

Integrated Health Outreach CSO Statement

Integrated Health Outreach (IHO), is a not-for-profit organization based in Antigua and Barbuda, and working throughout the Caribbean region. It is our mission to enhance community, ecological and social-emotional well-being. We focus on supporting vulnerable groups with a strong emphasis on the rights of women and youth. For the past decade, we have implemented projects supporting women's wellbeing and livelihoods and biodiversity conservation funded by international donors such as World Bank, Global Affairs Canada/Equality Fund, UNDP and others.

Integrated Health Outreach, like many Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) based in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), understands the challenges our communities have faced and the impacts they have had on vulnerable and marginalised groups. It is from these experiences that we would like to address the second chapter of the Zero Draft Outcome Document—***What do SIDS want?***

We would like to address Section A, **Resilient Economies**

- Heading ii. **Trade and investment:** We are proposing the addition of trade and investment vehicles for women, youth and vulnerable groups who traditionally face economic challenges in accessing start-up capital to facilitate economic diversification. The following statement proposed:

“Provide specialized trade, investment points of access and venture-funded cycles for enterprise development of women, youth and vulnerable groups across SIDS to reduce barriers to economic viability. This includes programs that integrate comprehensive education and mentorship programs to deliver support and foster inclusive growth and sustainable diversification.”

We would like to address Section B, **Safe and prosperous societies:**

- Heading i. **Strengthen health systems.** We are proposing that mental health be added to strengthening health systems. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have particular mental health system needs due to their remoteness and narrow resource base. Additionally, people facing mental disorders are often stigmatised. We propose the addition of this statement to support heading i. and paragraph d:

“Development of programmes to promote mental health and prevent mental health disorders; development of mental health action plans; increased access to primary mental health care; promotion of rigorous research to determine the pervasiveness of mental disorders.”

- Heading *iii. Achieve gender equality, empower youth and leave no one behind.* Although you address leadership in *paragraph b (Increase women’s leadership, and promote their meaningful and effective participation and representation at all stages of decision-making processes)* we feel that this statement does not adequately address women’s lack of political representation.

We would like to propose that this paragraph be expanded and an additional paragraph (paragraph i) to include:

“Build the capacities of women political candidates through increased training. Strengthen legislation to provide equitable access to political arenas for women to allow for fair and equal governance and decision making to ensure that government policies uphold women’s rights.”

We would like to address **Section C A secure future:**

Heading iii. **Resilient Infrastructure**

Noting the exacerbated pressures faced by vulnerable groups due to limited infrastructure and increased risk to climate change. We propose the inclusion of the following statement as paragraph c:

“Increase and improve infrastructure design to be inclusive to the gender, social and climate change characteristics of SIDS with distinct consideration for the access, safety, economic mobility and transportation of women, youth and vulnerable groups.”

We would like to address Section D. ***Environmental Protection and Planetary Sustainability:***

We propose the inclusion of social accountability in all sections. Social accountability is defined as an approach toward building accountability that relies on civic engagement to strengthen government’s accountability. It can enhance human development outcomes by strengthening the links between governments and citizens to monitor government performance and foster responsive governance. The SIDs climate crisis demands increased citizen engagement and government accountability to increase the protection of the environment and conserve biodiversity.

Heading i. **Urgent action on climate change:**

“i. Support civic engagement through the creation of programs and funding mechanisms for community-led monitoring and actions towards strengthening government’s accountability and responsiveness.”

Heading iv. **Mainstream Disaster Risk Reduction:**

We propose the inclusion of sustainable and inclusive post-survivor care in disaster risk reduction. Noting that disaster events have a domino effect and implications across the productivity and resilience of SIDS. Therefore, the addition of the following statement as paragraph f:

“Create pathways for sustainable and inclusive support for the impacted communities of disaster events with focus on all vulnerable groups which incorporate long-term access to government and community-based safety programs, psycho-social support services, and livelihood rehabilitation infrastructure programs. “

As we approach the 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Conference, Integrated Health Outreach proposes for the inclusion of these elements to be addressed.

Sincerely,



Dr. Nicola Bird
Executive Director
Integrated Health Outreach