

QUESTIONNAIRE

Implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the MSI, BPOA for the Sustainable Development of SIDS

Please note that strict word limits have been established for each question. The Secretariat is unable to consider any information beyond these established word limits. In this regard, you are requested to report only on new or updated information. Information conveyed in previous surveys will not be considered. Previous surveys can be accessed at https://sdgs.un.org/topics/small-island-developing-states#sg_reports_2023 under reports.

PART A VULNERABILITY REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE BUILDING IN SIDS

1. Enhanced Support for achieving Resilient Prosperity in SIDS

The theme for the SIDS4 Conference is "Charting a Course toward Resilient Prosperity" as such resilience building will be at the core of the new Programme of Action for SIDS. Briefly elaborate on any resilience building interventions or strategies (proactive or preventative) that will be implemented at national or regional levels aimed specifically at improving resilience in SIDS. Please include indications of resource allocations, if available (750 words).

SIDS has been one of UNESCO's two priority groups since 2016, recognising their vulnerabilities and need for additional support. In 2021, a specific section with dedicated staff and budget was created, enhancing coordination of action of its 6 sectoral programmes, (Education, Natural Sciences, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), Social and Human Sciences, Culture and Information and Communication). Furthermore, additional support is provided through its specialised institutes, centers and networks. On the ground, five fully dedicated Field Offices serve the Caribbean (3) and the Pacific (2), while five other support SIDS in AIS (4) and in the Pacific (1) regions.

In November 2023, the 42nd session of UNESCO's General Conference adopted the SIDS Operational Strategy 2023-2029, guiding the organisation's actions in building SIDS' resilience in the next nine years. The Strategy, *Moving Towards a Sustainable Future for SIDS*, addresses four priority areas.

Priority one, "*Meeting educational challenges*", supports SIDS in advancing quality education, focusing on policies, data, and ESD with an emphasis on climate change. It includes reskilling and upskilling for employment (TVET, STEM, literacy, higher education) and leveraging technology for better learning outcomes. Teacher training covers competency standards and gender-transformative pedagogies.

Climate action in education is promoted through scientific and environmental education and coordinating ESD for 2030 initiatives. The gender gap and skills strengthening for youth and adults are prioritised.

Digital divides will be addressed by developing inclusive digital learning policies and platforms. Partnerships between cultural and educational institutions will be sought to integrate cultural contexts into learning and enhance teacher capacities in cultural and arts education.

Priority two, "*Meeting Environmental Challenges*", aims to strengthen resilience in SIDS, focusing on reducing the impact of climate change and natural hazards through its Natural Science programmes and the IOC. Efforts address environmental deterioration, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem decline by enhancing research, knowledge sharing, and cooperation.

Key actions include monitoring and communicating disaster risks, improving preparedness, response and recovery skills, and reinforcing marine science and multi-hazard warning systems whilst promoting indigenous knowledge, cultural heritage and climate adaptation. The World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and Global Geoparks, will support sustainable environmental and management and community resilience.

Water security will be improved under the Intergovernmental Hydrology Programme, focusing on adaptation and resilience in water management. Youth engagement in STEM will be enhanced while the development of digital ecosystems for ocean data will advance ocean understanding, including through the Global Ocean Observing System.

Priority three, "*Meeting social cohesion challenges*", which promotes cultural content and participation and fosters free and independent media landscapes. It will combat inequalities, racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance.

It will safeguard cultural heritage, support national legislation revisions, and rebuild cultural

life after disasters. It will enhance digital access to cultural heritage and leverage culture's economic potential through creative industries and sustainable tourism.

Access to diverse information sources and protection of multilingualism will be promoted, while special initiatives (General History of the Caribbean and the Routes of Enslaved Peoples) will promote peace and shared values. Indigenous languages and knowledge will be integrated into education to boost social cohesion and community pride, while support to the digital creative economy will optimise benefits.

