

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

### 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4)

### 2nd Global Online Stakeholder Consultation: Inputs for Interactive Dialogues

### **SUMMARY REPORT** FEBRUARY 2024

## Acknowledgements

This report provides a summary of the inputs received from a broad range of stakeholders through an online consultation organized by the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) ahead of the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4). It is prepared by Maria Sanu and Sameer Dada under the supervision of Lotta Tahtinen, Naiara Costa and Yunxiao Long. Jordan Friedman also collaborated.

Design and layout: Maria Sanu

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# Background

The <u>fourth International Conference on Small</u> <u>Island Developing States (SIDS4)</u> will be held from 27 to 30 May 2024 in St John's, Antigua and Barbuda. Under the overarching theme of "Charting the course toward resilient prosperity", the Conference will aim at assessing the ability of SIDS to achieve sustainable development, including the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. It will result in an intergovernmentally agreed, focused, forwardlooking and action-oriented political outcome document.

The SIDS4 Conference will bring together leaders to agree on a new programme of action for SIDS with a focus on practical and impactful solutions and to forge new partnerships and cooperation at all levels.

As part of its formal programme, the SIDS4 Conference will feature five interactive and multi-stakeholder dialogues that will focus on addressing existing and emerging challenges opportunities for the sustainable and development of SIDS and ways and means to address them, including through the strengthening of collaborative partnerships.

The themes of the interactive dialogues are as follows:

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ORGANIZA

 Making Climate Finance work for SIDS: Building on the Outcomes of UNFCCC COP 28

The discussions should explore ways to significantly increase the provision and mobilization of climate finance, addressing both adaptation and loss and damage and upscaling solutions to climate change. Engagement in this theme should strategize around the outcome of COP28 to fulfill the international community's commitment to limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, safeguarding our planet, its inhabitants, and its biodiversity, and preventing the breaching further irreversible tipping points and surpassing of planetary boundaries, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement.

 Enhancing Critical Forms of Financing and Aid Effectiveness through Collaborative Partnerships: A Conversation Encompass dialogues on global financial reform, utilizing MVI insights, and policymaking to improve financial stability, enable debt relief, and meet SDGs, with a focus on shared partnership and private sector collaboration.

 Levering Data and Digital Technologies and Building Effective Institutions for a Resilient Future in SIDS

Explore strategies and actions to bridge data gaps and enhance technological and institutional capacities that empower evidencebased policymaking. The dialogue can explore tangible steps to implement and utilize the SIDS data hub and leverage recommendations from the Global Digital Compact to advance the technologies adoption of digital and infrastructure, building resilience and sustainable development in SIDS.

 Investing in Human Capital: Addressing Health Crisis in SIDS and Building the Potential of Youth in SIDS This theme will facilitate focused discussions on developing actions to enhance social and human capital, addressing health, including mental health, and education as pivotal components for unlocking opportunities for youth.

To ensure an in-depth discussion, background notes will be prepared by the UN secretariat to inform each theme listed above.

#### • Revitalizing SIDS Economies for Accelerated and Sustainable Growth

The challenges faced by SIDS across the three dimensions of sustainable development as well as those caused by external shocks, climate change, sea-level rise, rapid coastal erosion, the discussion should identify collective action towards enhancing SIDS' economic diversification, building resilience and disaster recovery, and propelling sustainable development through strategies, policies, and initiatives. This theme would focus on practical steps, partnerships, and policies, including to utilize the blue economy for SIDS' sustainable growth, tourism, marine management, ocean industry expansion, renewable energy, and ecosystem conservation.



# 1st Online Stakeholder Consultation for SIDS4

To facilitate the participation of stakeholders in the regional preparations for the Conference, DESA, in collaboration with OHRLLS, convened a global online stakeholder consultation from 13 June to 7 July 2023 on key challenges and policy recommendations for SIDS. The first global online consultation generated 170 responses. DESA has prepared a <u>global report</u> and three regional snapshots (<u>AIS, Caribbean</u> and <u>Pacific</u>) summarizing the inputs received and outlining a number of policy recommendations that can assist SIDS in achieving their sustainable development priorities.

