



SIDS & UN DESA

Partners for a prosperous,
sustainable and resilient future for
small island developing States

2026



**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

SIDS and UN DESA: Advancing the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda together

Introduction by UN Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua

Small island developing States (SIDS) are on the frontlines of today's most pressing global challenges, from climate change and food insecurity to economic shocks, debt burden, and rising inequalities. Yet, time and again, the people of these island nations have shown themselves to be resilient, innovative, and determined leaders in the global push for sustainable development. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) is proud to stand with SIDS as a steadfast partner working to build a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable future.

The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS)—A Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity, provides a renewed blueprint for action. This agenda, agreed to by Member States at the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) in 2024, is a bold 10-year plan of action that will deliver meaningful change for these vulnerable island countries.

UN DESA is committed to helping SIDS bring this vision to life, including through participation in and follow up to key global processes such as the annual High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the Second World



Summit for Social Development, the UN Water Conferences, and the UN Ocean Conferences. We will also continue to support SIDS at national and regional levels through meaningful and dedicated capacity-development programmes and projects, the SIDS Partnership Framework, and new analytical tools to shape sustainable development pathways based on evidence and equity. Furthermore, through our flagship publications and extensive databases related to sustainable financing, good governance, energy, climate, and ocean action, we are fully equipped to provide SIDS with state-of-the-art knowledge and policy insights that can be tailored to regional and national contexts.

Our work with and for SIDS spans six priority action areas: advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and multilateralism, ensuring sustainable financing; putting data and science to work for SDG progress; addressing poverty, inequality, and leaving no one behind; protecting our planet through fostering climate and SDG synergies; and leveraging the Department's work on projection and frontier issues, including through strategic foresight and digital transformation.

Throughout these action pillars, we centre the voices of those often left behind—women and girls, youth,

persons with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples—ensuring no one is excluded from progress. Our commitment is to walk alongside SIDS in translating global agreements into local solutions.

As we turn the promise of ABAS into tangible progress, UN DESA remains deeply committed to supporting SIDS at every step. Our shared objective is clear: to create resilient economies, inclusive societies and a healthy planet for future generations of island communities. Together, let us drive a lasting transformation, anchored in solidarity, partnership, and sustainable development.



Children at a damaged sea wall in Tebunginako Village, which has been severely affected by rising sea levels, on Abaiang Island. Kiribati, 2023. | PHOTO UNICEF/FAUZAN

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) supports and works together with small island developing States (SIDS) through a range of initiatives tailored to their unique sustainable development challenges, spanning the Department's six action areas.



Accelerating action on the SDGs and strengthening multilateralism

UN DESA facilitates the consideration of issues that are important to SIDS speakers in major events on the world stage—including the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the UN Ocean Conferences and the UN Water Conferences—to ensure their unique concerns and priorities are heard in discussions on implementing the 2030 Agenda, the **Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS)**, and other frameworks relevant to SIDS. In the 2025 HLPF session devoted to SIDS, for instance, speakers underscored the need for more affordable financing and immediate debt relief to create fiscal space for investments in essential areas. There was also broad support for the **SIDS Centre of Excellence** and the **Global Data Hub**, two key action areas that resulted from the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4), held in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024.

Since 2018, the Department has hosted the **SDG Pavilion** on the sidelines of the annual UN Climate Change Conference, aiming to highlight the connections between climate action and the other 16 SDGs—including their effect on small islands.

Advancing digital transformation and gender equality in SIDS

At the 2025 United Nations Public Service Forum (UNPSF) in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, representatives from SIDS voiced challenges they face in digital transformation and digital inclusion in public service delivery. By leading the

UN E-Government Survey, UN DESA helps SIDS with data on e-government development trends and offers analytical insight for prioritizing government efforts in digital transformation. Exploiting digitalization has far-reaching potential for SIDS, not just in improving processes and workflows for greater efficacy and effectiveness of public service delivery, but also in ensuring inclusion, participation, and accountability to fulfil the motto of leaving no one behind. Digital solutions can help mitigate the unique vulnerabilities in SIDS, such as building resilience to climate change, and bringing distance learning and mobile health to remote island pockets, among other innovative applications.

Based on *E-Government Survey* findings, in 2025, UN DESA organized a capacity-building workshop in the Solomon Islands on digital transformation in the public sector, identifying constraints in infrastructure, digital skills, and legal and institutional frameworks. Additionally, two African SIDS, Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, participated in a capacity-building workshop UN DESA co-organized with UN University in Abuja, Nigeria, during the ICEGOV2025 conference in November 2025. These workshops highlighted specific challenges these SIDS face in their digital development and helped identify road maps for transformation.

UN DESA also supports gender equality in SIDS. In 2024, the Department supported a national review, online training, and capacity-development workshop in Mauritius to identify structural barriers and develop a national action plan to advance gender equality in public administration, particularly at decision-making levels. The action

plan was peer-reviewed by Cabo Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, which were also sensitized on integrating gender equality into their own public administration systems.

Strengthening partnerships among SIDS and between SIDS and other countries

to achieve the SDGs is also a priority for UN DESA. The SIDS Partnership Framework and SIDS Partnership Toolbox, developed by the Department in consultation with SIDS representatives, aim to enhance capacity in designing meaningful partnerships and assist in their review and monitoring. UN DESA also organizes the annual Global Multistakeholder SIDS Partnership Dialogue and SIDS Partnership Awards, further mobilizing action.

Through a series of capacity-building initiatives, UN DESA collaborates with SIDS policymakers to ensure the SDGs are well-integrated into national agendas, hosting workshops that showcase cohesive approaches to SDG implementation.

UN DESA and the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) provided technical support for the development of the monitoring and evaluation framework for the ABAS and facilitated its endorsement. The framework, which includes clear targets and indicators that reflect the development needs of SIDS, was presented to Member States in June 2025 and subsequently endorsed by the Second Committee of the General Assembly in November 2025.

