

ISLANDS IN A SEA OF CHANGE

Building Island Resilience

UNESCO's Intersectoral Platform for SIDS



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Intersectoral
Platform for SIDS

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Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face unprecedented challenges. In a globalized and interconnected world subject to climatic and financial crises, small islands are particularly at risk – whether from increasingly unpredictable and severe weather, the prospect of rising sea levels, or due to geographical isolation and economic vulnerability.

However, small island societies have a record of thriving in challenging times. Their long histories are rooted in new and innovative approaches, societal mobilization and technological adaptation.

UNESCO's house-wide contribution to the implementation of the *Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS* is mobilized through the SIDS Platform. The SIDS Platform pursues an integrated approach to sustainable island living and development, emphasizing interregional linkages and cooperation.

Interdisciplinary in nature and drawing on expertise in both Headquarters and Field Offices, the Platform strives to match the inventiveness and determination of island societies themselves.

To ensure that its targeted SIDS programmes and activities fully reflect the current concerns of its 44 SIDS Member States and Associate Member States, UNESCO's Director-General, Ms Irina Bokova, engages in regular exchanges with the SIDS Committee of Representatives to UNESCO, providing updates on the planning and development of UNESCO activities and engaging in informal discussions on issues of particular concern to SIDS.

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Climate Change

Climate change is perhaps the most pressing challenge facing SIDS, threatening island livelihoods, resources, cultures and societies and even the very existence of low-lying island countries. With priority given to SIDS, UNESCO addresses climate change through four main areas of work – climate science and knowledge; education; diversity and cultural heritage; and the social, human, ethical and gender dimensions.

Supporting research-policy dialogue

A high-level discussion on “Climate Change Adaptation in the Caribbean” was jointly organized in St. Kitts and Nevis, in March 2011, by the Social and Human Sciences Sector, the government of St. Kitts and Nevis, and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Ministers and officials attended the meeting along with experts, regional agencies and civil society. This event was followed by a UNESCO experts’ meeting on Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean, held in the British Virgin Islands in June 2011, organized by the Kingston Office and the Government of the British Virgin Islands in coordination with the Education and Natural Science sectors. The two events resulted in the identification and publication of regional priorities and plans for addressing climate change, in particular the consolidation and enhancement of ocean observation and tsunami early warning systems, research cooperation with particular emphasis on the social and human sciences, and climate change education for sustainable development.

Educating for climate change

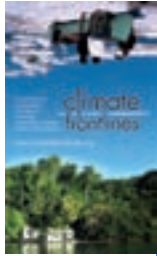
The recommendations of these meetings provided the backdrop for the Interregional UNESCO experts’ meeting on Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development in SIDS held in Nassau, The Bahamas, in September 2011. Education and climate change specialists from all SIDS regions developed succinct recommendations for the advancement and development of climate change education programmes, materials and cooperation. Made possible with financial support from the governments of Denmark and Japan, this event reflects the priority assigned to SIDS under UNESCO’s climate change initiative.

Migration

Launched in 2011, the publication “Migration and Climate Change” brings together views from 26 leading experts from numerous disciplines using case studies from Bangladesh, Brazil, Nepal and the islands of the Pacific. It constitutes the first in-depth analysis of one of the most-discussed but least-understood aspects of climate change. The publication concludes that it is important to explore migration as a possible proactive response to environmental change, ensuring a human rights framework and taking into account people’s desires and patterns of movement. More and better research on affected SIDS populations may ultimately facilitate a forward-looking solution.

Climate Frontlines (www.climatefrontlines.org)

Small island, indigenous and other vulnerable communities have been largely sidelined from global climate change debates. Climate Frontlines seeks to address this by promoting the sharing and exchange of community-level observations, concerns and innovations. It is a joint effort by UNESCO, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In addition to online discussions, Climate Frontlines currently funds, with assistance from the Government of Denmark, more than 30 community-level research projects.



