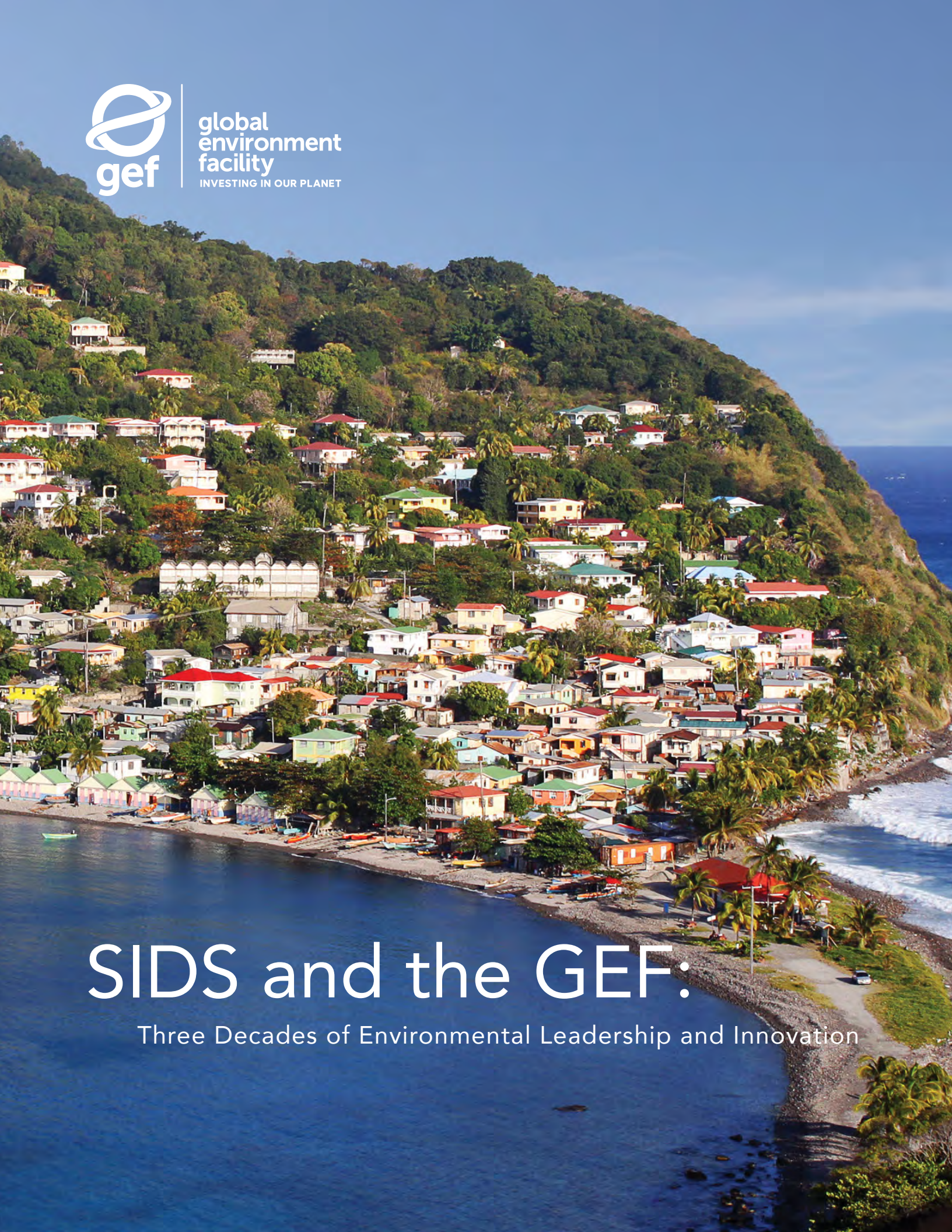
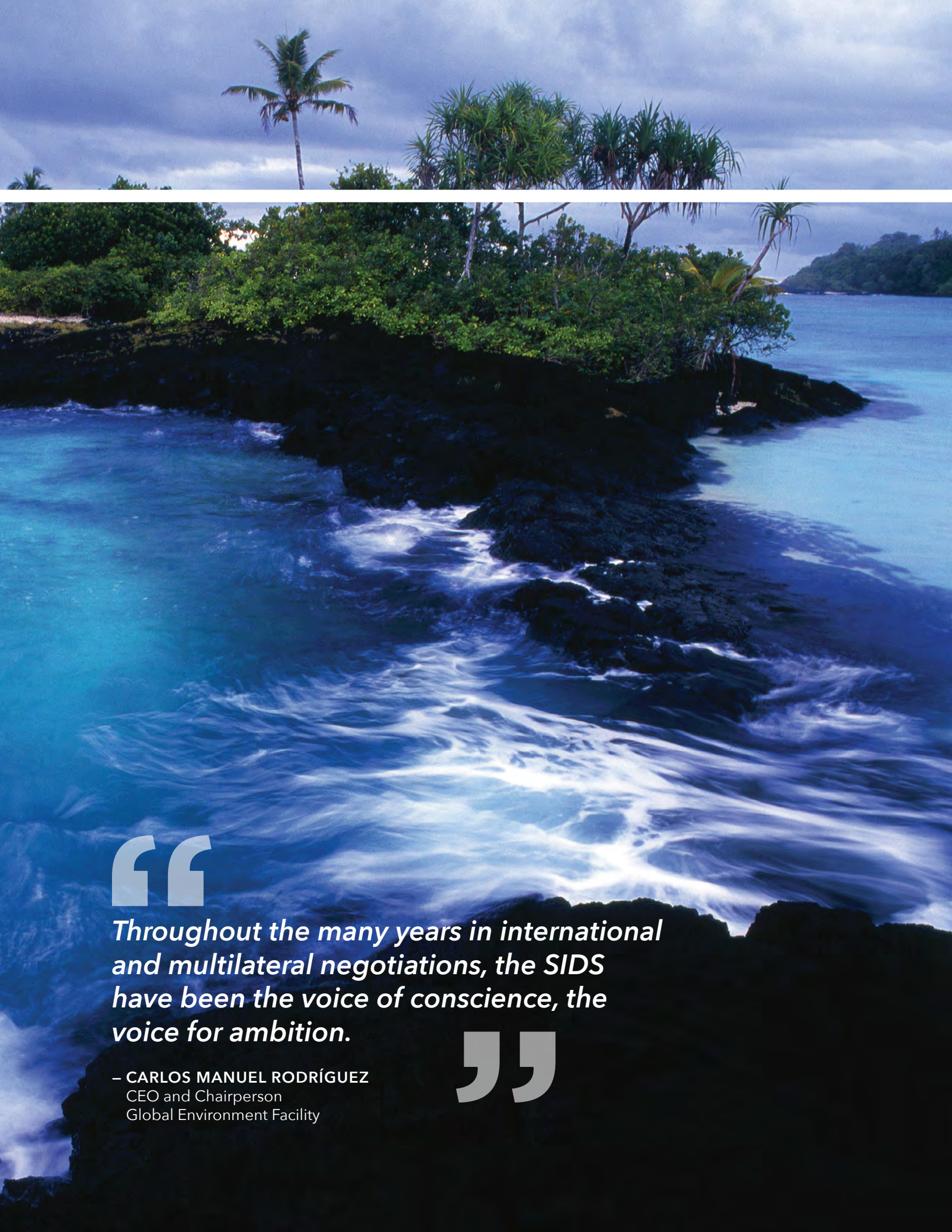
global environment facility
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET



SIDS and the GEF:

Three Decades of Environmental Leadership and Innovation



Throughout the many years in international and multilateral negotiations, the SIDS have been the voice of conscience, the voice for ambition.

– **CARLOS MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ**
CEO and Chairperson
Global Environment Facility

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Foreword

On behalf of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), I am delighted to introduce this publication that shines a light on the remarkable leadership of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) on environmental issues.

SIDS face unique challenges due to their size, remoteness, and vulnerability to climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Yet, they consistently demonstrate a powerful commitment to environmental stewardship. Their innovative approaches and tireless advocacy serve as an inspiration for all nations.

This publication highlights the ways in which SIDS are leading the charge on critical environmental issues. You will find stories of successful GEF-supported projects that are fostering sustainable development, protecting biodiversity, and promoting climate resilience in SIDS.

The GEF is proud to partner with SIDS governments, communities, and civil society organizations to support their environmental priorities. We recognize the vital role of SIDS in shaping a sustainable future for our planet.

Through this publication, we:

- Celebrate the achievements of SIDS in environmental leadership.
- Showcase the innovative approaches being developed and implemented in SIDS.
- Highlight the importance of continued support for SIDS' environmental efforts.

I encourage you to explore the stories within and learn more about the inspiring work being done in SIDS. Together, we can build a future where all nations can thrive in a healthy and resilient environment.