The SIDS Action Platform is the main online resource for SIDS partnerships. It includes options to:



Register a new partnership for SIDS



Provide a progress report of a previously registered partnerships



Browse and learn from existing partnerships



Speakers discuss renewable energy in SIDS at the SDG Pavilion organized by UN DESA at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November 2024. | UN DESA/ARIEL ALEXOVICH

2 Ensuring sustainable financing and realizing the SDGs

UN DESA's work with SIDS **prioritizes sustainable financing strategies**. Through initiatives like “Financing for SIDS (FINS)”, spanning the Dominican Republic, Fiji, and Seychelles, UN DESA supports SIDS in crafting financial strategies aligned with the SDGs, promoting reliance and sustainability. FINS is applying the framework, Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF), to assess financing needs and sources, identify policy and institutional reforms, and strengthen coordination between domestic efforts and external support. For example, in the Dominican Republic, the focus is on guiding donor support and exploring innovative financing to achieve national priorities. FINS also has a peer learning component, with a Peer Exchange on Debt Sustainability Strategies in Pacific SIDS planned for mid-2026.

In Seychelles and the Dominican Republic, UN DESA is also supporting efforts to enhance collaboration across institutions and strengthen the link between planning and financing by applying systems thinking and long-term scenario-based approaches—fostering more integrated and forward-looking national financing strategies.

At the 2023 Development Cooperation Forum high-level meeting, UN DESA heard from SIDS representatives on **the need for increased concessional finance and for reforms of the international financial architecture** to better support long-term resilience efforts. Additionally, peer-learning workshops on sustainable finance, green taxonomies and policy development have fostered collaboration and knowledge-sharing, enabling collective action toward the SDGs.

The **establishment of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI)** represents a significant acknowledgment by the international community that vulnerability is a serious obstacle to sustainable development, due to the damage caused by exogenous shocks and stressors to which countries are increasingly being exposed. The MVI quantifies structural vulnerability and

A decade of SIDS VNR Reports

One VNR | Two VNRs | Three VNRs

Year	Latin America and the Caribbean	Asia and the Pacific	Africa
2016		Samoa	
2017	Belize	Maldives	
2018	Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica	Kiribati, Singapore	Cabo Verde
2019	Guyana, Saint Lucia	Fiji, Nauru, Palau, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Vanuatu	Mauritius
2020	Barbados, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago	Micronesia (Federated States of), Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands	Comoros, Seychelles
2021	Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Cuba, Dominican Republic	Marshall Islands	Cabo Verde
2022	Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Suriname	Tuvalu	Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe
2023	Barbados, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis	Fiji, Maldives, Singapore, Timor-Leste	Comoros
2024	Belize	Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu	Mauritius
2025	Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia, Suriname	Micronesia (Federated States of), Papua New Guinea	Seychelles
2026	Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis	Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Tonga	Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau

Spotlight on the development prospects of SIDS

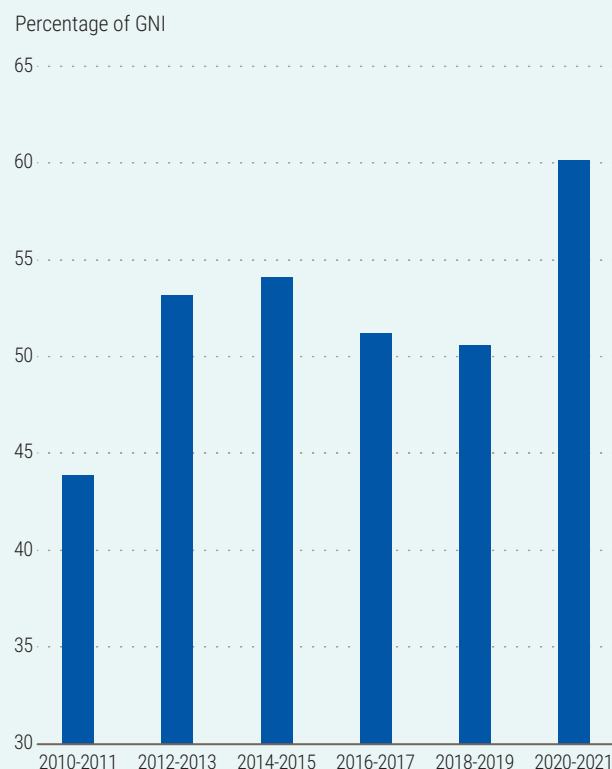
The economic challenges faced by SIDS feature prominently in the *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025 (WESP)* and the *WESP 2025 Mid-year Update*. The reports highlight that economic projections for SIDS remain subdued. The *WESP 2025* notes that SIDS' economic growth forecasts continue to lag behind the average growth recorded during the decade prior to the pandemic. Furthermore, this already modest outlook has been revised downward in the *WESP 2025 Mid-Year Update*, which accounts for the intensification of global headwinds. Economic growth in SIDS is projected to decline from 4.6% in 2024 to 3.1% in 2025, and further to 2.8% in 2026, significantly below the 2010–2019 average of 3.9%. The reports underscore how trade tensions, geopolitical developments, and climate change impact SIDS. The *World Social Report 2024* assessed SIDS' vulnerabilities in an era of cascading global shocks, indicating the national and international collaborative actions necessary for ensuring their resilience and inclusive prosperity. A recent **Frontier Technology Issues (FTI)** report highlights how innovation and circular economy strategies can support an inclusive recovery and mitigate structural vulnerabilities in developing countries. The analysis—including ten SIDS—focused on the potential of recycling energy transition critical minerals from waste and scrap as a means to reduce import dependency, strengthen local value chains, and create green jobs. With the rising volume of scrap imports to many SIDS, realizing such potential can present new opportunities for economic diversification and technological innovation within an overall framework of sustainable development.

The most recent policy briefs by the **United Nations Economist Network**, convened by UN DESA, consistently highlight the unique challenges and strategic importance of SIDS. Drawing on contributions from economists across the UN system, including economists based in UN Resident Coordinator Offices across many SIDS,

these briefs emphasize the need for tailored policy approaches for countries in special situations.

The **“Future and Foresight”** series underscores the importance of forward-looking governance, digital transformation, and the future of work in these contexts. One brief informed a foresight exercise in Jamaica, exploring how the country's future economy will hinge on understanding the pace and nature of technological change and its impact on labor markets. Another brief, focusing on industrial policy, examines the case of Madagascar, illustrating how well-designed industrial strategies can overcome connectivity constraints and enhance SIDS' participation in global markets.

UN DESA analysis shows that SIDS' external debt stock has grown by more than 50 per cent, relative to their income



Source: UN DESA, based on the World Bank World Development Indicators database.

