

IOM and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Human Mobility and Sustainable Development in SIDS

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a unique group of [39 States and 18 Associate Members](#) spread across three geographical regions: the Caribbean; the Pacific; and the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) regions.

The group – faced with a unique set of social, environmental and economic challenges – is at the forefront of multiple global crises, notably climate change; and whilst remarkable successes and progresses have been made over the last three decades, it remains a special test case for sustainable development.

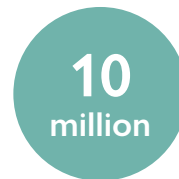
“Let’s make migration an opportunity to be seized, and let’s leverage it for SIDS’ sustainable and resilient development”

Ms. Amy Pope, IOM Director General, SIDS4 Conference, Antigua and Barbuda, May 2024

The complex migration profile of SIDS illustrates the [deep linkages between migration and sustainable development](#). Migration has long been part of the social, economic, cultural fabrics of SIDS; and as SIDS aspire to a resilient form of prosperity, migration is a part of the solution.

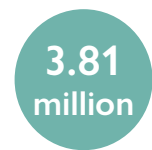
On the whole, SIDS are more countries of origin of migrants, but they are also places of destination of migrants and boast significant intra-regional migration dynamics.

SIDS are places of origin of



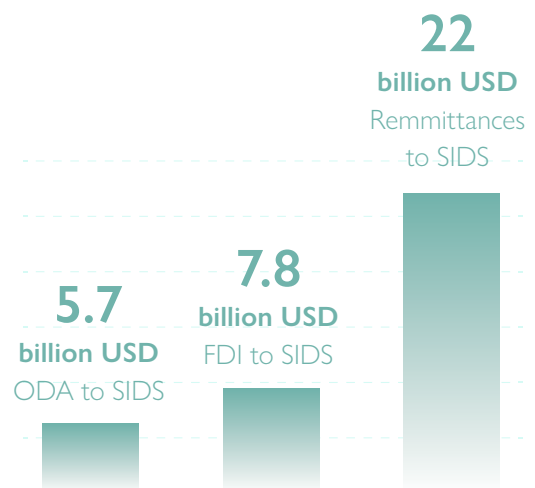
international migrants

SIDS host



international migrants

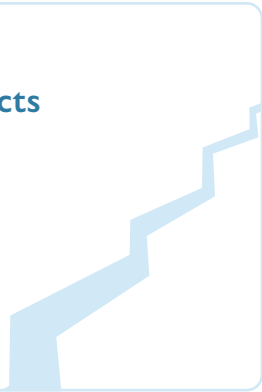
Remittances to SIDS represent a bigger financial inflow than both Official Development Assistance and Foreign Direct investment combined. These finance sustainable development, climate adaptation and contribute to poverty reduction objectives. They help stabilize macroeconomic volatility and can act as insurance during crises or after disasters.



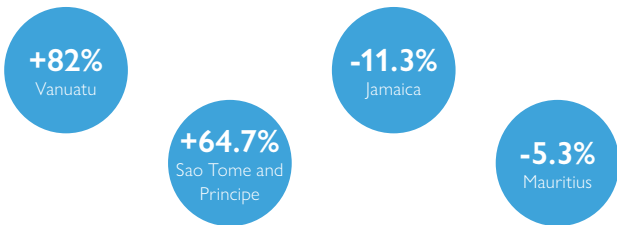
SIDS are particularly vulnerable to adverse impacts of climate change – and face heightened economic and non-economic loss and damage. Well-managed migration can be built into adaptation and mitigation solutions for climate and environmental resilience, and to drive solutions to displacement.

SIDS are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change

Over the past two decades, 20 major disasters have struck SIDS each year



Over the coming decades, SIDS will experience contrasted but significant demographic transitions. This will have an impact on workforce and labour markets. It may further compound situations of unemployment – notably amongst young people. Regular migration pathways that benefit migrants and countries of origin and destination alike, including through enhanced labor migration between SIDS, will contribute to address demographic challenges and build the skills for economic diversification.