The summaries also highlight innovative opportunities for stakeholder engagement at SIDS4.





Regional Snapshot: Atlantic, ndian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) Region

Global Online Stakeholder Consultatio

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Regional Snapshot: Caribbean Region

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Global Online Stakeholder Consultation

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# 2nd Online Stakeholder Consultation for SIDS4

To create a space for stakeholders to engage with the substantive preparations for the SIDS4 Conference, DESA organized <u>a second global online stakeholder</u> <u>consultation</u> to solicit informal inputs from stakeholders from different sectors for the elaboration of the background notes for the SIDS4 interactive dialogues.

Information about the consultation was broadly disseminated through mailing lists, UN official websites and social media. This report presents the main outcomes of the inputs received in the global online stakeholder consultation. All inputs are made publicly available <u>here.</u>

#### **Objectives of the Consultation**

The objective of the substantive online stakeholder consultation was to:

- 1. Compile key policy recommendations from all stakeholders to inform the preparations of the background notes for the interactive dialogues to be held at SIDS4.
- 2. Highlight key examples and other information shared by stakeholders ahead of SIDS4.

#### Questions

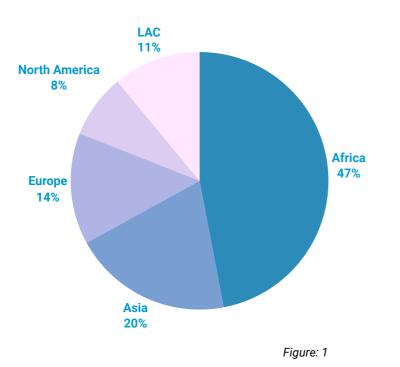
The online stakeholder consultation was held through an open online form. For each interactive dialogue, stakeholders were asked to identify the most important challenges that hinder progress in that particular area, and to discuss the transformative actions that need to happen, and by whom, to overcome these challenges and accelerate progress in making climate finance work for SIDS.

Additionally, stakeholders were asked to share evidence of new ways of working, new approaches and partnerships implemented by stakeholders that have proved to support accelerated implementation in SIDS countries. A few examples of initiatives mentioned by stakeholders are listed in the report.

#### **Outcomes of the 2nd Online Consultation**

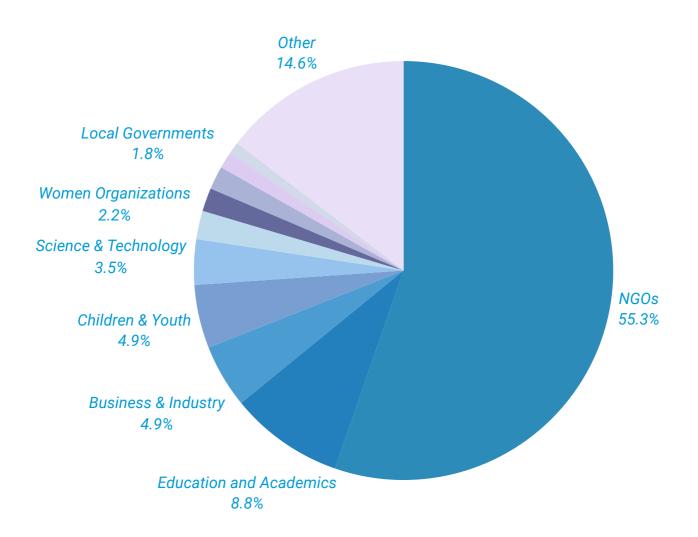
**64 inputs** from interested stakeholders were received for this 2nd global online consultation. These included organizations actively contributing to sustainable development efforts in Small Island Developing States across all three SIDS regions: Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS), the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Inputs were received from stakeholders from **30 Member States**: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Brunei Darussalam, Cabo Verde, Dominica, Fiji, Grenada, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Micronesia, Monaco, Nauru, Netherlands, Palau, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.