Note: Seventeen SIDS are included in this analysis based on data availability.

(lack of) structural resilience of all developing countries, and it can also be used as a diagnostic tool to drive coordinated action, improve development decision-making and allocate resources. **The Sevilla Commitment**—the outcome of the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4) in July 2025—also complements the advances made in the MVI resolution by noting the growing political momentum for measuring progress in sustainable development using metrics that complement or go beyond gross domestic product (GDP). These include multidimensional vulnerability and a commitment to improving development cooperation and access to development finance, including concessional finance and inviting international financial institutions, multinational development banks, and international organizations to consider using MVI as a complement to their existing practices and policies to inform their development cooperation policies and practices. UN DESA supported SIDS in articulating these priorities and anchoring them in the Sevilla Commitment, including through capacity-development workshops for delegates from SIDS. These commitments and others will be monitored and reviewed at the annual ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up, which provides a space to discuss SIDS-related financing challenges.

UN DESA has been working with the UN Sustainable Development Group on MVI and will encourage widescale pilot testing of the tool. The Department is working closely with interested UN system entities to explore opportunities to pilot the MVI in line with their respective mandates. In this context, UN DESA is collaborating with ECLAC and the UN Resident Coordinator Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean to develop a methodology and beta-test the Vulnerability-Responsive Country Profile (VRCP) in Saint Kitts and Nevis. There has been similar interest in piloting the VRCP in the Pacific region. Lessons learned from the Caribbean pilot will inform replication in interested Pacific SIDS in 2026.

The Department has also been lending its support and thought leadership to the operationalization of the **Debt Sustainability Support Service (DSSS)**, a key outcome of the SIDS4 Conference, which will be a mechanism for supporting SIDS to develop appropriate debt sustainability strategies and engage in conversations with credit rating organizations and other bilateral and multilateral lenders around debt.

Strengthening domestic revenue mobilization

Building on these efforts to strengthen sustainable financing frameworks, UN DESA also contributes to advancing domestic revenue mobilization in SIDS. In March 2026, the Platform for Collaboration on Tax (PCT), which brings together the IMF, OECD, UN, and World Bank Group, convened a high-level meeting in Tokyo focused on domestic revenue mobilization in SIDS. Ministers, tax commissioners, and development partners from across the three SIDS regions exchanged practical experiences on strengthening tax systems, including improving revenue collection from key sectors such as tourism and fisheries, modernizing tax administration, and enhancing regional cooperation. The discussions highlighted the importance of tailored policy approaches and coordinated international support to help SIDS build more resilient and sustainable revenue systems.



Participants in the Platform for Collaboration on Tax meet to discuss domestic revenue mobilization in SIDS in March 2026. | PHOTO MAKOTO KATO

Investment mobilization

Papua New Guinea is advancing reforms to attract more investment and expand sources of financing for realizing major energy, digital, and food systems transformations. Through a six-week green economy training programme conducted with UNITAR, UN DESA strengthened capacities in project preparation and investor engagement amongst officials spanning key ministries and agencies, including the Department of Planning, Department of Finance, the National Energy Authority, and the Department of Information and Communication Technology. UN DESA also supported the country's participation in the SDG Investment Fair in Sevilla, Spain, during FFD4, where Papua New Guinea presented three pipeline projects on digital inclusion, sustainable cocoa value chains, and a first-of-its kind offshore wind project. This generated concrete investor interest, helped build a credible pipeline of SDG-aligned investments, and increased the country's visibility globally to help diversify the investor base.

UN DESA has also supported Suriname, the Seychelles, and Sao Tome and Principe in past years to better understand the requisites for attracting private investment and elevating the bankability of potential sustainable infrastructure projects. The staff of the Seychelles Investment Board benefitted from training in 2025 on "Project Preparation and Risk Mitigation," with a national capacity-building workshop planned for 2026. A delegation from Sao Tome, led by the Minister of Infrastructure, showcased key infrastructure development priorities at a UN DESA side event at the Private Sector Forum of the Fifth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDC5), with subsequent ongoing engagement to identify bankable projects for the 2026 SDG Investment Fair.

Finally, UN DESA experts contributed to a capacity-building workshop for government officials on financing at the Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (PFSD), co-hosted by UN ESCAP, which took place in Fiji in October 2025. Subsequently, several Pacific island States have indicated interest in taking part in the 2026 SDG Investment Fair in New York.

3 Putting data and science to work for SDG progress

UN DESA is dedicated to **empowering SIDS with the statistical tools and expertise needed to navigate their complex development challenges**. For example, UN DESA has developed a dedicated initiative for SIDS called Data for SIDS, or DATAS, which aims to strengthen national statistical systems in SIDS in order to produce better data, track progress, and make more informed policy decisions. This kind of work is especially timely, given the critical role data plays in the development of the MVI advocated by SIDS and in responding to the needs highlighted in the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS).

With support from the government of Ireland, DATAS is currently being implemented in Fiji, Jamaica, and Comoros. In each country, UN DESA works in close partnership with national authorities and UN agencies to improve the availability and use of quality data aligned with national priorities, whether by improving crime and health statistics in Fiji, developing migration data systems and address registers in Jamaica, or using administrative data for statistics production to inform the fisheries sector and disaster management in Comoros. High-level events and workshops have been organized to engage senior government officials and key stakeholders to promote the importance of collaboration and data sharing across institutions, increase ownership, raise user awareness, and ensure sustainability in data use for decision-making. At the regional level, the initiative is supporting the development of a Caribbean platform for SIDS-SIDS cooperation and a best practice exchange on data solutions and tools for nature. Some of the

early results were shared at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP16) in Cali, Colombia, in 2024, alongside CARICOM. Furthermore, with support from governments of Norway and the United Kingdom, UN DESA is supporting the Maldives and the Dominican Republic through the Data For Now initiative that aims to support in countries in the use of innovative approaches to fill data gaps in priority areas. These include improving data to inform anti-corruption and migration related policies.

Starting in 2026, UN DESA has begun monitoring progress on the ABAS using its newly formulated monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework, and the Department will lead the production of an annual report to monitor progress.

