



# Empowering Communities: Leveraging SIA in Red Sea Global

Abstract ID	1321
Paper Title	Empowering Communities: Leveraging SIA in Red Sea Global
Session ID	386
Session Title	SIA as the basis for ongoing participatory community monitoring: examples from across the world
Author/Co-Authors	Author: Majed Badr Shaabein – Senior Specialist – Social Impact Assessment Co-Authors: Faisal Alyousef – Director – Social Impact Assessment Khlood Alkhalaqi – Senior Manager – Social Impact Assessment Lutfiah Hammad – Senior Specialist – Social Impact Assessment



## 1 Contents

1	ABSTRACT.....	3
2	INTRODUCTION .....	3
3	RSG REGENERATIVE TOURISM: A NET-POSITIVE MODEL.....	4
4	BRIDGING ASSESSMENT AND ACTION: THE ROLE OF SEBS IN RSG'S SIA APPROACH .....	4
5	FROM INSIGHT TO INTERVENTION: THE SEBS CASE .....	6
6	CATALYZING ACTION: VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY .....	7
7	CONCLUSION.....	9

### شركة البحر الأحمر الدولية

Tadawul Tower No. 1.17,  
KAJD, Al Aqiq District 7071,  
Riyadh 13519-2827,  
Saudi Arabia

شركة شخص واحد (مساهمة مقفلة) س.ت. 1010449117 C. R | رأس المال 16,157,621,830 ريال سعودي

REDSEAGLOBAL.COM



## 1 ABSTRACT

Red Sea Global (RSG), is spearheading new development and tourism models, putting people and planet first to deliver projects that actively enhance the well-being of customers, communities, and environments. Born from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, in alignment with national tourism goals and international frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and IFC Performance Standards, RSG plays a pivotal role in positioning the Kingdom on the global tourism map as a regenerative tourism pioneer by "acting as agents of change by partnering with world's greatest minds to spearhead new innovations that reimagine the boundaries of our sector and create a better world for people and planet."<sup>1</sup>

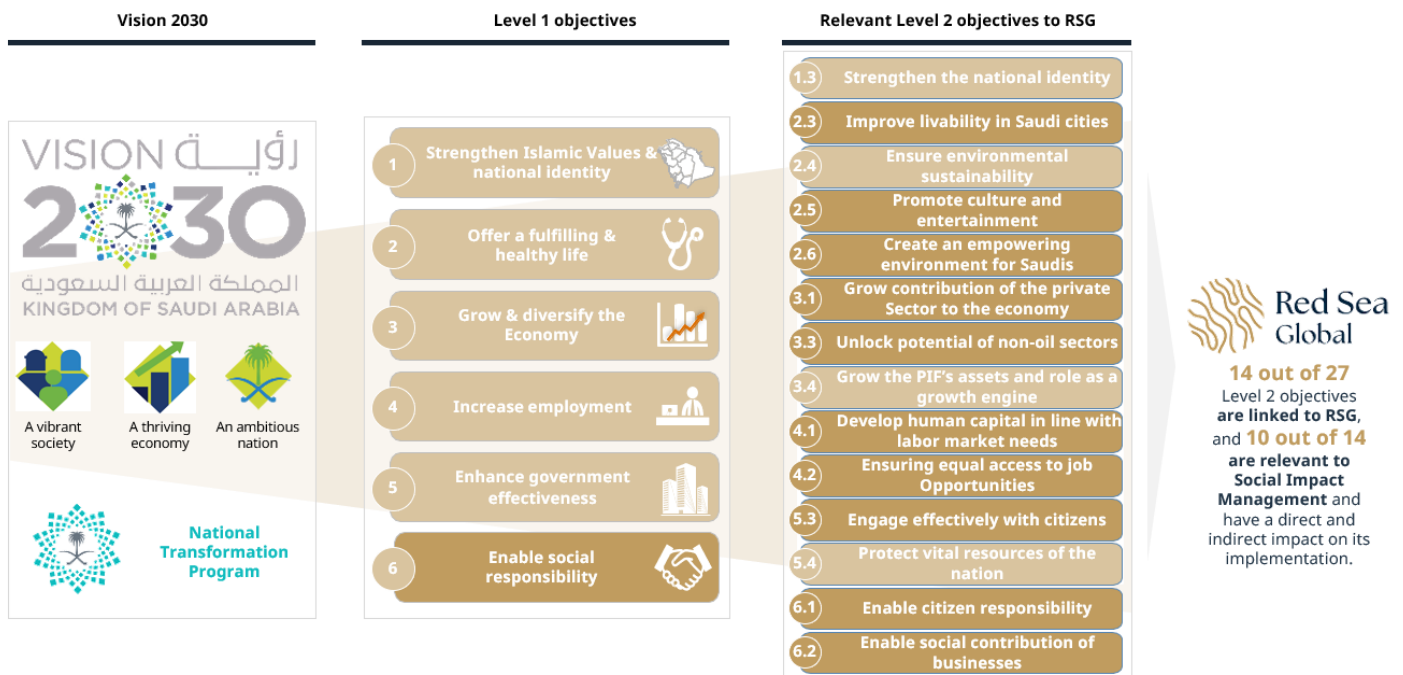
At the heart of RSG's strategy lies social development, with a team of social impact management experts who work in an anticipatory and participatory process with various internal stakeholders to ensure that local context and community impacts are considered into RSG's social development programs and initiatives as well as asset development projects across all stages, from conceptualization to operations. By leveraging social impact assessment (SIA), RSG ensures that its developments minimize risks while maximizing social and economic opportunities for local communities. This paper explores how tools like the Socio-Economic Baseline Study (SEBS) can guide SIA methodology improvements and ensure community-centered actions that reflect regenerative tourism principles.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

