



Pacific Regional 10-Year Review of the SAMOA Pathway

DRAFT PAPER



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I: Introduction¹

1. The UN General Assembly Resolution 76/203 paragraph 20(a) calls for the convening of a Fourth International Conference on SIDS in Antigua and Barbuda in 2024. In preparation for the 2024 conference, three regional preparatory meetings (one in each of the three SIDS regions) and an inter-regional preparatory meeting for all SIDS will be convened in 2023. The preparatory meetings aim to identify key priorities for the 2024 Conference, while maximising coherence and complementarity for development of the SIDS. The preparation of a progress report on the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway Report aims to assist discussions at a Pacific Regional Preparatory meeting in August 2023. The Fourth International Conference in 2024 is expected to result in ‘an inter-governmentally agreed, focused, forward looking and action-oriented political outcome document’ that will shape the future development of SIDS.
2. This report summarise progress in the thirteen Pacific SIDS (Fiji, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Tuvalu) and 7 associate members (American Samoa, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Guam New Caledonia, Niue and the Northern Mariana Islands) since the adoption of the SAMOA Pathway in 2014. It explains how the Pacific SIDS have evolved over the past decade and examines how they have utilized the SAMOA Pathway to support national and regional development. This report specifically focuses on the five thematic priority areas identified in the SAMOA Pathway as vital for development of SIDS and assesses the progress of the Pacific SIDS in each area, as summarized in the Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/218).

Sustainable Development and the significance of the SAMOA Pathway

3. The SIDS (Small Island Development States) classification began to gain currency at the United Nations Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, when it was used to identify and draw attention to the environmental and developmental commonalities and challenges faced by small island development states. The Barbados Programme of Action was developed in 1994 to assist the SIDS in their sustainable development efforts. This was further developed in 2005 with the Mauritius Strategy². There is no internationally agreed definition of SIDS. Depending on the criteria and/or list used to define SIDS, the list of countries that qualify ranges from 29 countries to 52 countries worldwide.³
4. At the regional level through the Pacific Islands Forum and CROP agencies, SIDS used the Pacific Plan to coordinate their efforts. The Pacific Plan was adopted by Forum Leaders in 2006 and aimed to strengthen Pacific regional cooperation and integration around four pillars: economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security. The plan was reviewed in 2013 and replaced by the Framework for Pacific Regionalism in 2014. The Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific was endorsed in 2017 as a strategy for the Pacific SIDS for the period 2017 – 2030. In addition to the Pacific Plan and the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific, Pacific SIDS also used other frameworks to coordinate their development activities including: the Framework for the Pacific Oceanscape (2009); the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries (2015); the Sustainable Development Goals (2015); and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. These frameworks together provide the SIDS with a range of tools and resources to progress sustainable development.

¹ Roy Trivedy is the lead author of this draft paper.

² See: [About Small Island Developing States | Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States](#)

³ See K4D Development Characteristics of Small Island Developing States, University of Birmingham (2019). Also: <https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/small-island-developing-states>.

5. The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway (SAMOA Pathway) was developed in 2014 as a Framework for Action on Sustainable Development for Small Island Developing States. It was adopted by all United Nations Member States at the Third International Conference on SIDS in Samoa in 2014.⁴ The SAMOA Pathway⁵ built on previous frameworks by focusing greater attention on the development of SIDS in three main ways. First, it sought to raise greater awareness of the common challenges faced by all SIDS and the need for increased international support; Secondly, it provided a framework for SIDS to develop their own national sustainable development plans in accordance with the global goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030; Third, it aimed to mobilize resources from development partners to support the development efforts of the SIDS. The SAMOA Pathway identified five thematic priorities, recognised as highly relevant for all SIDS. These are:
 - Area 1: Promote sustained and sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth, with decent work for all, sustainable consumption and production and sustainable transportation;
 - Area 2: Act to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts by implementing sustainable energy and disaster risk reduction programmes;
 - Area 3: Protect the bio-diversity and environmental health of small island developing states by mitigating the impact of invasive species and by properly managing chemicals and water, including hazardous waste, and protecting the oceans and seas;
 - Area 4: Improve human health and social development through food security and nutrition and improved water and sanitation and by reducing the incidence of non-communicable diseases and promoting gender equity and women’s empowerment;
 - Area 5: Fostering partnerships among small island developing states, United Nations agencies, development partners and others to achieve the goals.
6. This report is based on data and information obtained from national reports, information from UN Member States and Territories, UN-custodian agencies, regional inter-governmental organisations such as the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies, civil society organisations and other partners. In addition to data sources, several briefing and consultation meetings were organised to assist in preparing this report. These included: with the Pacific academia and youth on 13 June 2023; with UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams on 15 June; and with representatives from CROP agencies, Pacific member States and others on the 19-20th July⁶. This report has been prepared with support from the ESCAP (sub-regional office in the Pacific) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

⁴ The SAMOA Pathway was developed prior to the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals. As such, it can be regarded as a ‘torchbearer’ of the aspirations of SIDS and other countries worldwide. The signatories of the SAMOA Pathway recognised from the outset that the success of the Pathway would depend on the commitment and action of all stakeholders, including governments, businesses, civil society and individuals in these countries. The Pacific SIDS also recognised that whilst they were primarily responsible for achieving the goals and targets that they had adopted, they would also require the support of the international community.

⁵ [SAMOA Pathway - outcome document: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform \(un.org\)](#)

⁶ The consultation with Pacific Experts was in Suva, Fiji on 19-20th July. There was also a Tuvalu national consultation, organized with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and line ministries on 7 June 2023 in Funafuti.

II: Pacific SIDS Regional Overview

7. The 20 SIDS in the Pacific occupy a vast area. Thirteen are members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), and seven are associated members⁷. These SIDS share common characteristics and challenges. They are all islands, or part island, nation states surrounded by oceans and seas. Some of the countries are archipelagos dispersed over vast areas of ocean. For example, Kiribati has an area of 810 square kilometres distributed in 35 atolls/islands spread over 3.6 million square kilometres of ocean. Papua New Guinea has a total land area of 462,000 km² (equivalent to about 83% of the land area of all Pacific states). The Solomon Islands has the next largest land area with 28,520 km². The remaining Pacific Island countries are small with two – Tuvalu and Nauru – each being 30 km² or less.
8. The Pacific SIDS have unique cultures and traditions⁸. They face a shared set of geographical, environmental, economic and social challenges, and have unique development needs that make them extremely vulnerable. SIDS face specific challenges based on geographical locations and their remoteness from economic markets, that affects their abilities to benefit from global supply chains and increases import, production and trading costs for energy and other material resources. This limits their competitiveness in tourism and other sectors and affects their abilities to attract inward investment.
9. SIDS are characterised by having relatively small landmass, small often dispersed populations, small size of economy and especially high exposure to external environmental and economic threats because of climate change. With minimal elevation above sea level, large parts of the population face the gravest threats from the impacts of climate change and enormous risks from frequent storms, flooding, droughts and erosion. Additionally, most Pacific SIDS are susceptible to seismic movements and volcanic eruptions. Most Pacific SIDS have ‘limited state capacity’ because of their small population sizes, which constrains their abilities to raise domestic taxes and limits possibilities for economies of scale. Development indicators like income per capita disguise the unique challenges faced by different small island developing states.⁹
10. Papua New Guinea¹⁰, together with Solomon Islands, Fiji and New Caledonia are well endowed with natural resources – arable land for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, gold, minerals, oil, petroleum products and natural gas. These countries account for roughly 80% of the Pacific region’s population and have made progress in developing their economies. The resource base of the ‘middle-island economies’ such as Samoa and Tonga are more modest. While very small Pacific SIDS have limited resources, largely restricted to fisheries in their Exclusive Economic Zones.¹¹ Some of the Pacific

⁷ Several the Pacific SIDS also belong to several different regional and sub-regional groupings. For example see: [About Small Island Developing States | Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States](#); Papua New Guinea is also part of the APEC and Timor-Leste is part of ASEAN.

⁸ Biodiversity holds aesthetic and spiritual value for many Pacific communities. For centuries, these communities have protected and drawn benefits from biodiversity in the form of food supply, clean water, reduced beach erosion, soil and sand formation, and protection from storm surges.

⁹ Much of the literature on the SIDS focuses on their vulnerabilities especially to the impacts of climate change. One of the things that is alluded to in the literature but not always explicitly mentioned is the idea that many of the vulnerabilities of the SIDS are primarily affected by ‘development paths of other, especially industrialised, countries based on the use of fossil fuels’. On characteristics of SIDS see: <https://dgff2021.unctad.org>.

¹⁰ Despite its size and natural resource endowments, Papua New Guinea is a member of the SIDS grouping because it shares many of the same vulnerabilities and challenges as other SIDS.

¹¹ See: Pacific Island Economies Trade Patterns and Some Observations on Trade Policy Issues by Teo Fairbairn (1994) Nautilus Institute:

<https://res.cloudinary.com/dnjrorsut/image/upload/v1686937435/87350/d33lr0kn0d8syqvugevp.png>. Also: <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Pacific-Security-Outlook-Report-2022-2023.pdf>.

SIDS enjoy advantages deriving from the fact that although they lack resource diversity, they have been able to utilize a specific advantage (for example Nauru with phosphate, New Caledonia with nickel deposits and American Samoa with its strategic advantage for fish processing). Agriculture and fisheries remain the backbone of most Pacific SIDS. The Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of Pacific SIDS are vast, covering an area of approximately 30 million square kilometres, significantly larger than their land area. This gives Pacific SIDS an important resource in terms of fish stocks and marine biodiversity¹². All Pacific SIDS have a long history of fishing and aquaculture. Fishing and aquaculture play important roles in Pacific cultures and traditional practices. Fish and seafood are a major source of food and income for the population, and most Pacific SIDS also export fish and seafood to other countries.

11. The main resource base of most Pacific SIDS is marine based, with fisheries and tourism being the two most important sectors. The resource base of most SIDS in the Pacific includes:

- Fish and seafood are major sources of food and income for most of the population of the SIDS, and many Pacific SIDS also export fish and seafood to other countries. Tuna is the most important fish species. The Pacific SIDS account for a significant share of the global tuna stocks.
- Tourism - a major economic driver for many Pacific SIDS including the Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu. SIDS offer stunning scenery, beautiful beaches, and a variety of natural and cultural attractions. Tourism is a major source of foreign exchange for many SIDS. It creates employment and boosts economic growth.
- Agriculture and forestry are important sectors for most SIDS in the Pacific. Crops such as copra, bananas, coconuts, taro, sugar, palm oil, pineapples, tropical fruits, vanilla and coffee are grown on many SIDS, and they are exported to other countries. Subsistence agriculture is a major source of livelihoods, food and income in virtually all Pacific SIDS, and it helps to reduce poverty. Many people, especially women, depend on work in the informal sectors often linked to subsistence farming, fisheries and forestry.¹³
- Manufacturing – several Pacific SIDS have developed small manufacturing industries. Products such as clothing, electronics, and furniture are manufactured in several Pacific SIDS, and they are exported to other countries. Manufacturing is a significant source of employment for some SIDS, and it helps boost economic growth.¹⁴

Economic growth

12. GDP growth rates for the Pacific SIDS have fluctuated over the past decade. In general, economic growth has been slow, with an average annual growth rate of 2.2%. However, there

¹² Epeli Hau'ofa (a well-known Tongan and Fijian writer and founder of the Oceania Centre for Arts at the University of the South Pacific) noted that 'After the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention the South Pacific transformed from islands in the far sea to a 'sea of islands'. See: <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-with-the-largest-exclusive-economic-zones>. Also for example: <https://timorleste.un.org/en/174513-new-blue-economy-opportunities-timor-leste>.

¹³ Note: Women's participation in the formal labour force in the Pacific SIDS is generally low. In 2020, the average female labour force participation rate for Pacific SIDS was 52%, compared to 80% for men. There is a gender gap of 28 percentage points in labour force participation between women and men in Pacific SIDS.. Women play a more significant and visible role in informal markets which most households rely on. See also: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.NE.ZS?locations=Z4>

¹⁴ Although Women's participation in the formal labour force in the Pacific is generally low and there is a significant gender gap in labour force participation between women and men in the Pacific SIDS, many small businesses are initiated and owned by women. A major obstacle to women led businesses in the Pacific SIDS however is 'access to finance' (mentioned by participants in the consultation with experts, 19-20th July 2023).

have been significant variations from this average. **Table 1 below** shows that in 2014, the growth rate for Pacific SIDS was 3.1% (above the average for the world). This was followed by a period of slower growth. In 2018, growth in the Pacific SIDS picked up again, reaching 2.5% but this was followed by a decline to 1.9% in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on all Pacific SIDS' economies in 2020 and led to growth rates falling by -2.5%.

Table 1: GDP Growth Rates for the Pacific SIDS (%)

Time period/ SIDS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Cook Islands								-29.1	10.5	11.2
Fiji	5.6	4.5	2.45	5.35	3.81	-0.58	-17	-5.11	15.6	6.0
French Polynesia	1.05	3.45	3.37	2.1	2.82	2.42	-10	1.02		
Kiribati	-1.1	9.87	-0.48	-0.24	5.27	-0.54	-0.55	1.5	1.8	2.3
Marshall Islands	-1.12	2.11	2.02	3.41	4.19	10.84	-1.84	1.11	1.5	2.2
Micronesia (F.S.)	-2.31	4.62	0.9	2.68	0.21	1.17	-1.77	-3.19	2.2	4.1
Nauru	26.56	3.7	3.57	-5.75	6.1	0	1.15	1.5	1.2	2.2
Palau	6.29	7.54	-0.08	-4.08	0.11	0.4	-9.11	-	-1.0	4.3
Papua New Guinea	13.54	6.58	5.49	3.53	-0.28	4.48	-3.17	0.3	3.5	4.9
Samoa	0.66	3.85	7.98	1.41	-0.61	4.45	-3.11	-7.08	-6.00	2.0
Solomon Islands	1.19	1.68	5.55	3.08	2.75	1.75	-3.38	-0.2		
Timor-Leste	4.47	2.76	3.38	-3.06	-0.69	23.51	31.91	5.29	3.3	4.20
Tonga	2.02	1.17	6.57	3.32	0.24	0.71	0.49	-2.67	-2.2	2.5
Tuvalu	0	10.42	5.66	1.79	1.75	13.79	1.52	2.99	2.5	2.7
Vanuatu	3.14	0.37	4.69	6.32	2.9	3.24	-5.4	0.45	2.0	4.0

Source: ESCAP (2023)

13. As the impact of the COVID pandemic gradually receded, national borders reopened and economic activities across the globe experienced a resurgence in 2021. Average growth rates for the Pacific SIDS rebounded to 3.1% - the highest level since 2014. However, the war in Ukraine, starting towards the end of February 2022, resulted in additional setbacks, leading to a simultaneous global economic slowdown in 2022. The supply disruptions caused by the war in Ukraine have driven up global food and energy prices. This has resulted in a multi-decade high inflation across the globe, escalating food insecurity and malnutrition in many countries including in the Pacific region. The Pacific SIDS have especially been affected because of their heavy reliance on imports. This has triggered rapid monetary policy tightening globally and increased borrowing costs, which has weighed on economic activities everywhere, including in the Pacific.
14. Economic growth rates of Pacific SIDS are expected to remain modest but relatively stable in coming years. The IMF has downgraded its global growth forecast for 2023 to 2.8%. This is likely to also have a negative impact on the economies of Pacific SIDS, which are heavily reliant on tourism and exports of a primary commodities.

