



ICT 4 SIDS

Small Islands and Developing States

OUR MISSION IS MAKING THE POST-COVID RECOVERY IN MALDIVES AN OPPORTUNITY TO DELIVER THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 5, 8, 12, 13, 14 AND 15 WITHIN THE DECADE OF ACTION 2020-2030.

The 2030 Agenda was approved by all the Member States of the United Nations in the General Assembly in New York on 25 September 2015. It calls for global engagement of people and public-private partnerships to work for the planet sustainable development to achieve the global Goals by 2030.

The 2030 Agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) covering all the major challenges for human kind in social, economic and environmental domains and works as a global blueprint to hand over a better world to the next generations within 15 years.

Inspired from the vision of the 2030 Agenda, ICT4SIDS was set up as a UN Partnership to mainstream the SDGs in the SIDS (the group of Small Island and Developing States registered at the UN) by supporting the best use of information and communication technologies in remote and less served communities.

At the SDG Summit in September 2019, with only ten years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Secretary-General called on all sectors of society for energizing a Decade of Action to accelerate the progress made towards the SDGs and to make optimum utilization of available resources, knowledge and experience to leave no one behind by 2030.

Unfortunately at the onset of 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic started in China, quickly spreading around the world and disrupted in just a few months the global economy rolling back much of the progress made in advancing the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda in the first 5 years.

Therefore in the need of the hour ICT4SIDS Regional Office for South Asia has decided to address the existential challenge of post-Covid recovery in Maldives by proposing innovative solutions designed to reinforcing longer-term SDGs commitments in the Decade of Action 2020-2030.

To this extent our Pilot Project in Maldives will be focused on [Tourism for the SDGs](#) in the Alif Alif Atoll. ICT4SIDS, in close collaboration with the Atoll Council, and all other concerned stakeholders, will advocate the sustainable tourism development for the SDGs in Alif Alif through the introduction of Local Gastronomy Tourism and Agrifood Sustainable Production.

The project proposal, backed by a dedicated Portal, is centered on encouraging guesthouse owners in the Atoll to meet the criteria of **Responsible Hospitality**, adopting best practices to meet the expectations of visitors and to enhance the synergy between business and community. Eventually by getting engaged in social, economic and environmental initiatives that our project is trying to inspire, the guesthouse owners will be able to play an active role in the post-Covid 19 recovery for the sustainable tourism development of the Alif Alif Atoll and will strongly contribute to implement the delivery of SDGs by 2030.

The project offers forward looking strategies to insure the creation of new skills and job opportunities (SDG 8) for island youth, especially unemployed and enterprising women and girls (SDG 5), specially conceived to attract a larger share of foreign visitors by providing them a personalized connection with local families and the discovery of traditional Dhivehi food in private or public occasions, and rural tourism experiences based on responsible production and consumption of local food (SDG 12),

GASTRONOMY TOURISM IN THE LOCAL ISLANDS

UN ICT4SIDS Partnership and the Alif Alif Atoll Council have signed an MoU in **March 2020**, in Rasdhoo, Maldives, taking a mutual commitment to develop the Gastronomy Tourism in the eight inhabited islands of the Atoll, keeping for reference the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Guidelines and calling for collaboration from all stakeholders to create special culinary attractions for tourists and a steady source of new jobs for local youth, both targets consistent with the delivery of SDGs 5, 8, 12 of the 2030 Agenda.

In the months which followed the MoU signature, as the country has been going through an unprecedented socio-economic emergency due to the Covid-19 pandemic and has now entered the second semester of the year 2020 in dire need to restart Tourism in a big way, we have identified a specific strategy that will allow to develop a long-term Plan of Action for Gastronomy Tourism in the Alif Alif Atoll to help rebuilding the local island tourism sector in full consistency with the post-Covid recovery programs promoted by UNWTO.

Therefore

By **December 2020** we would like to submit to the Maldives Ministry of Tourism a plan of action which could make possible to start a sustainable development of the Gastronomy Tourism in the Alif Alif Atoll by taking advantage of the **Covid-19 Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package** made available on demand by **UNWTO** to Members worldwide <https://www.unwto.org/news/unwto-releases-a-covid-19-technical-assistance-package-for-tourism-recovery> .

