Quick status report for 2018 ICT4SIDS activities

2018 has been the year to test the specific approach adopted by ICT4SIDS in the Indian Ocean Region to develop projects and partnerships according to the vision and mission of the organization.

Such an approach has implied following at least two main guidelines: integrate ICTs with other technologies that eventually would be included in a pilot project, associate in a project as partners mostly organizations (public and private sector) who have already aligned their policies to the SDGs Agenda 2030.

We have tested this approach in Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Seychelles and Maldives and the following are the steps taken on the way all the 2018 long.

In Sri Lanka we have proposed pilot projects related to:

- whale watching made easy by a portal using ITCs online based on satellite data collection;
- revival of Nenasala network (telecenters sponsored by the government and managed by private sector) introducing e-libraries and 3d printers to stimulate youth creativity;
- training underprivileged women in the Agricultural Provincial Department of Southern Province to use digital devices to improve agriculture activities;
- setting up of a smart hub for fostering youth entrepreneurship in the rural multifunctional premises of a national leading Foundation;
- creating a program with a Security Agency to manage online a tuk tuk (three wheelers used as taxies) service for guaranteeing safe night rides in touristic areas,
- developing a program with concerned village Authorities islandwide based on combining sensors and drones to solve the elephant-man conflict,
- launching a MiniLanka Heritage Park showcasing Sri Lanka landmarks in scale, produced with 3d printers using filaments from recycled plastics, as a unique attraction for international tourists to celebrate the cultural

heritage of the country in an entertaining and educational way , completed with a digital SDGs Center, a smart hub for young people to learn about SDGs applications, receive vocational training in jobs for tourism sector and get inspired to find sustainable solutions for next generations.

ICT4SIDS Representative in Indian Ocean Region, Mr. Vittorio Coco, after presentation of MiniLanka Heritage Park project to the Minister of Tourism of Sri Lanka, the Hon. John Amaratunga

In Mauritius we did attend a UN Conference on Sustainable Tourism (May 2018) and have proposed to concerned stakeholders pilot projects related to:

- Whale watching hub to be connected to Sri Lanka whale watching project and beyond

- Fishermen network hosted in a Portal to learn to practice fishing assisted by digital devices applications
- Local youth in less known tourism areas to be trained to shoot videos in Virtual Reality to provide previews of their surroundings and lifestyles to be used in the Travel industry to attract more tourism in remote locations
- A telemedicine project to be sponsored by a Mauritius based international hospitality group and to take place in Maldives as part of their corporate social responsibility programs to help local communities where they operate.

In Seychelles we identified and discussed in Colombo a potential project of telemedicine to be developed in a remote island of Seychelles in collaboration with a major Medical Group, Sri Lankan Hospitals, based in Colombo which has recently opened a branch in Seychelles capital.

In Maldives we are currently engaged in the preliminary stages of two pilot projects:

Telemedicine project in the island of Maamigili to reactivate the Health Centre telemedicine facilities, under sponsorship of The Lux Collective (based in Mauritius and owner of the Lux Resort, just opposite the Maamigili island) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health of Maldives and local stakeholders in view to use the pilot project if successful as a model to relaunch the entire telemedicine national network set up in 2010 in about 39 islands, which nowadays is not operative since several years. To face the critical point of compensation for international doctors without charging the local patients we have proposed to adopt and adjust to our project the program Doctors in Maldives developed by an Italian University, which would allow video consulting by doctors to be compensated with free vacation packages in Resorts and Guesthouses as part of their CSR programs.

Sustainable Maldives, a project to engage Guest House owners (as members of their association GAM, our partner in Maldives) to take advantage of new digital technologies, including Virtual and Augmented Reality, introduced through a dedicated Portal with the purpose of helping youth residents to start or improve new hospitality business in local islands, a new trend booming in underserved communities, to get competitive advantage in marketing strategies for tourist accommodation in less known destinations, to offer better digital services to both visitors and residents implementing the concept of Smart Tourism in the Atolls, and eventually to enable the Guest House Association of Maldives to contribute consistently to set up Sustainable Tourism Observatories in selected island locations, a potential affiliate network of UNWTO, and support with adequate sustainable solutions the conservation of heritage and environment which are particularly at risk given high vulnerability of those small islands to climate change.

Guesthouse Association of Maldives
Posted by Ahmed Amjad
Just now ·

Guesthouse Association signed an MOU today with ICT4SIDS to develop an online portal to promote Maldives Local Island Tourism worldwide. This pilot project is scheduled to complete within 3months.

In order to monitor and advance the above projects in Maldives for best possible coordination with other stakeholders (we have also made personal contacts with UNDP officials and the Minister of Environment of Maldives) we plan to open an office of ICT4SIDS in Male' in March 2019 and the request has been presented personally by Mr. Coco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives, who confirmed he would gladly support the idea and facilitate the legal procedures requested for the case.