15. The availability of foreign aid is another factor that affects economic growth of the Pacific SIDS. Foreign aid is a major source of financing for development in Pacific SIDS. However, the availability of foreign aid for the Pacific SIDS is declining (despite growing geo-political interest in the Pacific and increased investment from the USA)¹⁵.

Demographics

16. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) estimates that SIDS in Pacific had a combined total population of approximately 14.87 million in 2023 (see Table 2 below). The largest of the SIDS in Asia and the Pacific by population is Papua New Guinea, with about 10.3 million people, followed by Timor-Leste, with about 1.3 million people. The smallest SIDS by population are Niue with 1,936 people, Tuvalu, with 11,400 people, followed by Nauru, with about 12,800 people in 2023. Population densities vary widely but are particularly high for the smaller island countries.¹⁶

17. With relatively small populations, many of the Pacific SIDS struggle to create employment opportunities for their citizens. Most of the Pacific SIDS, have high levels of ‘out migration’ with some of the most productive citizens seeking ‘better work opportunities’ overseas and sending remittances back to their families. One result of the high level of ‘out migration’, is that the proportion of elderly people, those with disabilities, specific vulnerabilities or long-term illnesses, women and children are often significantly higher proportion of the total population of the SIDS.

18. The demographic profiles of most Pacific SIDS are characterized by:

- Young populations: The median age in most Pacific SIDS is between 20 and 25 years old. This is due to high fertility rates and relatively low life-expectancy rates;
- High urbanization: Most people in the Pacific SIDS live in urban areas. This is because of greater access to economic opportunities, access to education and healthcare, and better infrastructure;
- High out-migration: Many people (especially youth) from Pacific SIDS migrate to other countries in search of better opportunities. This is a major challenge for the region, as it leads to a loss of skilled workers. It also means that many of the SIDS have a higher proportion of women, children and elderly citizens remaining in villages for large parts of a year;
- Ethnic diversity: The people of the Pacific SIDS are ethnically diverse, with a mix of Polynesian, Melanesian, and Micronesian ancestry. This diversity is reflected in the languages spoken (estimated at 1,500 in the Pacific SIDS) which include English, French, Melanesian Pidgin, Polynesian Languages, Tok Pisin and Bislama;
- Low income: The majority of Pacific SIDS are classified as low-income countries. This means that they have a low per capita income and often higher levels of poverty.
- High levels of non-communicable diseases: Many Pacific SIDS have limited healthcare facilities, inadequate infrastructure and high levels of diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and obesity.¹⁷

¹⁵ See for example: www.https://asia.fes.de/news/pacific-islands. Also: SN Amin et al (2021) ‘Reframing security in Pacific Island Countries and Territories’.

¹⁶ See: <https://pacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/pub-pdf/web>. Also: <https://www.unescap.org>.

¹⁷ For example [the Global Burden Diseases](#) (2010) ranked Nauru as number one in the world, in terms of the prevalence of diabetes in the adult population. Consequently, the annual expenditure for diabetes has been approximately 20% of the annual health Government expenditure. Despite Nauru implementing various initiatives, including health education campaigns, promoting healthy lifestyles, improving access to healthy

Table 2: Population of Pacific SIDS (thousand people)

Time period/ SIDS	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Solomon Islands	597	613	628	644	659	675	691	708	724	740
Papua New Guinea	8,464	8,682	8,899	9,115	9,329	9,543	9,750	9,949	10,143	10,330
Nauru	11	11	11	12	12	12	12	13	13	13
Kiribati	115	117	119	120	122	124	127	129	131	134
Timor-Leste	1,185	1,206	1,225	1,243	1,262	1,280	1,300	1,321	1,341	1,361
Samoa	202	204	206	208	210	212	215	219	222	226
French Polynesia	290	292	294	296	298	300	302	304	306	309
Micronesia (F.S)	109	110	110	110	111	111	112	113	114	115
Niue	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Tuvalu	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
New Caledonia	281	283	284	284	285	285	286	288	290	293
Guam	168	168	168	169	169	169	169	171	172	173
Fiji	916	917	918	919	919	919	920	925	930	936
Palau	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Tonga	107	106	106	105	105	105	105	106	107	108
Northern Mariana Islands	52	52	51	51	50	50	50	50	50	50
Cook Islands	18	18	18	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
Marshall Islands	50	49	48	47	46	45	43	42	42	42

Source: UN ESCAP (2023)

Remittances

19. Many of the Pacific SIDS have a sizeable proportion of their citizens (especially males and often those in their most productive years) working overseas and sending remittances regularly to their families.¹⁸ In 2010, remittances to the Pacific SIDS totalled \$2.7 billion. By 2020, this figure had

food, and strengthening screening and management programs for NCDs, the NCD numbers in Nauru continue to grow. (Government of Nauru, 2018).

¹⁸ See: 'Fintech Remittances in Paradise: a Path to Sustainable Development' by Hanjoo Hahm et al. ESCAP WP/19/08 (2019).

more than doubled to \$5.7 billion. The level of remittances to Pacific SIDS varies from country to country. In 2020, Tonga received the most remittances, with \$1.8 billion, or 38% of GDP. Other countries with high levels of remittances include Samoa (29%), Vanuatu (22%), and Kiribati (17%). Remittances are a significant source of foreign exchange for Pacific SIDS. In some countries, they account for more than 10% of GDP. Remittances are used to support families, businesses, and government budgets. They help reduce poverty and inequality.¹⁹

20. In 2020, remittances fell by 10%. Despite this, in 2020 Fiji received an estimated US \$1.2 billion from Fijians working overseas mostly in Australia and New Zealand; Samoa received US \$500m from Samoans working in New Zealand; Tonga received \$300m from Tongans mostly working in Australia and New Zealand; Kiribati received \$200m from citizens mostly working in Australia and New Zealand; Tuvalu received £100m from Tuvaluans mostly working in Australia and New Zealand. In addition to the countries listed above, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste also receive large remittances. Remittances are a vital source of income for many families and an important source of support for the Pacific SIDS' economies.

Social context

21. In the Pacific, the Modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (mCPR) is estimated to be 18-48%, well below the 62% average for Low Income Countries²⁰. A review of mCPR in the Pacific shows that only three out of the 14 countries for which data are available have an mCPR of above 40% and most are under 30%. Some countries show a decline over the past decade (Samoa and Tonga, for example); others appear to be stable or declining. There is also a relatively high level of unmet need for family planning (8-46%) when compared to global estimates of less than 10% unmet need. The persistently high total fertility rate of 3-4% compared to 1% globally reflects the low mCPR and high unmet need for family planning in the Pacific SIDS. Unmarried women who are sexually active have a higher total demand for family planning and contraception (93%) than married women (64%) and a greater unmet need for contraception (83% compared to 35%). This unmet need is particularly high amongst 15-19-year-olds (91%) and only one in ten sexually active, unmarried women have their contraceptive demand satisfied compared to married women (46%).²¹
22. Non-Communicable Diseases are the leading cause of death in the Pacific region, accounting for around 75% of all deaths. The WHO notes that the ten countries with the highest obesity rates globally are all SIDS in the Pacific, where over 45% of adults live with obesity. These islands have some of the highest prevalence rates of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and NCD-related premature mortality.²² The most common NCDs in the Pacific SIDS are:
- Cardiovascular diseases: These include heart disease and stroke;
 - Diabetes: This is a chronic disease that affects the way the body turns food into energy;
 - Cancer: This is a group of diseases that involve abnormal cell growth;
 - Chronic respiratory diseases: These include asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and lung cancer.

¹⁹ See: Labour mobility and Remittances in Asia and the Pacific during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic by Aiko Kikawa et al, Asian Development Bank (2021). Also: Pacific Mobility, Migration and Remittances in Times of COVID-19 by D.Doan et al, World Bank publications (2020); Also: <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Labour-mobility-Report-2022.pdf>.

²⁰ Thanks to UNFPA for providing available information on use of contraceptives in the Pacific SIDS.

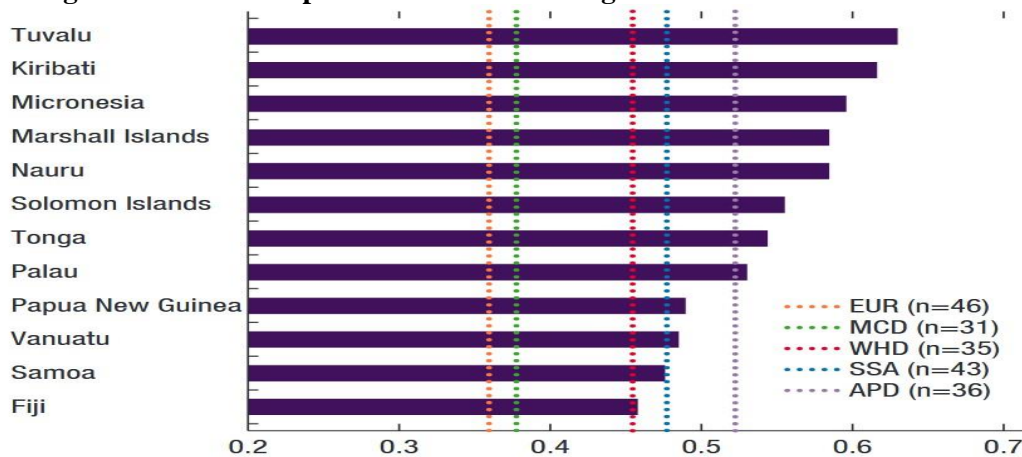
²¹ Extracted from the UNFPA written contribution for this assessment report (2023).

²² See: <https://www.who.int>. Also: <https://www.adb.org/features/facts-and-data-about-health-pacific>.

Climate change and risks

23. The Pacific SIDS have differing capacities to plan and respond to the challenges that they face. Several factors contribute to making the SIDS vulnerable to external and environmental shocks, such as natural disasters, climate change, sea level rise, coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion, and loss of biodiversity. The Pacific SIDS are generally acknowledged to be some of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the impact of climate change and related disasters. The World Risk Index 2021 (see Figure 1 below) ranks several Pacific Island countries among the most at-risk countries, with Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Tonga ranking first, second and third, respectively, and other countries such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Kiribati ranking among the top-20.²³

Figure 1. Index of Exposure to Climate Change



Source: International Monetary Fund. 2021. Unlocking Access to Climate Finance for Pacific Island Countries. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Departmental-Papers-Policy-Papers/Issues/2021/09/23/Unlocking-Access-to-ClimateFinance-for-Pacific-Islands-Countries-464709>.

Notes: Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index (2018). Dotted lines show averages by IMF area departments, and the number of countries is shown in parentheses. APD = Asia Pacific; EUR = Europe; MCD = Middle East and Central Asia; SSA = Sub-Saharan Africa; and WHD = Western Hemisphere.

Human development

24. How has all of this affected the lives of citizens in these countries? The 2022 Human Development Index (HDI) scores for SIDS in Asia and the Pacific provide a partial response to this.²⁴ The Human Development Report for 2022 reveals the following:
25. Several factors help explain the variation in HDI scores among SIDS in the Pacific as well as their comparison with some other parts of the world. These include:
- Geographic location: SIDS in the Pacific are more remote and generally have smaller populations than SIDS in other regions. This may have made it more difficult for them to access resources and markets.

²³ See: World Risk Report 2022 (harvard.edu); also at: WorldRiskIndex - Humanitarian Data Exchange (humdata.org).

²⁴ See: Human Development Report 2021-22 | Human Development Reports (undp.org).

- Climate change: The Pacific SIDS are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as sea level rise and extreme weather events. This may have negatively impacted on their economies and their ability to provide services to their citizens.
- Economic development: SIDS in the Pacific have a range of economic development levels which affects their abilities to invest in education, health care, social protection and other social services.

Table 3: SIDS ranked by HDI score

Country	HDI Score	Rank
<i>Palau</i>	0.801	1
<i>Marshall Islands</i>	0.736	2
<i>Fiji</i>	0.730	3
<i>Vanuatu</i>	0.722	4
<i>Federated States of Micronesia</i>	0.699	5
<i>Kiribati</i>	0.697	6
<i>Solomon Islands</i>	0.685	7
<i>Cook Islands</i>	0.661	8
<i>Samoa</i>	0.657	9
<i>Tuvalu</i>	0.647	10
<i>American Samoa</i>	0.672	11
<i>Timor-Leste</i>	0.634	12
<i>Tonga</i>	0.652	13
<i>New Caledonia</i>	0.754	14
<i>Guam</i>	0.742	15
<i>French Polynesia</i>	0.767	16
<i>Cook Islands</i>	0.667	17
<i>Northern Mariana Islands</i>	0.729	18
<i>Niue</i>	0.652	19
<i>Papua New Guinea</i>	0.629	20

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2022

Assessment of the contributing factors to SAMOA Pathway progress

Productive Capacities Index

26. A variety of factors contribute to a country's ability to meet the needs of its citizens. The Productive Capacities Index (PCI) is a tool developed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to measure the productive capacities of different countries²⁵. The PCI score is calculated by taking the weighted average of a country's scores

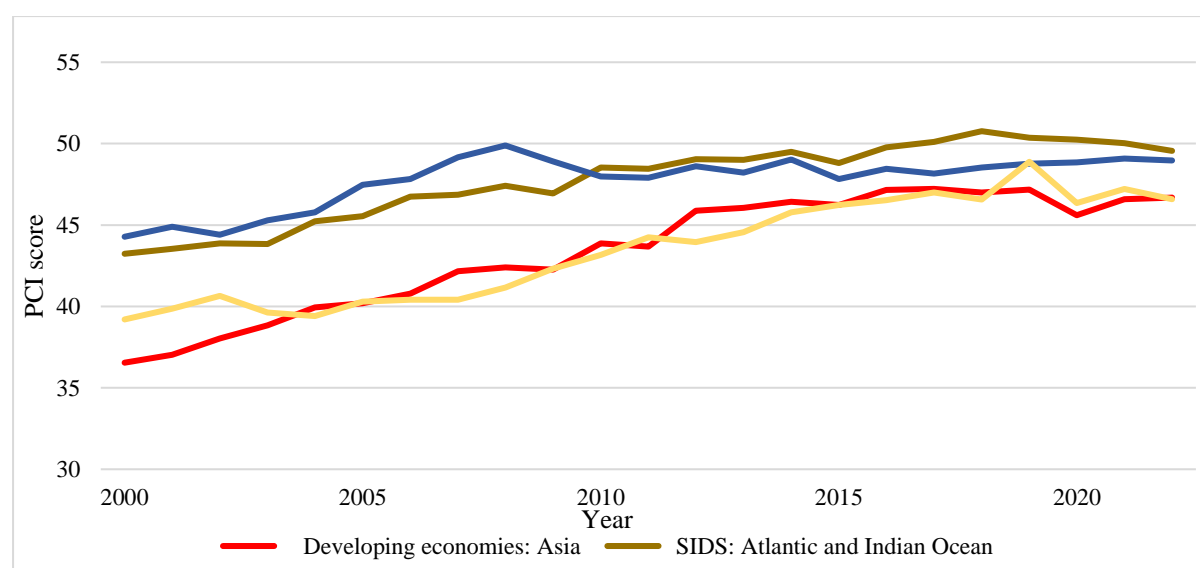
²⁵ See: Productive Capacities Index: gff2021.unctad.org/economy/productive-capacity/.

on 42 indicators across eight categories of productive capacities. The PCI is a multidimensional index that covers eight components: Human capital; Natural capital; Energy; Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); Structural change; Transport; Institutions; and the Private sector.