Contributing stakeholders originated from all regions of the world, with the following distribution: Africa – 47%, Asia – 20%, Europe – 14%, Latin America and the Caribbean – 11% and North America – 8%. (Refer Figure: 1)





The majority of stakeholders contributing to the online consultation self-identified as representing Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) - 64%. Other sectors contributing inputs included: Business & Industry – 4.7%; Indigenous Peoples – 4.7%; Science & Technological Community - 3.1%; Education & Academic Entities – 3%, , Volunteer Groups - 3%; Women's Organizations 3%; Private Philanthropic organizations 1.6%, Other stakeholders active in areas related to sustainable development 10.9% and Child & youth organizations – 1.6%,

## Summary of Inputs -Policy Recommendations

#### Making Climate Finance work for SIDS - Building on the Outcomes of UNFCCC COP 28

Stakeholders highlighted the lack of access to climate financing by SIDS as the primary challenge to build on the outcomes of the UNFCCC COP28. Complex bureaucratic steps and processes that must be followed to obtain funding were identified by stakeholders as factors that delay and hamper the abilities of SIDS countries to access resources that are already available. Development partners and financial institutions should further simplify processes for accessing climate funding considering that local organizations may lack the knowledge and capacity to go through complex bureaucratic proceedings.

Additionally, stakeholders flagged the **overall lack of available funding** and emphasized the need for countries, development banks, private sector sources and philanthropic organizations to fulfil the 80 USD billion pledge that was committed to climate financing at COP 28. Stakeholders noted the **low disbursement ratios** of funding provided to SIDS compared to the amount committed, either due to the complex disbursement process or lack of trust that resources allocated were being spent effectively.

Additionally, stakeholders mentioned the lack of training and of strong financial institutions and mechanisms in SIDS countries to effectively mobilize, access and implement climate funding.

Respondents called towards reinforcing the capacity of SIDS as a transformative action that could make climate finance work for SIDS. Stakeholders called upon developed countries, international financial institutions, development partners and international organizations to provide training and technical support on the ground and to support strategies to strengthen institutions to improve SIDS self-sufficiency and the effective implementation of climate finance for resilience building and sustainable development.

Stakeholders stressed the need for more funding to be directed towards SIDS, in line with the commitments made at COP28. Additionally, stakeholders encouraged **new funding commitments** to address the unique challenges of SIDS in financing climate change and implementing the SDGs. Respondents called for new, additional funding to be allocated towards new technologies that promote economic growth and sustainable development of SIDS.

Stakeholders called upon developed countries to take an active role in the development of SIDS considering their greater capacities and resources. Finally, stakeholders called for SIDS to be an **integral part of decision-making processes** related to climate financing to foster local leadership and partnerships in project implementation.

#### Initiatives highlighted by stakeholders:

**Blue Guardians Initiative** - led by <u>SIDS Youth AIMS Hub</u>, partnered with local governments, NGOs, and private sector entities in the Caribbean to promote marine conservation, sustainable fisheries, and climate resilience. It is designed to make the best possible use of scientific, technical and human resources to contribute to the climate change priorities of island nations.

- Listed by United for Human Rights (United States).

#### • Enhancing Critical Forms of Financing and Aid Effectiveness through collaborative Partnerships: A Conversation

When asked about enhancing critical forms of financing and aid effectiveness through collaborative partnerships, stakeholders once again cited the **difficulty of accessing funding**. Bureaucratic hurdles in this process such as accreditation requirements are considered as prohibitive for several NGOs who may not have the capacity to navigate them, further exacerbating underfunding for sustainable development in SIDS.



Stakeholders identified challenges for the establishment of effective partnerships including a lack of coordination between parties, asymmetrical power dynamics and capacity and knowledge gaps between partners. Stakeholders highlighted the fragmented nature of funding sources, with government and external development partners perceived as functioning in silos and providing financing to national short-term economic strategies that may not always be conducive to long-term, sustainable growth.

Respondents stressed the need for **better coordination mechanisms** to enhance the effectiveness of partnerships. Stakeholders recalled that **partnerships must be reciprocal in nature**, rather than asymmetrical, with transparency and accountability between all parties involved.