The private sector plays a crucial role in accelerating the achievement of the positive socio-economic impact through innovative technologies, sustainable investments, and partnerships with the public sector. RSG represents a comprehensive model that combines sustainable development, local economic support, and environmental protection and serves as an inspiring model. For example, globally renowned companies such as Apple launched initiatives like "Everyone Can Code," supporting education and digital skills for youth in its local and global communities and Proctor & Gamble has partnered with various governmental and academic institutions to enhance education and health programs in local communities worldwide. On a national level, companies such as Saudi Aramco and SABIC have been supporting sustainable development, continuously investing in industrial, social infrastructure development, and supporting social responsibility initiatives in local communities, including educational, health, and cultural programs.

RSG, as one of the Giga-projects in Saudi creates a long-lasting impact on society and it is essential for social programming to achieve a positive impact and create a balance between people and planet. As detailed in the figure below, RSG follows Vision 2030 objectives, of which 10 are highly relevant to social impact management to empower the local community.

Figure 2-1 Vision 2030 Goals and Objectives



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.redseaglobal.com/en/about-us>

### 3 RSG REGENERATIVE TOURISM: A NET-POSITIVE MODEL

Regenerative tourism, as defined in a joint scientific paper by Red Sea Global, KAUST, and Aptamind Partners, as “regenerative tourism as one that enhances the natural, cultural and social capital of a destination to create net positive benefits for people and the planet. “. It is important to note that it differs from sustainable tourism “in that it serves its host community rather than the tourism industry alone, by giving back to that community and contributing more than it takes from it.” (Duarte, et al. 2023)

On the social and economic front, regenerative tourism seeks to:

- Create high-quality jobs
- Design governance systems that support all actions above
- Develop transparent reporting of progress toward SDGs
- Establish participatory processes with local community across all actions
- Establish partnerships
- Promote gender equality
- Promote sustainable communities
- Provide quality education

It is within the DNA of RSG's vision to integrate the environmental, social, and economic aspects including investing in human capital and preserving cultural heritage in development projects and by implementing programs and initiatives such as:

1. English for Tourism – An annual English Language program targeting the local communities in the Red Sea Project region, with more than 2,000 trainees to date.
2. Sailboat Restoration – An initiative that included reactivating the maritime heritage of the Red Sea by renovating traditional sailboats and activating it for the community and visitors.
3. Jewar mobile application - specifically designed for the residents of the Red Sea Project region, aiming to create sustainable opportunities and establish consistent engagement with the local communities.\*

\*which impacts positively on:

- Creating meaningful local employment
- Strengthening community institutions and NGOs/NPOs
- Fostering equitable access to resources and training
- Ensuring the circulation of economic benefits within local economies

RSG serves as a model for accelerating sustainable development initiatives for several reasons:

- Environmental and Social Sustainability: The company implements major developmental projects, including the sustainable development of coastal cities, such as eco-tourism and marine sustainability projects. It contributes to environmental protection by adopting eco-friendly technologies and practices in developing coastal areas and managing natural resources.
- Boosting the Local Economy: The company enhances the local economy by creating local job opportunities in various sectors, such as tourism, real estate development, and local services. It promotes investments in local communities through partnerships with government entities and academic institutions to develop skills and infrastructure.
- Attracting Students and Researchers: Due to its major and innovative sustainable development projects, Red Sea Global has become an attractive model for study and research. The company offers opportunities for researchers and academics to study the impacts of its projects and contributions to sustainable development, enhancing the quality of research and education in this field.