27. The PCI (see **Figure 2**) is a tool for improving the productive capacities of countries. It assists policy makers to identify areas where targeted policies and interventions are needed to boost economic growth and achieve sustainable development. A closer analysis of the Pacific SIDS shows that while some countries have performed well in certain periods, others have struggled (so it is helpful to cross-reference these scores with for example the GDP growth rates in Table 1).

28.

Figure 2 - Productive capacities index of selected regions, 2000-2022



Source: www.UNCTAD.org

Trade development and capacity

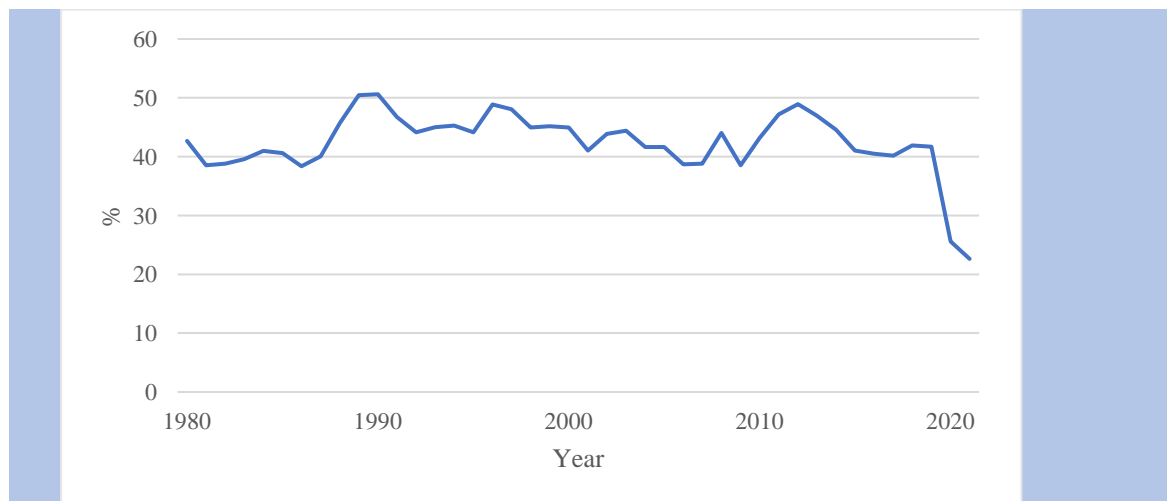
29. A major share of the exports from the Pacific SIDS currently come from three countries (Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia and Fiji).²⁶ These countries have contributed approximately 80% of total regional exports over the past two decades. This is largely due to the export of mineral products – gold, copper, oil and nickel. Most middle-level and small Pacific Island countries depend on a narrow range of traditional export products, such as copra, cacao and handicrafts. However, several of the smaller countries have had success in developing new lines of activity that have allowed a degree of diversification of exports (for example Tonga’s development of squash and vanilla, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea’s production of coffee, the Cook Islands development of the pearl industry, Samoa’s development of automotive parts manufacturing, and Fiji’s export of garments, biscuits, paints, beer and cement).

30. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) notes that the level of exports from SIDS in the Pacific and Asia for the period 2014 to 2022 has been relatively volatile (see Figure 3 below). The volatility of exports from SIDS in the Pacific and Asia is due to several

²⁶ See: World Bank (2022) Exports of Goods and Services Exports of goods and services (% of GDP) - Pacific Island small states | Data (worldbank.org)

factors, including the global economic environment, the performance of the tourism sector, and the impact of climate change.

Figure 3: Exports of goods and services (% of GDP) – Pacific Small Island States



Source: World Bank (2022)

31. The UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport 2022²⁷ notes that the major destinations of exports from SIDS in the Pacific (and Asia) in the period 2014-2022 were China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States. These countries accounted for almost half of the total containerized trade from SIDS in the Pacific region. The main exports from SIDS in the Pacific and Asia were fisheries products, minerals, agricultural products, and tourism services.

Development Assistance

32. ESCAP's data shows that aid flows to the Pacific SIDS have been declining in recent years. In 2014, the total amount of aid received by Pacific SIDS was US\$2.6 billion. By 2023, this figure has fallen to US\$1.9 billion. The data shows however that the decline in aid flows has been most pronounced for the smallest and most remote Pacific SIDS²⁸.
33. The decline in aid flows has had several negative consequences for Pacific SIDS. It has made it more difficult for these countries to invest in essential infrastructure, such as roads, schools, and hospitals. It has also made it more difficult for them to address pressing challenges, such as climate change, disaster risk reduction, social protection and economic diversification. The largest donors to the Pacific SIDS in 2023 were Australia, New Zealand, the European Union and the United States. The largest sectors receiving aid in 2023 were social infrastructure and services, economic infrastructure and services, and production.²⁹
34. Dornan and Pryke³⁰ note that there are several caveats regarding the much of the data on official aid flows. First, the data focus on sovereign Pacific island countries, which means that transfers of

²⁷ See: <https://unctad.org/press-material/unctads-review-maritime-transport-2022-facts-and-figures-asia-and-pacific>. See also: Asian Development Bank's work (2020) on Fragile and Conflict affected States and SIDS at: Fragile Situations and Small Island States in Asia and the Pacific | Asian Development Bank (adb.org)

²⁸ See: <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/countries-special-situations/sids>.

²⁹ See: Debt for Climate Swaps in the Pacific SIDS. Background Paper UN ESCAP (March 2022). Also: <https://repository.unescap.org>. Pathways to Adaptation and Resilience in Pacific SIDS Subregional Report 2022.

³⁰ See: Foreign Aid to the Pacific: Trends and Developments in the 21st Century, M. Dornan and J. Pryke, Wiley.com (2017).

funds to non-independent territories like New Caledonia, Guam, Wallis and Futuna and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas are not counted. Inclusion of these funds would alter Figure 2 significantly, with fiscal transfers (not counted as ODA) from France to New Caledonia alone measuring approximately \$500 million each year.³¹ The second point to note is that the data on ODA calculate net loans, which means that loan repayments are subtracted from aid that is provided. This has the effect of reducing the amount of ODA provided by multilateral institutions (especially the ADB through the AsDB Special Funds) and Japan. Notwithstanding these caveats, aid to the Pacific is very concentrated. In no other region in the world does a single donor provide such a large share of total official aid as Australia. Foreign aid is concentrated further at the country level, with most aid to countries like Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Niue and Tokelau largely provided by one donor. These patterns are often the result of historical ties, including colonial relationships. Chinese development assistance is not reflected in the OECD data. In the absence of official data from the Chinese Government on ODA to the region, several authors have estimated Chinese aid to the region. These estimates, suggest that China may have become the third most important source of ODA to the region over the past decade.

Debt distress

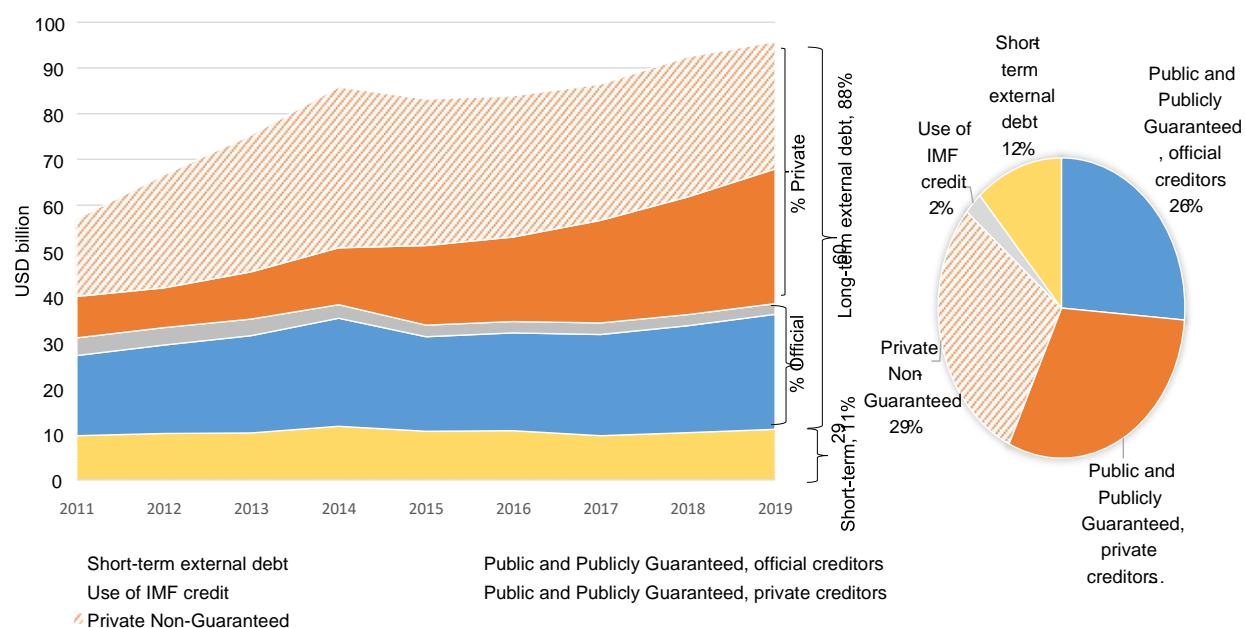
35. The OECD³² (2021) note that ‘Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, eleven out of twenty-two SIDS already had solvency problems: they were qualified as high risk or being in debt distress.’ Over the past decade the overall external debt stocks in all SIDS have risen (+7% on average per year over 2011-19, reaching USD 96 billion in 2019). ESCAP note that ‘Most Asia-Pacific economies entered 2022 with constrained fiscal space and rising public debt levels. The immense fiscal needs generated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic downturn drained fiscal resources’. Fiscal deficits in the Pacific (and Asia region) have jumped from merely 1 per cent of GDP in pre-pandemic years to about 4-5 per cent of GDP in 2020 and 2021. Similar deficit levels are expected in 2022 and 2023, as government revenues are set to recover only gradually, while pandemic-related fiscal expenditures are slowly phased out.³³
36. Debt composition has also evolved, becoming significantly more privately owned. Over the 2011-2019 period the private long-term share of the SIDS’ total external debt grew by fourteen points, from 46% in 2011 to 60% in 2019 (Figure 4 below). The OECD estimate that in 2019 private debt had increased substantially in several countries including Papua New Guinea (70% of the country’s total debt). The OECD notes that ‘For the eleven SIDS for which data is available in 2019, so-called “off-the-radar” Chinese debt was estimated to add an extra USD 3.8 billion, on average, or 7% of their total external debt. This aggregate picture however obscures wide disparities. For example, in Fiji, off-the-radar Chinese debt reached 20% of total external debt.

³¹ This is also true for the three Compact of Free Association Countries supported by the United States (the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau). See for example: <https://fpif.rg/the-new-battle-for-the-compact-states/>

³² See: [https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/External-debt-in-small-island-developing-states\(SIDS\).pdf](https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/External-debt-in-small-island-developing-states(SIDS).pdf)

³³ See: <https://unescap.org>.

Figure 4. Private creditors hold a significant proportion of total SIDS' external debt USD billion, current prices



Note: Based on the Pacific SIDS (plus Maldives) for which data are available. Source: Calculations based on World Bank debt statistics (2020) <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/debt/ids/>

37. The international community has provided debt relief packages for SIDS in the Pacific and Asia, but these support packages have not been sufficient to address the challenges that these countries face due to their vulnerability to climate change, the impacts of the COVID pandemic and other external shocks.³⁴
38. Despite the relatively generous debt support packages, they have been insufficient to meet the financing needs of SIDS in the Pacific³⁵. ESCAP note that “Despite the notable increase in grants by bilateral and IFI partners, increased borrowing – largely external – has been essential to meeting budget financing needs in PSIDs. Increased public debt/GDP ratios have broadly reflected the magnitudes of the external and domestic activity shocks experienced in the region. Consequently, (unweighted) debt/GDP ratios in most countries in the region have risen significantly relative to GDP, so that the average debt/GDP ratio is now over 40 percent of GDP, approximately a 10 percent increase since 2019”.³⁶
39. For most Pacific SIDS, public debt is largely external debt to official lenders. For PSIDs, external commercial borrowing is either not feasible or very costly, and domestic debt markets are very limited. This means that most borrowing is external, and from either IFIs such as ADB, World

³⁴ See: <https://www.unescap.org/events/2022/pacific-regional-debt-conference-addressing-debt-sustainability-pacific-aftermath-covid..>

³⁵ The Pacific SIDS are estimated to have accessed approximately 0.22% of global climate finance over the past decade. Although some Pacific SIDS have benefitted from Emergency Loans from the IMF Catastrophe Containment & Relief Trust and from the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, accurate data is not easily accessible.

³⁶ See: <https://unescap.org/kp/2023/public-debt-dashboard>.

Bank, and IMF, or from bilateral official lenders including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and China³⁷.

40. The ILO notes that global average monthly wages are estimated to have declined in real terms by 0.9 per cent in the first half of 2022. In the Pacific (and Asia), average real wage growth in 2021 was 3.5 per cent, which slowed to 1.3 per cent in the first half of 2022. Excluding China, average real wage growth for the region was much less at 0.3 per cent in 2021 and 0.7 per cent in the first half of 2022. The ILO estimates that the increase in prices in the last two years has probably increased the cost of living of the bottom income deciles by a greater amount than at the top income deciles (inequality has increased).³⁸ This cost-of-living crisis is in addition to the wage losses seen during the pandemic years. These factors have together contributed to increasing levels of poverty and vulnerability in the Pacific and elsewhere. The World Bank³⁹ estimates that the global economic challenges, may have increased poverty worldwide by 0.2 to 0.3 percentage points using the lower middle income poverty line of \$3.65 per day and by 0.9 to 8.3 per centage points on the upper middle oncome poverty line of \$6.85 per day.
41. Given this overall context, how have the Pacific SIDS progressed the five thematic priorities?

³⁷ See also: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/0929/declaration-on-u-s-pacific-partnership>. Also: <https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/south-koreas-new-found-interest-in-the-pacific-islands>.

³⁸ See: <https://ilo.org/digitalguides/en-gb/story/globalwagereport2022-23>.

