

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.

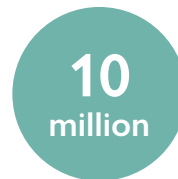
“Let’s make migration an opportunity to be seized, and let’s leverage it for SIDS’ sustainable and resilient development”

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.

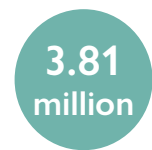
On the whole, SIDS are more countries of origin of migrants, but they are also places of destination of migrants and boast significant intra-regional migration dynamics.

SIDS are places of origin of



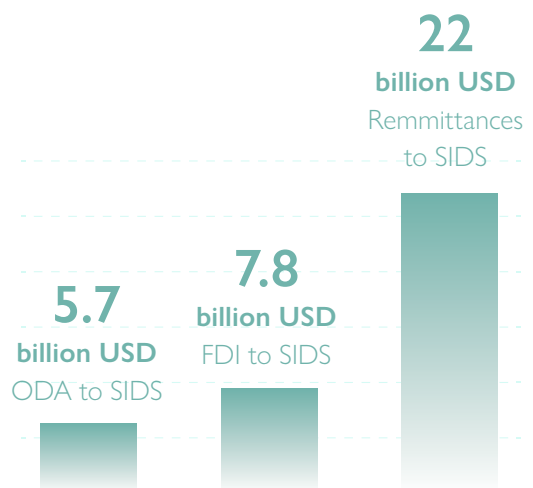
international migrants

SIDS host



international migrants

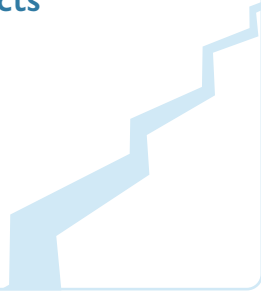
Remittances to SIDS represent a bigger financial inflow than both Official Development Assistance and Foreign Direct investment combined. These finance sustainable development, climate adaptation and contribute to poverty reduction objectives. They help stabilize macroeconomic volatility and can act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



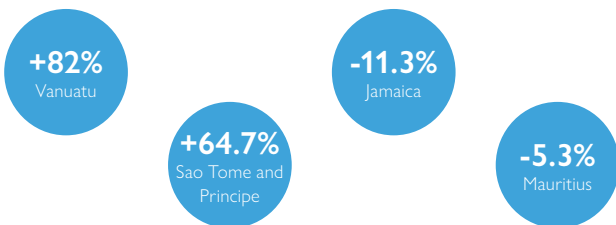
SIDS are particularly vulnerable to adverse impacts of climate change – and face heightened economic and non-economic loss and damage. Well-managed migration can be built into adaptation and mitigation solutions for climate and environmental resilience, and to drive solutions to displacement.

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.

IOM’s engagements with and for SIDS is guided by its [Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028](#) and its three strategic objectives of (1) Saving lives and protecting people on the move; (2) Driving solutions to displacement; and (3) Facilitating pathways for regular migration. Mobilizing resources and actioning on the three strategic objectives, while advancing cross-cutting priorities such as environmental sustainability and leveraging key institutional enablers – notably data, evidence, learning and innovation, and partnerships – is essential to harness the power of migration for resilient SIDS prosperity.

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. During the Conference itself, coming ahead of the Summit of the Future and the 29th UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP29) – topics related to facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration pathways for SIDS populations, especially in the face of heightened environmental and climate risks were central to IOM’s 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 programme of action are presented in this factsheet.

IOM Operational Support in SIDS

Building resilient economies and fostering safe, healthy and prosperous societies

Guided by its Strategic objectives (1), (2), and (3), 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, by facilitating safe, orderly, and regular migration pathways amongst, to, and from SIDS.

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

Guided by its Strategic objectives (2) and (3) - and informed by its [Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change](#) and the [IOM messages to the COP29](#); the organization implements multifaceted policy and programmatic actions at international, regional, national and local levels tailored to the specific context of human mobility and climate change in SIDS to provide solutions for people to move, for people on the move and for people to stay.

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 collaboration with the United

Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), IOM has promoted a human security approach to disaster displacement and environmental migration policies. The Joint Programme enhanced systems and capacities for disaster risk management to support adaptation to climate change and environmental degradation on human mobility.

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 **Maldives**, 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

Guided by its Strategic objective (3) and its institutional enablers on data and evidence, learning, and innovation – IOM works to enhance opportunities for SIDS through equitable and inclusive partnerships and evidence-based cooperation on regular migration pathways that work for all. 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 supports the Australia-Tuvalu Falepili Union who signed a special visa agreement to create regular pathways for migration allowing Tuvaluan communities affected by climate change to live, work and study in Australia, potentially averting a humanitarian crisis in the future. Furthermore, IOM has supported the Government of **Tuvalu** with other initiatives relating to regular pathways, such as the development of the [Tuvalu Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy](#).

In **Vanuatu**, IOM has so far delivered sessions to more than 2,000 labour migrants and their families, in partnership with the Department of Labour and World Vision to maximize the socio-economic benefits of labour mobility while addressing negative social impacts (Famili I Redi). This includes information on healthy relationships, family separation, nutrition, gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and family financial 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. IOM helps CARICOM to leverage migration as a development tool. The RAMP framework addresses migration priorities, challenges, and opportunities, such as bridging labour market gaps, and contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact for Migration.



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

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