Valuing Heritage and Knowledge

Recognizing World Heritage in Islands

The World Heritage Programme for SIDS coordinates the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy in the context of the World Heritage Convention. During 2010 and 2011, targeted programmes were established in both the Caribbean and the Pacific, and several new SIDS sites were added to the World Heritage list, including the Phoenix Islands Marine Protected Area in Kiribati, the Bikini Atoll Nuclear Test Site in the Marshall Islands, and Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison in Barbados. The Caribbean Capacity Building Project benefits 16 Member States and 20 World Heritage sites. It builds and strengthens capacities in heritage management, fosters cooperation in the region and contributes to understanding the synergies between heritage conservation and new developments. The Pacific World Heritage Action Plan (2010-2015) is currently being carried out by Pacific islands and territories, with UNESCO coordinating regional agencies, NGOs, experts and communities to enhance knowledge management, capacity building, and partnership building.

Underwater Cultural Heritage

The ocean houses a wealth of underwater cultural heritage. The potential for sustainable tourism in partnership with the diving industry has been attracting growing attention. The first regional workshop on Pacific underwater cultural heritage took place in December 2009 in the Solomon Islands. The papers presented by experts at the workshop were published as "Underwater Cultural Heritage in Oceania" in 2010. A feasibility study on the development of a Pacific Underwater Cultural Heritage Capacity Building Programme was prepared in 2011. The study concludes that a careful approach should be taken considering the specific challenges and difficulties the Pacific is facing, and that actions should be based on traditional systems of governance and cultural practices rather than imported.

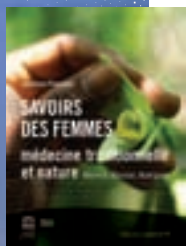
Sharing Island Cultural Expressions

In response to calls from the States Parties to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), ratified by Fiji, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Jamaica, UNESCO has focused its programmes for the 2010-2011 biennium on a global strategy of capacity building among Member States, in particular through the organization of "training the trainers" workshops in the Caribbean, Pacific and other regions. These are aimed at developing strategies and reinforcing synergies between

community-based practices, customary laws and government-supported programmes and policy for ICH safeguarding. For example, in Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 300 specialists from 33 countries took part in training events on the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage offered by the UNESCO Havana Office with the collaboration of other UNESCO Offices in the region. In parallel, a global network of trainers is under development.

Creole Women's Knowledge in the Mascarene Islands

Women's knowledge of medicinal plants and traditional medicine in the Mascarene Islands in the Indian Ocean (La Reunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues) is rooted in the elaborate synergies developed amongst African, Chinese, European and Indian knowledge systems and worldviews. These Creole medicinal practices, which continue to provide for local health needs, have been recorded in the framework of UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) programme and published in French in 2011 in a richly illustrated volume entitled "*Savoirs des Femmes – médecine traditionnelle et nature*". The book was launched at the International Workshop on Bioprocessing, Policy and Practice: Conservation and use of Medicinal plants of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the Indian Ocean and Madagascar, held in April 2011 in Mauritius. The workshop aimed to share information and experience in the conservation, management and exploitation of the region's medicinal plants. An English language version of the book will be published in 2012.



Knowledge Societies



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International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)

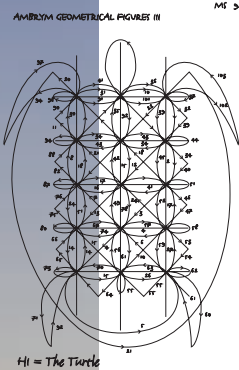
UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication plays an active role in the development of media in SIDS. A total of 176 projects aimed at expanding opportunities for free, independent and pluralistic media in developing countries worldwide were funded in 2010-2011. Projects in SIDS will contribute to IPDC's main priorities, i.e. promoting freedom of expression and media pluralism, development of community media, and capacity building of media professionals.