³⁹ See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects> (2023)

III: Findings and Analysis ⁴⁰

Introduction

42. This part of the report summarizes the findings on each of the five thematic priorities and examines overall trends in the Pacific SIDS. It provides examples of significant on-going work by the Pacific SIDS in each thematic area and summarize the key policy messages. Some examples of ‘innovative work’ that are expected to yield good results in future are also featured in boxes.

Thematic Area 1: Promote sustained and sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth, with decent work for all, sustainable consumption and production and sustainable transportation.

Overview

43. Thematic Area 1 is a high priority for SIDS because of its link to the well-being of citizens. The importance of equitable and inclusive economic growth with decent work for all, was identified as vital for future development in all SIDS. The assessment uses 11 indicators to measure progress in this thematic area. The three clusters for which data are available and where it is possible to assess progress are: (i) Education; (ii) Sustained and Sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth with decent work for all; and (iii) Tourism..

Education

44. The indicators focus on completion, participation and enrolment rates in education. They show improvements in school completion rates across all levels (for boys and girls), and increases in official flows for scholarships, which have been taking place in nearly half of the SIDS. Progress in the Pacific SIDS has been considerably slower than in other regions during this period..
45. Data from the World Bank and UNICEF⁴¹ show that gross primary enrolment (GPE) rates in the Pacific SIDS were declining in the period 2006 to 2018. The average gross primary enrolment rate in Pacific SIDS was 114.8% in 2018 (down from 120.8% in 2015). The decline in gross primary enrolment (and retention) rates is concerning because it negatively affects the long-term development of Pacific SIDS.
46. Pacific SIDS spent an average of 14% of their national budgets on education in the period 2014-2022. This is higher than the global average of 12%. The highest spend on education during this period was in Kiribati, which allocated an average of 20% of its annual national budget to education. Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands were also significant spenders on education, with both countries allocating an average of 18% of their annual national budgets to education. The lowest spender on education was Nauru, which allocated an average of 8% of its annual national budget to education.

⁴⁰ UN ESCAP Dashboard is available here [SAMOA-Pathway-2023 \(Version 3\)](#), with Annex 2 on the methodology.

⁴¹ See: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>. Also: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/primary-education/>. It is important to recognise that GPE in Primary Schools in the Pacific SIDS has increased from 78% in 2000 to 93% in 2020 but the net enrolment rate in secondary schools is only 58%. This masks large disparities – for example in Fiji net enrolment in secondary schools was 82% while in Tuvalu it was 33% in 2022. Note: In the Consultation with Pacific Experts on 19-20th July 2023, it was mentioned that the average number of years of schooling for young people in the Pacific SIDS is 6. This means that most young people in the region complete primary school, but do not go on to secondary school.

Palau and Tonga have also been relatively low spenders on education, with both countries allocating an average of 10% of their annual national budgets to education.

47. Pacific SIDS have strengthened their commitments to education for sustainable development and increased support in distance learning and ICT in education platforms. Nine Pacific SIDS have collaborated on Education for Sustainable Development teaching, including boosting learning resources and teacher training, from early childhood to tertiary levels that were made available to 15 countries. Eleven Pacific SIDS committed to increasing the use of technology in learning and teaching through various strategies, including digital transformation policies, enhanced connectivity, and infrastructure in all schools, provision of open education resources and strengthening digital skills amongst teachers, as evidenced in Transforming Education Summit national statements, developed in 2022. Eleven Pacific SIDS have developed national SDG 4 benchmarking indicators to monitor progress in education through 7 globally and regionally agreed measures covering access and quality of education with support from UNESCO/UIS and SPC.
48. Pacific SIDS have made progress in reducing unplanned pregnancies (a major cause of girls dropping out from schools) over the past 20 years – from approximately 60% to 30%. Despite this, actual fertility rates remain higher than desired fertility rates by between one to three children – hence there is more progress required to reduce unplanned pregnancies. Six of the Pacific SIDS have a growing total fertility rate and, alarmingly, eight of the Pacific SIDS are now experiencing growing adolescent fertility levels. Adolescent pregnancy has profound implications for girls, including reducing education and employment prospects.⁴²
49. The regression and stagnation in the Pacific SIDS can be explained in part by:
 - The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many schools being closed for long periods of time, and many students unable to access remote learning because of internet connectivity issues as well the access to technology. In many Pacific SIDS teachers struggled with teaching remotely. School authorities sought to encourage pupils to return to school post pandemic by ensuring that schools re-opened safely, offering financial assistance to families⁴³, improving the provision of school meals programmes and improving remote learning.
 - Natural disasters - Pacific SIDS are highly vulnerable to disasters such as cyclones and earthquakes. These disasters often damage schools and disrupt education. Data from Statista show that there were 262 cyclones and 1,024 earthquakes with magnitude 6 or higher in the Pacific region between 2014 and 2022. While these disasters did not all necessarily lead to disruptions in education, there are many examples of how natural disasters have caused significant disruptions. For example:
 - a. Cyclone Pam, which struck Vanuatu in March 2015, and Cyclone Winston, which struck Fiji in February 2016, cost each country approximately US \$500 million. In Vanuatu, this represented approximately 61 per cent of GDP, while in Fiji it equated to 7.5 per cent of GDP;

⁴² See: Investing in Maternal Health and Family Planning in Small Island Developing States, UNFPA (2021). See also Adolescent Unplanned Pregnancy in the Pacific' K. McMillan et al, Pacific Women's Support Unit, UNSW, Australia (2020)

⁴³ In the Consultation with Pacific Experts on 19-20 July, several participants explained that there had been significant delays in making these payments in several countries. This has affected re-enrolment and retention rates. See: <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents>.

- b. In 2018, Cyclone Harold displaced over 100,000 people and led to an estimated US \$2 billion damages to housing, businesses and infrastructure in Fiji;
 - c. In 2019, the earthquake in Papua New Guinea caused an estimated US \$1 billion damages to infrastructure, killed many people and displaced 500,000 people. It led to prolonged school closures in the PNG Highlands;
 - d. In 2020, torrential flooding in Timor-Leste caused an estimated \$5000m of damage to infrastructure displaced almost a thousand and led to school closures and disruptions..
 - e. In 2021, extreme drought in the Northern Marshall Islands affected water supply, crops and food security. Drought also affected Kiribati and Tuvalu in 2022.
 - f. In 2022, the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai volcano in Tonga exploded. It was a 15 megatons explosion with the highest plume ever recorded and an ash cloud that reached 35 miles in height. It led to six reported deaths but huge public disruption.
50. Several Pacific SIDS have sought to improve education outcomes through the development of national education plans. Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu have developed national education plans between 2014 and 2022 that set out practical strategies for addressing key challenges and the needs of different groups of learners.⁴⁴ These plans emphasise the need to boost digital and technical skills (including in the sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics) as well as training initiatives for youth⁴⁵. Pacific Sustainable Development report notes that the agenda for education in the Pacific is changing to recognize the increasing need to develop non-cognitive skills (such as motivation, communication and interpersonal skills) in young people to respond to changing communities, labour markets and the broader impacts of climate change. While existing initiatives are helping to improve access to education as well as the quality of education, there is much to be done to ensure that all children and young people in Pacific SIDS have access to quality education.

Sustained and sustainable, inclusive and equitable, economic growth with decent work for all.

51. Unemployment, particularly among women and young people continues to be a major concern for the region and a major detractor for social development. As a result of the pandemic, in 2020 overall unemployment rates went up by 3.7 % in the Pacific, with youth unemployment (prior to COVID-19) already averaging 23 % in the Pacific compared with the global average of 13%. The main reasons for high youth unemployment are linked to low economic growth rates, high population growth and skills mismatches.⁴⁶ As in other countries and regions, most highly paid jobs in the Pacific SIDS are in urban and peri-urban areas, which encourages rural to urban migration⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ See: Transforming Education Summit: Member States Statements | United Nations. One area where there may be scope for Pacific SIDS to do more is to promote the use of ‘circular economy models’ to promote decent work and employment opportunities. This is happening (for example in Fiji) but at a small scale at present.

⁴⁵ One promising initiative is the Fostering Opportunities for the Learning Environment (FOLE) which is funded by the European Union and implemented by UNDP. FOLE is working in 10 Pacific SIDS to improve the quality of education. It has reached over 100,000 people and has scope to be scaled-up.

⁴⁶ See: Decent Work and Social Justice in Pacific Small Island Developing States – Challenges, Opportunities and Policy Responses, ILO (2014)

⁴⁷ In the Consultation with Pacific Experts on 19-20th July 2023, participants noted that official unemployment figures do not properly acknowledge the traditional contributions of youth (male and female) to household well-being including construction works, fetching firewood and water, childcare, provision transport, contribution to food security based on fishing and agriculture and often as ‘first responders’ in disasters and emergencies.

52. Women lead nearly 80% of small businesses in the Pacific SIDS⁴⁸. The COVID pandemic and associated border closures, lockdowns, school closures and social distancing extended supply-side shocks on many businesses, particularly in the informal sectors. Overall unemployment rates increased in the Pacific, with youth unemployment at more than 23 percent in 2022 compared with the global average of 13 percent. The main reasons for high youth unemployment rates are low economic growth, high population growth and skills mismatches.
53. Pacific SIDS have made progress in promoting ‘decent work for all’ by: increasing investment in education and training – several Pacific SIDS have increased investment in education and technical & vocational training (especially for youth and women but also for people living with disabilities); reducing gender disparities in the labour market; and promoting the rights of workers - such as the right to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. These measures have helped improve the working conditions of workers and protected them from exploitation.⁴⁹ Significant challenges however remain in all Pacific SIDS because of: the high levels of unemployment and underemployment in many of the Pacific SIDS (especially for youth, women and people with disabilities, the elderly and single headed households); low wages; the prevalence of informal employment especially in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and hospitality sectors; the need to substantially strengthen the quality of education including vocational and technical skills; and variable rates of female participation in the workforce as a result of several factors including responsibilities for provision of childcare in the home and social norms. Accelerating progress on measures to promote decent work for all in the Pacific SIDS remains a high priority.
54. UNFPA notes that there is scope for greater recognition of the importance of population dynamics and its impact on development in the Pacific SIDS. A deeper understanding of the present population structures of the countries and factors affecting population change would be important for forecasting in all sectors including understanding the potential for remittances and revenue generation, the availability of skilled labor, potential dividends that can be derived from increased investments in skills enhancement for young persons, given the youthful population structures of some of Pacific SIDS and the need to plan for aging populations in others.

Promoting sustainable transport

55. The UN Liner Shipping Connectivity Index⁵⁰, which measures connectedness to global shipping networks, shows that SIDS are less than one third as well-connected as other developing countries. Among the Pacific SIDS, Fiji and Papua New Guinea, the most well-connected at 8.9 and 11.9 respectively out of a possible 100. The Federated States of Micronesia (1.9) Palau (3.3) Kiribati (4.4) and Marshall Islands (4.4) remain the least connected by shipping of any group of countries. UNCTAD notes that while for most countries the cost of international transport is approximately 9 per cent of the value of imports, for the Pacific SIDS this amounts to 10 per cent.
56. Maritime transport is responsible for about 2.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Efforts have been made under the leadership of Marshall Islands to reduce maritime shipping emissions through IMO, in line with the Paris Agreement; and to establish a Micronesia Centre for Sustainable Transport to promote low carbon shipping in the Pacific. The Pacific SIDS contributed to the IMO agreement to cut the shipping sector's carbon dioxide output by 50 per cent by 2050. While welcome, this agreement is regarded as grossly inadequate for global ambitions on emission targets.

⁴⁸ Participants at the Consultation with Pacific Experts noted that one of the biggest barriers to female led businesses in the Pacific SIDS is access to finance. This is a barrier that banking and financial institutions can address more effectively.

⁴⁹ See: <https://www.ilo.org/asia/decentwork>.

⁵⁰ See: <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/wds>.

57. Pacific Regional policy frameworks on transport include the Framework for Action on Transport Services 2011-2020 and the 2050 Strategy for Blue Pacific Continent (which includes Technology and Connectivity as one of 7 priority areas).
58. Sustainable aviation transportation is a major challenge in the Pacific region. The Regional Aviation Ministers platform has in place the Pacific Regional Aviation Strategy (PRAS) which recognises that air connectivity and in turn sustainable aviation is enabled through four key interconnected drivers: geography; airport infrastructure; airline models; and the regulatory and economic frameworks of states. These drivers all play an important role in ensuring that the Pacific SIDS can maintain or expand air connectivity..

Tourism

59. Data on tourism show substantial progress has been achieved by SIDS in the AIS region, mixed progress in the Caribbean (where there has been regression and stagnation) and a worryingly high level of stagnation and regression in the Pacific SIDS. This may be attributable to a combination of factors including the impact of the COVID pandemic (travel restrictions affecting) and the disruptions caused by the war in Ukraine (increasing fuel and other prices). All Pacific SIDS together with the Pacific Islands Forum have made, and are making, considerable efforts to boost sustainable 'eco-tourism' as part of the 'Pacific Blue Continent'. In response to COVID pandemic and disruptions to international travel and country lockdowns, a revised policy on tourism in the Pacific has been created – the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (2021-2030)⁵¹. This has provided an opportunity to reflect, rethink and revise the pathway to recovery for tourism in the Pacific, balancing economic, social and environmental needs while also being conscious, regenerative and restorative for the peoples, cultures, islands and ocean ecosystems in the Pacific.

Thematic Area 2: Act to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts by implementing sustainable energy and disaster risk reduction programmes.

Overview

60. The ambition of the Framework for Resilient Development as well as the SAMOA Pathway is greatest in relation to the impacts of climate change. This corresponds with the existential threat that the climate crises poses for the Pacific SIDS. The 2022 assessments note that there are three clusters under thematic area 2 (climate change, sustainable energy and disaster risk reduction) and thirteen indicators.

Climate Change

61. Recognising that the Pacific region contributes just 0.03% of global emissions, Pacific Leaders have shown their commitment to the Paris Agreement with by agreeing ambitious Nationally Determined Commitments (NDCs). With the establishment of the Pacific regional NDC Hub (2017) to support the implementation and ambition of decarbonization, NDCs have the potential to galvanize national actions to pursue higher emission targets and ensure compliance both nationally and regionally including in high emitting sectors/industries such as energy, transportation and land use, and urban

⁵¹ See: <https://southpacificislands.travel/wp-content/uploads/202/08/Pacific-Sustainable-Tourism-Policy-Framework-pdf>

areas. The implementation of NDCs is also supported by the work of the Pacific Meteorological Council.⁵²

The Role of Pacific Climate Change Centre

In response to the Pacific Leaders consistent call for climate action, the SPREP Meeting in 2012 endorsed the proposal to request support from the Government of Japan to construct the Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC) on the SPREP campus. The proposed PCCC was further endorsed by the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting in the Republic of the Marshall Islands in 2013. In 2014, the Government of Japan approved the application, developed by SPREP and submitted through the Government of Samoa, and began the process for assessing the requirements for constructing the Centre.