The sixth in-person meeting of SIDS National Focal Points (NFPs) was held in December 2025, in Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting focused on the ABAS M&E framework, and the development and refining of a practical toolkit for NFPs. Discussions around understanding data collection, analysis and reporting for the ABAS M&E framework included UN DESA experts who guided participants on utilizing existing reporting frameworks and data sources to align overlapping indicators for both the framework and the SDGs.

Another workshop in support of the M&E framework was held in Guyana in December 2025 for the Caribbean sub-region, bringing together national statistical offices and senior officials from key policy institutions. Innovative approaches explored included the use of artificial intelligence, citizen-generated data, geographic

information systems (GIS), and mobile data. Similar regionally tailored workshops will be delivered in 2026 and 2027.

SIDS and AI

UN DESA, in partnership with UNCTAD, ECLAC, UNEP, CARICOM, IMO, and UN RCOs, recently launched the DA Tranche 17 project on “Evidence-based Climate Action through Artificial Intelligence and Data Innovation for Caribbean SIDS,” which is focused on using AI and data to enhance climate action in the Caribbean. Specifically, it aims to improve the ability of four Caribbean SIDS— Barbados, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Dominican Republic—to monitor and analyze maritime transport, trade, fisheries, and their greenhouse gas emissions as well as strengthen technical and institutional capacities to compile System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) ocean accounts related to coastal ecosystems as part of regular official statistical production. The project also seeks to strengthen the statistical, data science, and analytical capabilities of these four countries.

The project aims to build skills in data science, econometrics, and data wrangling, enabling these SIDS to better utilize data from sources like Automatic Identification System (AIS) data

and national fishing vessel registers. This project responds directly to the priorities set out in the **Nice Declaration**, adopted at the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference.

Innovative capacity-building

UN DESA supports SIDS through workshops, advisory missions and projects to enhance statistical capabilities crucial for policymaking and sustainable development.

Regional workshops have focused on environmental statistics, sustainable forest management, climate finance, and SDG indicators, and tailoring **strategies to the needs of SIDS**. Advisory missions strengthen legal frameworks and governance structures for statistical systems, ensuring data reliability. For example, an advisory mission to Aruba in February 2023 focused on developing a draft statistical act and included training sessions on the principles of official statistics and the structure of national statistical systems.

Capacity-building initiatives also foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among SIDS, addressing common challenges. Long-term projects, including the Programme on Statistics and Data, and Resilient and Agile National



Experts discuss internal migration statistics at a meeting at the Maldives Bureau of Statistics (MBS) with representatives from MBS, Positium, UN DESA, and ITU in Male, Maldives, in November 2025. | PHOTO MBS

Statistical Systems, and initiatives such as DATAS, demonstrate UN DESA's commitment to building sustainable statistical capacities for SIDS and **promoting data-driven decision-making.**

Through technical support provided by UN DESA under the DATAS initiative, Comoros is advancing the development of statistical information in thematic areas identified as national priorities, with the aim of facilitating evidence-based decision-making. In August 2025, under the leadership of the National Institute of Statistics and Economic and Demographic Studies (INSEED) and with support from UN DESA, a high-level event and a workshop were held with various actors of the national statistical system to secure high-level government buy-in, enhance cross-functional coordination, and prioritize areas, including the fisheries and disaster sector, to be supported under the DATAS initiative using administrative data. Additionally, following a request from Comoros, UN DESA provided support for the refinement of the draft National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) in collaboration with UNDP, the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO), UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO.

In Jamaica, UN DESA facilitated a series of knowledge exchange and technical meetings with international partners on nationally identified priorities, including on address registers and international migration register. The initiative also supported Jamaica's participation at the European Forum for Geography and Statistics 2025, to deepen technical exposure and peer learning related to the development of address registers. In Fiji, advancements were made to improve statistics to inform crime and health policies, for example through support on standardizing the classification of crimes for statistical purposes and improving cause-of-death statistics. Consultations and technical support are also ongoing in Fiji, Jamaica, and Comoros to strengthen the IT infrastructure for more efficient statistical processing to effectively integrate, process, analyze, and disseminate data for statistical production.



Members of the national statistical system in Comoros meet with support from the DATAS initiative, in Moroni, Comoros, in August 2025. | PHOTO UN DESA/ GABRIEL GAMEZ

Another example is the Data for Now initiative, under which UN DESA is collaborating with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to help the Dominican Republic in operationalizing the UNODC statistical framework for measuring corruption. The country has shown a strong willingness to advance the framework, proposing a roadmap that begins with identifying focal points across key institutions and priority indicators. Under the same initiative, UN DESA is also supporting the Maldives in using innovative data sources and methods to measure migration statistics, a key priority for the Maldives to inform its decision-making. The Department also supports the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. UN DESA, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), provided technical support to Caribbean SIDS on preparing voluntary national reviews related to the compact in a March 2026 workshop organized by the UN Network on Migration in Panama City, Panama, in preparation for the International Migration Review Forum 2026.

UN DESA, in collaboration with UNITAR and ECLAC, supported an experimental project led



Participants pose at the workshop “Harnessing Administrative Data Sources for Official Statistics Production: International Migration and Environment/Climate Change Statistics Cases,” in Saint George’s, Grenada, in June 2025. | PHOTO UN DESA

by Grenada under the OECS Data for Decision-making initiative, aimed at exploring the use of administrative data in Grenada for the production of official statistics. Following a workshop organized in June 2025, four working groups were established around national priority data needs, including population and migration and environment statistics, and action plans were developed for their implementation. With support from UN DESA and using tools developed by the Collaborative on Administrative Data, two working groups (focusing respectively on climate finance and migration estimates) made progress by the end of the project timeline in October, drafting a Memorandum of Understanding, data-sharing agreements and data collection templates to allow the use of administrative data, which are now pending review and clearance by the government.

In December 2025, UN DESA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Service of the Solomon Islands, organized a national workshop focused on advancing digital transformation through strengthened digital government assessment and implementation in the Solomon Islands. The workshop introduced public officials to a toolkit on the E-Government Survey assessment framework, including methodologies for reviewing online public services at both national and local levels, and provided practical guidance on applying these tools to inform digital transformation planning and self-assessment. The workshop contributed to strengthening

institutional capacity for evidence-informed digital policymaking and more inclusive public service delivery, in line with SDG 16.

