

A photograph of a beach cleanup scene. In the foreground, several people are bent over, picking up debris from the sand. The debris includes sticks, leaves, and other natural materials. In the background, a white car is parked on the left, and a line of trees is visible. The ocean is on the right, and the sky is blue with some clouds. The overall scene suggests a coastal area affected by natural events or pollution.

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Mitigating Economic Impacts of Climate Change on Small Island Developing States

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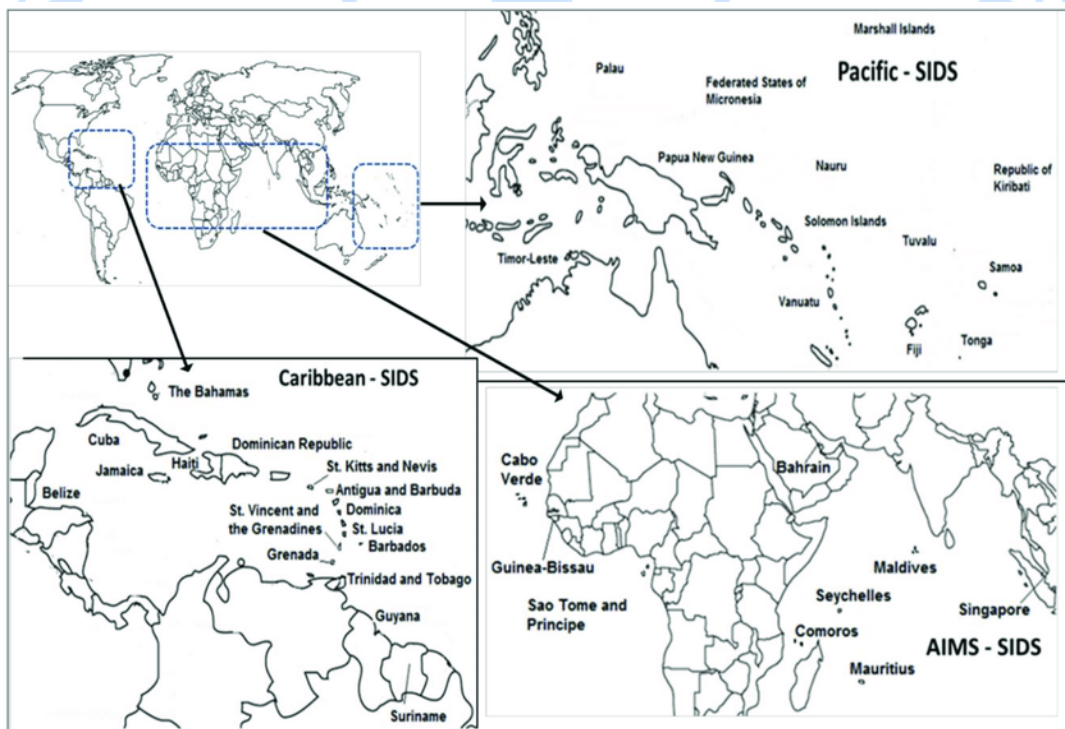
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Introduction

Roughly 65 million people inhabit Small Island Developing States globally, making up less than 1% of the world population. Yet, this group faces harsh and demanding consequences of climate change unlike any other. Countries which share many borders often have access to direct trade and hold a generous supply of natural resources. SIDS, on the other hand, have predisposed economic disadvantages through their geographical position, such as a small threshold of resources, and small domestic markets. In combination with the challenges created by climate change, these states are often left to struggle to sustain their markets.

Definition of key terms

SIDS (Small Island Developing States): A collection of 38 Member UN states and 20 Non-UN Members/Associate Members of United Nations regional commissions that share and face unique social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities include small populations, limited resources, remoteness, susceptibility to natural disasters and excessive dependence on international trade.



Global Warming: The long-term heating of the Earth's surface observed since the 1800s due to human activities, primarily the burning of fossil fuels which release greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane.

Climate Change: Refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Since the 1800s, human activities have been the largest contributor to climate change. As more greenhouse gases are trapped in the atmosphere, weather patterns will continue to become more extreme.

EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone): As defined under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), is an area of the ocean directly offshore from a country's land coast in which that country retains exclusive rights to the exploration and exploitation of natural resources.



Infrastructure: The basic physical and organisational structures and facilities, such as buildings, roads, and power supplies, which are needed to operate a society or enterprise.

LEDC/ MEDC (Less or More Economically Developed Country): Divides all countries into two categories based on wealth and standard of living.

Coastal erosion: The loss of coastal lands due to the net removal of sediments or bedrock from the shoreline.

Biodiversity: The variety of plant and animal life in the world or a specific habitat. A high level of biodiversity is essential for sustaining healthy and complex ecosystems.

Domestic: Existing or occurring inside a particular country's borders.

General Overview

Due to the remote nature of these islands, exports and imports are highly expensive. For SIDS, most of their resources are from the ocean, because of Exclusive Economic Zones, they often control ocean territory that makes up more than their land mass. Their small land mass and resource base forces them to rely externally for goods. International trade is not only essential for their survival but also for their resilience towards climate change. International trade can help SIDS by supplying resources to help combat higher temperatures while also introducing low-emission technology. Yet, climate change challenges the very act of long-distance trading. Extreme weather fluctuations could bring challenges to seaports through heavier floods and stronger winds. Consequently, increasing maritime accidents and slowing cargo ships in reaching the islands. Climate change also challenges the populations living in SIDS from living and working in the region. As sea levels rise, many islands will continue to lose land and populations will be forced to relocate. Tuvalu in particular, is suffering dramatically from coastal erosion and heavy typhoons which damage community infrastructure and continue to keep Tuvalu reliant on foreign aid. Additionally, the warming of the ocean has brought incredible challenges to the environmental biodiversity of the Islands. Biodiversity is not only important to the population of SIDS, but also to the tourists on which the islands are often extremely reliant. Roughly 80% of employment in Aruba is related to the tourism sector and it, therefore, relies strongly on tourists to sustain jobs. Damage to biodiversity will also harm the practice of farming and fishing in the islands, another large factor to their income. However the issue of economic challenges due to climate change is one that affects many countries worldwide. Events abroad, such as loss of cargos and damages to sea ports is one that ultimately affects those that export the goods too.

Major Parties Involved

China: China is globally the largest exporter of international goods. They are extremely involved in particularly the South of the Pacific Islands. For the Solomon islands, the two-way trade with China makes up 49% of all their trade. Additionally, China has been extremely involved in aid projects in the Pacific to repair and build infrastructure through generous investments.

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization: This organisation has promoted many discussions through conferences on the effects of climate change on SIDS.

SIDS: SIDS have a relatively low CO₂ emissions rate, yet experiences the most dramatic drawbacks from climate change. They, or their jurisdiction nations, are encouraged to therefore express their needs in response to the challenges they face.

Global Coral Reef Alliance: This non-profit organisation initiates projects globally to restore coral reefs for their respective economic benefits. GCRA Projects often perform restoration of coral reefs and marine habitats for mariculture, tourism and shore protection.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

SIDS were first recognized as a unique case for its climate and economic challenges at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Since then, discussions have been held to find solutions to assisting SIDS. The International Conference on Small Island Developing States has allowed for the implementation of programmes which assisted the aforementioned states in sustaining development. These programs address sustainable development through environmental protection and foreign aid efforts. However, the challenges remain persistent, due to the increasing gravity of the effects of climate change.

Relevant UN Programmes:

- Barbados Programme of Action - 1994
- Mauritius Strategy - 2005

- SAMOA Pathway - 2014

Possible Solutions

To mitigate the economic impacts of climate change on Small Island Developing States, the issue should be addressed in two forms. Short-term assistance to the economy of SIDS could be ensuring proper distribution of foreign aid to SIDS, as well as building more weather-resilient infrastructure. This should be focused on the infrastructure that is valuable to economic development, for example, that which contributes to commercial zones and seaports. Additionally, communities on the islands could receive more benefits and protection from governments to avoid the relocation of residents. Long-term assistance would mean fighting climate drawbacks as a whole. This could mean ensuring that reefs are rebuilt and islands are running on renewable energy sources.

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