Beyond the strengthening of existing partnerships, stakeholders called upon SIDS to **establish new partnerships** in collaboration with the private sector, donors, and grass-roots organizations.

Respondents also emphasized the **need for change on the ground**, including policy reform to create governance systems that prioritize ending hunger and poverty while managing natural resources in a sustainable and equitable way.

Stakeholders called governments to **prioritize long-term**, **sustainable development** over short-term economic strategies. Increasing awareness of ecological issues and lobbying for more opportunities were also cited as ways to open new forms of financing.

#### Initiatives highlighted by stakeholders:

**Caribbean Sustainable Energy Roadmap and Strategy (C-SERMS)** – a collaboration between CARICOM, SIDS governments, and international partners that focuses on renewable energy development, reducing dependence on fossil fuels. Evidence indicates increased renewable energy capacity and improved energy security in several Caribbean SIDS.

Listed by Redroot SVG Inc. (St. Vincent and the Grenadines



#### Levering Data and Digital Technologies and Building effective Institutions for a Resilient Future in SIDS

Stakeholders flagged the **lack of digital literacy** as one of the greatest barriers to the leveraging of digital technologies, as not enough people possess the know-how to harness the full advantage of these technologies. Lack of access to these technologies may result from the absence of dedicated funding to the technological and information sectors, especially in rural areas.

Regarding data, respondents noted an overall **lack of available data** which hinders the capacity of governments to implement evidence-based policymaking. Besides, stakeholders identified the need to strengthen institutional **capabilities and SIDS infrastructure** to routinely collect, store, and share relevant data to support informed policy decisions. Stakeholders reminded the ever-present concern of cybersecurity the risk of data leaks or cyberattacks increasing whenever there is a lack of proper digital infrastructure.

#### Initiatives highlighted by stakeholders:

Pacific Data Hub Initiative - led by the Pacific Community (SPC) in collaboration with development partners like the Australian Government, has significantly advanced data utilization in SIDS. This platform consolidates regional data, enhancing accessibility and usability for evidence-based decisionmaking in the Pacific region.

Listed by the Centre for Law and Policy Affairs CLPA (Bangladesh).

Stakeholders largely stressed the need for **capacity-building** in addressing these important challenges and for SIDS governments to **adjust their priorities towards digital infrastructure investment, creation of robust cybersecurity measures, digital literacy initiatives, enhancement of institutional capabilities, and creation of regulatory frameworks which foster innovations.** Beyond shifting government priorities, respondents also expressed the huge **potential for collaboration** in these areas between SIDS governments and development partners.



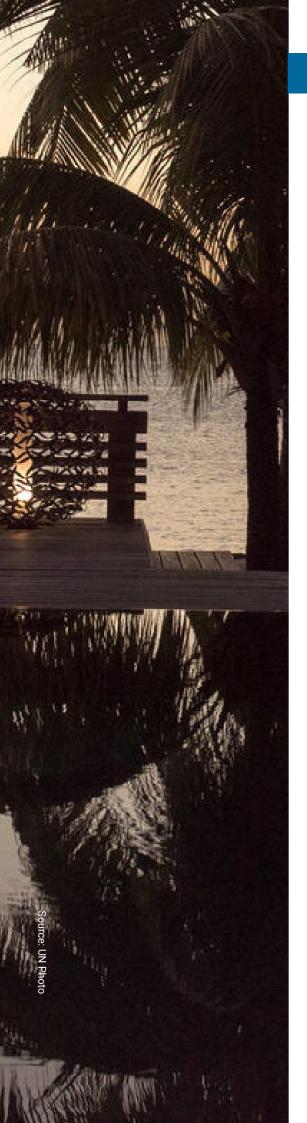
**International collaboration** with developed nations, tech corporations, and global organizations can support SIDS in building digital infrastructure programs and in providing tailored capacity-building programs, while technology firms and educational institutions can provide technical expertise to ensure the effective leveraging of data and digital technologies. Donor organizations, multilateral banks and private investors can play a crucial role in providing financial support for these transformative behaviors by targeting tech initiatives.

