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A “Green Growth Framework for Islands” - Executive Summary

Introducing the Project

Islands are among the smallest contributors to climate change, yet they face some of the largest impacts such as sea level rise, increased drought, and changing rainfall patterns that impact food, infrastructure, and economic security. At the same time, due to their isolation and dependence on a scarcity of local resources, islands have centuries of experience in adapting to natural disasters and unexpected events. Locally endured knowledge systems, in combination with contemporary traditional practices and experience, makes islands the best positioned to lead the way in serving as a community of practice for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and adapting to climate change.

The Local2030IN, our project partner, recognizes that islands need support to achieve a sustainable state, implement the SDGs, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Our project partner seeks to bring islands together to support each other through promoting the design and implementation of island-led, green growth initiatives. ‘Green growth’ means “fostering economic growth and development while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies” (OECD, 2011). Through green growth initiatives, islands have an opportunity to take stock of their current needs and develop a path forward for adopting locally and culturally-relevant sustainable practices that simultaneously build adaptive capacity to climate change and protect unique ways of life.

The aim of this project was to bring together good practices of islands that are collaboratively working with their communities to promote green growth and adapt to climate change, while implementing the SDGs. Specifically, this report details the processes island leaders from existing green growth initiatives in Hawai‘i, Guam, and Tasmania used to launch their efforts and combines key findings into a “Green Growth Framework for Islands.” By following the recommendations provided by island leaders, we hope to empower the global island community to implement green growth initiatives as a tool for enhancing their adaptive capacity and implementing the SDGs. By doing so, islands can serve as an example to our “island earth” on how to navigate the impacts of climate change and transition to a sustainable future.

Methods and Interventions

To inform the creation of the green growth framework, our team analyzed three existing green growth initiatives in Hawai‘i, Guam, and Tasmania. Through interviewing green growth leaders from each island, we uncovered how their experiences shaped the development of their respective green growth initiatives and collected recommendations for what other islands should keep in mind when designing their initiatives.

In designing our framework, we looked to ‘The UN Roadmap for Localizing and Implementing the SDGs’ (Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, 2016). We modeled our framework after this roadmap because it combines a series of processes for localizing the SDGs with international examples, which is how we planned to display our findings from an island context.

Project Outcomes/Results

Using the interviews from 10 island leaders across Hawai‘i, Guam, and Tasmania, we designed a robust “Green Growth Framework for Islands”. The framework starts with detailing the background behind the

development of green growth as a strategy for implementing the SDGs and adapting to climate change on islands. We follow the story with a detailed explanation of what green growth is in order to set the stage for sharing the recommendations from island leaders. We consolidated our findings from the interviews into four overarching design principles and sixteen priority action recommendations that islands can consider following when designing their own green growth initiative. Each action item includes a description of the implementation process, key insights from island leaders, exemplar actions from Hawai'i, Guam, and Tasmania, and possible barriers with suggested solutions for overcoming them.

While the framework is not being shared with islands yet, it will be used to help the Local2030IN design their long-term strategy for engaging and supporting islands. Once the Local2030IN becomes more established, we hope that the ideas shared in the framework will empower and inspire islands to take on the challenge of creating a green growth initiative as a tool for implementing the SDGs and enhancing their adaptive capacity to climate change.

Next Steps

We achieved our goal of designing a green growth framework for islands that takes their specific local and cultural contexts into account. Because only one island has implemented a green growth initiative, the designed framework has a strong focus on development rather than implementation. Thus, in the same way green growth initiatives are recommended to be updated frequently to reflect new knowledge and needs, so should this framework, especially as more green growth initiatives are implemented.

Additionally, due to their strong intent on launching a green growth initiative, we recommend that the Local2030IN launch a pilot run of the framework with Puerto Rico Green Growth and Diné Green Growth to determine if the proposed recommendations are helpful. We are confident that the designed framework will be a useful blueprint for the Local2030IN to enhance their efforts to bring islands together to adapt to climate change and implement the SDGs. We cannot wait to see how the recommendations we provide in our framework influence island sustainability over time!