Arthur Bernard Deacon, 1927 © RAI 7074 / Plowman

Memory of the World register (MOW)

SIDS engage actively with the MOW register. New SIDS inscriptions include *Documentary heritage of the Indian indentured labourers*, submitted by Fiji, Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. The Fiji MOW Committee successfully registered documents of national significance and piloted educational exercises in 12 schools, attracting the attention of other schools in the region interested in replicating this practice. In 2011, the *Arthur Bernard Deacon (1903-27) collection MS 90-98*, which records the 1926 visit to Malekula and other islands by the young Cambridge anthropologist, was jointly submitted by Vanuatu and the United Kingdom and recommended for provisional inscription pending minor clarifications. In March 2011, a second Asia Pacific MOW Training Workshop was held in Indonesia in order to coach and mentor countries not yet represented on the MOW register to identify documentary heritage of world significance. Representatives from Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste participated in this event.



Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) recognizes the primary role of information and media in our everyday lives. It lies at the core of freedom of expression and information because it empowers citizens to understand the functions of media and other information providers, to critically evaluate their content, and to make informed decisions as users and producers of information and media. Achieving media and information literate societies to drive sustainable development requires that teachers – the key catalysts of literate societies – first become media and information literate. The MIL Curriculum for Teachers is an essential resource for SIDS to accomplish this goal. UNESCO is working with Caribbean SIDS to adapt the MIL Curriculum for Teachers and to integrate it into teacher education programmes in the region. Fifteen teacher training institutions from countries including Barbados, Suriname, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Dominica, Grenada and Jamaica participate in regional “training of trainers” workshops and consultations to adapt the Curriculum. Currently available in English, the Curriculum has been translated into Spanish and French, which will facilitate its use in Haiti, Cuba and other SIDS. In addition, 20 professionals from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and St. Kitts and Nevis with responsibilities for education and training took part in a capacity building workshop organized by UNESCO and the University of the West Indies.

“True genius resides in the capacity for evaluation of uncertain, hazardous and conflicting information.”

Winston Churchill



Capacity Development through Education for Sustainable Development

The University Consortium of Small Island States

The University Consortium of Small Island States (UCSIS), a UNESCO UNITWIN network, is composed of the Universities of Malta, Mauritius, South Pacific, Virgin Islands and the West Indies, as well as new partners Seychelles and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. It promotes an integrated system of research, training, information and documentation for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy. In partnership with UNDESA and with funding from the Government of Spain, UCSIS member institutions are currently developing a joint Master's programme focusing on small island sustainability. Connected through a shared online platform, the programme will allow students from participating small island universities to take part in courses offered by networked institutions in other SIDS regions.

Strengthening Non-Formal Education in Timor-Leste

Within the framework of Capacity Development for Education For All (CapEFA), support has been provided by the UNESCO Office in Jakarta to strengthen the capacity of the Timor-Leste Ministry of Education in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating non-formal education programmes. Interventions have specifically focused on strengthening provisions of equivalency education, Community Learning Centers, pedagogy applied to non-formal education for adult learners, and income generation. In addition, support is also being provided to develop capacities in recording, using and transmitting local and traditional knowledge and practices.



Sandwatch (www.sandwatch.org)

Sandwatch is a climate change and coastal monitoring programme which encourages the development of sustainable approaches to address beach environment challenges, while also stimulating local climate change adaptation measures.

Launched by UNESCO over a decade ago, Sandwatch is today active in more than 25 SIDS worldwide, and is coordinated by the non-profit Sandwatch Foundation. A new edition of the Sandwatch Manual was published in 2010, integrating new content on climate change adaptation as well as networking and information sharing. Currently available in English and French, the manual will be published in Spanish and Portuguese in 2012. A global Sandwatch database is under development to allow the data collected by Sandwatch teams around the world to be systematically recorded and shared.



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Taking climate change education beyond science

In order to assist teachers and education planners in developing their understanding of the science of climate change, its impacts and mitigation, a climate change starter's guidebook has been jointly developed by UNESCO and UNEP, with contributions from other partners such as WHO. This starter's guide – which encourages the teaching of climate change in an interdisciplinary manner – also covers the impacts on society, as well as political and educational responses to climate change. The Starter's Guide has been written for educational planners and practitioners with the objective of enhancing their capacity for developing educational programmes and content on climate change adaptation and mitigation, while taking into account the cultural, social and political complexities of the issue, and thus forging a more understanding future generation.



