

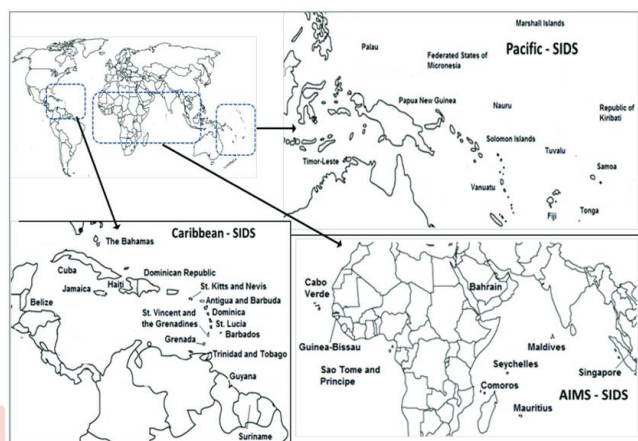
## Building Economic and Climate Resilience for Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

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### Introduction

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a group of 38 United Nations (UN) member states and 20 non-member states with unique social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities. Many nations in the group are near the Caribbean, Pacific, and Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and the South China Sea. Due to their remoteness, growing population in a small area, and dependence on international trade, SIDS are especially susceptible to extreme weather events caused by climate change and economic shocks. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the average global temperature is expected to increase from 2.6 degrees Celsius to 4.8 degrees Celsius by 2100 if greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase. Climate change leads to rising sea levels and natural disasters, which pose extreme threats to SIDS: food insecurity, extensive damage to public infrastructure, and outbreaks of water-borne diseases. For instance, SIDS in the Caribbean basin are highly impacted by the wind; the damage is estimated to be an additional 1.4 billion annual losses. Also, the changing climate constrains SIDS from industrial development since their key industries such as fisheries, tourism, and agriculture cannot grow well to contribute to their national growth domestic product (GDP), rather aggravating their debt. Furthermore, SIDS suffers from limited access to electricity and overly dependent on imported fuel, thereby obtaining sustainable energy sources from other regions to sustain their economy. Their current economic condition is especially prone to economic shocks. Therefore, finding and implementing an adaptive strategy is very significant to overcome these challenges.



*Map of SIDS – Geographical Distribution*

### Background

Although SIDS contributed the least to climate change, they are the most impacted countries as some areas became uninhabitable, grabbing the international community's attention for financial and technical support. SIDS were the first recognized by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 upon the governments' agreement to address development for secure future generations. In 1994, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados

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came up with actions specified in the Barbados Programme of Action designed on national, regional, and international levels to achieve sustainable development. The most urgent areas of measures concerning climate change, climate variability, and sea-level rising were identified in the conference. Even during the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, these actions were acknowledged again as pressing and pledged to be met "rapidly and in full" by 2015. In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development emphasized that SIDS still needed support for the environment and economic development. The measures implemented to build climate and economic resilience were hampered by several obstacles: inadequate information, weak institutional capacity, and limited financial aids. Recently, 41 SIDS are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 29 countries are signatories of the Kyoto Protocol, and 11 nations are part of least developed countries (LDCs).

### International Actions

#### *The SAMOA Pathway*

In 2014, the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States was held in Samoa to achieve sustainable development in SIDS by establishing the SAMOA Pathway, a document that addresses the ways to support SIDS. The five major ways include sustain inclusive economic growth, mitigate climate change, protect the marine ecosystem, improve the health care system, and foster partnership among SIDS, UN Agencies, and development partners. A major outcome of the SIDS Conference was developing a SIDS Partnership Framework, which aims to observe the progress of existing and newly occurring partnerships. Around 300 partnerships were formed during the conference, and approximately 261 new partnerships and commitments have been registered ever since. According to the UN, the partnerships created positive impacts for the sustainable development of SIDS via improving access to safe water and sanitation for communities, protecting marine environments, creating a database to manage disasters and nutrients, training people on disaster resilience, and strengthening policies in women empowerment and youth engagement. Although visible progress has been made through partnerships among countries and agencies, there are still some challenges, such as supporting sustainable financing, initiating new partnerships, building trust between partners, and assuring institutional fortitude. Also, due to the lack of baseline partnership data, it's challenging to evaluate the progress. Thus, forming "S (side specific) M (measurable and monitorable) A (achievable and accountable) R (resource-based and results-focused) T (transparency by all parties)" partnerships is crucial to achieving the goals set in the SAMOA Pathway.