Finally, priority four, "*Meeting Technological Challenges*", addresses human rights, openness, inclusivity, and ethics in the digital environment and addresses ethical questions raised by digital technologies, digital divides and cyber threats.

UNESCO will support governments using data and frontier technologies like AI for the common good and promoting digital skills and media and information literacy to enable full participation in the digital era.

Access to information and knowledge will be strengthened through digital skills development, open access to scientific information, and preservation of documentary heritage. Knowledge sharing, open educational resources, open science and open-source solutions will be promoted to bridge knowledge divides.

It will assist policies and legislation revisions for diverse digital ecosystems and content and explore ways to enrich knowledge based on Internet Universality principles, ensuring the Internet is human rights-based, open, and accessible to all.

UNESCO estimated that the SIDS budget for the 2024-2025 biennium is around US\$70 million, with US\$ 30 million still to be mobilised. In this regard, a Partnership and Resource Mobilization Plan was elaborated, building on the development of "SIDS Partner platforms". Those platforms will bring together key stakeholders and their financial and non-financial contributions, focusing on joint impact at scale.

2. Enhanced and Tailored Development Co-operation for SIDS

The New SIDS Programme of Action will require improved, tailored development co-operation approaches, calibrated to the specific needs, capacity constraints, and economic challenges facing SIDS. Briefly elaborate on any planned or ongoing strategies/approaches to improve and deliver on more tailored development support to SIDS. What are the expected results from these interventions in the targeted countries. Please include indications of resource allocations if available (750 words)

UNESCO built the SIDS Operational Strategy around six SIDS Accelerator Programmes (ACEs) composed of three key initiatives, each launched every biennium. ACEs are tailored to the specific needs, capacity constraints, and economic challenges facing SIDS and are aligned with UNESCO's mandates and areas of competence. Some of the Initiatives are planned for the 9 years of the Strategy.

ACE1: Advance Climate and Environmental Action through Education for Sustainable Development for Resilient Societies in SIDS

- IslandWatch is used to capture coastal, ocean, biodiversity, and hydrological data in UNESCO-designated sites or national protected areas. Initial pilot testing in 3 countries in each region;
- The Greening Education Partnership (GEP) is a global initiative with four pillars: greening schools, curriculum, teacher training, and communities. It includes 10 SIDS, promoting climate resilience through lifelong learning and is developing ESD initiatives for 2030;
- Exchanges between ILK holders, scientists and policymakers in scientific national ecosystems assessments in Pacific and/or Caribbean SIDS.

ACE2: Strengthen sustainable ocean knowledge, spatial planning and water management capacities of SIDS in support of the growth of their blue economies

- Applying e-DNA for Marine Pest Species Surveillance Programme through an early warning system for invasive species using eDNA techniques and building local scientific capacity to protect marine ecosystems, local economies, and oceanic ecological integrity;
- UN-Water SDG6 Capacity Development Initiative piloting process initiated in the Caribbean;
- Creating sciences and oceans data repositories in SIDS higher education institutions. The pilot planned in the AIS region with extensions to the Caribbean and the Pacific as part of IslandWatch to strengthen the Universities Consortium for SIDS (UCSIS).

ACE3: Protecting and promoting culture for resilience and sustainable development in SIDS.

- Empowerment of Young Culture Professionals aims to empower 1,000 young professionals from 22 SIDS by 2029 through incubator and accelerator initiatives in the cultural and creative industries, building on the success of the "Transcultural" program
- Capacity building for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in emergencies in Pacific and Caribbean SIDS: living heritage and DRR strategies (ongoing project 2022-2025).
- 'Caribbean Plan of Action for Disaster Resilience and Recovery of the Culture sector' presented during the 20th Regional Cultural Committee of CARICOM. National pilot activities launched.

ACE4: Support SIDS on Crisis Preparedness and Response and Disaster Risk Reduction to move from vulnerability to resilience.