Photo: © Thomas L. Jensen

Enabling Environments

Caribbean networking for capacity building in research and development

In September 2010, the Caribbean Diaspora for Science Technology and Innovation (CADSTI) launched the Caribbean Science Foundation (CSF) in Trinidad and Tobago with the assistance of CARISCIENCE.

The mission of the CSF is to assist in diversifying the economies of the Caribbean and to help raise the standard of living. More specifically, the CSF aims to help stimulate technology-based entrepreneurship by identifying and funding science and technology projects in new and existing enterprises that are relevant to the economic development needs of the region; accelerate education reform that supports technology-based entrepreneurship by promoting and funding programmes; and provide scientific and engineering advisory services to Caribbean governments by working with CADSTI to leverage the expertise that resides in the diaspora.



© University of the West Indies, St Augustine campus



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Youth

Youth, which makes up the majority of many SIDS populations, is assigned priority in UNESCO's engagement with SIDS, as reflected in several activities undertaken in 2010 and 2011. In the Caribbean, the First Forum of Ministers Responsible for Social & Sustainable Development updated their design of policy frameworks for the social development of youth in Caribbean SIDS, while the YouthPath programme disseminated best practices on youth poverty alleviation at the World Youth Conference held in Mexico in August 2010. The Youth Visioning for Island Living (YV) (www.youthvisioning.org) initiative promotes capacity building and the involvement of youth in the sustainable development of SIDS. Young people articulate how they want their islands to develop in the future and undertake projects that encompass the environment (including climate change), health, socio-economic and cultural issues. YV was initiated in 2004 and is supported by many organizations at the national, regional and inter-regional level. Since 2006, YV has benefited

from funding through the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in support of youth-led local activities relating to HIV/AIDS. Projects adhere to a human rights-based approach, with an emphasis on awareness building on a youth-to-youth basis. During 2010-2011, eight projects from Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean SIDS were implemented.

**YOUTH
VISIONING**
for Island Living

Gender and climate change

In 2010, UNESCO and Monash University undertook a study on the potential impacts of climate change on women from the Pacific. Food security, water resources and health will inevitably have major impacts on women's lives due to their primary role as family carers. An increase in natural disaster frequency and intensity will have further implications as women suffer from higher casualty rates than men. Stress caused by these impacts, acting in conjunction with other factors, could lead to increasing domestic violence and issues of safety within the community. Further work to determine the actual impacts in Pacific communities is planned for 2012.

Participation Programme

During the 2010-2011 biennium, UNESCO provided a total of more than \$2,300,000 to SIDS member states for the implementation of nationally executed projects across the full range of UNESCO's programme areas. This support, along with the diversity and ingenuity of the projects being implemented by governments, civil society organizations and communities are testimony to the mutual commitment and good cooperation between UNESCO and its SIDS member states.



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Land, Marine and Water Resources

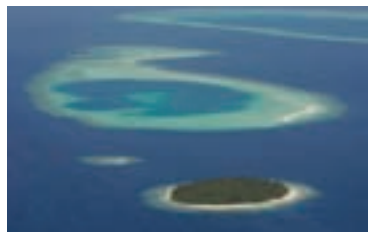
Biosphere Reserves in SIDS

Through the active engagement of Man and the Biosphere (MAB) committees and regional and thematic networks, new advances in the designation and management of biosphere reserves are being made in SIDS worldwide.

In the Pacific, a call for proposals for research, management and monitoring projects was issued in March 2011. Utwe Biosphere Reserve in the Federated States of Micronesia – a community-managed coastal reserve in the central Pacific Ocean – responded, proposing to establish new monitoring sites and begin a coral and fish monitoring programme; construct a boardwalk and four huts to support ecotourism activities; and organize, prepare, plan and conduct management planning workshops in the Utwe community. As part of the proposal, educational materials will be developed and disseminated in both the biosphere reserve and in the wider community.