Finally, UN DESA contributed to the Regional Workshop on Time Use Statistics: Methods and Uses, held in Suva, Fiji, and co-organized by UN Women and the Pacific Community (SPC). The workshop brought together representatives from Pacific national statistics offices to deepen their understanding of time-use statistics and their relevance for gender-responsive policymaking. UN DESA guided the discussion by focusing on the growing need for reliable data on unpaid domestic and care work, a key priority across regional frameworks, and introduced the newly endorsed UN Guide to Producing Statistics on Time Use and the Minimum Harmonized Instrument. This statistical standard offers streamlined, comparable approaches for data collection. The workshop also explored methodological options for stand-alone surveys and for integrating time-use modules into existing instruments such as LFS and MICS. As a follow-up, the Pacific Working Group on Time Use will assess feasible approaches for the region.

Strengthening capacity to report on ABAS progress

In December 2025, UN DESA collaborated with ECLAC and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat to organize a



Delegates take part in a capacity-building workshop on “Empowering Digital Transformation in SIDS,” held in the Solomon Islands in December 2025. | PHOTO SOLOMON ISLANDS MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE

capacity-building workshop on the ABAS and its monitoring and evaluation framework. Held in Georgetown, Guyana, the workshop brought together experts from national statistical offices (NSOs) and senior policy makers from SIDS in the Caribbean. This workshop was an early opportunity to familiarize the participants with the framework, strengthen their understanding of its targets, indicators, and

methodologies, and prepare countries for ABAS implementation and reporting in 2026. Through a combination of presentations by experts, hands-on discussions, and peer-to-peer exchanges, participants identified practical challenges in institutional coordination and data production, documented capacity gaps, and developed workplans to align ABAS reporting with other national, regional, and global processes.

Spotlight on capacity-building and the environment

a. Empowering SIDS with Big Earth Data: strengthening evidence for ABAS and SDG implementation: Through a collaborative partnership with the International Research Center of Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals (CBAS), UN DESA is delivering capacity-building support to SIDS to explore how Big Earth Data can support ABAS and SDG implementation. The initiative demonstrates how Earth observation and big data technologies can enhance development decision-making. SIDS preparing Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are prioritized for training, with the aim of strengthening reporting quality and addressing data and information gaps.

b. Strengthening STI capacity for ocean knowledge and coastal resilience in Lusophone SIDS: In partnership with ECA and UNESCO, the Department is working in three Lusophone SIDS, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe, to strengthen national capacities to develop, deploy, and scale science, technology, and innovation (STI) in support of the SDGs, particularly for ocean knowledge and coastal resilience. Project recommendations will be piloted through UNESCO-designated sites and relevant multi-stakeholder networks to amplify impact.

c. SIDS Ecosystem Restoration Flagship: ridge-to-reef solutions for island futures: UN DESA continues to support the SIDS Coalition for Nature and its SIDS Ecosystem Restoration Flagship that promotes the integration of marine and coastal ecosystem restoration, conservation, and sustainable blue

finance into economic recovery and growth in three SIDS—Saint Lucia, Comoros, and Vanuatu—through an integrated “ridge-to-reef” approach.

d. Just transition to 100% renewable energy and energy statistics training: This UN DESA-led initiative supports Pacific SIDS in advancing a just, inclusive transition to 100% renewable energy. By combining high-level policy dialogue with targeted capacity-building, the initiative strengthens regional cooperation, mobilizes partnerships, and supports countries to translate national commitments into action. It promotes innovative, context-specific solutions and strengthens energy data systems essential for investment, accountability, and delivery of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS and SDGs.



Delegates pose at the event for the Partnership on Big Earth Data between UN DESA, SIDS, and the International Research Center of Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals. | PHOTO CBAS 2025

4

Protecting our planet through fostering synergy between implementing the 2030 Agenda and advancing climate action

UN DESA is actively involved in capacity-building, policymaking and resource mobilization for **sustainable forest management and climate finance**. In Fiji, our initiatives aim to integrate National Forest and Landscape Restoration into the National Development Plan (NDP), develop a forest financing strategy, and provide an E-learning course. In Guinea-Bissau, our focus is on establishing a National Forest Programme, integrating financing strategies into the NDP and preparing concept notes for accessing climate finance. Meanwhile, in Mauritius, UN DESA's

support is geared towards aligning the National Forest Programme and Forest Financing strategy with the NDP (see spotlight). In Suriname, UN DESA is assisting in aligning the National Forest financing strategy within the NDP and preparing a project proposal for a multilateral funding source, focusing on sustainable forest management and climate finance.

Furthermore, UN DESA is actively supporting **Supreme Audit Institutions** (SAIs) in SIDS in capacity-building for auditing sustainable

Spotlight on ABAS integration into the VNR process

Integrating the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) into the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process is a strategic imperative for alignment and coherent national reporting.

By integrating ABAS monitoring into the VNR process, SIDS can reduce reporting burdens, maximize policy coherence, and build national capacity. This integrated approach transforms the VNR from a compliance exercise into a useful instrument for advancing both the ABAS and the 2030 Agenda.

- Approximately 80 per cent of the ABAS indicators are also SDG indicators.
- SIDS can integrate ABAS issues into the VNR report where relevant and appropriate.
- The VNR presents an opportunity for SIDS to not only track progress but also to signal where they need investments (in data, for instance) to scale up SDG implementation.
- Evidence-based VNRs support policy coherence and decision-making for better data collection and analysis.
- The challenge with many SIDS for SDG indicators (and by extension ABAS indicators) is low data coverage.
- Diverse data ecosystems are crucial for bolstering data capacity.
- The VNR process can drive the use of more updated innovative data sources, including administrative data, geospatial data, and mobile phone data, to fill data gaps.
- Data investments can increase, if data is used.

development and climate change, organizing events to allow SAIIs from SIDS countries to share experiences and practices related to auditing climate change, climate finance, sustainable debt management, and digital transformation.

