



4TH INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON  
**Small Island  
Developing States**  
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ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

## **SIDS4 Conference Side Event**

**Harnessing the power of migration to accelerate  
development and for climate-resilient prosperity in SIDS**

**8:30-10:00 Tuesday, 28 May 2024  
Room 11, American University of Antigua**

**Organized by: International Organization for Migration  
(IOM)**

### **Background on the event**

The complex migration profile of SIDS, associated with broader socio-economic trends, illustrates the deep linkages between migration and sustainable development. In the context of demographic shifts, and compounding impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, disasters and natural hazards, health and other challenges and economic vulnerabilities, and the progressive deterioration in SIDS' ability to withstand external shocks; migration can and must be part of the solution for SIDS to chart a course towards resilient prosperity.

### **Key Issues discussed**

- The speakers shared the increased need to relocate communities as a last resort, and that in doing so it is critical to ensure people-centered approaches and due consideration for the most vulnerable groups.
- Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change by Member States and Associate Members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States is seen as a key instrument in strengthening climate resilience and adaptive interventions for communities and people in fragile situations, including through the development of suitable policies and strategies for actions.
- In Dominica, after Hurricane Maria in 2017, a National Resilience Strategy was developed, based on the SDGs, to support recovery efforts in Building Back Better, including in terms of financial resilience, and in managing some of the mobility

consequences of the disaster where some people left the country. Dominica has committed to becoming the first resilient country.

- In Fiji, key climate actions to support safe and dignified relocation of communities in the face of the imminent threat of climate change impacts include the development of planned relocation SOPs, the establishment of the Climate Change Act and the Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund.
- The Blue Pacific 2050 Strategy Implementation Plan Phase I (2023 – 2030) calls for regional collective actions in the Pacific to enhance regional cooperation on labour mobility to maximize the socio-economic benefits of both labour-sending and receiving countries and mitigate potential negative impacts. Under the thematic area on climate change and disasters, the Pacific has agreed to protect vulnerable communities and marginalized groups in climate and disaster-induced relocation including in the implementation of the Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility. Participants called for SIDS to continue to lead global climate action.
- Challenges in Fiji include bureaucracy around the language of climate change. All mitigation and adaptation measures need to be exhausted before communities are ‘qualified for relocation’. Recurrent climate-related natural hazards, displacements and relocation are having psychological impacts, especially on children.
- Cultural sensitivity needs to be integrated in the relocation planning; in Fiji, 90-92% of the land is owned by indigenous peoples, and their cultural heritage must be preserved.
- In Belize, the relocation of the main city in the 1970s from the coast to the interior after a major hurricane removed vulnerable people from climate risk and spurred development. Belize City is now benefiting from migrants from Latin America, Haiti but also Asia to fill some of the labour gaps.
- Speakers recognized the significant role played by remittances in the development of the communities and countries of origin, as well as recovery from humanitarian and climate emergencies. There is a potential in diaspora’s remittances that can be further leveraged as financial support to build resilience of SIDS.
- There is a “hush culture” that prevents the inclusion of groups from the grassroots in action towards the SDGs, beyond the bubble of those who are educated on sustainable development issues.

### **Key recommendations for action**

- People-centered approaches, particularly integration of most vulnerable groups must be ensured in any adaptation and response actions to climate events, including in the relocation of communities.
- National mechanisms should include flexible funding and streamlined/simplified funding mechanisms to enable adequate and timely support for the relocation of communities affected, or threatened by the effects of climate change in SIDS given their relatively small size.
- Youth, including youth in indigenous communities, must be at the center of such effort and their potential must be leveraged to extend the SDG implementation beyond those who are already educated in it, by facilitating for instance student exchanges among SIDS countries.

- For migrants to truly benefit their host communities, especially in small communities across the SIDS, it is important to support their integration to ensure that they are productive assets, but also to build on cross-cultural exchanges.
- Regional institutions, such as CARICOM in the Caribbean and PIFS in the Pacific, have an important role to play in integrating displacement and mobility in regional instruments and tools that are best geared toward the reality in SIDS.
- Safe, orderly and regular migration pathways – including enhanced labour migration between SIDS – can help build up the workforce that supports economic resilience. Further efforts are needed to ensure that diaspora’s economic contributions, including remittances and investments, combined with their social, human and cultural capital boost trade and stimulate the green transition of SIDS’ economies.