In the Indian Ocean, assistance was provided to the Maldives for the preparation of nomination documentation for Baa Atoll to become the country's first biosphere reserve, leading to the successful addition in June 2011 of Baa Atoll to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Also in 2011, St. Mary's in St. Kitts and Nevis became the newest biosphere reserve in the Caribbean. With its diverse natural habitats – from coral reefs and mangroves along the coastline to tropical cloud forest in the mountainous zone – it is one of the most important biodiversity sites in St. Kitts and Nevis. It is among the first biosphere reserves to be inscribed in the Caribbean small islands, providing a good case study of community involvement in the preservation of an area of outstanding natural and cultural value.



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© Atoll Ecosystem Project / Ministry of Housing & Environment, (Baa Atoll), Maldives



Pacific Catalogue of Rivers

The UNESCO Apia Office supports the development of the first Catalogue of Rivers for the Pacific, intended for use by specialists and lay-persons alike. The initiative adds value to the now complete Pacific Hydrological Cycle Observing System (HYCOS) project by including examples of available HYCOS data. The Catalogue covers eight countries: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. It is the broadest collection of river information in the Pacific to date and covers hydrological information ranging from river gauges to rainfall data for each country – an invaluable resource for anyone wishing to engage in water-related programmes in the Pacific.



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Expanding institutional capacity, regional cooperation and partnerships in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

Scientific, policy-related, legislative, educational, social, and communication information related to water science and water resource topics covering the Caribbean – as well as Latin America – is published twice a year in the scientific journal Aqua-LAC. The journal's 5th issue was published in March 2011 (Volume 3, N°1). Initiated in 2009, Aqua-LAC has proven to be an attractive space for leading research from the region. The content of the journal is aimed to meet the requirements of the scientific community, water resource managers, decision-makers, and the public in general. Aqua-LAC's editorial council includes members from Haiti and Saint Lucia, and the Board of Directors includes the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, based in Belize.



© FAO/Ministry of Environment, (Baa Atoll), Maldives

Natural and Environmental Disasters

Knowledge, preparedness and management

Small islands are at particular risk from a wide range of natural hazards, including tropical storms, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Island communities in the Pacific, Caribbean and Indian Ocean have adapted to these hazards and have built locally specific knowledge and practices to minimize loss of life and livelihoods when disasters strike. UNESCO has led a number of recent collaborative activities on scientific, educational and communication aspects of disaster mitigation.

In the Pacific, a documentary on traditional knowledge for disaster risk reduction in the Cook Islands was produced, while in Samoa a video documentary of the September 2009 tsunami was developed together with a community-based disaster risk management and climate change adaptation tool kit for community-level preparedness and mitigation.

In the Caribbean, local and community media professionals received training on preparedness and response to natural disaster situations as well as on the handling of information relating to humanitarian issues. Activities included training in the tools and means used by meteorologists to observe and track hurricanes. The impact on media workers allowed the publication of “*A mal tiempo periodismo*”, a booklet for journalists on how to improve media coverage in disaster situations.

Preparedness for Ocean-Based Extreme Events

With its focus on research and monitoring of the world’s oceans, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC) works closely with its SIDS member states. IOC has been involved since the mid-1980s in a long-term project on the management of beach resources and planning for coastline change. It hosts and co-sponsors the Secretariat of the Global Ocean Observing System, one of the ultimate aims of which is to mitigate damage from natural hazards and pollution. It coordinates the establishment of early warning systems for tsunamis and other ocean-related hazards in the Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean regions. These systems have been under development by countries since 1990. IOC contributes regularly to regional training courses and events – a key component of its continuing support for SIDS coastal and ocean hazards preparedness in the small island regions.



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UNESCO's Intersectoral Platform for Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

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World Heritage Convention