Changes to the nature of aid itself were also suggested by stakeholders, such as data collection and impact assessment to become a requisite component of financing/aid packages from international agencies and development This would incentivize partners. governments to adopt a more evidence-based model of policymaking while also requiring that institutional capacity for data collection, management, and sharing is built in routine decision-making processes. Having support in these areas would result in a stronger resiliency and additional space for creative and innovative solutions based on relevant, up-to-date data.

#### Initiatives highlighted by stakeholders:

Smart Island Initiative is lead by European island authorities and communities in collaboration with the World Bank and tech companies. The initiative encompasses energy, transport, ICT, water and waste management - directly tackling circularity in the economy. This innovative approach proposes that by implementing smart, integrated solutions and leveraging cutting-edge technologies, islands can evolve into smart territories. This transformation not only enhances the quality of life for local communities but also contributes to Europe's journey towards a sustainable and inclusive economy. Substantiating this, there is evidence of improved disaster response, data-driven decision-making, and elevated public services

- Listed by United for Human Rights (United States).



#### Initiatives highlighted by stakeholders:

#### Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network -

WIDECAST is dedicated to fostering regional capacity for the recovery and sustainable management of depleted sea turtle populations. Comprising a volunteer coalition of experts from over 40 nations and territories situated throughout the Wider Caribbean Region, the organization constructs a comprehensive understanding of regional sea turtle population trends. This collaborative effort underscores the importance of regional capacity-building, emphasizing the sharing of expertise and facilities among islands.

- Listed by Fauna & Flora (United Kingdom)

#### Investing in human capital addressing health crisis in SIDS and building the potential of youth in SIDS

Stakeholders flagged that the **lack of financial means and difficulties in accessing available finance** lead to gaps in healthcare infrastructure in SIDS countries. This challenge is exacerbated by **multiple ongoing health crises**, as SIDS countries are proportionately much more vulnerable to non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and many respondents noted the ongoing mental health crisis which disproportionately impacts youth. This puts great strain on healthcare infrastructure, and forces SIDS to prioritize care for advanced diseases, leading to greater vulnerabilities when responding to health challenges resulting from climate change.

Respondents also noted disparities in **quality education for youth** which, in turn, leads to skill gaps and a lack of trained personnel. Stakeholders expressed concerned about a perceived ongoing 'brain drain', wherein talented individuals from SIDS tend to migrate to more developed countries in search of opportunities like higher education or better healthcare systems, leading to a dearth of skilled healthcare professionals and educators.

Lastly, respondents emphasized the crucial importance of **information in effective healthcare systems**, and noted the lack of strong health information systems across SIDS, as well as an overall lack of research in areas of importance such as the relationship between NCDs and climate change, leading to difficulties in creating real-time solutions.

#### Initiatives highlighted by stakeholders:

**Caribbean Youth Development Project (CYDP)** - led by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) in partnership with the European Union, stands out in bolstering youth potential in SIDS. This initiative focuses on skills training, entrepreneurship, and employment opportunities for Caribbean youth. The program includes the Youth FIRE Forum, a one-day event for young individuals aged 15-35, the inaugural meeting of the Bank's Future Leaders Network (FLN), involving personal and professional development, and the Youth FIRE Expo showcasing young innovators and entrepreneurs in Saint Lucia.

- Listed by Center for Law and Policy Affairs (Bangladesh)

To overcome these challenges, transformative actions should focus on **strengthening healthcare systems**, **providing quality education**, **retaining talent**, **and empowering youth**. Stakeholders called upon efforts to secure funding for national NGOs, to invest in healthcare infrastructure, and to involve the youth in development initiatives.

**Collaborative initiatives**, including international partnerships and private sector involvement, are essential for holistic progress in human capital development in SIDS. Stakeholders recommended **prioritizing healthcare system strengthening**, **investing in medical facilities, and adopting resilient health strategies** as key actions to be taken by national governments. The challenges also extend to mindset issues, such as age limits restricting youth involvement and the need for a shift towards a more inclusive and collaborative approach.

