

4TH INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON
**Small Island
Developing States**
2024

SIDS & UN DESA

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



UN DESA is supporting SIDS to diversify their economies. Cook Islands 2024. Photo credit: D. McFadzien

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:

- 1 Accelerating action on the SDGs and strengthening multilateralism
- 2 Ensuring sustainable financing for recovering from the pandemic and realizing the SDGs
- 3 Putting data and science to work for SDG progress
- 4 Addressing poverty, inequality, and leaving no one behind in the recovery from the confluence of crises
- 5 Protecting our planet through fostering synergy between implementing the 2030 Agenda and advancing climate action
- 6 Strengthening the Department's work on projection and frontier issues

Accelerating action on the SDGs and strengthening multilateralism

UN DESA facilitates the **participation of SIDS speakers in important events on the world stage** – including the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, the UN Ocean Conferences and the UN Water Conference – to ensure their unique voices are heard in discussions on implementing the 2030 Agenda, the SAMOA Pathway and other agreements relevant to SIDS. In the 2023 HLPF session, for instance, speakers from Trinidad and Tobago and Mauritius highlighted the **unique challenges faced by SIDS in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and other global crises**. They emphasized the perspectives of SIDS youth and offered policy recommendations for enhancing resilience.

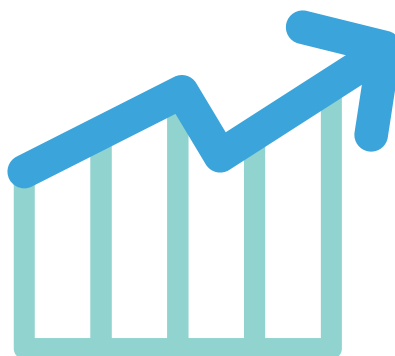
Strengthening partnerships among SIDS and between SIDS and other countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is also a priority for UN DESA. The SIDS Partnership Framework and SIDS Partnership Toolbox, developed by the Department in consultation with SIDS representatives, aims to enhance capacity around the design of meaningful partnerships and assist in their review and monitoring.

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

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

Ensuring sustainable financing for recovering from the pandemic and realizing the SDGs

UN DESA's work with small island developing States (SIDS) **prioritizes sustainable financing strategies**. Through projects like “Financing for SIDS (FINS)”, spanning Fiji, the Dominican Republic and Seychelles, the focus is on integrating national financing frameworks to bolster planning and coordination. Technical guidance supports SIDS to craft strategic investment projects aligned with the SDGs, promoting resilience and sustainability.

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.

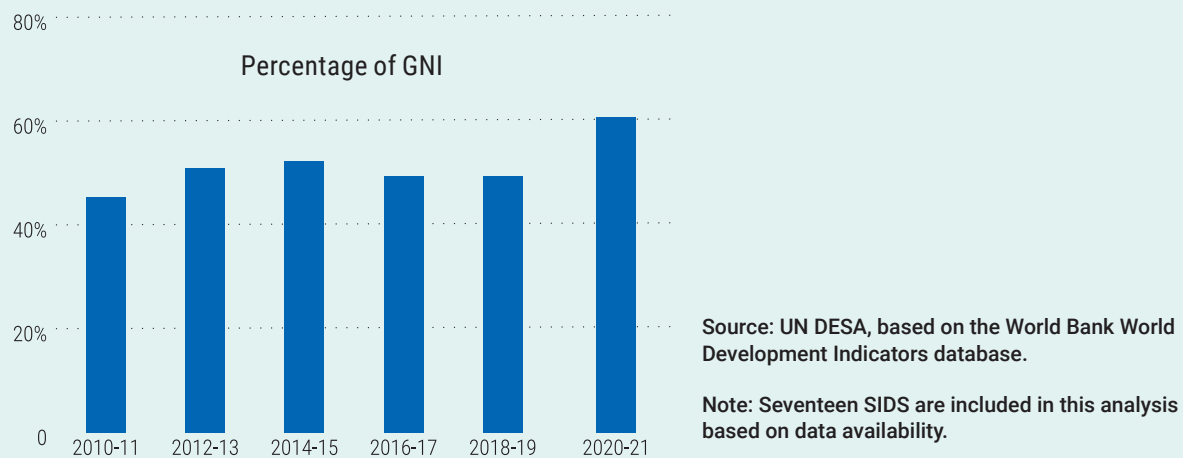


UN DESA colleagues work with Government counterparts in Fiji on an integrated national financing framework. Photo credit: UN DESA INFF Team

Spotlight on the economic prospects of SIDS

UN DESA highlights the promising yet vulnerable economic prospects of SIDS in the **2024 World Economic Situation and Prospects** report. In 2023, SIDS experienced a robust rebound in tourism, crucial for their economies, with projections indicating a growth of 3.1 per cent in 2024. However, challenges persist, including climate change impacts, oil price fluctuations and significant output losses following the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these obstacles, SIDS are making strides in recovery, with tourism nearing pre-pandemic levels and innovative financing mechanisms like debt-for-climate swaps being explored to foster resilience and sustainable development. The report emphasizes the critical need for targeted support and international cooperation to address the unique vulnerabilities and adaptation finance needs of SIDS, ensuring their path towards sustainable economic recovery and growth.