By 2050, population is expected to increase in a majority of the SIDS, but to decrease in others

SIDS face financing shortfalls and are overburdened by debt and its repayment. Diasporas’ economic contributions and investment can be leveraged as a more sustainable, and complementary source of finance. Further, this can be combined with diasporas’ skills, networks, and cultural capital to support the just transition of SIDS economies.

The [Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS](#) (ABAS) adopted unanimously by World leaders during the [Fourth International Conference on SIDS](#) (SIDS4) in May 2024 presents the vision for the future SIDS want, and how to get them there.

The next ten years will be critical for SIDS. A new context is emerging. As is a new drive for solutions. Migration is part of the solution.

IOM’s Engagement in the SIDS

37 SIDS are member states or Observer States of IOM. With a strong operational presence across the three SIDS regions – through full-fledged Missions, or projects and other forms of national stakeholders’ engagement – IOM is in a unique position to put to practice the vision under the 10-year Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS.

As part of its active engagement in the UN Development System, IOM provides inputs every year for the preparation of the [Secretary General report to the General Assembly on the follow-up to and implementation of the SAMOA Pathway](#) and the [Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS](#). These inputs outline IOMs work on the development agenda for SIDS; and showcase human mobility solutions to accelerate development outcomes in SIDS.

IOM was a [vocal advocate for SIDS](#) in the lead up to the SIDS4 Conference, and was represented throughout the Conference with a large delegation that held multiple engagements, including the in-person high level side event on “[Harnessing the power of migration to accelerate development and for climate resilient prosperity in SIDS](#)”.

Since 2020, and with the support of its partners, IOM has invested nearly USD 300 million through 244 new initiatives in SIDS covering a range of thematic areas. These directly advanced the [SAMOA Pathway](#) priority action areas; and accelerated progress on all SDGs. A sample of IOM interventions – and how they also can be related now to the ABAS plan are presented in this fact sheet.



IOM Operational Support in SIDS

Building resilient economies and fostering safe, healthy and prosperous societies

IOM supports SIDS Member States, communities impacted by migration, and migrants themselves to harness the power of well-managed migration to boost SIDS resilience, and to mitigate the negative impacts of displacement and forced migration that hamper SIDS from building resilient societies and economies.

The **Pacific** region is experiencing and will continue to experience significant demographic transitions – with all but one of the Pacific SIDS projected to see a significant population growth by 2050. Enhanced labour migration pathways from, to, and between Pacific SIDS – can help navigate demographic challenges and build up the set of skills that support economic diversification. IOM is supporting SIDS through provision of technical advice to governments, and support to regional coordination mechanisms. IOM supports for instance the **Fijian** Government to identify diaspora groups in Australia.

For SIDS countries that are significantly dependent on tourism for instance – and in the continued post-COVID-19 pandemic context – building resilient economies means focusing resources and expertise to ensure those SIDS countries are better equipped and capacitated to prevent a reoccurrence of the negative effects that a health crisis could trigger.

The dramatic reduction in human mobility was one of the most significant effects of the pandemic in the **Maldives**, resulting in major social and economic impacts, as the country relies heavily on tourism. IOM continues the implementation of an initiative focused on Immigration and Border Health Management that works to strengthen the capacities of border management to respond to infectious diseases, at the main Points of Entry across the Maldives.

In **Cabo Verde**, IOM has promoted the economic recovery of migrant workers, particularly migrant women, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, through an entrepreneurship Start-Up Challenge enabling them to develop and implement their business ideas and restore their self-sustaining capacity; and supported initiative to improve diaspora engagement in Cabo Verde through the revision of the Diaspora Engagement Strategy and the development and implementation of the Diaspora Investment Programme.