Spotlight on Mauritius

UN DESA's recent work in Mauritius highlights a tailored approach to enhance the island's sustainable development capabilities, particularly in climate finance and forest management. The deployment of the National Forest Programme, alongside a strategy to integrate forest management with national development plans, underscores a tailored support mechanism. Additionally, workshops conducted by UN DESA have provided Mauritius with valuable insights into improving statistical systems for informed policymaking and better SDG reporting. Other work includes strengthening national capacities to develop national forest financing strategies and measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on forest cover, enhance livelihoods, improve trade, increase financial flows, and encourage forest certification. These initiatives reflect a dedicated push towards empowering Mauritius and other SIDS to achieve sustainable growth and resilience against climate challenges.

Additionally, UN DESA has been supporting the establishment and coordination of the **SIDS Coalition for Nature**, aiming to catalyse SIDS strategic partnerships to support the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The Coalition, launched at the 2022 UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15), is co-led by Belize, Cabo Verde, and Samoa with UN DESA support. As of July 2025, the Coalition includes 35 governments (20 SIDS members across the three SIDS regions and 15 others) and has launched seven nature action initiatives and partnership proposals, five of which are already funded or in the process of being funded through friends and partners. Recently, at the **third UN Ocean Conference** in Nice, France, the Coalition announced a new UN DESA-UNCTAD project "Evidence-Based

Climate Action through AI and Data Innovation for Caribbean SIDS" that was registered as a Voluntary Ocean Commitment.

Climate-resilient infrastructure asset management

Through its innovative work on climate-resilient infrastructure asset management (IAM), UN DESA is helping SIDS transform vulnerability into resilience and ambition into action. With support from the Infrastructure Resilience Accelerator Fund (IRAF) and in close partnership with national and local governments across Belize, The Bahamas, Jamaica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, UN DESA equips public officials with the tools and training needed to plan, manage, and safeguard infrastructure assets that are vital to sustainable development. Utilizing the globally recognized UN Handbook on IAM, officials are guided in designing sound policies and multi-year action plans that strengthen service continuity even in the face of natural hazards.

IAM contributes to a range of long-term benefits. It reduces costly infrastructure failures, enhances service reliability, and improves the fiscal sustainability of public infrastructure systems. By extending asset life cycles and reducing the need for new investments, IAM can also help ease public expenditure burdens. Over time, well-managed infrastructure also supports improved creditworthiness by serving as collateral for investment, thereby contributing to debt sustainability.

This work directly supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework, and the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS. It embeds climate risk into infrastructure planning, promotes whole-of-government coordination, and fosters inclusive, data-driven decision-making. In doing so, UN DESA helps SIDS unlock new pathways for domestic resource mobilization, private sector engagement, and long-term resilience while ensuring that no one is left behind.

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Addressing poverty, inequality and leaving no one behind

UN DESA's research and analysis describes **pathways for all countries to accelerate social progress, by promoting equity, reducing inequalities and enhancing well-being**, with a specific focus on the needs of the most vulnerable, including those in SIDS. UN DESA actively monitors national and global socio-economic trends, identifying emerging issues, and assessing their implications for leaving no one behind at both national and international levels, mainstreaming gender throughout.

We are dedicated to **advocating for social inclusion**, ensuring that policies and programmes consider the specific needs of countries in special situations, including SIDS. This includes digital inclusion, and through the *UN E-Government Survey*, UN DESA highlights strategies for SIDS to overcome persistent digital divides. Capacity-building efforts in digital transformation in SIDS address the gaps in digital data management and cooperation (Samoa and Vanuatu), promote digital inclusion in public services delivery (Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Solomon Islands,

and Suriname), and policy experimentation with regulatory sandboxes for frontier technology adoption (the Maldives).

We also actively promote greater awareness and increased involvement by civil society in the United Nations' work on sustainable development. By engaging with civil society, we amplify the voices of different communities in SIDS, including women and girls, youth, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and older persons and ensure that their concerns are heard and that their priorities shape collective action for social progress. For example, the Department has been taking the lead in mainstreaming the rights and needs of Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities and engaging their representative organizations in global policy debate at key global forums. This has involved working closely with Indigenous Peoples in SIDS. Recent capacity-building projects aimed at strengthening the capacity of policymakers to ensure that the digital transformation of the creative economy leaves no one behind have benefited SIDS and Least Developed Countries, including Timor-Leste.



Participants meet at a capacity-building workshop in support of ABAS implementation in Georgetown, Guyana, in December 2025. | PHOTO CARICOM SECRETARIAT



Working with SIDS on projection and frontier issues

UN DESA is working to develop **forecasting and modelling capacities in SIDS**. With tailored modelling tools and support through other mechanisms, we empower informed decision-making in SIDS.

As the Secretariat of the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP), UN DESA implements the Enhanced Monitoring Mechanism (EMM) for countries graduating or recently graduated from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category, which currently includes five SIDS beneficiaries: Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Sao Tome and Principe, and Solomon Islands.

UN DESA has supported SIDS in preparing for **graduation from LDC status** and smooth transition strategies covering critical areas like small-to-medium enterprise (SME) development, trade, and climate finance. Our capacity-building initiatives in Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, the Maldives, and Jamaica include training in population forecasting and National Transfer Accounts (NTAs) to assess and predict the economic impacts of population change.

UN DESA also strives to raise awareness among SIDS about **innovation in public service delivery to achieve the SDGs**. This has resulted in, for instance, the proposal of a Regional Innovation Lab for digital government in the Caribbean. High-level briefings and capacity-building activities in the Maldives, Dominican Republic and Guyana have focused on enhancing digital

government understanding and public sector transformation. This support aims to foster social inclusion, climate resilience, and **overall digital transformation** in SIDS, addressing key dimensions such as governance, leadership, strategy, legal frameworks, technology and workforce development.

The Department is also expanding its capacity-building support on strategic foresight in several SIDS. This includes deeper engagement in countries such as Mauritius, Seychelles, the Dominican Republic, and St. Lucia, with upcoming efforts focused on strengthening foresight capacities in Pacific SIDS to support climate resilience and disaster risk reduction. Working with national institutes of public service training, UN DESA, CARICAD and ECLAC have organized a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop in Barbados to support creating a multiplier effect, building internal expertise, saving costs and fostering a continuous learning culture. Similar workshops are planned in Saint Lucia and The Bahamas.

