



4TH INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON  
**Small Island  
Developing States**  
27-30 MAY, 2024  
ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

## **SIDS4 Conference Side Event**

***Fostering Resilience: An intergenerational dialogue on  
health and climate in SIDS***

**Tuesday, 28 May 2024, 10:00am – 11:30am**  
**American University of Antigua, Antigua and Barbuda**  
**Side Event Room 5**

**Organized by: The Government of Samoa and the Commonwealth  
Foundation**

### **Background on the event**

Ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and the Commonwealth People's Forum 2024, the Government of Samoa, in partnership with the Commonwealth Foundation, hosted a joint side event at the 4th UN SIDS conference that highlighted the critical intersection of the health and climate crises in SIDS. With a keynote address delivered by HE Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa, this event facilitated an intergenerational dialogue during which an expert panel identified a range of priority issues and possible solutions relating to climate and health in SIDS, particularly concerning young people and the elderly. The panel highlighted successful practices of youth leadership and engagement, shared lessons learned, and discussed innovation and investment opportunities to enhance health and climate resilience in SIDS. The event also explored how the Commonwealth and other international bodies can better support young people and wider civil society to address the public health challenges arising from the climate crisis.

### **Key issues discussed**

- **Increasingly intense storms** are accelerating demand for physical and mental health services and disrupting service delivery by damaging health facilities.
- The **rise in extreme heat and in non-communicable diseases** is boosting hospital admissions and placing an extra burden on SIDS health systems.

- **Droughts and floods** are disrupting the water supply, which in turn compromises the food supply. Both lead to higher rates of headline inflation, **pricing out low-income families and communities and leading to malnutrition.**
- **Climate disasters are driving migration** from small island states, contributing to **labour shortages, including of health professionals,** and leaving the elderly and children without adequate familial support.
- **Repeated climate disasters** are making citizens of small island states homeless or fearful for their homes and livelihoods, with increasing numbers forced into temporary accommodation for months on end. This creates **heightened anxiety, known as “eco-anxiety”**, which particularly impacts the young.
- **People living with disabilities,** who are especially vulnerable to the health-related effects of climate change, are often **ignored in policies** regarding health equity.
- **Senior medical professionals often fail to recognise the impact of climate change on health,** such as the rise in dengue fever, making it challenging to secure their support in mitigating these impacts.

### **Key recommendations for action**

- Commonwealth Heads of Government should use their political platforms to declare their commitment to doing what it takes to **secure climate resilient health systems by 2030.**
- Governments should commit and act to **protect those with disabilities and chronic health conditions from climate-related health impacts** by setting up means of confidential information sharing between emergency management and health authorities, so their needs can be met in the wake of natural disasters.
- Government and civil society should come together to **integrate young people from SIDS into disaster preparedness** policies and plans, including through school programmes and through mentorship, internship, and training programs for young people in the climate and health sectors to empower them to advocate for resilient adaptation and understand the connections between climate change and health.
- There should be a concerted international effort to **build the capacity of SIDS communities to secure and utilise international funding** to: (i) retain an adequate medical workforce; and (ii) empower young people and civil society to be partners for change.
- Commonwealth Heads of Governments, most especially developed state partners to the Paris Agreement, should demonstrate, through their actions, a **clear commitment to moving away from energy dependence on fossil fuels,** which is the leading cause of the climate crisis.
- Intergovernmental organisations should be encouraged to think creatively in finding ways to **amplify the voices of young people from SIDS.**