

Outcomes Article

Good practices of capacity development for climate change in SIDS

PCCB Network: OECD and UN DESA

Background

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a group of countries and territories distributed across the Caribbean, Pacific, and Africa, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS). SIDS are a diverse group, with large geographical, cultural, and socio-economic differences. Although these countries are among the least responsible for climate change, they are at the frontlines of climate impacts. These distinct challenges and circumstances have led to their recognition as a special case for the support of the international community. The [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) recently indicated that they present the most urgent needs for capacity development support, notably on climate change adaptation.

In response to this, the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (OECD) and the [United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs](#) (UN DESA) work to support donors and SIDS, to highlight the role of capacity development as a key component for success in climate action and ambition. The experiences and lessons learnt from the work carried out to date and the expectations for future work on this important topic were shared in a technical webinar hosted by the PCCB Network on 29 June 2023. The webinar brought together a range of stakeholders, including government representatives from Portugal and Saint Lucia, the [Caribbean Youth Environment Network](#) (CYEN), [the Alliance of Small Island States](#) (AOSIS), the [Sustainable Development Solutions Network](#) and [the Global Island Partnership](#) (GLISPA).

The [Paris Committee on Capacity-building \(PCCB\) Network](#) was set up to support the [PCCB](#) mandate of addressing current and emerging gaps and needs in implementing and further enhancing capacity-building in developing countries and foster collaboration between actors at all levels. Through the PCCB Network, over 371 institutions and organizations from 91 countries have a platform to connect across sectors and regions, promote knowledge- and experience-sharing, and strengthen partnerships and co-ordination in capacity-building efforts.

Recap of OECD's work on capacity development for climate action in SIDS

Currently, the OECD is finalising a report on capacity development for climate change in SIDS, looking at donor practices across five key themes for capacity-related donor action: access to climate finance, climate data and services, working with non-governmental partners, regional and triangular approaches, and effectiveness issues. These themes provide a guiding framework for donor action – and raise a number of questions for donors, SIDS and other stakeholders on how to ensure effective, long-lasting capacity development. This work builds upon [past OECD work on the subject](#) and the political endorsement of DAC members to working with SIDS (see DAC Declaration on Climate Change [here](#)).



United Nations Climate Change
PCCB Network



OECD

In collaboration with



DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The report concludes with a set of recommendations that highlight the need for a paradigmatic change in how capacity development activities are delivered in SIDS, including on climate change. These recommendations touch upon the need for donor approaches to be more flexible, to continue working on access and provision of climate finance, to work on new types of partnerships with different types of actors, and to harness the value of regional and triangular co-operation approaches, notably in the Africa, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) region, among others.

UN DESA's support for SIDS

UN DESA's SIDS Unit aims to promote and support effective, coherent and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of major UN agreements on sustainable development and the sustainable development priorities of SIDS. The SIDS Unit has been developing several initiatives such as: the [establishment the "SIDS Coalition for Nature"](#), with a Call for Action highlighting 3 gap-bridging partnerships for SIDS to implement the Global Biodiversity Framework; and the (ii) development of the [SIDS Flagship \(under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration\)](#) in partnership with FAO and UNEP in support to 3 SIDS (Comoros, St. Lucia and Vanuatu) aiming to address the environment-economy nexus with a ridge to reef approach. The SIDS Flagship got awarded as one of the first Global Restoration initiatives during World Restoration Day in 2022 and the SIDS Coalition for Nature was launched at COP15 [with the support of the UN Deputy Secretary-General](#). Also, the SIDS Unit is leveraging in-house DESA expertise and partnered with UN DESA entities such as FSDO and UNSD to jointly develop two tailored SIDS focused programs, respectively labeled FINS (Financing for SIDS) and DATAS (Data for SIDS).