*SAMOA Pathway Overview*

#### *Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) Project*

PACC project is the first climate change adaptation initiative in the Pacific region from 2009 until 2014. PACC covered 14 Pacific SIDS and helped them adapt to climate change by

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ensuring food security and production, water resource management, and coastal protection. The project was implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), partnered with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Government of Australia. Dr. Netatua Pelesikoti, the Climate Change Director of SPREP, commented, "To see the outcomes happen now and the difference this project is making upon the lives of Pacific island residents is all worth it."

### *Japanese Government Funding Small Island Developing States Programme*

On August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the Japanese government approved the "Capacity Building to Support the Conservation of World Heritage Sites and Enhance Sustainable Development of Local Communities in Small Island Developing States" program proposal and provided a total budget of 1 million US dollars. This project aims to support the development of Pacific and African SIDS program and sustain the existing capacity building program in the Caribbean region. All three areas require different strategies based on each region's situation. For example, African SIDS need to identify the heritage and conservation needs more accurately and develop a partnership framework. In the Pacific region, the SIDS need support to include the States Parties without recognized World Heritage Sites into the list of World Heritage Lists. Without the help of the Japanese government, the implementation of this project would be unlikely.

### *UNDP's support to SIDS*

UNDP has made significant progress in building economic and climate resilience for SIDS by implementing and funding numerous projects. 111 projects aimed at developing climate change adaptation and mitigation measures received support from UNDP-GEF Green Low Emission Climate Resilient Development Strategies (GLECRDS) team; 101 projects received funding from UNDP-GEF Ecosystems and Biodiversity (EBD) for ecosystem-based climate change adaptation and mitigation; 18 projects that focused on sustainable fisheries and integrated water resources management gained support from UNDP-GEF Water and Oceans team; 17 projects gained funding from UNDP-GEF Energy,



*Barbudan families influenced by Hurricane Irma receive housing support from UNDP*

Infrastructure Transport and Technology (EITT) team; and nine projects gained support from the UNDP-GEF Chemicals team. UNDP invested around 300 million US dollars in these projects, including two new Green Climate Fund projects in the Maldives and Tuvalu. Green Climate Fund is a unique global platform that strives to help less developed countries shift to low carbon emission and climate-resilient development. Recently, UNDP is focusing on recovering the wide-spread damage created by Hurricane Irma, a 5 Category storm that occurred during the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season and the most powerful on record. This hurricane caused immense destruction and loss of life in the northern and eastern Caribbean region, especially in the islands of Barbuda. To recover these damages, UNDP has been partnering with other UN agencies, funds, and programs such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and International Organization for Migration to establish Crisis Management Unit right after the disaster,

construct educational buildings for the impacted kids, and repair roofs, respectively. UNDP partnerships with relevant organizations have successfully improved the situation in the areas affected by the hurricane.

### Places of High Concern

#### *Tuvalu*

Tuvalu is the fourth-smallest nation in the world, accounting for less than 26 sq km and consisting of 11,000 people. This small island developing state is in danger of sinking. Due to sea rise and coastal erosion affected by climate change, two of the nine islands in Tuvalu have been swallowed, and the remaining islands are barely three meters above sea level. According to scientists, Tuvalu will become uninhabitable within the next 50 to 100 years. Moreover, the rising sea level has polluted underwater ground supplies, leading Tuvalu people to rely solely on rainwater. However, as droughts are frequently occurring, people are suffering from a lack of water. Also, Ciguatera poisoning infected several fish, which toxins passed on to humans and caused illness such as vomiting, fevers, and diarrhea. Though the local town council is planning to raise the island 10 meters above sea level through dredging and reclaiming land at the south of Fongafale, the plan requires 300 million US dollars that is hard to attain due to no funding.