Overall, RSG's approach represents a comprehensive model that combines sustainable development, local economic support, and environmental protection.

### 4 BRIDGING ASSESSMENT AND ACTION: THE ROLE OF SEBS IN RSG'S SIA APPROACH

Context:

RSG has developed a tailored ESIA methodology that follows international and national regulations and guidance since its inception, and as development projects progressed, a gap has been identified in the social impact assessment aspects being quite limited compared to the various negative and positive impacts that have been observed over time. Therefore, RSG has initiated the Socioeconomic Baseline Study (SEBS) to gain a comprehensive understanding of the communities in the Red Sea northern coast to feed into the SIA methodology improvements.

International Frameworks and Standards:

RSG's SIA approach draws upon a comprehensive set of global standards. These standards influence the environmental and social impact assessment criteria, and define valued environmental and social receptors, and determining impact significance. In addition, national legislation and guidance such as the Saudi regulations on heritage, culture, wellbeing, community engagement. International standards are listed below:

1. Equator Principles
2. IFC Performance Standards
3. World Bank Environmental and Social Framework

4. Sustainable Development Goals
5. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
6. UNDP Baseline Study and Evaluation Guideline
7. OECD Policy Framework for Inclusive Growth
8. World Bank and IMF socio-economic monitoring frameworks
9. UNDP Baseline and Evaluation Toolkit
10. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

Stakeholder Mapping:

Figure 4-1 Stakeholder Identification and Engagement Categories

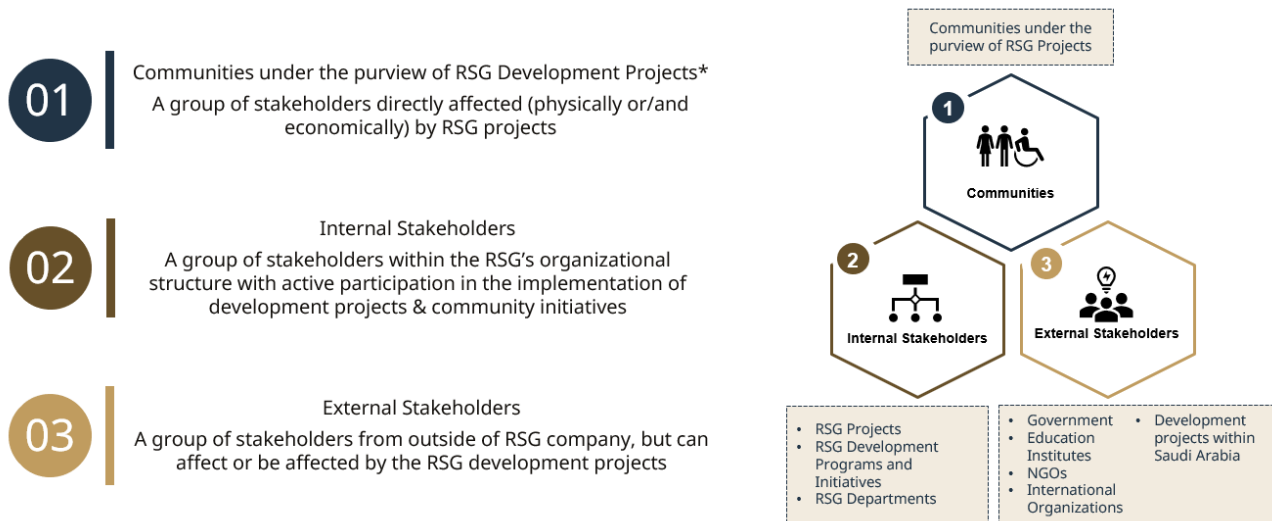


Figure 4-2 RSG Internal Stakeholders (360) Support



RSG applies SIA process as an integral component of its Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) framework. The SIA supports the systematic identification, evaluation, and management of potential social impacts arising from development projects and RSG social development initiatives and programs. It ensures compliance with national regulatory frameworks and international best practices while enhancing decision-making and risk mitigation throughout the project lifecycle.

