

Guest House Association of Maldives (GAM) Network

Tourism for SDGs in the Atolls of Maldives (Concept Note)

December 20, 2018

UN ICT4SIDS www.ict4sids.com Partnership is proposing to concerned stakeholders a pilot project named Maldives ASHNet (Atolls Small Hubs Network) that will run for at least one year. This network, displayed in Figure1, will consist of the following key components:

- a) a National Hub in Male' in the GAM headquarters for overall coordination. It also has a Knowledge Portal for adopting sustainable tourism and an ecommerce website as a digital showcase of Maldivian guesthouses
- b) Solar powered kiosks , “the smart hubs”, located in selected islands that provide multimedia tourism information. Most of the Kiosk information will be also available at the National hub for convenience.

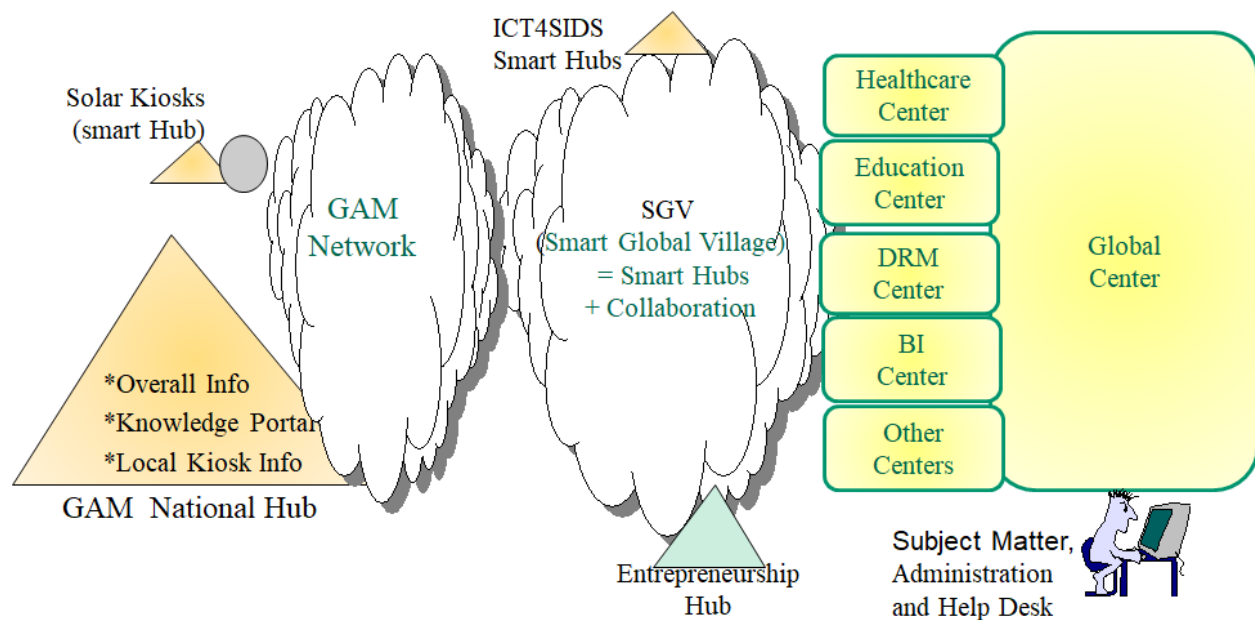


Figure1: Conceptual View of the GAM Network

As shown in Figure1, the GAM Network Users will have access to the entire ICT4SIDS Smart Global Village (SGV) and all resources of the SGV (e.g., the

ICT4SIDS Smart Hubs and the Global HQ Hubs). The ultimate goal of the project will be to evolve the Maldives ASHNet into the Maldives Sustainable Tourism Observatories Network affiliated to UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) <http://insto.unwto.org> .

The **GAM National Hub** consists of the following capabilities:

a) Coordination and National Resources:

- A dedicated department named National Hub should be set up in GAM headquarters in Male' soon after the signature of the MoU with ICT4SIDS to supervise and coordinate the different components of the project.
- A Desk in this department should be made available for the Representative of ICT4SIDS during his staying in Maldives to help streamlining and monitoring the project development.
- Tasks, schedules, agenda and activities will be discussed periodically in these premises by the Joint Working Group with reference and within the framework of the MoU signed with ICT4SIDS.
- A National Hub technical team will be selected with the main task of managing the solar telekiosk system placed in the islands to implement the Atoll Smart Hubs Network.
- To this extent the tourism information provided through the telekiosks touch screens will include of course promotional multimedia material selected and/or produced by GAM and possibly other stakeholders.
- All the digital devices in each kiosk will also be programmed by GAM experts for collection of tourism data for the purpose of analysis and policy development at national level in collaboration with Ministry of Tourism.
- This additional feature will help later GAM (in a complementary new project that ICT4SIDS is ready to offer) to upgrade the telekiosks into the logistic and operative component of an envisioned future network of Maldivian Atolls Sustainable Tourism Observatories, to be affiliated then to the UNWTO – INSTO (International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories).

b) the Portal Online.

