



Arctic Council SAO plenary meeting  
20-21 November 2019, Hveragerði, Iceland  
Meeting code: SAOIS201

Document Title

Sustainable Development Working Group SDWG Progress Report

Agenda item number

4.2

Submitted by

SDWG

Document filename

SAOIS201\_2019\_HVERAGERDI\_4-2-A\_SDWG-Progress-Report

Number of pages, not including this cover sheet

5



The goal of the sustainable development program of the Arctic Council is to propose and adopt steps to be taken by the Arctic States to advance sustainable development in the Arctic, including opportunities to protect and enhance the environment, and the economies, cultures and health of indigenous communities and of other inhabitants of the Arctic, as well as to improve the environmental, economic and social conditions of Arctic communities as a whole. (Arctic Council Terms of Reference for the Sustainable Development Program, September 1998)

### Overview

The Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) was established in 1998. In 2017, SDWG adopted a [strategic framework](#) that articulates a vision, guiding principles and identifies twelve (12) priorities areas. This framework, along with the Arctic Council Chairmanship Program and the direction provided by Arctic Council Ministers and Senior Arctic Officials, guides the SDWG work plans that are established biennially. The SDWG’s [2019-2021 Work Plan](#) was endorsed at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting on 7 May 2019 in Rovaniemi, Finland.

### Advancing the SDWG’s 2019-2021 Work Plan

The SDWG 2019-21 work plan currently includes 14 projects. Five (5) projects that are still in development, two (2) new project, four (4) follow on projects, and three (3) projects that were previously endorsed and will continue during the current work period. Additional projects may be added to the work plan in the future.

SDWG Thematic Priority	Project	Status
<b>Educational Opportunities</b>	Arctic Children – Preschool Education and Smooth Transition to School	This project is an assessment of best practices in free pre-school education for children from Indigenous minorities of the Arctic and Subarctic regions. It was endorsed as part of the 2017-2019 work plan and it received support to continue as part of the current work plan. There has been discussion about expanding the project and the SDWG will consider this proposal when more information is available.
<b>Heritage &amp; Culture of Arctic Communities</b>	Arctic Indigenous Youth, Food Knowledge and Arctic Change (EALLU) Phase II	This project was endorsed by the SDWG at its September 2019 meeting. It is a follow on project to the EALLIN Reindeer Herding Youth Project and EALLU I. The goal of this phase of the project is to maintain and further develop a sustainable and resilient reindeer husbandry in the Arctic in face of climate change and globalisation, working towards a vision of creating a better life for circumpolar reindeer herders. In particular, the project focuses on youth involvement and engagement, seminars and place-based workshops, local capacity building, summer/ winter schools, networking, as well as co-production of project outputs by youth themselves.



<b>Reduction/ Elimination of Inequalities</b>	Gender Equality in the Arctic III (GEA)	GEA was initially introduced in SDWG’s 2013-2015 work plan. GEA III is part of the Icelandic Chairmanship Program and is a follow on project that was endorsed by the SDWG in February 2019. This project will produce a pan-Arctic report on gender and diversity in the Arctic and publish a digital quarterly newsletter about the status of GEA III and highlight gender-related topics in the Arctic. The project hosted a panel on gender equality at the Arctic Circle and the first GEA newsletter is scheduled to be released in November 2019. Project leads are in the process of confirming members of the steering committee for its report and exploring issues and themes that may be included.
<b>Human Health</b>	One Arctic – One Health	This project focuses on exchanging information, assessments and innovations that can support public health systems and health service delivery (including clean energy sources/systems) - with particular emphasis on projects that reduce death and disability from environmental risk factors, suicide, and high-burden infectious and chronic diseases. One Health was initially introduced in the 2015-2017 work plan. Specific activities that will be undertaken as part of the 2019-2021 work plan are still under development. The SDWG will consider this proposal when more information is available.
	Local 2 Global	This project facilitates international collaboration and connections between circumpolar communities working to prevent suicide and support the mental well being of Arctic youth and communities, including Arctic Indigenous Peoples who have the highest rates of suicide in the Arctic. This project was endorsed by the SDWG in September 2019 and is a follow on project to series of SDWG mental health and suicide prevention projects that began in 2009 (Hope and Resilience, Sharing Hope, Rising Sun, CREATEs). This project will include digital storytelling workshops, a knowledge exchange study tour, a circumpolar adverse childhood experiences research initiative and a Local 2 Global Circumpolar Forum.
<b>Community Vitality</b>	Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic II (SLiCA II)	A project proposal is currently in development for a follow on project that would update and extend the work carried out in SLiCA. The initial SDWG project was carried out between 1998 and 2015. It was an international joint effort of researchers and Indigenous peoples in Northern Alaska, Chukotka, and Greenland to measure and understand living conditions in the Arctic. The SDWG will consider this proposal when more information is available.
<b>Water &amp; Sanitation Services</b>	Solid Waste Management in Small Arctic Communities	A project proposal is currently under development for a follow on project that would build on the study of best waste management practices used in remote Arctic communities that was undertaken as part of the SDWG’s 2017-2019 work plan. This project proposal is being developed in cooperation with ACAP.