In 2023–2024, UN DESA supported foresight and systems thinking workshops in Mauritius, Seychelles, and the Dominican Republic to strengthen SDG-aligned planning. The Dominican Republic's virtual training introduced basic systems thinking, foresight, and tools. Building on this work, in September 2025, UN DESA, in collaboration with UNITAR and the Ministry of Finance and Economy, held a national workshop in Santo Domingo to further integrate foresight into national planning processes. In 2026, UN

Spotlight on strengthening national capacity for sustainable development planning in SIDS

UN DESA supports developing countries—including SIDS—in strengthening national capacity for sustainable development planning through the Climate, Land, Energy, and Water Systems (CLEWS) model. This integrated tool helps policymakers better understand cross-sectoral linkages and facilitates decision-making processes, which is critical for SIDS facing climate change impacts, economic vulnerabilities, and financing challenges. In Mauritius, the CLEWS analysis is aligned with broader national strategies and regional partnerships, such as the renewable energy roadmap supported by the SDG Fund. Through these collaborations, UN DESA aims to strengthen evidence-based policy coherence and resilience-building in Mauritius by delivering

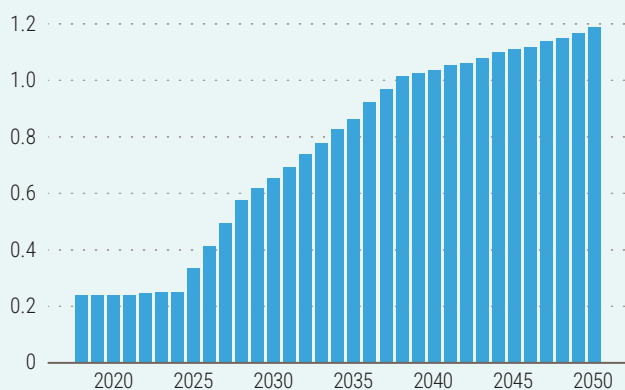
comprehensive online and onsite training programs tailored for government officials.

In the Dominican Republic, CLEWS has been used to help address pressing challenges related to water management, land use, and climate adaptation, which are essential for food security and sustainable growth. Following workshops and capacity-building, government agencies, academia, and stakeholders prepared recommendations to institutionalize CLEWS within national planning frameworks, improve regional agricultural data, modernize irrigation for key crops such as rice and banana, and reduce high water losses through infrastructure improvements and governance reforms. Support for both countries is ongoing.

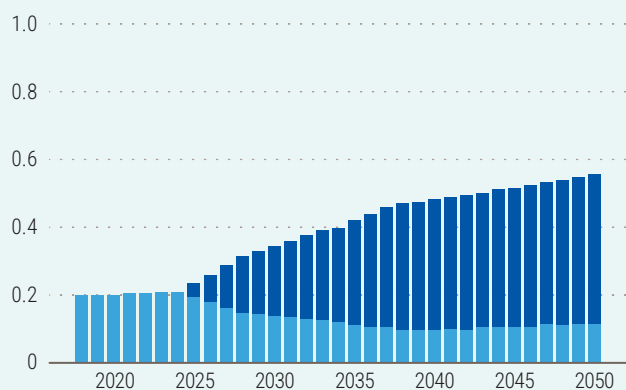
Projection of water use and traditional irrigation for rice cultivation vs. technified irrigation in Yaque del Sur, Dominican Republic (2020-2025)

■ Traditional irrigation ■ Technified irrigation

Projection of water use and traditional irrigation for rice cultivation in Yaque del Sur



Projection of water use and technified irrigation for rice cultivation in Yaque del Sur



DESA will train a group of national trainers in the Dominican Republic to build capacity in foresight and systems-thinking across government. In Mauritius, workshops applied tools like Causal Loop Diagrams to promote integrated planning across government and academia. In Seychelles, officials applied systems thinking to map key drivers of socioeconomic change using tools like

Causal Loop Diagrams. The process identified leverage points for more coherent, long-term planning aligned with Vision 2033. In Mauritius and Seychelles, further support is planned in 2026 to deepen the application of these methods in planning and coordination processes and strengthen national capacity to sustain the approach.

Spotlight on promoting understanding of demographic realities and policy responses in SIDS

UN DESA's report **Population Prospects of Countries in Special Situations** provides a snapshot of the population dynamics of SIDS, covering levels and trends in total population, fertility, mortality and international migration.

SIDS are a demographically diverse group of 57 island and coastal countries and territories with a combined population of 73.5 million as of mid-2024. While most have populations under 1 million people, four countries—Papua New Guinea, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti—have over 10 million each and together account for about 60 per cent of the total SIDS population.

Population growth in SIDS is expected to continue, though at a slower pace than in recent years, reaching 85.4 million by 2050. This growth will be driven largely by SIDS of the Pacific region, where fertility rates remain high in many countries, exceeding four births per woman in some, including the Solomon Islands and Samoa. In 2024, among women of reproductive age who did not want to become pregnant, the proportion using modern contraception (SDG 3.7.1) was moderate to high in SIDS of the Caribbean region (73 per cent) and of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea region (67 per cent). Although this proportion was considerably lower in SIDS of the Pacific region (52 per cent), its increase was substantial over the past two decades and is projected to continue through 2030. In all SIDS regions, further improvements in access to modern contraception would help to ensure that all parents can control the number and spacing of births.

Life expectancy also varies across the three SIDS regions. In 2024, the average level for all SIDS was 73 years, with the highest in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea region (76 years) due in part to Singapore, followed by the Caribbean region (73 years), and with the lowest in the Pacific region (68 years). The lower life expectancy in SIDS of the Pacific region reflects high rates of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and related risk factors. Thirteen of the 15 countries and territories with the highest prevalence

of adult obesity worldwide are Pacific SIDS. Nine SIDS, mostly in the Pacific region, are among 20 locations with the highest mortality rates attributed to NCDs, which include cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory disease. As SIDS populations continue to age, the burden of these chronic diseases is likely to rise further unless concrete steps are taken.

Migration has also significantly shaped SIDS demographics. As of 2020, around 11.5 million people from SIDS were living abroad. Their origin countries are heavily concentrated in the Caribbean region, which accounted for 86 per cent of all international migrants from SIDS. For nearly half of the Caribbean SIDS, the size of the diaspora population exceeded 30 per cent of the resident population, underscoring the region's long-standing migration patterns.