The second phase of the project will commence in September 2023. The PCCC is strengthening support to Pacific SIDS through capacity building and training around accessing climate finance and providing readiness support to the SIDS. It is also developing innovative climate finance solutions through engagement with the SIDS and the private sector in the Pacific. The PCCC represents an important means for accelerating climate action, in support of the target of keeping global temperature increase to within 1.5 Celsius and achieving net-zero emissions.

62. The provision of sufficient, predictable, financing to the Pacific SIDS for implementing climate change adaptation and mitigation remains a significant gap. Anecdotal evidence referred to in the Consultation with Pacific Experts indicated that to date the Pacific SIDS have received 0.22% of global climate finance (which if true, would be remarkable given that these are countries that face the gravest threat from the impacts of climate change). With support from development partners and the Green Environment Fund, many of the Pacific SIDS have commenced construction of ‘climate resilient infrastructure’ and projects promoting sustainable resource management to assist mitigation and adaptation work. Despite these efforts more support and investment is required.
63. The 2022 assessment notes that in the Pacific, two-thirds of the countries with data, show progress on investments in renewable energy⁵³. Assessment of the underlying indicators show that strong gains have been made in renewable energy capacity, where progress is being seen in approximately 80 per cent of SIDS (including in the Pacific). Financial flows to support clean energy initiatives are evident in 66% of the countries that have this data, with many of the SIDS showing increased reliance on clean energy. While progress in renewable energy capacity is evident, SIDS across all three regions, are regressing in terms of the share of renewable energy as a percentage of total energy usage. With increased engagement with the Sustainable Energy for All and the International Renewable Energy Agency (via the SIDS Lighthouse Initiative), it is possible for the Pacific SIDS to improve energy efficiency and accelerate the transition to renewable energy. This requires deeper commitments by most Pacific SIDS to progress the transition to renewables.

⁵² See: <https://www.pacificmet.net/pmc>.

⁵³ The Consultation with Pacific Experts on July 19-20th 2023 included presentations from the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) programme and from the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) on the SIDS Lighthouse Initiative. Both are already working with SIDS and gave a strong justification of why increased investment of use of renewables will be vital for the Pacific SIDS over the next decade. To date, only Vanuatu has made a commitment to move to 100% renewable energy use by 2030 – other Pacific SIDS have yet to make similar commitments.

Disaster Risk Reduction

64. The World Meteorological Organisation 2021 Report on the State of the Climate in the South-West Pacific⁵⁴, notes that the total economic damage from climate related disasters in 2020-2021 in the Pacific region amounted to USD 5.7 billion dollars. The same report found that a comparison of the economic loss in 2021 to the average over the past 20 years shows that the economic damage for the two major climate related disaster types (storms and floods) is on the rise. ESCAP's 2022 Asia Pacific Disaster Report, Pathways to Adaptation and Resilience in the Pacific SIDS states that the total annual adaptation cost for Pacific SIDS is estimated at \$487 million (\$480 million as the adaptation cost for climate-related hazards and \$7 million as the adaptation cost for biological hazards). As a percentage of a country's GDP, the highest costs are estimated for Vanuatu at 9.6% followed by Tonga at 8.6%. Regional cooperation can be a useful tool in pooling common resources to help countries, that have higher costs of adaption as a percentage of GDP and less ability to pay, to reach their adaptation goals. While increases in climate financing for the Pacific region is welcome, it is not keeping pace with the adaptation needs of Pacific SIDS.
65. Substantive progress has been made by the Pacific SIDS to support the development of national early warning systems for tsunamis and other coastal hazards and within the context of the reinforcement of human and institutional capacities, for the Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme. All Pacific SIDS now have disaster risk management and response plans prepared. Sixteen Pacific SIDS now have Tsunami warning Focal Points and benefited from capacity-building support.⁵⁵ Other areas of progress on disaster risk reduction include:
- Strengthened national multi-hazard risk governance: while there has been some progress in integrating DRR into sectoral development plans and strategies, more needs to be done to move towards risk-informed and resilient sustainable development in all sectoral plans and in integrating climate change adaptation and DRR strategies at national and local levels to support more effective adaptation and mitigation.
 - Application of risk data and information in national development plans, sector-specific plans, and related investments to strengthen resilience. Risk data and information can help to facilitate better understanding of the root causes of risk and disasters, and the development of a multi-sectoral approach to DRR. Incorporation of local, traditional, and indigenous knowledges in planning, and evidence-based programming are essential part of for effective disaster risk reduction.
 - Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction: An inclusive approach to disaster risk reduction is important to maximise resilience dividends for the most vulnerable groups. By promoting 'gender-responsive approaches' to DRR and ensuring the involvement of persons with disabilities, the elderly, children and marginalized groups in each step of DRR implementation, it is possible to achieve better outcomes from all⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ See: <https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/climate/wmo-statement-state-of-global-climate>.

⁵⁵ See: <https://rrp.unescap.org>. UNESCAP notes that there is an estimated 10-fold return on investment on early warning systems. In most cases the costs of adaptation are equivalent to 1.5% of GDP which is three times less than average projected losses. There is a strong case for investing in effective early warning systems.

⁵⁶ At the Consultation with Pacific Experts on July 19-20th 2023, several participants advocated for stronger links to be made between the DRR work (prioritised through the Sendai Framework) and the principles of the Jakarta Declaration (1997) on health promotion and the importance of community participation. There is scope for improving the design of infrastructure to make increase accessibility for people with disabilities.

66. Predictable and sufficient levels of climate finance and finance for disaster risk reduction remain priorities for the Pacific. Concerns remain in the Pacific about the adequacy of the financial resources and support that has been made available, including through the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage, to address the impacts of climate change for the most vulnerable. Short-term climate finance based on donor cycles is insufficient for addressing the longer-term, slow-onset events that exacerbate the loss of biodiversity. While the Green Climate Fund has adopted a simplified access procedure for SIDS, this applies primarily to ‘low-risk projects’, while other essential initiatives requiring climate finance remain unfunded in the Pacific SIDS.
67. Future challenges for the Pacific include an over-reliance on the Paris Agreement commitments and risk of failure with voluntary commitments of NDCs and protracted negotiations. Internal population displacement due to the impacts of climate change are also a challenge in all Pacific SIDS and already a visible reality. For example, temporary displacements following natural disasters as well as permanent community relocation in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. International migration options are also being discussed in the Pacific region for vulnerable populations living on atolls. Major challenges for the Pacific SIDS include the need to improve coordination, reduce duplication and ‘scale-up’ successful programmes.

The Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change Project

One successful initiative in the Pacific is the PACC (Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change) project, funded by GEF and UNDP and implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). This project focused on water security, food security and coastal management, through the Pacific climate change portal and relevant national portals. The project delivered on the ground adaptation in each country, provided important lessons learned and numerous studies, and now serves as a basis for knowledge management on adaptation in the region. Despite the project’s success, however its activities need to be implemented in all sectors, in all communities, and in all countries. This challenge, for example, requires a concerted effort to develop new proposals for each of the SIDS, for which more support is needed to identify concepts, develop full projects and support implementation.

Thematic Area 3: Protecting the biodiversity and environmental health of SIDS by mitigating the impact of invasive species and by properly managing chemicals and water, including hazardous waste, and protecting the oceans and seas.

Overview

68. The 2022 assessment report notes that there are 25 indicators covering 6 main clusters in this area. There is insufficient data to assess progress in relation to desertification, land degradation and drought as well as some aspects on invasive alien species. In the remainder of clusters, there are three indicators for which there is insufficient data (relating to fish stocks, protected areas and municipal waste treatment).

Protection of biodiversity and environmental health

69. Habitat loss continues to be a challenge, largely due to human impact and unsustainable practices such as: logging and forest conversion for plantation and agriculture; land-based activities that contribute to marine pollution and other forms of improper waste management; clearance of mangrove areas, foreshore reclamation, coral harvesting, dredging, sand mining and coastal development; poorly managed mining operations; and the impact of natural disasters and extreme events. The

Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in the Pacific⁵⁷ is monitoring conservation practices. It provides strategic guidance and encourages coordination and cooperation amongst key conservation players. A coalition of regional organizations and partners, under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Round Table for Nature Conservation, are also working to support implementation of the Framework.

Mitigating the impact of invasive species

70. The State of Environment and Conservation in the Pacific Islands Regional Report (2020) notes that Islands account for 5% of the total land area on Earth but account for nearly 50% of IUCN's 'Red Listed species'. Invasive species are the leading cause of species extinction in Pacific ecosystems. They have been formally identified as a threat for 1,531 species in the Pacific region⁵⁸. also have an impact on food and economic security through the introduction of new diseases and pathogens with the potential to wipe out agricultural, fisheries and crop development.
71. Pacific SIDS have made political commitments to tackle invasive species including: (i) The Suva Declaration on Invasive Species, which was adopted by leaders of the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF) in 2015; (ii) The Nauru Agreement on Marine Resources, which includes a commitment to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species; (iii) The Pacific Regional Invasive Species Strategy, which was developed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in 2017. These political commitments provide a framework for action to tackle invasive species in the Pacific SIDS. In addition to the above commitments, the Pacific SIDS have supported several regional initiatives to implement specific programs including:
- The Pacific Invasive Species Management Network (PIMSN), which is a partnership of organizations working to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species.
 - The Pacific Regional Pest and Disease Management Centre (PRPMC), which provides technical support to countries in the region to manage pests and diseases.
 - The Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP), which provides a global platform for the exchange of information and best practices on invasive species management.

These initiatives are helping to raise public awareness, building capacity for the management of invasive species and improving coordination.

Managing chemicals water including hazardous waste

72. While sound management of chemicals and waste are vital for human health and environment in all aspects and across borders, the small land areas and remote and fragile ecosystems of SIDS pose a particular challenge. In several Pacific SIDS, poor waste management practices and limited land availability has resulted over the past decade in substantially increased volumes of solid and hazardous wastes that threaten the environment and sustainable development. The indicative waste generation for the entire Pacific urban population has been projected to be more than 1.59 million tonnes by 2025. Organic waste constitutes an average of 44 per cent of the waste stream, which in

⁵⁷ See: <https://www.sprep.org/pirt/framework-for-nature-conservation-and-protected-areas-in-the-pacific-islands-region-2021-2025>.

⁵⁸ Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme at: <https://www.sprep.org/invasive-species-management-in-the-pacific>.

turn releases odours, pests and noxious leachate from dumps. These impacts can be minimized by diverting organic waste into recycling programmes such as composting or anaerobic digestion.

Regional, National and Local Initiatives on Management of Waste

The Pacific Regional Waste and Pollution Management Strategy (2016–2025) is designed to help improve the management of waste and pollution over the next decade. Two positive developments are: (i) the ‘Cleaner Pacific 2025’ strategy, made possible with partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the European Union. This focuses on strengthening institutional and human capacity, promotion of public-private partnerships, implementation of sustainable best practices, and promotion of regional and national cooperation; and (ii) the ISLANDS Project: a global project that is working to reduce the use of hazardous chemicals and waste in SIDS. The project is funded by the Global Environment Facility and is being implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme in the Pacific and elsewhere.

There are also a growing number of national and local initiatives to help improve waste management in the Pacific. Approximately 88 per cent of the urban population (or 47 per cent of the national population) in 18 Pacific SIDS have access to a regular collection service. Providing consistent and reliable waste collection services, in rural areas and on outer islands in many Pacific SIDS and territories, continues however to be challenging. Local initiatives such as the ‘Container Deposit Programmes’; pre-paid waste collection bag systems; and the introduction of waste tipping fees to assist countries finance the appropriate disposal of waste are some of the positive steps being implemented. These need to be supported and replicated. These initiatives are being supported through public education and awareness activities, such as the ‘3Rs+Return’, ‘eco-bags’ and the ‘Clean Schools programmes’. Recycling initiatives in countries (eg Palau and Kiribati), have resulted in a substantial volume of materials taken offshore, which has relieved pressure on landfill space.

73. All Pacific SIDS have phased out the use of Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and now face the challenge of phasing-out consumption of HCFCs or the main Ozone Depleting Substances (ODSs) used in the Pacific region primarily used in refrigeration and air-conditioning. Other examples of positive steps taken in the Pacific include: the passing of legislation in Vanuatu in February 2018 to ban the use, manufacture and importation of single use plastic bags and polystyrene takeaway food containers; In Palau and Timor-Leste banning the use of single use bags and CNMI (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) introducing fines for shops that offer single use bags; and Fiji has user fees to discourage use of plastics.

Protecting Oceans and Seas

74. Prior to the 2nd UN Ocean Conference in June 2022, the Forum Leaders issued a united Statement in 2021 stating their commitment to strong regional action and shared stewardship of the Pacific Ocean, guided by the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. As regards considerations for oceans and seas in the future, it is important to examine international agreements to safeguard resources and address issues related to maritime boundaries⁵⁹.
75. More support is needed for the sustainable use of fisheries, especially in the Pacific SIDS, where national fish consumption is three to four times the global average, representing 50 to 90 per cent of animal protein consumed by many island populations. In the Pacific, earnings from fisheries remain disproportionately low, representing only a small percentage of the value of the landed catch, partly owing to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. At present, there are differing positions

⁵⁹ The adoption of the Treaty of the High Seas, also known as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty in March 2023 is a significant milestone in global protection of biodiversity in seas and oceans. It can more effectively support the on-going efforts of the Pacific SIDS to protect biodiversity and reduce pollution of the oceans See: <https://www.un.org/bbnj/sites/www.un.org/bbnj/files>.

amongst the Pacific SIDS on deep sea mining, with some countries supporting a moratorium and others supporting different levels of exploration. This will become a more significant issue in future.

76. There are a multitude of threats to the health of oceans and seas, including climate change and ocean acidification, marine debris, plastic litter, overfishing, illegal practices, and the lack of precautionary approaches. Shipping and marine pollution also pose key threats, due to the special value and sensitivity of the region's coastal environments and the inadequacy of regional and national capacity to address the issue. The Blue Pacific Ocean Report 2021 pointed to a lack of coordination in the implementation of ocean initiatives, especially when it comes to documenting progress and called for a better integration to inform a coordinated policy development to tackle the factors that are continuing to undermine the quality and health of vulnerable ecosystems. This should be assisted by the new Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Treaty.

Forests

77. Protecting biodiversity requires good land management practices. Several Pacific SIDS have policies for managing forests and biodiversity. These include Fiji, Palau, Samoa, Tuvalu and Papua New Guinea. In each of these countries, efforts are on-going to conserve and manage forest areas, protect biodiversity, reduce deforestation, manage invasive species and promote community participation. There are however significant threats to forest areas due to widespread commercial and illegal logging. The estimated level of deforestation in the Pacific SIDS between 2014-2022 was less than 1% per year. However, the Pacific SIDS figure obscures a range of different deforestation rates including Solomon Islands (2.2% p.a.), Vanuatu (1.8% p.a.), and Papua New Guinea (1.7% p.a.). The countries with the lowest rates of deforestation are Tuvalu (0.2% p.a.) and Kiribati (0.3% p.a.).
78. Pacific SIDS are supporting measures to reduce deforestation including by: (a) promoting sustainable agriculture: This involves using agricultural practices that minimize the impact on forests; (b) improving forest management: This involves managing forests in a way that ensures their long-term sustainability; (c) supporting reforestation: This involves planting trees to replace those that have been lost; (d) increasing public awareness: Raising awareness of the importance of forests can help to reduce deforestation.

