through its efforts in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but many challenges remained at the outset of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sri Lanka's leaders established the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife (MoSDW) to give its people an integrated agency that would lead this work. The MoSDW drives the country's SDG-related efforts as it looks to deliver on Sri Lanka's 2030 Agenda commitments. The organization's central mission is to coordinate work around the policies, strategies, programs, mechanisms, and tools aimed at addressing its development challenges, to ensure environmental, social, and economic sustainability. It does so via an integrated approach that combines inter-agency mechanisms with broad stakeholder engagement.

Quote

"The Earth is not a treasure only of mankind. Animals too hold same right as him. Since they also are members of the bio-sphere, all these animals hold equal right to live at any place on the earth just as man."

-Gamini Jayawickrama Perera; Minister of Sustainable Development and Wildlife Conservation

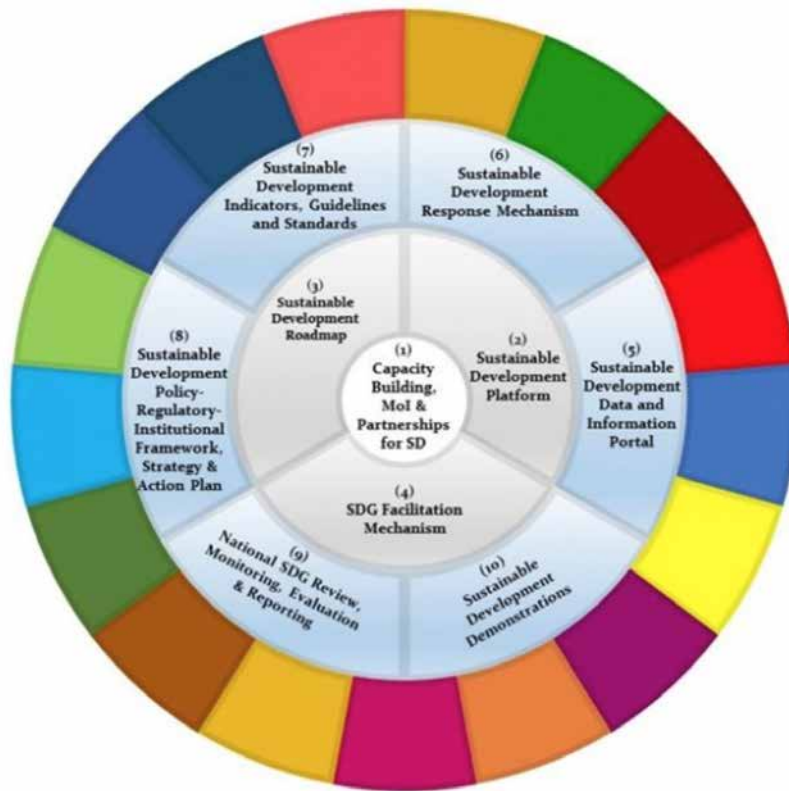
Approach, Delivery, & Challenges

The Sustainable Development Division (SDD) was established within the MoSDW to directly implement Sri Lanka's SDG efforts. That group is charged with delivering on the country's National Sustainable Development Roadmap which in turn informs the related policy and institutional framework, strategy, and action plan.

The SDD has been tasked with four primary roles and responsibilities. Those are: (1) to act as the central agency for sustainable development efforts to develop the necessary policies, strategies, programmes, mechanisms, and tools, (2) to collaborate with agencies to identify priorities and develop mechanisms for the implementation of national policies on sustainable development, (3) to foster research related to Sustainable Development and distribute the results of that research to drive policy reforms and direct action, and (4) to coordinate Sri Lanka's commitments to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



and the SDGs including monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on the goals. The Ministry is also charged with maintaining and enhancing the state of the country's wildlife resources, botanical gardens, and zoological gardens.



Sri Lanka's Sustainable Development Division's Work-Wheel¹

Sri Lanka's Sustainable Development Division has many efforts organized in a progression of work tracks that are represented in the SDD team's Work-Wheel. The first steps of that program were launched as part of the 2016-2017 Strategic Plan. The SDD will implement its strategy over three phases; 2017 to 2020, 2020 to 2025, and 2025 to 2030.

The Work Wheel's steps include:

1. Capacity Building, Means of Implementation and Partnerships for Sustainable Development: the SDD collaborates with expert working groups, while working to build capacity;
2. National Sustainable Development Platform: to keep stakeholders informed, while developing knowledge and fostering planning;
3. National Sustainable Development Roadmap: to facilitate the creation of the national strategy and action plan, while also feeding into the development of the necessary policy, regulatory, and institutional frameworks;
4. National SDG Facilitation Mechanism: to facilitate coordination between agencies, while also developing the specific sectoral expertise needed to implement, monitor, evaluate & report on the country's progress;
5. National Sustainable Development Data and Information Portal: the central data repository with links to regional and international data to allow thorough, relevant analysis and reporting to assist national planning;

¹ "Sustainable Development Division," *Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife*, 2017, <http://msdw.gov.lk/divisions/sustainable-development-division/>.