<b>Infrastructure</b>	Zero Arctic: Concepts for Carbon Neutral Arctic Construction Based on Tradition	This project was approved as part of the SDWG's 2017-2019 work plan. It focuses on developing regional concepts for Arctic building construction that are carbon neutral over their full life cycle. The project uses both scientific life cycle assessment and energy simulation methods as well as learning from and applying traditional knowledge of sustainable construction. The project is on track to be completed in Spring 2020.
<b>Sustainable Energy</b>	Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy II (ARENA II)	This follow on project was endorsed by the SDWG in September 2019. It continues the work initiated under the 2017-2019 work plan. ARENA II aims to build knowledge and capacities for the development and integration of sustainable energy solutions for remote Arctic communities. It will identify approximately 20 people to participate in on-site sessions (in Canada, Alaska and Iceland) and virtual meetings in 2020.
	Arctic Renewable Energy Atlas (AREA) Website	The AREA project is an online tool designed to enhance knowledge of the best practices and local adaptation actions on Arctic renewable energy and energy efficiency. The project was initiated in as part of the 2015-17 work plan. This project is expected to be completed in Fall 2019 with the launch of the website. SDWG may consider options for a potential follow on project.
	Arctic Sustainable Energy Futures Toolkit II	Under the SDWG 2017-2019 work plan, a print and web-based guide was created for communities to use when developing and exercising community energy planning process. A project proposal is currently under development for a follow on project that would focus on sharing this toolkit with Arctic communities and supporting its use. A proposal is expected to be presented at an upcoming SDWG meeting.
<b>Economic Assessments</b>	Economy of the North IV (ECONOR IV)	The ECONOR projects draw together and harmonize socio-economic statistical data across national and regional borders. Previous reports were released in 2006, 2008 and 2015. A project proposal is currently under development for a follow on project. A scoping workshop was held in Oslo, Norway in August 2019 to examine questions of resource wealth and distribution, as well as economic regulation, production, & decision-making. The SDWG will consider this proposal when more information is available.
<b>Sustainable Business Involvement &amp; Development</b>	Blue Bioeconomy in the Arctic	This new project forms part of the Icelandic Chairmanship Program and the SDWG 2019-2021 work plan. It was endorsed by the SDWG in September 2019. This project maps key opportunities for enhancing and further developing the Arctic blue bioeconomy with a focus on balancing economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. The project will collect success stories and describe best practices, as well as identifying obstacles that could hamper progress. The PAME working group is involved with the project and linkages with the AEC's Blue Economy Working Group are also being explored.



	Arctic Food Innovation Cluster (AFIC)	The AFIC is a new project that was endorsed by the SDWG in February 2019 as part of the 2019-2021 work plan. This project aims to facilitate the development of a focused approach to food production and regional economic development; respond to global challenges of food production while seeking to define the Arctic's role and contribution to the changing climate and issues of food security locally and around the world. Project leads are in the process of organizing various activities and events associated with this project. In addition, links are being made with SDWG's EALLU and Blue Bioeconomy in the Arctic projects.
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### SDWG Expert Groups

SDWG is supported by two expert groups – the Arctic Human Health Expert Group (AHHEG) and the Social, Economic and Cultural Expert Group (SECEG). For the duration of the Icelandic Chairmanship, the chairs of these two expert groups are Eydís Kristín Sveinbjarnardóttir, Dean School of Health Sciences and associate professor at the University of Akureyri, and Embla Eir Oddsdóttir, Director of the Icelandic Arctic Cooperation Network, respectively.