Thematic Area 4: Improve human health and social development through food security and nutrition and improved water and sanitation and by reducing the incidence of non-communicable diseases and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

Overview

79. This theme is covered by 50 indicators across seven clusters (food security and nutrition; water and sanitation; health and non-communicable diseases; gender equality women's empowerment; social development; culture and sports; and peaceful societies and safe communities).

Food security and nutrition

80. For the Pacific SIDS, the data shows that there has been stagnation and slight regression on the indicator for under-5 children who are moderately or severely stunted. There is a similar trend in all SIDS for this indication. This may in part be due to global challenges including the impact of the COVID pandemic and the disruptions caused by the war in Ukraine. Since most of the SIDS

are net importers of food and fuel, and the share of food and oil account for up to 40 per cent of the consumer price index basket in many of these economies, the impact of the global price shocks has contributed considerably to domestic inflation and reducing food security (nationally and at household levels).

81. There are multiple immediate and long-term challenges to ensuring food security in the Pacific. They include: climate and other environmental pressures; availability of scarce, fertile and arable land; limited access to land; overexploitation of oceanic resources and native forests; pollution; population growth; urbanization; and aging agricultural and fisheries workforces. These are all issues raised by several of the Pacific SIDS that participated in the UN Food Systems Summit in 2022 and are now being followed up at national and local levels.⁶⁰ Disasters, including earthquakes, cyclones, floods and tsunamis have seriously impacted food security and led to a decrease in savings and increased difficulties in meeting daily expenditure. This combined with the COVID pandemic, where many more people lost their source of income and had to rely on their savings, increased the vulnerability of communities, with women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities disproportionately at higher risk.
82. In the period 2014 to 2022, fourteen of the Pacific SIDS have joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement⁶¹. The SUN movement provides a platform to share experiences and learn from each other, as well as to access resources and support.

Water and Sanitation

83. For the Pacific SIDS, the indicators on water and sanitation show stagnation (with and some regressions) for the percentage of the population using safely managed drinking water; the percentage of the population practising open defecation; the percentage of the population having safely managed sanitation; and the percentage of the population with basic handwashing facilities. The Pacific Sustainable Development Report notes that approximately 50% of the Pacific population lives without access to basic drinking water facilities, and more than 66% live without access to basic sanitation. Despite this, there has been a persistent low level of engagement by many national and local authorities the Pacific SIDS on water security compared to other sectoral issues, and insufficient consideration of water security issues in regional frameworks and decision-making.
84. Despite global progress in addressing open defecation, it is estimated that some 1.3 million Pacific islanders continue to rely on the bush or the beach for their toilet. Pacific communities are also highly vulnerable to the WASH-related impacts of climate change and disasters, including threats to water security due to sea level rise, changing rainfall patterns and more frequent extreme weather events, as well as an increasing burden of climate-sensitive water-borne and water-related diseases. The strengthening of WASH facilities and practices is therefore an important aspect for building the resilience of the Pacific SIDS to the impacts of climate change and natural hazards.

Health and non-communicable diseases

85. High prevalence of NCDs in the Pacific SIDS remains a serious public health problem. NCDs account for approximately 70-75% of deaths in the Pacific. Pacific SIDS have supported, and continue to support, measures to address the problem of NCDs, including:

⁶⁰ At the Consultation meeting with Pacific Experts on 19-20th July 2023, participants heard an example of how young people are supporting social enterprises to boost food security through organic farming with support from farmers associations. The Tonga National Youth Congress is also constructing water and sanitation structures that promote gender equality and traditional local culture.

⁶¹ See: <https://scalingupnutrition.org>.

- Promoting healthy eating: Virtually all governments and health organizations are promoting healthy eating by educating people about the importance of healthy diets and by making healthy foods more available and affordable. Several Pacific SIDS are also raising taxes on sugar sweetened beverages⁶².
- Encouraging physical activity: Several governments and health organizations are encouraging physical activity by providing opportunities for people to be physically active and by making physical activity more accessible.
- Tackling tobacco use: Several governments and health organizations are tackling tobacco use by raising taxes on tobacco products, banning smoking in public places, and providing smoking cessation services.
- Reducing alcohol use: Several governments and health organizations are committed to reducing alcohol use by raising taxes on alcohol consumption, banning alcohol advertising, and providing alcohol treatment services.

86. A WHO report⁶³ shows that 8 of the 15 countries with more than a 30% risk of premature death from cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory disease are SIDS. The 10 countries with the highest obesity rates globally are all Pacific SIDS, where over 45% of adults live with obesity. The drivers of NCDs are complex and multifactorial and despite several global and regional agreements and commitments there has been limited translation into concrete local action. This is an area where Pacific SIDS must continue and deepen their efforts. There was stagnation on Hepatitis-B surface antigen prevalence (amongst under-5s) and on new HIV infections. The Pacific SIDS have made good progress on births attended by skilled health personnel, reducing infant and under-5 mortality, and reducing neo-natal mortality. Progress has been achieved by the Pacific SIDS to reduce infant, neonatal and under-5 mortality, with each showing reductions of approximately 10 to 15 per cent for most Pacific countries, during the period 2014 to 2019.

Linking Water and Sanitation and Health Outcomes

The links between climate change, water and sanitation and health are critical for SIDS. For example, the infrastructure goal of the Kiribati Development Plan and the Kiribati Vision 20 years (KV20) intends to build capacity and resilience of communities in the outer islands through WASH initiatives. Among the good practices is community participatory consultation that includes youth, women and elders to identify WASH-related infrastructure project needs. Communities commit to supporting the projects through their Village Action Plans, which were developed with assistance of SPC and MISC. Kiribati has highlighted the challenges of a “projectized” approach to WASH initiatives, and the benefits of a more programmatic, nation-wide, multi-stakeholder approach to foster sustainability.

Gender equality and women’s empowerment

87. The indicators for the Pacific SIDS show positive progress in net enrolment of girls in primary schools and the proportion of elected seats held by women in national parliaments (although this is

⁶² See: <https://www.obesityevidencehub.org.au/collections/prevention/countries-that-have-implemented-taxes-on-sugar-sweetened-beverages>.

⁶³ See: <https://www.who.int/news/item/15-06-2023-small-islands-agree-bold-plan-of-action-on-non-communicable-diseases-and-mental-health>.

from an extremely low base). The data also show that there has been some progress in the percentage of women in managerial positions as well as in senior and middle level management positions⁶⁴. There have been positive developments in recent years, such as the adoption of the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration in 2012 (which is expected to be revised in November 2023 at the next Forum Leaders meeting). There is however still a long way to go to achieve gender equality and address the many challenges that women continue to face in the Pacific SIDS..

88. Priorities to improve gender equality in the Pacific SIDS include: (i) increasing women's representation in decision-making: This can be achieved in some cases by agreeing quotas for women in parliament and government, as well as by supporting women's political participation; (ii) addressing discrimination in schools, colleges and the workplace: This can be done by enforcing laws against discrimination, providing training for employers and employees, and creating awareness of the issue; (iii) eliminating violence against women and girls: This can be done by enacting laws on violence against women and girls in all spheres (including at home), providing support services for victims of violence, and raising greater awareness of the issue; (iv) increasing women's access to education and healthcare: This can be assisted by providing financial assistance to women, building schools and clinics in remote areas, and addressing cultural barriers that prevent women from accessing education and healthcare. By taking these steps, it may be possible to further improve gender equality and create more just and equitable societies.

Culture and Sport

89. Pacific SIDS have strengthened international cooperation in the cultural field, in line with UNESCO's international conventions reaching close to universal ratification of the World Heritage Convention and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Regional and local capacities have been reinforced in the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage as well as the development of cultural and creative industries. Despite this, the assessment on culture and sport shows significant levels of stagnation and regression.

Social Development

90. Social development is a broad concept that encompasses many aspects of human well-being including health, education, gender equality, social protection, human rights and participation. The SIDS face challenges in achieving social development due to their geographic isolation, small population size, limited financial resources, environmental vulnerability, high levels of NCDs and exposure to external shocks. In the Pacific, and the other SIDS regions, there are significant gaps in terms of the data on social development.
91. An estimated 15% of people in the Pacific have some form of disability many of whom are marginalized and often excluded and unable to access essential services (such as water and sanitation and health and education services) as well as key infrastructure⁶⁵. Less than 10% of all children

⁶⁴ See for example: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/advancing-gender-equality-in-the-Pacific>. Also: <https://gsdrc/publications/gender-issues-in-the-pacific-islands-GSDRC>. Also: <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpret/gender-equality-pacific-less-talk--and-more-action>. Also: https://www.ilo.org/suva/areas-of-work/WCMS_195612.

⁶⁵ See: <https://www.forumsec.org/framework-for-rights-of-persons-with-disability/>. See also <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/SDD>. On building Disability-Inclusive Societies in Asia and the Pacific – Assessing progress of the Incheon Strategy (2018). Up to October 2022 44 Asian and Pacific governments had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. See: <https://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/guest-articles/persons-with-disabilities-key-to-achieving-fully-inclusive-societies>.

with disabilities in the region attend school, compared to 70% of children who do not have a disability. Reports show that the rate of unemployment for persons with a disability in the region ranges from 50% to 90%. Social development therefore remains a high priority for the full inclusion of these citizens of the Pacific SIDS.

Innovation via the Solutions Platform

The SIDS Solutions Platform is a global initiative launched by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other partners to facilitate knowledge exchange, innovation and scaling up of solutions for sustainable development among SIDS. It organizes regional forums for SIDS to showcase their solutions and learn from each other by helping to incubate, promote, scale-up and replicate locally grown ideas to accelerate the achievement of agriculture, food, nutrition, environmental and health interventions. The Solutions Platform has helped spread the use of digital technologies, mobile technologies, remote-sensing techniques to transform agri-food systems in the Pacific SIDS.

Peaceful Societies

92. The Global Peace Index ⁶⁶ measures the level of peacefulness in 163 countries based on 23 indicators. In 2021 it concluded that the Pacific region has experienced a deterioration in its overall score since 2010, mainly due to increased militarization and political instability.
93. While Pacific SIDS remain largely peaceful and secure, it is important to stress that evidence from across the world shows that peace and security can rapidly destabilise when societies face significant threats, such as land loss or food and water insecurity, and when groups of people feel some form of grievance that which perceive the authorities seem unwilling to address. It is arguable whether the Pacific SIDS are currently doing enough to address this.⁶⁷

Thematic Area 5: Fostering partnerships among small island developing states, United Nations agencies, development partners and others to achieve the goals

Overview

94. There are 25 indicators covering six clusters (Means of Implementation, Partnerships, Finance, Trade, Technology, Data and Statistics) under this theme. .

Means of Implementation

95. There are two specific indicators covering means of implementation are: (i) domestic budgets funded by domestic taxes (percentage); and (ii) debt service (as a percentage of exports, services and primary income). For the Pacific SIDS, the assessment shows that there has been considerable regression and stagnation for the first indicator and regression on the second indicator. Domestic

⁶⁶ See: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-peace-index-2022>.

⁶⁷ SPREP has a Grievance Mechanism to resolve any environmental and social concerns or performance of a SPREP project. See: <https://www.sprep.org/accountability/grievance-mechanism>. The largest conflict in the Pacific in recent times was in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, 1994-1998. In 2019 there was a non-binding independence referendum in Bougainville, in which over 98% of voters voted for independence. The issue remains a potential source of grievance between the people of Bougainville and the Government of Papua New Guinea.

budgets in the Pacific SIDS have been declining in the last five years. The Asian Development Bank notes that the average domestic budget of Pacific SIDS has declined by 1.5% per year since 2017.⁶⁸

Partnerships

96. The indicators on partnerships focus on the provision of official development assistance (aid) to SIDS and public-private partnerships for infrastructure in the SIDS. On aid to the Pacific SIDS, the indicators show that the Pacific has made progress (slightly less than in the AIS SIDS but more than the Caribbean SIDS). There has however also been greater regression in aid to the Pacific SIDS, compared to the other regions. For the Pacific SIDS, this may warrant a deeper discussion with key development partners to better understand why this has happened and to review expectations for the future. On public-private partnerships for infrastructure, all three SIDS regions show significant levels of stagnation (in the Caribbean there is also some regression). An area that could possibly be explored in more detail is the possibility of strengthening intra-SIDS partnerships for aid, trade, know-how and technology transfers. There are some initiatives underway to promote climate smart trade and investment within the Pacific SIDS including:

- The Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER Plus) -is a free trade agreement between 12 Pacific Island countries. The agreement has been in force since 2001, and it has helped to increase trade between the countries⁶⁹.
- The Pacific Islands Forum Economic Development Strategy (PIFED) - is a regional development strategy that aims to promote economic growth and development in the Pacific Islands. PIFE includes several trade-related initiatives, such as the development of a regional trade agreement.
- The United Nations system provides technical assistance to countries in Asia and the Pacific including programs that promote trade between SIDS, such as the Trade Facilitation Programme for the Pacific Islands.

Financing

97. The three indicators on financing cover: remittance costs (as a proportion of the amount remitted); government revenue (% of GDP); and personal remittances. For the Pacific SIDS there has been mixed progress on these three indicators. On the first, there has been progress but also regression. On the second and third indicators, the Pacific SIDS have achieved some but there have been greater levels of regression. Progress on the level of personal remittances has been greater in the AIS and Caribbean regions than in the Pacific.

98. On remittance costs, there has been progress over the past decade in the Pacific SIDS to reduce the costs of sending remittances but the data from the other SIDS regions shows that there is considerable scope for further reducing the costs of remittances in the Pacific. Remittances are an important contributor to most of the economies of the Pacific SIDS and based on experience from other countries, there is scope for several Pacific SIDS to do more to increase the level of remittances received

⁶⁸ In the Consultation with Pacific Experts 19-20th July, Mark Borg (a Consultant based in the Pacific) stated.. 'In terms of Pacific priorities on the issue of financial resources, ..for decades, discussions on financing in the Pacific have been about how much money we can attract from external (mostly donor) funding and .. That needs to change. ... I feel that discussions need to be around how we can raise our finances within our own countries and slowly eliminate the reliance on donor funding. The region has the reputation of being ODA dependent. This need not be so'.