**Caribbean Centre for Health Systems Strengthening** – implemented in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization and SIDS governments, focuses on bolstering healthcare infrastructure and addressing health crises in the Caribbean. It is expected that this collaboration will result in a joint effort to significantly improve health infrastructure in the region, with a focus on creating resilient and sustainable healthcare systems. This will make it possible to adequately address future health emergencies.

Listed by <u>RedRoot SVG Inc.</u> (St Vincent and the Grenadines).



### • Revitalizing SIDS Economies for accelerated and sustainable growth

Stakeholders identified **limited economic diversification**, **constrained access to finance**, **and the impacts of climate change** as key hindrances to revitalize SIDS economies for accelerated and sustainable growth. To overcome these obstacles and propel progress, stakeholders called upon SIDS governments, supported by international collaboration, to **prioritize economic diversification and innovation**. Dependence on a narrow range of industries, such as tourism and agriculture, needs to be addressed through strategic planning and investment in new sectors. This shift should be coupled with a focus on **building climate resilience and adaptation measures** to mitigate the impacts of environmental challenges.

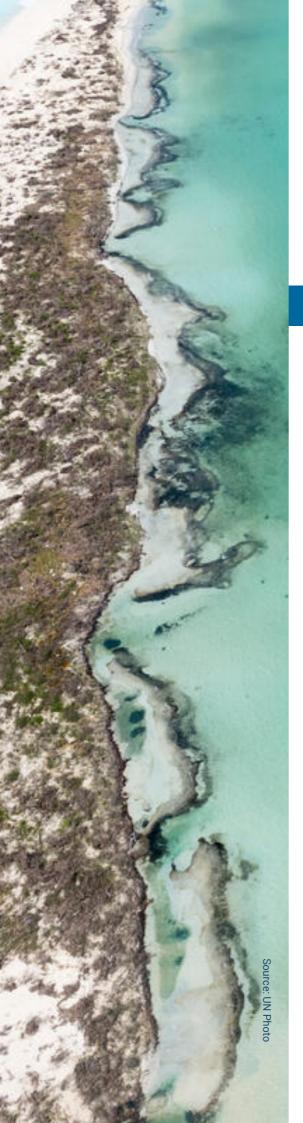
Stakeholders stressed that access to finance remains a critical barrier, particularly for local initiatives combatting climate change.

The establishment of financing mechanisms by national governments and international organizations could facilitate economic growth. Moreover, **empowering local communities through grassroots participation and capacity building** were identified as essential.

**Inclusive governance models** ensure that all stakeholders, especially those at the grassroots level, actively contribute to and understand the development initiatives.

The role of international financial institutions, developed nations, and private investors was considered as pivotal by respondents. Collaboration with SIDS governments is essential to create re**silient economic strategies** and additional support for sustainable industries and for the provision of technical assistance.

Stakeholders called for a **stronger engagement of civil society, community and worker collectives** in promoting the necessary transformative change towards more sustainable and resilient SIDS. This decentralized approach would ensure that development initiatives were aligned with the needs and priorities of the local population.



Respondents also identified unemployment and inadequate education as additional challenges and that addressing these issues would require targeted efforts in providing **education and training to the youth, encouraging entrepreneurship, and creating job opportunities**. The involvement of communities in decision-making processes is crucial to garner support and ensure the success of development initiatives.

#### Initiatives highlighted by stakeholders:

#### **Blue Bond Initiative**

Implemented by Seychelles in partnership with the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility, it offers an innovative financial approach driving sustainable economic growth in SIDS. This initiative addresses oceanrelated challenges by issuing sovereign blue bonds, showcasing Seychelles' commitment to environmentally sustainable development.

Listed by Centre for Law and Policy Affairs (Bangladesh)

**Blue Economy Accelerator** – funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), it has played a pivotal role in facilitating sustainable economic growth in Caribbean SIDS. Projects that are selected through the grant scheme will be given tailored support from the Drua Incubator of the Fijian Government, UNDP's Inclusive Growth team, the Accelerator Lab in the Pacific, and established partners from the private sector. Focusing on marine-based industries, this initiative has provided evidence of increased livelihoods, marine conservation, and economic resilience.

Listed by United for Human Rights (New York)

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