To operationalize the SIA framework, RSG employs the SEBS as a foundational mechanism for generating empirical evidence on community dynamics. SEBS is not a parallel exercise, but a core instrument embedded within the SIA process, serving to structure, localize, and validate social impact projections.

The SEBS methodology is also anchored in global frameworks that emphasize methodological and multi-dimensional analysis.

#### شركة البحر الأحمر الدولية

Tadawul Tower No. 1.17,  
KAJD, Al Aqiq District 7071,  
Riyadh 13519-2827,  
Saudi Arabia

شركة شخص واحد (مساهمة مغلقة) س.ت. 1010449117 C. R | رأس المال 16,157,621,830 ريال سعودي

Based on the frameworks, the SEBS and SIA have adopted five capital pillars to guide the aspects considered in the assessment of risks, needs, and community assets which have been interlinked with RSG's corporate strategy. The capitals are as follows:

1. Human Capital: Education, skills, healthcare, and employment readiness
2. Social Capital: Social cohesion, inclusion, community structures, and cultural identity
3. Physical Capital: Public infrastructure, utilities, transport, housing
4. Financial Capital: Income, SMEs, funding access, livelihood diversity
5. Natural Capital: Environmental preservation, heritage, cultural landscapes

RSG ensures that data and programming align with these categories, creating a structured, accountable ecosystem for planning and evaluation.

## 5 FROM INSIGHT TO INTERVENTION: THE SEBS CASE

The SEBS is RSG's cornerstone for embedding community insight into Different aspects of projects and programs design, planning, and implementation. Conducted along the Red Sea Coast, it adopted a qualitative and quantitative methodology as follows:

Data Collection Tools:

- Surveys (n=540+): Quantitative insights on education, employment, services, and awareness
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Youth, elders, fishermen, artisans, women, and students across 11 villages
- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Municipality leaders, NGOs, SMEs, educators, tribal leaders
- Case Studies: Thematic deep-dives into vulnerable groups and productive families

The analytical process is organized into a four-stage model:

1. Scoping: Identifying socio-economic dimensions and receptors relevant to RSG's project footprint
2. Data Collection: Deploying multi-tool, regionally disaggregated methods for accurate representation
3. Analysis: Using cross-cutting segmentation (e.g., demographic, spatial, economic) and triangulation methods
4. Interpretation and Reporting: Linking findings to SDG-relevant outcomes and RSG's internal decision-making structures

To ensure data quality, the SEBS design incorporates:

- Data reliability (replicability under similar conditions)
- Data validity (alignment with intended variables)
- Data credibility (perception of impartiality and methodological soundness)

Analysis also utilizes Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and encryption protocols to ensure secure data management and real-time validation.

All data collected through SEBS was organized into the five capital pillars, allowing RSG to:

- Identify gaps (e.g., low English proficiency, limited access to healthcare)
- Validate priorities through triangulation of community insights
- Recommend interventions grounded in evidence.

This structured design ensured that every proposed social initiative mapped to real needs while contributing to broader sustainability goals