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



UN DESA colleagues meet with SIDS representatives and other stakeholders at the Second Session of the SIDS4 Conference Preparatory Committee. Photo credit: Predrag Vasic



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.**

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 environment statistics, sustainable forest management, climate finance and SDG indicators, **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 on “Resilient and Agile National Statistical Systems” demonstrate UN DESA’s commitment to building sustainable statistical capacities for SIDS and **promoting data-driven decision-making.**



UN DESA team briefs the Prime Minister of Aruba after training sessions on principles of official statistics.
Photo credit: Gabriel Gamez

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, 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.



UN DESA is building capacity among SIDS partners to access climate finance. Tuvalu 2024. Photo credit: L. Reupena

Spotlight on Mauritius

UN DESA's recent work in Mauritius highlights a focused 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. These initiatives reflect a dedicated push towards empowering Mauritius and other small island developing States to achieve sustainable growth and resilience against climate challenges.

Since 2018, the Department has hosted the SDG Pavilion on the sidelines of the annual UN Climate Change Conference, aiming to make the connection

between climate action and the other 16 SDGs – and their effect on small islands.



UN DESA hosts SIDS representatives in the SDG Pavilion at the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference (COP28).
Photo credit: Ariel Alexovich

Addressing poverty, inequality and leaving no one behind in the recovery from the confluence of crises



UN DESA supports SIDS to predict the economic impacts of population change, at this national training workshop in Jamaica on estimation of National Transfer Accounts, 4-8 December 2023. Photo credit: Timothy Miller

UN DESA's research and analysis describes **pathways for all countries to promote equity, reduce inequalities and enhance well-being**, with a specific focus on the needs of vulnerable populations, 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. 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 addressed on the global stage.

Strengthening the Department's work on projection and frontier issues

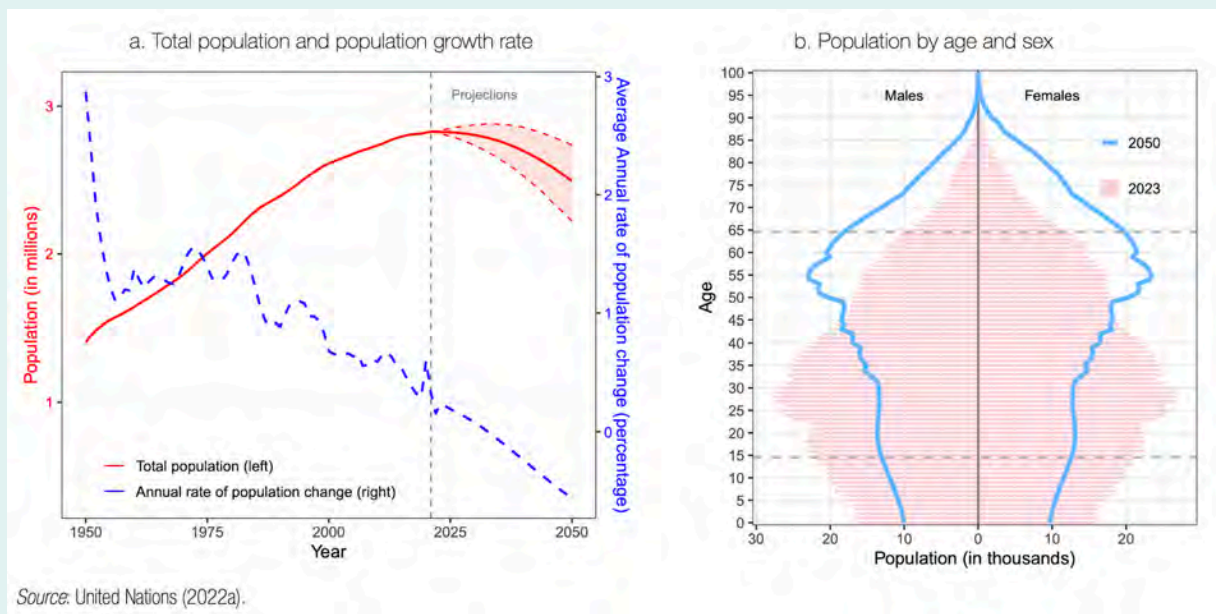
UN DESA is working to develop **forecasting and modeling capacities in SIDS**. With tailored resources like the OG-Core modeling

tool, we empower informed decision-making in SIDS recovery, focusing on Jamaica and six other countries.

Spotlight on the population prospects of SIDS

UN DESA's analysis in the recent **Population Prospects of Countries in Special Situations** report reveals that SIDS are experiencing slow population growth, compared to the global average, with an increase from 73.5 million in 2023 to an expected 85.4 million by 2050. This growth, however, varies significantly across regions, with the Pacific islands driving much of the increase due to higher fertility rates. Climate change, geographic isolation and economic constraints contribute to high levels of migration and a concerning "brain drain." As SIDS navigate these demographic shifts, focused international support and strategies are essential to ensure sustainable development and resilience within these unique communities.

UN DESA projects Jamaica's total population to peak in 2025 and be much older by 2050





UN DESA supports SIDS with foresight and systems thinking at this workshop in Seychelles on “Strategic Planning and Financing for Sustainable Development Goals”. Photo credit: Veronique Verbruggen

UN DESA also supports 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.

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