⁶⁹ In the Consultation with Experts, 19-20th July 2023, participants heard about the ways in which the Pacer Plus work is contributing to strengthening capacities of the Pacific SIDS to import/export goods and services, and invest in capacity building of the Pacific SIDS.

from communities overseas. For example, by supporting the issuing of diaspora bonds that can increase remittance flows.⁷⁰

99. The United Nations has estimated during the period 2015-2024 approximately US \$3.5 billion has been made available to the Pacific SIDS for implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.⁷¹ This figure excludes funding from the Green Climate Fund, which pledged to provide US \$100 billion to all SIDS over the 2023 to 2033 period. Most donor funding for the SAMOA Pathway has been provided by multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the European Union. However, there has also been additional funding from bilateral donors, such as Australia, New Zealand and the United States. The data from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) shows that in the period 2015 to 2023, Pacific SIDS have received total funding of US \$1.4 billion (US \$760 million for Adaptation and US \$640 for Mitigation projects). The majority of GCF funding for Pacific SIDS has been provided for adaptation projects, such as building seawalls, improving water management, and developing renewable energy sources. However, there has also been significant funding for mitigation projects, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and transportation.
100. A Discussion Paper produced by UNDP and supported by the UK aid and the Pacific Islands Forum in 2021 ‘Climate Finance Effectiveness in the Pacific: Are we on the Right Track’⁷² found that the Pacific SIDS had indicatively mobilised US \$2.2 billion in climate finance over the period 2011-2021. While this figure fell significantly short of the estimated adaptation and mitigation needs required to protect Pacific economies and enable them to deliver against their NDC and climate change adaptation priorities, the way in which climate finance was accessed and utilised was not ‘delivering meaningful and sustained resilient development results’.

Financing Options - the use of Bonds by the Pacific SIDS

Three Pacific SIDS have so far issued green bonds or similar financial instruments to enhance their financing possibilities (the FSM, Tuvalu and Papua New Guinea). In 2018, the Federated States of Micronesia issued a \$10 million green bond to finance renewable energy projects. The bond was certified by the Climate Bonds Initiative and was oversubscribed by 100%. In 2021 Tuvalu issued a \$10 million blue bond to finance marine conservation projects. The bond was certified by the Climate Bonds Initiative and was oversubscribed by 150%. In 2022 Papua New Guinea issued its first green bond in 2022. The bond was issued by the Papua New Guinea Sustainable Development Trust (PNGSDT) and raised \$100 million. It was also massively oversubscribed. The proceeds of the bond will be used to finance renewable energy projects, energy efficiency projects, and climate change adaptation projects in Papua New Guinea. These bonds are significant because they demonstrate the potential for green and blue bonds to help Pacific SIDS finance their transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient future. Several of the other Pacific including Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu are now considering issuing similar bonds as a way of assisting the transition to low-carbon futures. Green bonds and similar financial instruments are valuable tools for the Pacific SIDS to help achieve their climate and development goals.

⁷⁰ See: www.globaldiasporainsights.com.

⁷¹ The United Nations estimate for donor funding to the Caribbean and AIS SIDS for the period 2015-2019 is Caribbean SIDS (US \$ 1 billion) and AIS SIDS (US \$500 million), excluding Green Climate Fund commitment to provide all SIDS with US \$100 billion for the period 2023-2033. For the period 2015 to 2022, the Pacific SIDS received \$1.4 billion while the Caribbean SIDS and AIS SIDS received approximately US \$1,26 billion from the Green Climate Fund.

⁷² See: www.undp.org/sites/files/zskgke326/files/migration/pacific/UNDP-Climate-Finance-Effectiveness-in-the-Pacific-Discussion-Paper-pdf. See also: www.sprep.org/sites/default/files/30-SPREP-Meeting/officials/Eng/WP_7.2_att.2-Securing_climate_financing_pdf. (2021)

Trade

101. The indicators on trade focus on three specific areas. These are: tariffs applied to imports with zero tariffs; the MFN (Most Favoured Nation) average tariffs applied by Developed Countries; and the preferential rate, average tariff applied by developed countries. For the Pacific SIDS there has been some progress against the three indicators but also significant levels of regression and some stagnation.

102. The Pacific SIDS have established Pacific Trade and Invest Network offices in Australia, New Zealand and China. Pacific SIDS have also benefitted from aid for trade initiatives such as:

(a) the Strengthening Pacific Intra-Regional and International Trade (SPIRIT) project, funded by the European Union. This project has helped strengthen the trade capacity of Pacific SIDS by providing technical assistance in areas such as trade policy, customs, and export promotion. The SPIRIT project has helped to increase the number of Pacific SIDS that are exporting to the European Union;

(b) The Pacific Aid for Trade Strategy was endorsed by Pacific Forum Trade Ministers (PAFTS) in 2020. This strategy outlines four thematic priority areas for aid for trade in the Pacific: services sector, electronic commerce, comprehensive connectivity, and deepening Forum markets. The PAFTS has helped to improve the trade policy environment in the Pacific region;

(c) The Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation (PARTEC) project, which is funded by the Australian Government. This project has promoted trade and investment in the Pacific by providing technical assistance in areas such as trade policy, customs, and investment promotion. The PARTEC project has helped to attract new investment to the Pacific.

There are important lessons that can be learnt and shared more widely by the Pacific SIDS from these projects, there may also be scope to improve coordination and coverage.

Technology

103. The nine indicators in this cluster cover mobile network coverage, broadband subscriptions, and the tracked use of environmentally sound technologies in trade. Overall, the indicators show that the Pacific has made less progress on technology installation and use than the other SIDS regions. According to ESCAP, the average annual spending on information and communication technology (ICT) by Pacific SIDS governments declined from \$120 million in 2015 to \$90 million in 2020. This decline was driven by several factors, including the global financial crisis, the COVID pandemic, and the rising cost of ICT infrastructure.⁷³

104. The decline in funding for technology has had a number of negative consequences for Pacific SIDS. It has made it more difficult for these countries to develop and implement ICT-enabled solutions to challenges such as climate change, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable development. It has also made it more difficult for them to connect to the global economy and participate in the digital revolution. Technology installation (such as undersea cables to assist internet broadband connectivity) remain priorities for many of the Pacific SIDS because they can significantly increase productivity and efficiencies in many sectors of the economy and improve the skills base of the workforce.

⁷³ See for Example: <https://www.unescap.org/2022>. Also: [Asia/Pacific* ICT Spending to Reach \\$1.04 Trillion in 2022. Political Turmoil a Concern. Reports IDC.](#)

Data and Statistics

105. A priority in terms of gaps relates to strengthening data systems (including the collection, analysis and use of data). The ESCAP website shows that of the 93 SDG indicators that have been used to make assessments of progress to date, there are 15 indicators for which there is ‘no data available’ and 27 indicators where there is ‘insufficient data’ available in the Pacific SIDS. Improved availability of disaggregated data (by gender, age, area coverage etc.), will allow for more thorough assessments of progress, including gaps in implementation. The general absence of reliable data across most Pacific SIDS remains a significant obstacle to better planning and implementation.
106. An indicator that is closely associated with data, as well as the means of implementation, relates to the use of a ‘country-led results framework’ by the SIDS. The results for this show that in both the AIS and the Pacific SIDS, there has been progress (SIDS in the Caribbean have performed less well). In Pacific, there has been significant regression on the use of country-led frameworks. It is important to address the challenges on data to ensure that everyone in the Pacific region has access to accurate and timely information for planning and implementation of policies and programmes. Establishing live, easily accessible to the public, national platforms on progress against the SDGs in each of the Pacific SIDS could be beneficial. From a regional perspective, SPC hosts the Pacific Data Hub – this provides a good basis for improving collection, analyses and use of data in the Pacific SIDS.

IV: Gaps and Challenges

107. Based on the above, it is possible to draw eight broad conclusions about the progress achieved by Pacific SIDS on implementation of the SAMOA Pathway priorities and future priorities:
1. The evidence shows that the SAMOA Pathway has been utilized in a variety of ways by the Pacific SIDS. Despite multiple challenges posed by the COVID pandemic, the global economic downturn and political context (including the war in Ukraine), the impacts of climate change and multiple natural disasters, the SAMOA Pathway and its five thematic priorities remain highly relevant for the development of the Pacific SIDS. The Pathway provides a vital tool for SIDS to collectively and strategically position themselves to engage with the international community. The SAMOA Pathway has enabled the Pacific SIDS (together with other SIDS) to: (i) advocate and raise awareness of the specific needs of SIDS; (ii) organise as a grouping of countries with unique and special vulnerabilities and needs; (iii) mobilise financial and other resources from international partners.
 2. The efforts of the Pacific SIDS have so far resulted in mixed progress, with improvements for all Pacific SIDS in some priority areas and clear declines in others, and in some cases showing progress in some countries but a decline in others. Pacific SIDS have made significant progress on several priorities including disaster preparedness, building economic resilience, adaptation to climate change, improving health, education, gender equality, social development, enhancing skills of their peoples and protection of eco-systems. But in all these areas (and others) there is a need to progress make further and faster progress. There does not appear to be a need for the Pacific SIDS to introduce lots of new policies and instruments. Instead, this assessment shows that there is a need to focus more on prioritisation and implementation of certain policies. For Pacific SIDS to meet their future development aspirations and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, accelerated progress is required in all five thematic priority areas, especially given the high likelihood of increased challenges because of the impacts of future climate change and shocks impacting on the region. **Three important priorities for action are to: (i) revitalize economies to ensure sustainable, inclusive (of people and places) and equitable growth and decent work for citizens.** Without significant investments to improve the quality of education, promote decent work for all (including

women and girls as well as people with disabilities), and inclusive, sustainable growth, the Pacific SIDS will struggle to achieve the SDGs, Agenda 2030 and their development aspirations; (ii) **increase and improve the quality of investments in reducing vulnerability and strengthening resilience of people and communities**. This includes prioritising: investments in Disaster Risk Reduction and adaptation to climate change; finding ways and promoting ways of increasing returns on investment, strengthening food security, water and sanitation systems and social development/protection for the most vulnerable groups (including children, the elderly and people with disabilities) and communities; strengthened efforts to address non-communicable diseases and to promote sport and culture; (iii) **increase efforts to protect biodiversity (on land and seas) through existing and new partnerships**. This includes the need for strengthened efforts to stop illegal and unregulated fishing, fighting deforestation and illegal mining and reducing hazardous pollution.

While all the Pacific SIDS need to take appropriate action on these priorities, each country will need to prioritize their efforts on the areas where they can achieve maximum leverage and get the best returns on investments over the next decade.

3. In all thematic clusters, there is scope to reduce fragmentation and duplication, prioritise more effectively and improve coordination. This could be actioned by a clearer mapping of institutions and organisations that are working thematic priorities of the SAMOA Pathway and by conducting a [Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation’s monitoring exercise](#) that can assist in prioritisation, focusing investment, strengthening partnerships and coordination at country levels.⁷⁴
4. A consistent theme from the Voluntary National Reviews, and in discussions with the Council for Regional Organisations (CROP) in the Pacific, is that in virtually all the Pacific SIDS there is considerable scope to broaden and deepen the understanding and commitment of civil society, academia, faith-based groups, philanthropists, the private sector and others to help implement priorities. Creating safe, empowered, inclusive and engaged communities, will assist progress in implementing the SAMOA Pathway and progress the SDGs. Governments alone cannot deliver the SDGs and Agenda 2030 – a stronger push to involve individuals, groups and communities can have huge multiplier effects and deliver stronger collective results.
5. More discussion and increased collective action at regional and sub-regional levels to harness the power of governmental, non-governmental and private sector partnerships to progress sustainable and inclusive growth, reduce inequality, and enhance inclusion and gender equality will be vital. There are specific areas such as on renewable energy, tourism, social development (including gender equality and women’s empowerment, as well as disability rights), digital transformation, tackling corruption and improving the provision of health and education, where the Pacific SIDS could benefit from a deeper joint exploration of future trends and possible policy responses at country, regional and possibly also at sub-regional levels.
6. There is significant scope for the Pacific SIDS to improve performance against the SAMOA Pathway indicators by systematically improving data collection, monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Focusing efforts on this area alone, has the potential to result in some ‘quick-wins’, as well as prolific returns each year and over a longer period of time. There is also considerable scope to improve citizen engagement, strengthen lesson learning and sharing of practical experience, with other Pacific SIDS and with SIDS in other regions (at local, national and regional/sub-regional levels).
7. The Pacific SIDS recognised from the outset that the success of the SAMOA Pathway would ultimately depend not only their own commitment to achieve the goals and targets expressed in the Pathway but also on the support of the international community. This raises questions about whether in the past decade, the international community could have done more to support the Pacific SIDS

⁷⁴ See: <https://effectivecooperation.org/4thMonitoringRound>.

(not just through financing, debt relief and fairer trade but also in sharing knowledge, research and appropriate technologies, and especially by shifting patterns of production and consumption to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels) faster and more effectively?

8. While Pacific SIDS have received aid, trade, debt relief support over the past decade, this support has been insufficient to meet the needs of their citizens. There is an urgent need for more effective debt relief measures to be put in place, tailored to the specific needs of the Pacific SIDS. Pacific SIDS should consider prioritising further exploration of emerging trends in aid (including the possibilities of more effectively using and promoting the Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index for aid allocation, reviewing the experience on aid for infrastructure, climate adaptation and mitigation, and on protection of biodiversity and oceans), trade and debt reduction for the Pacific SIDS.

V: Recommendations for addressing identified gaps and challenges

Overall conclusion

Despite multiple challenges the SAMOA Pathway and the five thematic priorities remain highly relevant for the development of the Pacific SIDS. The Pathway provides a vital tool for SIDS to collectively and strategically position themselves to engage with the international community. It has enabled the Pacific SIDS (together with SIDS in the Caribbean and AIS regions) to: advocate and raise awareness of the specific needs of SIDS; organise as a grouping of countries with unique and special vulnerabilities and needs; mobilise financial and other resources from international partners.

National

On the five priority themes, the efforts of the Pacific SIDS have resulted in a mixed set of results. Pacific SIDS have made progress on many priorities but there is scope to improve prioritisation and coordination, reduce fragmentation and duplication of efforts and seek to achieve better returns on investment. This can be assisted by mapping institutions and organisations working on priorities and by conducting the [Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation's monitoring exercise](#) to strengthen partnerships and improve coordination mechanisms in country.

9. Five priorities for action are:
 - (i) revitalize the economies of the Pacific SIDS to ensure sustainable, inclusive and equitable growth and decent work for all;
 - (ii) invest in reducing vulnerability and strengthening resilience of people and communities;
 - (iii) increase efforts to protect biodiversity (on land and seas) through existing and new partnerships;
 - (iv) invest in building statistical and institutional capacities by systematically working to improve data collection, monitoring and evaluation frameworks;
 - (v) create more safe, empowered, inclusive and engaged communities in all Pacific SIDS.

Recognising that each of the Pacific SIDS has different levels of endowments and capacities, while it is vital for there to be a collective commitment to achieve progress in all five priority areas, each of the Pacific SIDS should focus on the areas where they can exert maximum leverage and achieve the greatest change for their peoples.

Regional

Promote deeper discussion and increased collective action at regional and sub-regional levels about how best to harness governmental, non-governmental and private sector partnerships to progress sustainable and inclusive growth, reduce inequality, and enhance inclusion and gender equality will be vital.

Strengthen links with key development partners including other SIDS regions. systematically working to improve data collection and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. There is also considerable scope to strengthen lesson learning and sharing of experience with each other and with other SIDS in areas such as digital transformation and joint advocacy for increased and improved quality support to meet the needs of their citizens.