Through match-making process, the SIDS-SIDS approach promoted by UN DESA goes beyond information sharing and is designed to identify specific SIDS-SIDS know-how transfer opportunities and cooperation schemes in view to develop and implement tailored regional SIDS-SIDS Cooperation Roadmap on SIDS priority areas (sustainable finance, data, blue economy, biodiversity, climate action etc). Finally, UNDESA SIDS Unit in consultation with the 3 SIDS regions and AOSIS, released two SIDS thematic gap assessment reports in 2022 on (i) [means of implementing biodiversity objectives in collaboration with the CBD Secretariat](#) and on (ii) [means of implementing the Sendai Framework in close collaboration with UNDRR](#).

Overview of panellist presentations

The first panellist to speak at the webinar was the representative of the government of Saint Lucia, whereby they presented a brief summary of the benefits of the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration Flagship](#). The Flagship aims to promote the integration of marine and coastal ecosystem restoration/conservation and sustainable blue finance into COVID-19 economic recovery and growth in 3 SIDS through a connected 'ridge to reef' and seascape management approach to build back better and bluer. The Flagship will be covering the 3 SIDS regions by targeting Vanuatu (in the Pacific), St Lucia (in the Caribbean) and Comoros (in the AIS region).

Importantly, the SIDS Flagship will operate as a toolbox supporting ongoing restoration projects' sites in (i) connecting ecosystem restoration to economic recovery and sustainable growth, (ii) ensuring ridge to reef and multi-sectoral approaches, (iii) applying decision-support tools to decide where and how to invest in restoration to best deliver environmentally sound and sustainable blue economic opportunities, and (iv) linking local level efforts to national level structural changes. This will be done through the development of innovative partnerships with governments, private sector, local communities.



United Nations Climate Change
PCCB Network



OECD

In collaboration with



DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Next, Portugal provided an overview of how its [Development Co-operation Strategy 2030](#), which is human- and needs-based, and has climate change and the environment as cross-cutting issues. The strategy also has a specific focus on SIDS, which are among the most important partners of Portugal, notably through the provision of capacity development type of action. The intervention also provided a snapshot of the current situation of one of its main partners, São Tomé and Príncipe, which has large capacity needs, including on climate change.

The country is introducing a number of reforms, e.g. fiscal reform to introduce VAT, to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels, but donor efforts there are often undermined by structural vulnerabilities, including climate change, and generally speaking the country has few partners to work with. A key milestone in Portugal's support is the [project to develop a roadmap for carbon sustainability in the country](#).

Following Portugal's presentations, a CYEN representative provided views on how the youth could be supported by donors and see their capacity development. Such support ought to focus on helping the youth as advocates of climate action and ambition, engaging the youth in policy and decision making, making sure that monitoring and evaluation approaches evolve so as to capture the impact of projects and programmes on the youth, and developing partnerships where the youth and their role in private sector activities is harnessed.

Subsequently, an AOSIS representative spoke on the capacity needs of SIDS to drive donor interventions. The AOSIS, itself, has created and implements a number of activities such as an AOSIS Award Fellowship (with support from Italy) that helps training and share knowledge of future SIDS negotiators. AOSIS also operates an online platform in the Pacific SIDS and runs a number of models using this platform, similar to what the Caribbean Climate Change Centre also offers for this other region. For SIDS to understand their needs and act consequently, further finance for capacity development is needed.

Then, a panellist from the UN Sustainable Development Network provided a presentation on the importance of quality education for the environment and climate change. Reforming the international financing system needs to go current discussions on whether to use the GDP as a metric to access sustainable finance, but such discussions need to touch upon the importance of having more finance for quality education, the need to progress on the digital agenda to reduce brain drain and the need to guarantee access to education for children. All of these have a direct and indirect impact on climate change issues and systemic capacities in SIDS.

Finally, the GLISPA speaker highlighted three communities of practice run by the Partnership, on tourism, resilient and clean energy systems, and data for climate change. These communities can help advance SIDS in these topics, they provide key learning networks and allow showcasing activities that are being tried. Such communities enable change to diverse groups that can learn from each other's challenges and difficulties.

For further information on the webinar, its recording and materials, please visit the [event webpage](#).



United Nations Climate Change
PCCB Network



OECD

In collaboration with



DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL AFFAIRS