- The portal online will serve as an **ICT-based knowledge platform** engaging guesthouse owners in adopting sustainable tourism solutions for implementation of SDGs targets in each Atoll. Dedicated programs and resources concerning education, training and empowerment of youth and women working for sustainable tourism in the guesthouses of Maldivian Atolls will be selected, stored and updated by ICT4SIDS in the e-library. Multimedia materials (some enhanced in virtual and augmented reality) will be available on pc and smartphones to members of GAM only and will offer, among others, information on best practices and case studies on SDGs worldwide to enable guesthouses owners (mostly local young entrepreneurs) and their staff to learn how to improve tourism sustainability in Maldivian atolls and attract more tourists to experience life and environment of small communities of Maldives
- The portal online will also host an innovative **e-commerce website** specifically developed by NGE (Next Generation Enterprise) Solutions, a software distribution start up in Sri Lanka associated to ICT4SIDS, aiming to promote and market worldwide the Maldivian Guesthouses members of GAM. The highlight of this portal section will be the digital showcase of Maldivian guesthouses in 360 and Virtual Reality, based on institutional data provided by GAM and advanced technologies supplied by Creative Hub, <https://www.creativehub.lk>, a Sri Lanka company specialized in 3D and VR walkthroughs also associated to NGE Solutions. This section will allow international visitors to select from their PC or smartphone an atoll, island and guesthouse of their interest and take a 360 and VR walkthrough of the rooms and outdoors of any listed guesthouse, with the additional option to engage live in the 360 and VR tour also the owner/staff by a free video call. Visitors will have the chance at the end of the walkthrough tour to book the accommodation and pay for it using an e-commerce payment solution online managed by NGE Solutions in partnership with GAM.

Explanatory note:

The 360 and VR showcase of the guesthouses, besides the adoption of an advanced ICT solution, is offering a consistent model to implement the sustainable tourism concept in SIDS because it will call for a direct role of the guesthouse owners to build and use their personal skills by shooting the walkthrough video by themselves with any cheap 360 camera available in the market, or in alternative being assisted by a trained technician using a special camera, the Matterport pro2 3d, <https://matterport.com/pro2-3d-camera> , functional to an exclusive patented technology which guarantees outstanding results (this second option would be implemented at a higher cost for the guesthouses owners by the Sri Lankan specialized company Creative Hub). In both cases the video tour material will be processed and finalized for the portal by the Creative Hub experts and put on line ultimately by the ICT4SIDS team. We are confident that by showcasing the guesthouses in 360 and VR online with original content, enabling the potential international guests to make a free direct video call to the guesthouse to engage the owners/staff in live questions answers on the destination and ultimately letting them start a sort of personal and friendly connection with the future host, will definitely provide a truly competitive advantage in the international market to the guesthouses owners operating in the Maldivian Atolls.

The **Smart Solar Kiosk Atoll Smart Hubs** consists of the following capabilities:

- Atoll Smart Hubs have been conceived in our project as modular solar powered telekiosks to be set up, in the long term, in each Atoll (in Maldives there are 26 natural rings of islands called Atolls), under supervision of GAM National Hub and in collaboration with local guesthouses owners, using the technical experience and turnkey solutions offered by an NGE Solutions associated German Company, specialized in this business worldwide <https://www.solarkiosk.eu/solutions/standard-products-turnkey-solutions-and-services/#custom> .
- Each solar telekiosk will be procured by NGE Solutions and supplied by Solar Kiosk with the necessary digital equipment (work station, touch screens, PC, Pos, printers, etc.) to provide multimedia tourism information and ICT based digital services (including utilities and other payments, transportation tickets printing, cell phones unloading etc) to tourists and members of the Atoll communities where the telekiosks will be placed.

Guesthouse owners residing in the islands of an Atoll served with a telekiosk will be requested, same as for their individual properties, to create their own suggested 360 and VR video tours of the island and their Atoll outdoors and underwater attractions, which will be periodically submitted to and reviewed by GAM National Hub (see next session), edited professionally by Creative Hub, and uploaded, and updated, in the kiosks by GAM technical staff.

Additional Information

- The Project will be launched with the MOU signature between GAM and Mr Vittorio Coco. This is expected to happen in Mid Jan2019.
- The MOU will be effective for one year.
- The duration of the project MOU will be one year but the duration of the pilot project will be 4 months (it will be an ICT4SIDS Pilot Project).
- The pilot project will focus on only one GAM National Hub that will have 3-4 portal described above (knowledge, ecommerce, kiosk, PoS)
- Most of the work on the Pilot Project will be in Jan, Feb and March of 2019