Figure 5-1 SEBS Results

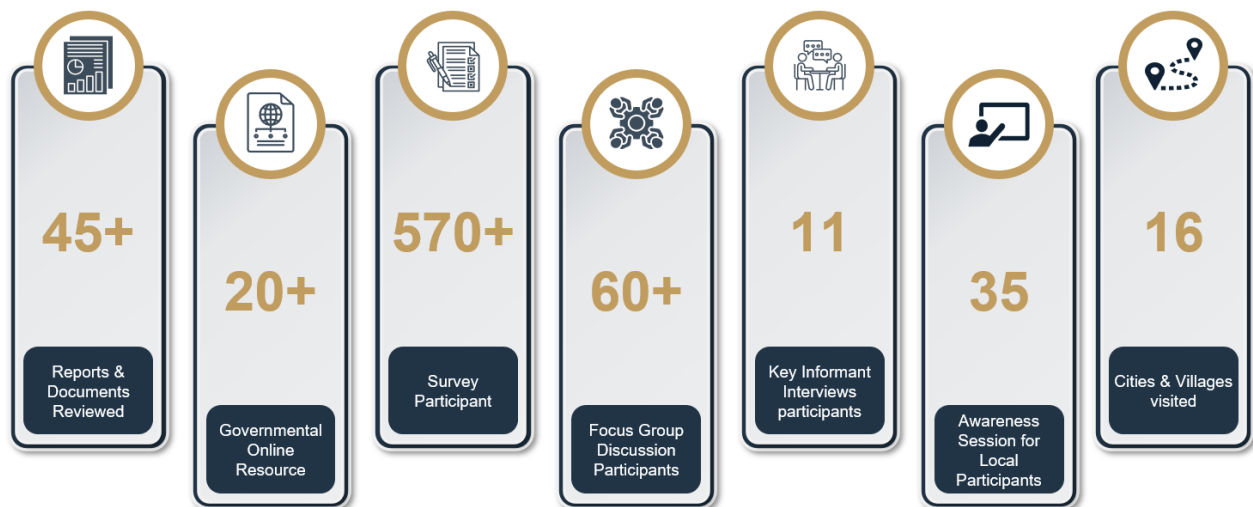






Figure 5-2 SEBS Impact



## 6 CATALYZING ACTION: VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY

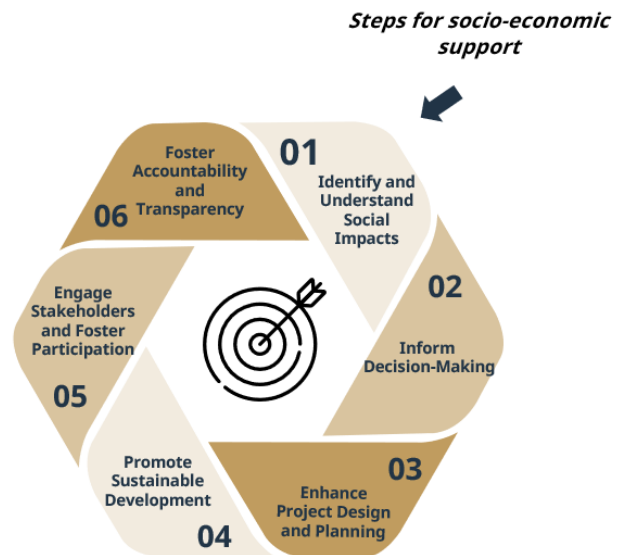
RSG transformed SEBS findings into a 3 Year Community Development Plan, a living roadmap of programs tailored to local aspirations and development gaps by following the guiding principles and goals of Socio-economic Support.

Figure 6-1 Socio-Economic Support Guide & Goals

### Guiding Principles of Conducting Socio- Economic support

- Participation and Engagement**  
Involve meaningful participation and engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including affected communities, marginalized groups, and other key actors
- Social Justice**  
Aiming to identify and address any potential negative impacts on vulnerable or marginalized groups, and promote equitable distribution of benefits and resources
- Interdisciplinary Approach**  
Integrating expertise from various fields to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the social impacts and enable effective decision-making
- Cumulative Impacts and Long-term Perspective**  
Adopting a long-term perspective, evaluating both short-term and long-term social impacts and considering potential scenarios and uncertainties.
- Adaptive and Iterative Process**  
Incorporating feedback from stakeholders, incorporate new information, and adjust assessment methods and mitigation measures as needed.
- Mitigation and Enhancement**  
Providing recommendations and strategies to minimize harm, maximize benefits, and promote sustainable development, considering the interests and needs of affected communities.
- Monitoring and Evaluation**  
Establishing indicators, baselines, and mechanisms for tracking and reporting on social outcomes, ensuring accountability and learning from implementation experiences.

### Main Goals of Socio-Economic Support



41 initiatives were identified and prioritized across six themes:

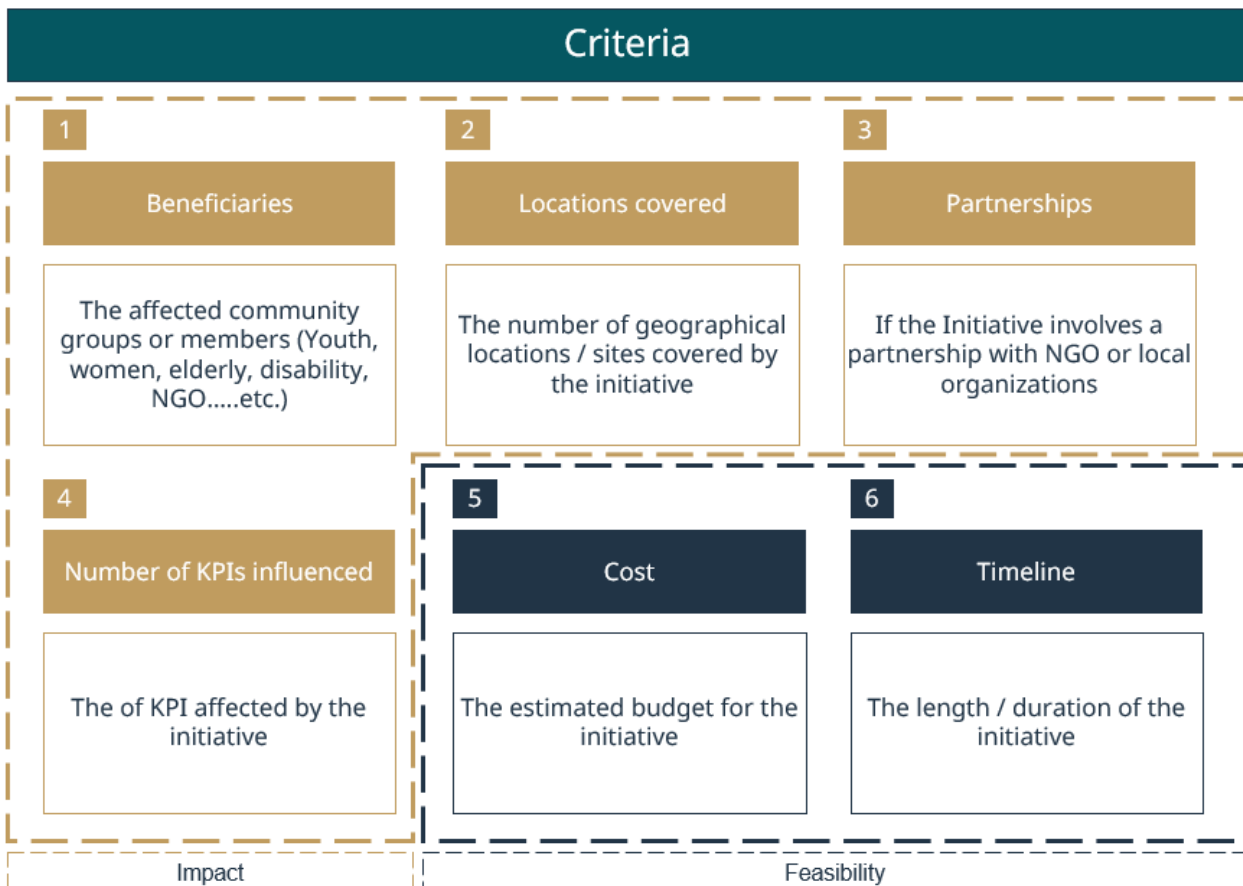
1. Advocacy (e.g., partnerships with municipalities)
2. Skills & Training (e.g., vocational and soft skills workshops)
3. Awareness Campaigns (e.g., environmental protection, marine safety)
4. Financial Support (e.g., development packages for productive families)
5. Cultural Events (e.g., artisan festivals, camel racing)
6. NGO Strengthening (e.g., governance workshops and volunteering frameworks)

Figure 6-2 Initiatives List (Sample)