- Strengthening early warning systems to improve SIDS resilience and building long-term climate adaptation planning, contributing to SG's EW4ALL initiative;
- Strengthening media institutions in SIDS by improving DRR programming, aiding in disaster preparedness strategies, and digital and AI tools for effective public information;
- Strengthening local and community capacities to face disasters in the Caribbean SIDS by raising awareness among communities through education systems, media and civil society engagement focusing on youth and women.

ACE5: Harnessing Digital Technologies for Education and Sustainable Development of SIDS.

- Strengthening SIDS capacities to integrate media and information literacy in policies and strategies and bridge the digital knowledge divide through OER and digital skills' development;
- Contextualising digital competency frameworks and fostering dialogue and peer-to-peer learning on digital competencies for teachers;
- Enhancing the knowledge and capacities of Caribbean SIDS in designing regulatory AI frameworks, developing AI policies, and responsibly deploying AI systems, aligning with the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI and the Caribbean AI Policy Roadmap.

ACE6: Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies building on the meaningful engagement of youth in SIDS through sport and intercultural dialogue

- Strengthening youth capacity to tackle multifaceted inequalities and discrimination in climate-affected communities through grants, capacity-building, and mentoring;
- The Fit for Life Sport and Gender Equality Game Plan;
- Enhancing youth participation and capacity development opportunities for youth-led peacebuilding and knowledge creation in Caribbean SIDS.

PART B

MULTIDIMENSIONAL VULNERABILITY IN THE WORK OF THE UN SYSTEM

Paragraph 13 of Resolution 78/232 Requests the Secretary-General to assess how multidimensional vulnerability is currently considered by the United Nations system. Please indicate how your entity considers multidimensional vulnerability in your policies, practices and Programmes (1000 words)

UNESCO integrates multidimensional vulnerabilities into its operations based on the needs of SIDS and keeping with UNESCO's main functions, such as creating standard-setting instruments, promoting cooperation, facilitating capacity building, exercising its convening power and working as a think-tank in its areas of competence. The organisation's support to Member States transcends GDP or GNI criteria, focusing instead on voluntary contributions and addressing SIDS vulnerabilities.

In the area of Education, UNESCO addresses multidimensional vulnerabilities through collaborative programs and intersectoral cooperation, integrating and mainstreaming gender equality and taking into consideration persons with disabilities (PWDs). One is example is the UN Joint Social Protection Programme, funded by the Joint SDG Fund, operating in Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau. The programme aims to develop evidence-based, nationally owned social protection systems to accelerate SDG progress through integrated national and sub-national programming and education.

SIDS resilience is reinforced through integrated bio- and geodiversity conservation support through its Biosphere Reserves and Global Geoparks for developing sustainable local economies. In addition, UNESCO provides expert advice and capacity development delivered through initiatives such as the Earth Network.

Addressing the diverse needs of Indigenous Peoples and marginalised communities,

UNESCO's LINKS programme promotes inclusive access to resources and fosters resilience. It advocates for including their knowledge systems in policymaking and practices, recognising their sustainable approaches and deep connection to their lands. This supports biodiversity conservation and ecological balance, safeguards cultural heritage and addresses climate change.

Sustainable water management in SIDS is supported by the IHP-IX framework of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP), in phase "Science for a Water-secure World in a Changing Environment" (2022-2029). Under the leadership of Saint-Lucia, UNESCO and UN-OHRLLS co-organised and supported the organisation of the UN 2023 Water Conference's official Side-event "Water security and climate resilience in SIDS towards SDGs and SAMOA Pathway achievement" in March 2023. The primary outcome was a call for action on "Water security and climate resilience in SIDS towards the SDGs and Samoa Pathway achievement".

Building on the SandWatch Programme in SIDS, UNESCO's new IslandWatch expands coastal, marine and terrestrial observation and monitoring systems, enhancing the availability of data by mobilising ecosystem users, including schools, communities, CSOs and private sector and the academic structures in SIDS, creating a cooperative cycle between citizen science, scientific quality assurance and policy evidence to allow to measure vulnerability and the adoption of adaptive action.