Inter-regional

Explore scope to enhance partnerships and improved sharing of experience between SIDS regions. There may be scope to increase the volume of trade between SIDS and also to strengthen advocacy efforts by SIDS (for SIDS). Possibly also to seek more support and partnerships between the Pacific SIDS and powerful economic blocks such as APEC and ASEAN.

International

The international community can do more to support the Pacific SIDS (not just through more financing, fairer trade and improved debt relief measures but also by more systematic sharing of knowledge, research and appropriate technologies, and most especially by shifting their own patterns of production and consumption to reduce dependence on fossil fuels) faster and more effectively. More effective debt relief measures, using the multi-dimensional vulnerability index for aid allocation, improved trade support, protection of biodiversity, reducing hazardous pollution are also priorities for action.

Annex

1: Income classification of Pacific SIDS

Compared to other developing countries, levels of national per capita income have been relatively high in most SIDS. While a number of these countries have GNP per capita well below US \$1,000, high levels of income have traditionally been received by such countries as French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Nauru. Based on the World Bank's country classifications by income level (based on GNI per capita for 2021), SIDS in Asia and the Pacific can be broadly grouped into three main income categories:

Annex: Table : SIDS in Asia Pacific - Country Classifications based on the World Bank's GNI (USD) per capita figures for 2021

High Income Countries	Upper-Middle-Income Countries	Lower-Middle-Income Countries
French Polynesia (\$19,914)	Palau (\$12,140)	Tonga (\$4,250)
Nauru (\$16,920)	Tokelau (US\$6,275)	Samoa (\$4,240)
	Fiji (\$4,760)	Papua New Guinea and Kiribati (\$2,570)
	Marshall Islands (\$4,290)	Solomon Islands (\$2,270)
	Micronesia (Federated States of) (\$4,270)	Tuvalu (\$3,840)
	American Samoa (\$4,000)	Vanuatu (\$3,030)
		Kiribati (\$1,890)
		Timor-Leste (\$1,590)

Source derived from World Bank Data. Note: Countries are classified by GNI per capita as follows: lower-middle income (US\$1036– 4045 pa); upper-middle-income (US\$4,036– 12,475 pa); high income (US \$13,205 pa or higher).

The 'income classification' of these countries are partly attributable to the relatively high historic levels of official development assistance (ODA) and substantial personal remittances from overseas and receipts from the tourism sectors in these economies. High levels of income are also attributable to the 'special advantage' that some countries have enjoyed, such as in Nauru and New Caledonia with access to phosphate and nickel deposits respectively.

2: Quantitative analysis Methodology

The quantitative analysis in this report is based on the SAMOA Pathway monitoring framework⁷⁵. The monitoring framework consists of 109 indicators (drawn from the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) covering progress against all 30 priority action clusters of the SAMOA Pathway.

Data sources

SDG data used in this analysis are sourced from the Global SDG Indicators Database⁷⁶ maintained by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction provided data for the Sendai Framework indicators, available at the Sendai Framework Monitor⁷⁷. For this report, data was last accessed in February 2023.

Methodology

In order to assess progress against each indicator, target values are desirable. However, in the absence of any clear targets in the SAMOA Pathway, a simple assessment of the degree of progress was made.

The assessment uses the desirable trend direction to determine whether a country or territory is progressing or regressing for any particular series. Stagnation is defined by an absolute compound average growth rate of less than 0.5%. In cases where a country or territory has only one data point for a particular series, the trend cannot be calculated. Therefore the series is classified as *insufficient data*. The possible categories based on the absolute value of annualized compound growth rate are:

- a) Category 1 (progressing): the rate is greater than 0.5 per cent in the desirable direction;
- b) Category 2 (stagnant): the rate is less than 0.5 per cent;
- c) Category 3 (regressing): the rate is greater than 0.5 per cent in the undesirable direction;
- d) Category 4 (insufficient data): insufficient data to make an assessment;
- e) Category 5 (no data): no data or desirable direction available.

Since indicators may be comprised of multiple series, the assessment is performed at the series level and then aggregated for indicators, which is the simple average of the number of countries in each category for each series.

The baseline year for the assessment is 2014, the start year of the SAMOA Pathway.

Limitations

The following limitation of the assessment should be noted:

- While disaggregated data are essential for identifying population groups that may be at risk of being left behind, they were not incorporated in the computations for the present report.
- Indicators that do not have a clear desirable direction for all countries were not included in the assessment and appeared as *no data*. This includes parity indicators, where the desired value needs to be within a range of a target.
- Since data sources were limited to SDGs and Sendai Framework, other framework indicators were not assessed due to the unavailability of data.

⁷⁵ See https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Final_Report_DevelopmentofFrameworkformonitoring_SAMOA_Pathway.pdf.

⁷⁶ See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>

⁷⁷ See <https://sendaimonitor.undrr.org/>

Quantifying Data Availability

The assessment of data availability is evaluated for each country or territory and series using data from 2000 until the most recent year according to the following criteria:

- Sufficient data: two or more data points are available
- Insufficient data: only one data point is available
- No data: no data points are available

When an indicator has multiple series, the series with the best data availability represents the indicator. The aggregation for a region takes into account the number of countries or territories within each category as follows:

- Sufficient data (for a region): at least half of the countries or territories within the group have sufficient data
- Insufficient data (for a region): less than half of the countries or territories within the group have sufficient data, or most countries or territories have insufficient data
- No data (for a region): all countries or territories have no data.

Regions

Three geographical regions were adopted for the assessments to provide a clear picture of the progress of small island developing States. The composition of the regions is as follows:

- (a) **Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea region:** Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, and Singapore;
- (b) **Caribbean region:** Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Anguilla, Aruba, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Curaçao, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, Saint Maarten, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands;
- (c) **Pacific region:** Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, American Samoa, the Cook Islands, Guam, New Caledonia, Niue, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

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SAMOA PATHWAY DATA DASHBOARD

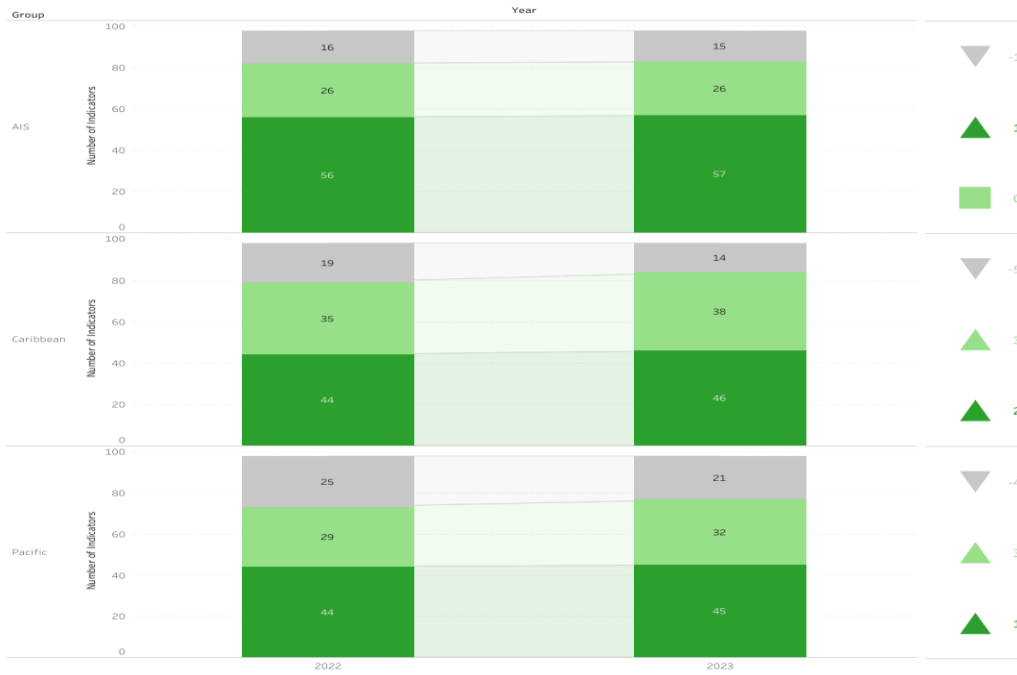
SAMOA-Pathway-2023 (Version 3)

Assessment Overview	Indicator (Report dashboard)	Trends	Indicator Dashboard	Cluster Dashboard	Rank Dashboard	Data Availability
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Overview of Availability for indicators

Sufficient data: indicators with at least one data series with two data points for at least half of the region since 2000.
Insufficient data: indicators with data but that do not qualify as sufficient.
No data: indicators with no data at national level.

■ No Data
■ Insufficient
■ Sufficient



SAMOA-Pathway-2023 (Version 3)

Assessment Overview	Indicator (Report dashboard)	Trends	Indicator Dashboard	Cluster Dashboard	Rank Dashboard	Data Availability
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Indicator



SAMOA-Pathway-2023 (Version 3)

Assessment Overview	Indicator (Report dashboard)	Trends	Indicator Dashboard	Cluster Dashboard	Rank Dashboard	Data Availability
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Cluster

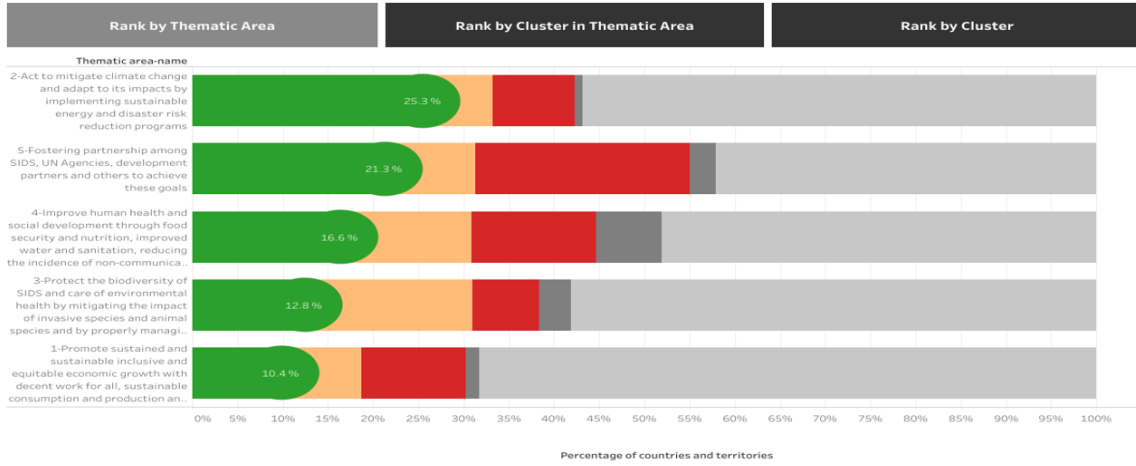


Rank

Group
Pacific

Total Number countries in group Pacific :

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20

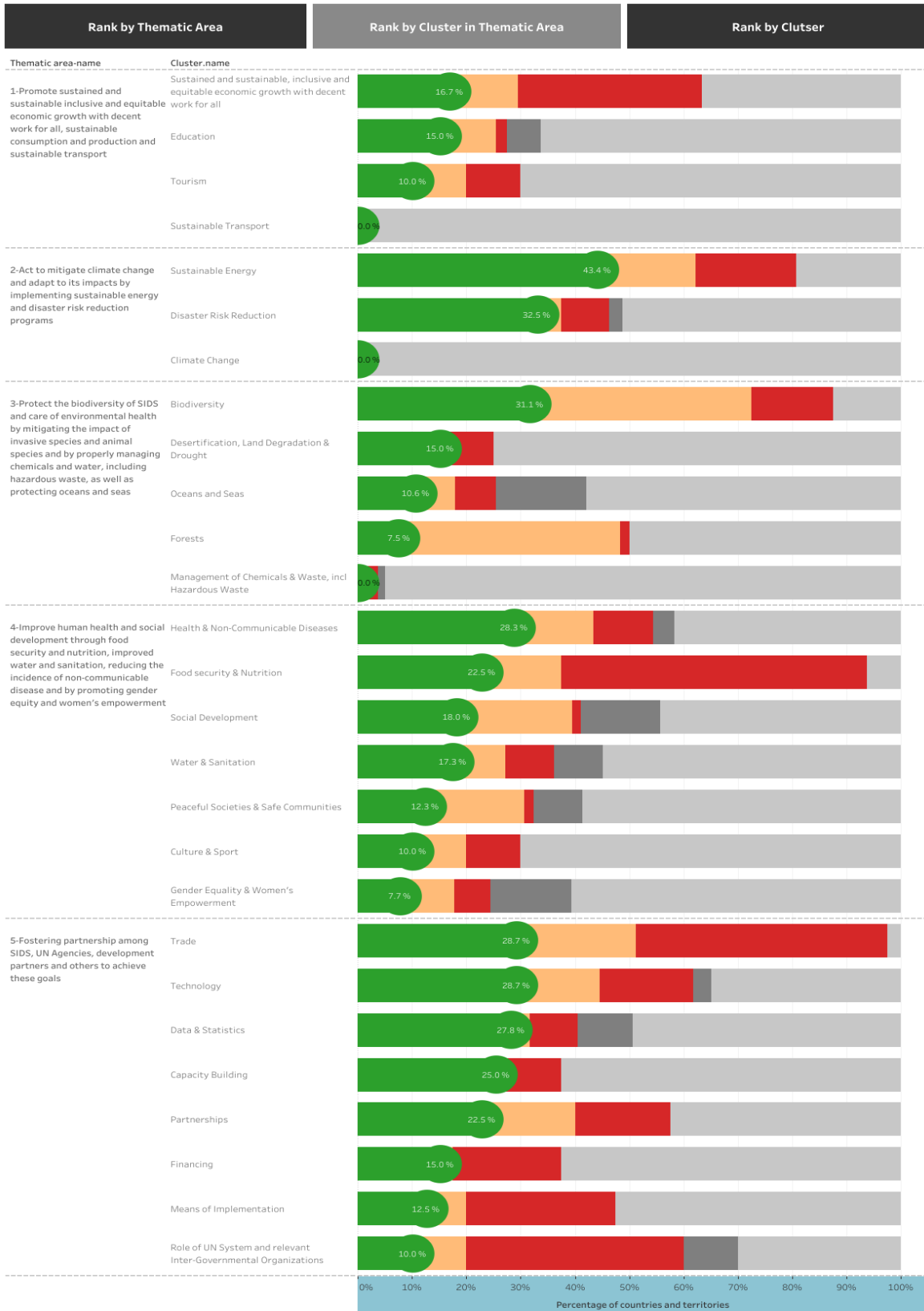


Rank

Group
Pacific

Total Number countries in group Pacific :

<
20



SAMOA-Pathway-2023 (Version 3)

- Assessment Overview
- Indicator (Report dashboard)
- Trends
- Indicator Dashboard
- Cluster Dashboard
- Rank Dashboard**
- Data Availability

Rank

Group
Pacific

- Progressing
- Stagnant
- Regressing
- Insufficient data
- No data

Total Number countries in group Pacific :

20