#	Theme	Program	Program Description	Initiative
1	Advocacy	Local Authority cooperations program	Activate partnerships with key governmental entities for continues communication such as ministry of education, ministry of culture, local municipalities, and Ministry of finance to promote / advocate for potential solutions that will tackle the relevant socioeconomic challenges in the north coast area (Umluj, Al waji, Dubai)	Partnership with local municipality
		Community Voice Program	Introduce new tools & techniques with relevant stakeholders (Private sector, NGO, hospitals, schools, individuals....etc.) in the north coast region to act as a means of communication between RSG, local community and external stakeholders to strengthen the local community trust. (Hotline, website, mobile office....etc.)	Seasonal Fishing & tours
2	Capacity Building	Skills Enhancements Program	Identify and select most vital common topics from the north coast area local community & RSG mandate, to provide trainings / workshops to increase the local community knowledge capacity and provide them a better employment opportunities. (soft skills, environmental protection, veterinary medicine, agricultural pests....etc.)	Soft skills / ESIA
		Digital Literacy Programs	RSG staff to provide virtual training / workshops to the local community as part of RSG skill-based volunteering program in the north coast area to increase local community capacity with RSG & community engagement between RSG staff and local community.	Digital knowledge / volunteering
		Vocational Training Program	RSG to provide vocational training for the local community in selected topics (farming, maintenance, Airport jobs, health safety, nursery, hospitality and tourism....etc.) and equip them with the necessary tools to further develop themselves and meet market demands for a better employment opportunities.	Tourism guide / Boat captain / nursery
3	Awareness Campaigns	Public Awareness Campaign	RSG to host multiple general awareness campaigns in (Dubai, Umluj, Alwaji) such as awareness on public health and safety, medical awareness sessions, environmental awareness sessions, marine protection....etc.	RSG Public Awareness - North Red Sea Coast Area
		RSG Projects And Developments Campaign	RSG to host multiple awareness sessions to promote and increase the awareness of the local community within the north coast area on the ongoing and potential RSG projects. This can also provide an opportunity for the local community to engage with RSG on an agreed capacity of work / involvement.	RSG Project Awareness - North Red Sea Coast Area amaala & redsea destination
		Employment Program	RSG to host a talent acquisition program in the north coast region targeting youth and jobseekers for available job / work opportunities with RSG, causing a greater impact to the local community and hiring local talent.	RSG career fairs
4	Economic Empowerment	Economic Acceleration Program	RSG to provide economic support that is accessible to the local community SMEs, NGOs, productive families, farmers, herders, and fishermen to support them in their business / practices and provide means of financial support to them. RSF	Economic empowering to productive families
5	Cultural Preservation	Artists Program	RSG to sponsor or host a coemption for cultural arts to the local community talented members as means of cultural engagement and inclusion, this will provide RSG to possess a data base for those who have art works or cultural libraries.	RSG Cultural Art Exhibition
		Artisans' preservation Program	RSG to facilitate for the Old artisans to conduct a workshop to train the youth for hand crafts innovation, to preserve the cultural aspects & Traditional occupations in the north coast area region. (historians, poets, singers, folklore)	RSG New-Gen Artisans'
6	Non-Governmental Organizations	NGO Technical Strengthening Program	RSG to provide support and assistance to the local NGO in the north coast area region to identify the potential services / initiatives / programs the NGO is able to deliver and provide technical workshop on how to conduct the services.	Volunteering Technical strengthening
		NGO Administrative Mentorship Program	RSG to host multiple work shops to the local NGO on Setting the NGO structure, governance, strategy, mandate....etc., this will further develop the NGO internally and will provide RSG with the a data base on the local NGO for possible partnerships in future projects.	Volunteering Administrative Mentorship

Each initiative was assessed using a weighted prioritization matrix including geographic coverage, cost, feasibility, stakeholder involvement, and SDG alignment. RSG also created initiative cards with clear KPIs, target demographics, timelines, and ownership units. This process ensured a robust governance structure and fostered internal alignment.

Figure 6-3 Community interventions Prioritization Matrix (RSG Developed)





## 7 CONCLUSION

RSG's integration of the local community needs within a regenerative tourism model in its ESIA process for development projects and the tailored SIA for social development programs and initiatives highlights how collaborating with the local community, institutions and NGOs/NPOs and utilizing the insights to improve processes ensures inclusive growth, environmental restoration, and economic opportunities can co-exist. Through evidence-based tools like SEBS, and actionable pathways like the Community Development Plan, RSG has pioneered a development strategy that puts people and planet first. This model, rooted in data, designed with community input, and implemented through strong local partnerships is not only transformative for the Red Sea region but stands as a global benchmark for tourism-based development.

## 8 REFERENCES

1. Duarte, C. M., Cousins, R., Ficociello, M. A., Williams, I. D., & Khowala, A. (2023). Advancing global climate and biodiversity goals through regenerative tourism. *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 11, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fenvs.2023.893782>
2. Palladium. (2024). *The Comprehensive SEBS Report of the North Region*.
3. Red Sea Global. (n.d.). *About us*. Retrieved March 26, 2025, from <https://www.redseaglobal.com/about-us/>
4. Saudi Arabia. (n.d.). *Vision 2030 program: Level 1 & Level 2 national objectives*. Retrieved March 26, 2025, from <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/>