This package in fact is designed to **help governments, the private sector and donor agencies** to work for economic recovery, marketing and promotion and institutional strengthening and resilience building towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-05/COVID-19-Tourism-Recovery-TA-Package_8%20May-2020.pdf

Our main goal is to get our pilot plan of action for starting the Gastronomy tourism development in Alif Alif Atoll **included** in the **Covid-19 Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package** made available on Maldives Tourism Ministry's demand by UNWTO. Our practical contribution will be based on an updated version of a previous proposal consisting in a three-phase assessment process ([see ANNEX 1](#)), prepared by Professor Roberta Garibaldi, who developed in 2019, as the Lead Expert of UNWTO, the plan for assessing the suitability of the town of Ubud in Bali, Indonesia to be named by UNWTO the first Global Gastronomy Destination <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2019/06/13/ubud-may-be-named-global-gastronomy-destination.html> .

We are proud we have associated to our project Prof. Roberta Garibaldi, <https://igcat.org/team/prof-roberta-garibaldi/> , whose decisive and central role in our project will guarantee to satisfy professionally all the expectations of Maldivian stakeholders and to follow consistently the UNWTO package recommendations, which will highly increase the likelihood of success for the Gastronomy Tourism development project in Alif Alif Atoll, and beyond, in Maldives.

GASTRONOMY TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS

The Gastronomy Tourism that we advocate in Alif Alif Atoll, Maldives, resonates consistently with the theme selected by UNWTO for the 6th World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism scheduled in Bruges, Belgium, on 21-23 June 2021. In fact the theme announced by the United Nations World Tourism Organization is: **“Gastronomy Tourism: Promoting Rural Tourism and Regional Development”**.

According to the Background and Objectives of the UNWTO 6th Forum (https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-04/WEB_ENG_Preliminary%20programme.pdf) “””

.... destinations are increasingly aware of the significance of gastronomy tourism as a growing number of tourists seeks to enjoy local food and buy local produce while also interested in learning about and participating in the production process.

....For destinations, gastronomy tourism represents a valuable opportunity to grow communities income and promote local traditions. This is particularly true for less favored rural areas where gastronomy tourism has potential to boost living standards, social and economic integration, personal fulfillment, and social development.

....Gastronomy tourism in rural areas can bring numerous benefits, including the increase of farm incomes, greater social vitality, territorial regeneration and protection of traditional activities. Gastronomy tourism adds vitality to rural communities, connected via marketplaces, festivals, stories, recipes and memories. It supports small, local food producers and strengthens their position in the market..... “””

We fully agree with these premises and we consider the rural development in Alif Alif Atoll and beyond, as a complementary component of our Gastronomy Tourism for SDGs strategy. Therefore we also intend to propose to Ministry of Tourism an additional plan which further extend the opportunity to take advantage of the Covid-19 Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package offered by UNWTO by developing the production and consumption of fresh, healthy and island grown food in

both inhabited and uninhabited islands through adoption of the newest agriculture technologies and by increasing the women engagement in agriculture as producers and entrepreneurs.

Here are the first Biennial Goals and Objectives in our proposed strategy to link Gastronomy Tourism and Rural Development:

- 1) **By December 2020**, to start in the field a feasibility study for the construction by 2021 of the Agrifood Incubator in Rasdhoo, a model center for innovation in agriculture designed and developed by a consortium of Italian companies (see [Presentation](#)) led by the Vertical Farm Italia engineering company. The modern structure built in a public area, offered by the Alif Alif Atoll Council, will host smart greenhouse technology and a high tech Totem farm installed in demonstration spaces, classrooms, office and shop, and will feature a commercial shared kitchen for local food cooking and tasting by foreign tourists and special culinary events for groups from resorts and corporations.
- 2) **By June 2021**, to send a delegation of stakeholders to attend the UNWTO 6th World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism, to be held in Bruges, Belgium and which will focus on the role of Gastronomy Tourism in Promoting Rural Tourism and Regional Development in line with the 2020 UNWTO Year of Tourism and Rural Development, and closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
Our contribution will provide to an international audience of experts and dedicated organizations a case study on the development of Gastronomy Tourism and Rural development in Maldives including
 - a) the assessment process results achieved by Prof. Garibaldi team,
 - b) the feasibility study carried by Vertical Farm Italia
 - c) topics related to the role of gastronomy tourism in enhancing the reputation of destinations, empowering local communities, as well as strategies that can be used by farmers and small scale food producers to promote tourism and thereby make a positive economic contribution at the local and regional level

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