6. Sustainable Development Response Mechanism: to help determine Sri Lanka's national sustainable development intervention requirements and give ministries, agencies and organizations the guidance necessary for managing initiatives and projects;
7. Sustainable Development Standards Framework: to provide the verification processes for monitoring and evaluation, including the guidelines, tools, and standards that will be used by project planning and approval agencies;
8. National Sustainable Development Policy-Regulatory-Institutional Framework, Strategy & Action Plan: guidance from the National Sustainable Development Roadmap will support the creation of a Sustainable Development Council that will craft and implement Sri Lanka's strategy;
9. National SDG Review, Monitoring, Evaluation, & Reporting: to track Sri Lanka's progress and convey their efforts both internally and to the world;
10. Sustainable Development Demonstrations: to partner with public sector institutions and other relevant stakeholders primarily at the local, community, and district levels to prove the benefits of sustainable development.

The MoSDW has overall responsibility for the SDGs, but to accomplish its goals, it has to navigate a network of fifty-two ministries, and hundreds of agencies, making its efforts both challenging and complex. Furthermore, the Ministry is faced with historically low tax revenues. To remedy this, Sri Lankan legislators passed a new Inland Revenue Act in October 2017 that simplified the tax code to increase compliance. The country also launched a new technology platform, the Revenue Administration Management Information System (RAMIS) which connected Sri Lanka's three revenue institutions with twenty-seven related agencies to boost collaboration and transparency. The new system is expected to lead to fairer actual taxation and improved revenue collection.

Benefits & Lessons Learned

Past efforts taught Sri Lanka's leaders the need of certain factors to enable them to effectively pursue matters as complex as the SDGs. Of those, developing functional institutions and workable plans, as well as having open communication channels are viewed as keys to success. In addition to this, they believe their country's transformation should be an inclusive endeavor. To this end, they're fostering engagement from a diverse group of stakeholders as they work towards integrating and mainstreaming the SDGs. Setting this foundation was one of the first tasks for the SDD, as it worked to create the National Sustainable Development Roadmap. Relevant policy will flow out of the roadmap, along with the institutional framework, strategy, and action plans that Sri Lanka will use to deliver on its goals.

Multiple steps are being taken to foster open communication between government agencies. Doing so increases coordination while ensuring policy coherence, which will support their efforts on the goals. To get there, they're aiming to utilize a whole-of-government approach for all phases (including planning, implementing and monitoring) of the SDGs. To facilitate such communication, they're creating interagency coordination committees, and promoting inclusive institutions.

Opportunities & Next Steps

In 2017, Sri Lanka's Department of Census and Statistics led the creation of a report on the status of SDG indicators for the country. The report shared the country's progress in collecting data around the SDGs, listing those which they were now able to track, as well as those they are working to begin tracking.



Sri Lanka's Director General of the Department of Census and Statistics, Dr. Amara Satharasinghe, claims "the SDGs and their accompanying indicators present both an opportunity and a challenge for Sri Lanka's data ecosystem." Dr. Satharasinghe believes there's a need for greater attention – domestically and internationally – to the production of reliable data, and that those in charge of the country's National Statistical System should use the opportunity provided by the SDGs to deliver needed improvements. To do so, he is working to deliver advancements to their census and survey capabilities, as well as their administrative data systems. The Department of Census and Statistics is also exploring opportunities to integrate new data with the goal of improving existing indicators, while also developing new ones. A primary challenge to this is that many indicators require cross-governmental and multi-stakeholder participation, thus a high level of collaboration.

Sri Lanka will present its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the country's SDG progress at the High-level Political Forum in July 2018. In March 2018, the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife partnered with the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) to host two workshops that brought together a diverse group to work on the VNR. An open call for participants was made for those events in looking to ensure the review process was inclusive in nature. Representatives from government, the private sector, academia, and civil society organizations discussed Sri Lanka's SDG implementation efforts, while focusing on the year's selected goals. While producing its first VNR, Sri Lanka's leaders are also assessing the progress of their related policies and programs in looking to ensure that they're having the intended effects.

In a keynote given at the 4th High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development in Asia and the Pacific held in April 2017, Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake stated that Sri Lanka has started a new journey towards sustainable development that would pass on benefits equally to all the country's citizens.

Sources & Verification

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Case study author:

Chris Oestereich