Both expert groups held their first meetings under the Icelandic Chairmanship in Fall 2019. This gave members an opportunity to discuss current and potential priorities and projects. The expert groups also agreed to review their terms of references and to find ways to strengthen their relationship and communication with the SDWG. Both expert groups are planning meetings in conjunction with the next SDWG meeting in Akureyri in March 2020.

### Thematic Discussion: Youth Engagement in the Arctic Council

The September 2019 SDWG plenary meeting included a thematic discussion about youth engagement in the work of the SDWG. In addition, a conference entitled *Strengths, Well-Being and Engagement of Youth in the Arctic* was organized in the lead up to the SDWG meeting. The conference was organized by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Icelandic Arctic Cooperation Network, the University of Iceland Institute for International Affairs, Centre for Arctic Studies and the University of Akureyri. As a result of these events, several recommendations regarding youth engagement in the Arctic Council were proposed in the [event summary report](#). These recommendations are now being considered by the SDWG. The SDWG, in partnership with CAFF and the Arctic Youth Network, will introduce this topic to SAOs for discussion at the SAO plenary meeting in November 2019 in Hveragerði, Iceland. In addition, opportunities to enhance youth involvement in SDWG projects are being explored. For example, GEA III will invite a youth representative to participate in the steering committee for its pan-Arctic gender report and solicit contributions to the report by youth from the Arctic.

### Collaboration and Partnerships

The SDWG continues to seek opportunities for collaboration and partnership with other Arctic Council working groups, task forces and other institutions. The SDWG welcomes the involvement of Observer states and organizations in its projects and meetings (e.g. EALLU and Blue Bioeconomy). Current examples include:

- Blue bioeconomy: making linkages with PAME and the Arctic Economic Council on the Blue Bioeconomy project.

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- **Plastics:** Linking the SDWG's project on waste management in remote Arctic communities with the Icelandic Chairmanship's plastics agenda and hosting a panel at the Symposium on Plastics in the Arctic 2020 on the impact of plastics on Arctic communities.
- **Marine litter:** identifying an SDWG representative (Dr. Catherine Chambers, University Centre of the Westfjords) to participate in PAME's work to develop a Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter in the Arctic (ML-RAP).
- **Youth engagement:** Working with CAFF and the Arctic Youth Network on youth engagement in the Arctic Council
- **Sustainable energy:** connecting with the Arctic Council Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane to find linkages between their work and the SDWG's suite of sustainable energy projects.

### Events and Activities

The SDWG continues to look for opportunities to share information and receive input regarding its work. Recent and future events include:

- Arctic Circle, October 2019: a plenary on youth and mental health in the Arctic and panels on Gender Equality in the Arctic and Project CREATEs (Circumpolar Resilience, Engagement & Action Through Story).
- Arctic Frontiers, January 2020: proposed side event and workshop on the blue economy
- Symposium on Plastics in the Arctic, April 2020: proposed panel on the impact of plastics on Arctic communities.
- World Circular Economy Forum 2020: potential side event to profile relevant SDWG projects.
- Arctic Energy Summit 2020: potential panels that profile the SDWG's sustainable energy projects.

### Upcoming SDWG Meetings

The SDWG meetings scheduled for the Icelandic Chairmanship currently include:

- 17 December 2019 – SDWG intersessional teleconference
- 21-23 March 2020, Akureyri – SDWG executive and plenary meetings, AHHEG and SECEG meetings
- 26-27 October 2020, Egilsstaðir – SDWG executive and plenary meetings
- 3-4 February 2021, Reykjavík – SDWG executive and plenary meetings

### Communications and Administration

Canada has announced that it will provide resources for the establishment of a secretariat for the SDWG. Canada provided information and sought preliminary feedback about this initiative at the SDWG meeting in September 2019. Canada is continuing to conduct consultations regarding the creation of the SDWG secretariat and it will share additional information as it becomes available.

Over the last several months, the SDWG has been focused on strengthening its communication and outreach – in particular, by sharing information about SDWG projects and activities via social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram). The SDWG will also be working closely with the Arctic Council Secretariat to redesign the SDWG website. Finally, SDWG is in the processes of setting up an information management system that is aligned with the policy and procedures of the Arctic Council Secretariat and transferring all SDWG materials and records to the SDWG SharePoint site.

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