The **Pacific** is a source, transit point and destination for

human trafficking. IOM is strengthening border control capacity through implementation of the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) in **Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga** and **Marshall Islands**, and strengthening Pacific risk analysis capacity to build capacity to detect and counter terrorists and serious crimes in **Samoa** and **Fiji**. IOM is also providing technical and operational support for **Pacific Island countries** to improve labour standards on fishing vessels.



Scaling-up climate action, and mainstreaming disaster risk reduction

In the **Caribbean**, a region severely affected by multiple disasters and related displacement, IOM is working to improve national mechanisms surrounding land planning and planned relocation in the **Dominican Republic**. In the **Eastern Caribbean**, IOM is supporting counterparts in designing policies and programmes that address climate and environmental mobility from a human security perspective leveraging the commitment expressed in the [Eastern Caribbean Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change](#).

In **Belize**, IOM is working on building climate change resilience and social integration of displaced people in settlements on the western part of the country, aiming to support those in migrant settlements to participate in furthering their common resilience, preventing the need for further displacement. IOM is also building capacities at the regional level and encouraging synergies to address climate mobility from a Caribbean perspective and engaging civil society actors around these issues.

In the **Federated State of Micronesia**, and the **Republic of the Marshall Islands**, IOM is working to enhance the local capacity of the Governments to prepare for, respond to, and reconstruct after disasters, promoting resilience through capacity development and local ownership in preparedness and disaster management. IOM is working

in **Fiji, Solomon Islands** and **Vanuatu** on construction and refurbishment of multiple evacuation centres alongside rolling out a participatory approach with communities, government authorities and first responders to improve evacuation centre management, information management systems and disaster resilience in at-risk communities.

IOM recently launched Phase II of the Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security Project, and is developing workplans in **Tonga, Tuvalu, Fiji, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, and Papua New Guinea** to support implementation of the [Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility](#) endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum Member States in 2023. Meanwhile, in the **Malddives**, IOM is supporting the government for the development of a Migration, Climate Change and Human Mobility baseline research which will be finalized by the end of 2024.



Enabling partnerships and supporting ownership with tailored solutions

Seizing the opportunities and facing the challenges of migration in the context of multidimensional vulnerability supposes acting in partnership with others and fostering local ownership. Governments, the private sector, other UN agencies, international organizations, academia, civil society and, of course, migrants and their communities are all essential actors.

In the **Pacific** region, IOM leads the regional Evacuation Centre Management and Displacement Cluster (ECMD) under the UN Pacific Humanitarian Team providing coordination support including monitoring of evacuation centre populations and regularly sharing information with relevant national clusters on the conditions and needs of displaced persons sheltering in evacuation centres. In **Vanuatu**, under the UN Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, IOM co-leads a one-of-a-kind National Durable Solutions Taskforce alongside the Government.

Tailored solutions imply mainstreaming migration and displacement-related considerations to other policy areas of sectors – and doing so through whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches: in **Tonga**, IOM is supporting the Recovery and Resilience Building Plan 2022 – 2025 through increased knowledge and skills to mainstream durable solutions including implementing Community Vulnerability Assessments (CVAs) and village and district emergency plans.

It also means leveraging indigenous, traditional and other forms of local knowledge: in **Vanuatu** for instance, IOM is working to strengthen the use of traditional knowledge and social and cultural systems in disaster-induced displacements, enhancing and drawing upon understandings of social and cultural networks and knowledge to inform future responses to displacement and provide more culturally appropriate options for displacement management.

Lastly, in an increasingly interdependent world, the needs of countries are more likely to be met if they are considered together – and collective gains reward collaboration on migration governance as well. IOM also integrates elements of multidimensional vulnerability thinking and evidence in its support to regional entities, such as the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) or the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in their regional or sub-regional programming.



For more information on IOM and its work in the SIDS, please contact:

International Organization for Migration
Department of Data, Insight and Policy Coordination (DIPC)
Policy Support and Coordination Unit

Email: migration4development@iom.int • psc@iom.int
Website: www.iom.int