CARLOS MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ
CEO and Chairperson
Global Environment Facility

Introduction

Small Island Developing States cover three geographic areas—Caribbean; Pacific; and Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea (AIS)—and are home to more than 65 million people, representing less than 1 percent of the world's population.

Tiny landmass, giant ocean domain: SIDS control a staggering 30 percent of the world's oceans through their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), dwarfing their mere 24,111 km² of land area. This vast maritime territory grants them significant economic influence.[1] SIDS also have high levels of endemism and consequently ecosystem degradation significantly impacts biodiversity, for example about 75 percent of recorded extinctions have occurred on islands.[2] As repositories of some of the world's most diverse and unique species and ecosystems, small islands of the Caribbean, West Indian Ocean, and the Pacific hold 1,000 Key Biodiversity Areas, with most SIDS entirely within biodiversity hotspots. The Caribbean is home to more than 11,000 species of seed plants, of which at least 7,800 are endemic to the biodiversity hotspots[3]; islands in the West Indian Ocean are home to the highest degree of amphibian endemism of any island group; and the Pacific contains the most extensive and biologically diverse coral reefs and the deepest ocean trenches. many of which are unexplored.[4] In addition, all SIDS possess ample renewable energy potential from wind, solar, marine, and other sources.

Coupled with these unique and valuable environments are unique vulnerabilities and environmental challenges, which are often more intense due to the small land area, geographic isolation, and remoteness of SIDS.

The Global Environment Facility and SIDS have a shared history dating back to the Earth Summit in 1992, with the recognition of 'small island developing States' as a special case for the environment and development,[5] and the confirmation of the GEF as a financial mechanism for the Rio Conventions. For 30 years the GEF, the world's largest environmental funder, has been a key partner for SIDS in tackling their environmental challenges and supporting their role in protecting the global environment.

The GEF's support has been multi-faceted:

- **Helping 38 SIDS meet international commitments**: The GEF has assisted SIDS in implementing national plans under key environmental agreements such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the Stockholm and Minamata Conventions.
- **Supporting the future of high seas protection**: Recognizing the critical role of SIDS in ocean health, the GEF, in its role as part of the financial mechanism, is providing ratification support and implementation readiness to the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement.
- **Creating leading protected areas**: GEF support has helped SIDS lead on nature conservation, from massive marine protected areas to community-based approaches that integrate protection and use.
- **Through the newly launched Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF)**, the GEF aims to help countries achieve the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework goals and targets with a strategic focus on strengthening national-level biodiversity management, planning, policy, governance, and finance approaches.
- **Combating pollution**: The GEF also supports SIDS in addressing chemicals and waste pollution, including plastic pollution.

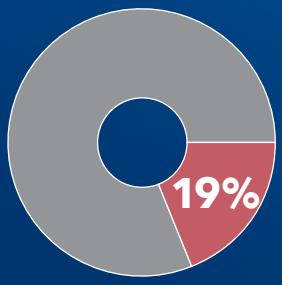
SIDS have also leveraged GEF financing to support their efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the series of SIDS global commitments under the Barbados Program of Action (1994-2004), Mauritius Strategy (2004-2014), and the SAMOA Pathway (2014-2024).

Since 1992, the GEF has provided $2.3 billion in direct national and regional project and program financing, along with an additional $12.2 billion in co-financing for SIDS.[6] This financing has been supported by the GEF's growing family of funds including the GEF Trust Fund, the climate adaptation funds of the GEF—the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) and the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF)—the Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT), and the Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund (NPIF), as well as the more recent GBFF. SIDS have not only benefited from the traditional project and program funding windows, but also through the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) as well as the Blended Finance window.

Within the GEF partnership, 15 GEF Agencies operate in SIDS, with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the World Bank providing a large share of the support to countries. Projects and programs also benefit from strong collaboration with key stakeholders including government representatives, academia, civil society organizations, private sector community representatives, and Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as well as a range of sub-regional intergovernmental organizations.

With SIDS at the helm demonstrating innovation and leadership, projects and programs across all three sub-regions are delivering on protection and sustainable management of biodiversity, increased access to renewable energy technologies and improved energy efficiency, reduction in CO_2 emissions, improved land management, cooperation on international waters, resilience and adaptation to climate change, improved management of chemicals and waste, and reduction of pollution.