UNESCO also strengthens SIDS capacities through an early warning system, raising awareness among communities before and during natural hazards through education systems, media and civil society engagement focusing on youth and women. These programmes contribute to enhancing the Resilience of the Built Environment by utilising AI to minimise the disruption of education by floods and earthquakes and implementing a multi-hazard risk assessment methodology for school buildings.

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission's Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme (TRRP) aims to increase community resilience to ocean hazards globally and ensure that all communities at risk of the tsunami are prepared for and resilient to tsunamis by 2030, through awareness and preparedness strategies that will protect life, livelihoods, and property from tsunamis in different regions. This collaborative effort to meet a standard level of tsunami preparedness through the fulfilment of a set of established indicators provides support to the Intergovernmental Coordination Groups for the Tsunami Warning and Mitigation Systems. It also facilitates preparedness and awareness across the early warning chain, with an end-to-end approach and a strong focus on SIDS to achieve the TRRP target. Moreover, leading the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, UNESCO works with SIDS to improve access to skills, data and technology and to promote the co-design and co-delivery of ocean science to inform policy and decision-making for sustainable ocean management, including measures to address multidimensional vulnerability. Via the Ocean Decade, UNESCO also works with Indigenous and local knowledge holders, including in SIDS, to ensure recognition of the importance of all knowledge systems in addressing ocean-related multidimensional vulnerability.

The UNESCO MOST (Management of Social Transformations) has initiated the "Amplifying the Voice of Caribbean Small Island Developing States: Towards an Inclusive Recovery from COVID-19" project, resulting in 11 published think pieces. Additionally, SIDS is providing support to enhance their institutional capacities to implement the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (2021), deploying the Ethical Impact Assessment and Readiness Methodology tools in SIDS Member States, currently being piloted in nine SIDS¹.

UNESCO supports SIDS in protecting and promoting culture in all its forms, building resilience,

¹ Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Cuba, Maldives, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, Timor-Leste, and the Dominican Republic (addition SID from the Pacific TBC)

and advancing inclusive, sustainable development, including fostering the cultural and creative economy, sustainable tourism, and cultural heritage in all its forms. SIDS are notably home to 34 UNESCO World Heritage properties and 25 elements included in the Lists of the UNESCO Living Heritage Convention. Furthermore, World Heritage marine sites, many of which are found in SIDS, comprise 15% of global blue carbon assets – equivalent to 10% of GHG emissions in 2018. The cultural and creative industries are also a growing sector in SIDS, which UNESCO supports through training and capacity-building programs because of spurring economic diversification, entrepreneurship and revenue generation.

SIDS' vulnerability is also addressed through constitutional, statutory, and/or policy guarantees for public access to information with SDG 16.10.2. In 2024, UNESCO conducted a workshop to strengthen national frameworks and promote greater Access to Information (ATI) for citizens across 5 SIDS². Government and civil society representatives discussed creating or improving the ATI legislation. The ATI bill in FSM and Palau ATI law was consulted according to international standards, and action plans were developed during the workshop to adopt similar legislation in Nauru, Kiribati, and the Marshall Islands.

Africa is a global priority for UNESCO, so special attention is given to SIDS in Africa. In that regard, in collaboration with UNDESA, support is being provided for transforming a Cabo Verde Marine institution into a Center of excellence to support scientific research and the capacity of Portuguese-speaking countries in marine sciences and biodiversity.

UNESCO also offers tools and solutions to uncover the gender dimension of the multidimensional vulnerability affecting SIDS. For instance, UNESCO's work to promote Gender Equality in Ocean Science and Governance addressed the climate crisis affecting coastal communities and resulted in the production and dissemination of targeted recommendations globally.

² Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, and the Federated States of Micronesia