*Rising sea levels are threatening the Pacific Paradise – Tuvalu*

#### *Niue*

Niue is one of SIDS that is located around 2400 km northeast of New Zealand, with a total land area of 250 sq km. Since Niue lies on the boundary of the southern tropical cyclone belt, it experiences a cyclone every four years and is currently hit by a severe cyclone once in ten years, causing substantial physical and economic damage to the island. For instance, Cyclone Heta that occurred in January 2004, created a damage cost of more than 60 million US dollars. Climate change triggered more draughts in Niue, which significantly impacted agriculture due to the lack of an irrigation system. Even without the climate change effect, up to 40% of Niue land was already unsuitable for agriculture. Therefore, the economy heavily relies on development assistance offered by New Zealand. Although the country tried to expand tourism for economic growth, it failed due to low air services. To adapt to these threats, the government relocated infrastructures to safer areas and established information systems to research climate change impacts. However, the measures are not enough to completely adapt to such effects.



*Barbuda's situation after Hurricane Irma*

#### *The islands of Barbuda*

On September 6th, 2017, Hurricane Irma directly hit the islands of Barbuda. After the event, 95 percent of the houses in Barbuda were destroyed. The majority of places became uninhabitable, causing 1600 people to flee to the main island of Antigua. The disaster's impact had a

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multiplier effect due to its geographic size, small populations, dependent economies, and fragile connections between ecosystems and livelihood, leading the entire economy to be affected as the cost of the disaster exceeded the national GDP of Barbuda. According to the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), Barbuda requires around 222 million US dollars for recovery and development plans. Although UNDP mobilized over 25 million US dollars and provided timely and effective recovery support such as restoring more than 800 buildings, the islands of Barbuda still need more support for complete recovery and to make all the displaced people return to their homes.

### Possible Solutions

As there are many aspects of this problem, many solutions can be proposed. Among the many issues that exist within this issue, the three of the gravest are the following:

1. Promoting inclusive partnerships among nations, UN agencies, and development partners. Though partnerships have been made throughout time, these partnerships tend not to last long due to several reasons such as lack of trust and financial support. Therefore, by holding more multi-level consultation meetings, SIDS will have more opportunities to form effective partnerships and communicate with other communities regarding adaptation strategies.
2. Countries providing incentives to encourage the usage of water-saving devices, select suitable drought toleration vegetation, establish river buffer zones to strengthen the resilience of rivers and increase rainwater catchment and storage areas. This solution can tackle a decrease in water resources in SIDS and allows SIDS to perform effective agricultural practices to benefit their economies.
3. Remove maladaptation practices. According to IPCC, maladaptation is defined as "an adaptation that does not succeed in reducing vulnerability but increases it instead." These maladaptation practices include the absence of comprehensive coastal zone management, rebuilding infrastructures in vulnerable areas, and making laws that lead to mangroves' devastation. For example, Fiji once had built seawalls to protect people from rising sea levels but actually made them more exposed to dangers as they prevent stormwater drainage. Also, the seawalls caused changes in sediment deposits, which negatively impacted the environment by threatening marine organisms' health. Therefore, maladaptation practices should be ceased as soon as possible.

### Glossary

*United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):* a "Rio Convention" with 197 signatory states to prevent hazardous human interference with the climate system.

*Kyoto Protocol:* an international treaty that extends UNFCC and commits parties to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

*Global Environment Facility (GEF):* an international partnership of 182 countries, private sector, non-governmental organizations, and international institutions to address global environmental

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issues. It is known as the largest funder of projects that aim to improve the world's environment. *South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)*: a regional intergovernmental organization that consists of 25 member states to promote cooperation in the South Pacific Region and provide support to protect the environment and ensure sustainable development.

*World Heritage Site*: landmark or area with legal protection by an international convention due to its outstanding universal value to humanity.

*Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)*: an internationally accepted methodology to determine the physical damages, economic losses, and recovery costs after a natural disaster via a government leading process.



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