Although international migration can support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including those related to poverty, health, education and gender equality, it can also have negative impacts on SIDS. Many small island economies, for instance, are heavily dependent on remittances from overseas workers. However, mass emigration of skilled workers can result in a “brain drain” from critical sectors, with various negative implications for development in countries of origin. It is important to adopt comprehensive policy approaches that maximize the overall benefits of migration, while also addressing the associated risks and challenges.

Migration can also serve as an adaptive strategy to cope with environmental degradation and climate change. Rising sea levels and increased intensity of storms linked to climate change could provide additional motivation to migrate across international borders. It is crucial to uphold the commitment of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (ABAS) to support and strengthen contingency planning and provisions for disaster preparedness and response, emergency relief, and population evacuation.

Spotlight on promoting understanding of demographic realities and policy responses in SIDS (*continued*)

Over the next decades, most SIDS are projected to experience a rapid increase in the size of the population age 65 and over. The number of persons in this age group residing in SIDS, which stood at 6.9 million in 2024, is projected to reach 10 million in the mid-2030s and could climb to 15 million by the late 2050s. In half of all SIDS, the size of the older population is expected to double between now and 2055. For most SIDS, population projections published by DESA anticipate a decline in population size and an upward shift in population distribution, as illustrated in the figure for Jamaica. Policies with a multifaceted, life-course approach will be essential for meeting the needs of an ageing society across multiple domains, including healthcare, food security, social protection, skills development, job creation, and investment.

References

[UN DESA Policy Brief No. 159: Demographic Outlook for the Small Island Developing States: Implications of Population Trends for Building Resilience and Prosperity across SIDS.](#)

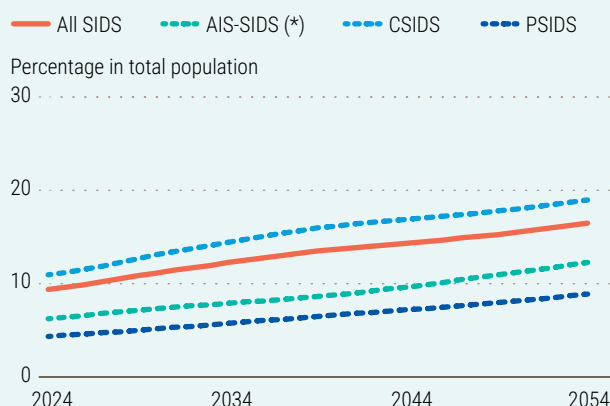
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[UN DESA Policy Brief No. 180: Anticipating the extent and pace of population ageing in SIDS can help build a more sustainable future in these vulnerable states.](#)

[Population Prospects of Countries in Special Situations: Tracking demographic change among the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, UN DESA \(2023\).](#)

Population ageing is most advanced among SIDS in the Caribbean region

Projected share of the population aged 65 years or over in SIDS, by region



Source: United Nations (2024a).

Notes: AIS-SIDS, CSIDS and PSIDS refer to the SIDS in the Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean and South China Sea region, in the Caribbean region and in the Pacific region, respectively. (*) Excludes Singapore, where older persons comprised 14 per cent of the total population in 2024, contributing 69 per cent of the AIS-SIDS older population. Intra-regional variation exists in all three SIDS regions, with the share of the older population ranging from 5 to 25 per cent in Caribbean SIDS, from 3 to 16 per cent in Pacific SIDS and from 3 to 13 per cent in AIS-SIDS excluding Singapore.

UN DESA is providing capacity development, in collaboration with CARICAD and ECLAC, to The Bahamas, Barbados, and St. Lucia for the strengthening of institutional arrangements, structures, mechanisms, and approaches to promote innovation and digital governance transformation to improve public service delivery, leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first. Through capacity-development workshops and focus groups, it has contributed to an

enhanced understanding by government officials of the importance of changing mindsets to support an environment conducive to innovation and digital transformation in the public sector, thus contributing to improved service delivery.

In May 2025, an interregional capacity-development workshop on “The Future of Governance in the Public Sector: Changing Mindsets for Innovation and Public Sector

Transformation” was held, where participants from 16 Caribbean SIDS discussed the current state of governance in the Caribbean based on emerging drivers of change, as well as the desired governance future. As a follow-up, a regional ministerial workshop will be organized in April 2026 to increase awareness and highlight the importance of futures thinking and changing mindsets, including innovation and foresight mindsets, in the public sector to enhance public service delivery. In support of peer-to-peer learning and sharing, several regional innovative practices in public sector transformation will be discussed and presented.

UN DESA offers a regional platform for peer learning, enabling public institutions from SIDS and their partners to exchange practices and shape innovation pathways through the Regional Symposium on Effective Governance and AI Transformation.

The participation of SIDS countries in the 2024 Regional Symposium, and the 2025 UN Public Service Forum workshop on “Skilling and Upskilling the Public Sector Workforce: What’s Next After GenAI?” reflects a growing commitment to forward-looking public sector transformation. Delegations from Fiji, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, Tonga, and Tuvalu have contributed critical insights grounded in small-state governance realities, geographic dispersion, and heightened exposure to cascading climate-related and socioeconomic shocks. Their engagement highlights the importance of inclusive digital governance, equitable access to emerging technologies, and public sector readiness for responsible, people-centred AI adoption. It also reinforces the continued value of peer-learning spaces that enable SIDS leadership in shaping resilient public institutions and AI-enabled governance approaches aligned with the 2030 Agenda, leaving no one behind.

In 2026, UN DESA will continue strengthening SIDS capacities by convening targeted leadership and skills-building initiatives. Planned support includes a national workshop with the Government of Timor-Leste on advancing digital transformation in public institutions. In parallel, UN DESA is preparing to support capacity development in Pacific SIDS, including Samoa, focused on promoting the responsible and people-centred adoption of AI in the public service, with an emphasis on practical understanding of governance enablers for the safe and accountable use of emerging technologies. The Department will also implement a Training-of-Trainers programme in Saint Lucia that will combine online learning and in-person workshops to develop a practical toolkit as well as a national cohort of facilitators capable of applying foresight methods and delivering training across ministries.



Victorina Kioa of Tonga speaks at the seventh Regional Symposium on Effective Governance and Digital Transformation in the Republic of Korea. | PHOTO UN DESA

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