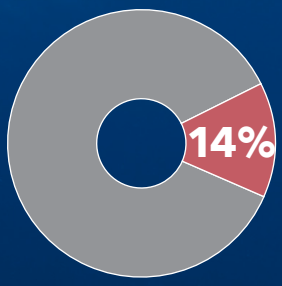
The impact of the triple planetary crisis is strongly felt in a SIDS context, given the strong interconnection between people's well-being and livelihoods and the healthy, productive, and resilient environment they rely on. With their small land mass and significant influence on global environmental degradation, they embody the reality of healthy planet, healthy people. On



of coral reefs in the world are in located in SIDS

The Cabo Verde archipelago is one of the world's **top ten** coral reef biodiversity hotspots

The combined **Exclusive Economic Zones** of Mauritius & Seychelles is **larger** than India



SIDS make up a vast share of the world's coastline

The **Saint Lucia marine reserve** is the **size** of Germany

Palau National Marine Sanctuary is **twice** the size of Mexico

Seychelles issued the **world's first sovereign Blue Bond**

Fiji is among the **first countries** to embark on ocean accounting for **enhanced, data-based decision making**

Belize is the **first country in the Americas** with a debt swap for ocean scheme

Source: SIDS Coalition for Nature

The GEF Small Grants Programme has been a member of [the Global Island Partnership] for about ten years, and … we've really been working together with [SIDS] to connect between political leadership and local implementation. How do we … enable those really amazing, very local stories, which are often only known in that local community, to both have resonance in their national space, but also internationally to get the types of resources that they need to keep implementing?

– KATE BROWN
Executive Director
Global Island Partnership

the positive side, due to their size, SIDS are also prime candidates for demonstrating how a healthy environment can lead to healthy people and healthy prosperity.

As the GEF approach has evolved over the past three decades to emphasize the need for integrated approaches to tackle these interlinked crises, so too has the approach of interventions in SIDS evolved for more transformative impact. This publication showcases this evolution.

GEF investments over 30 years have enabled SIDS to progressively build on and expand interventions that have improved their capacity to address their environmental challenges. For example, GEF support has spanned several projects working on expanding coverage of protected areas, developing enabling policy and legislation for the management of terrestrial and marine natural resources, and strengthening institutions and communities to more sustainably manage their natural resources.

Projects and programs have also evolved from primarily focusing on addressing distinct environment problems and challenges to tackling in a more integrated manner the drivers of environmental degradation and enhancing the resilience of ecosystems that support their growing economies. For example, this has evolved from multi-thematic projects and programs such as the Pacific Ridge to Reef Program; or the Integrating Watershed and Coastal Area Management in the Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean; to SIDS actively participating in the GEF's global Integrated Programs, such as Blue and Green Islands, Food Systems, and Clean and Healthy Ocean, among others.

Finally, within the range of projects and programs highlighted throughout the publication, examples of innovation whether through finance, policy, or new institutional arrangements will be showcased, recognizing the role of SIDS as leaders in the sustainable development agenda.

As we move into the post SAMOA Pathway era, after three decades of support and action, the GEF continues to recognize SIDS as a special case for sustainable development, and as such, will continue to enable SIDS to take a forward-looking position on global environment issues and deliver on their global commitments with a view to fostering environmental protection and planetary sustainability, building resilient economies, and ensuring a secure future.

Major Environmental Issues in SIDS

SIDS are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, including plastic pollution. More specifically, small island states have fragile natural environments, face threatened biodiversity, limited water availability, invasive alien species, land management challenges,[7] and face impacts of harmful chemicals and waste. In addition, most SIDS are characterized by a high dependence on imported fossil fuels for electricity generation and transport, putting a major strain on their resources and jeopardizing their energy security. The import of fossil fuel often takes a toll on national budgets, reaching up to 20 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of some islands.

SIDS' vulnerabilities are a result of greater exposure and sensitivity to external shocks than average, combined with a lower capacity to adapt.[8] The most significant of these shocks are climate related, which include altered rainfall patterns, storm surges, sea level rise, hurricanes and typhoons of increased intensity and frequency, and marine heatwaves. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic also disproportionately impacted SIDS; they were among the economically worst hit countries, mainly due to global contractions in tourism and fisheries.[9]

These shocks are exacerbated by economic vulnerabilities, including challenges in mobilizing domestic resources and accessing capital

markets; lack of economic diversification; high cost of inter-regional transport; and challenges in absorbing and in some cases being eligible for concessional financing and grants.[10] Altogether, climate shocks, other external shocks and economic vulnerabilities pose barriers for SIDS to sustainably use marine and terrestrial resources, improve access and availability of freshwater resources, enhance food and energy security, and build resilient infrastructure.[11]

The greater exposure of SIDS to external disturbance is caused by a variety of factors, including, for example, high percentages of SIDS populations living in low-lying areas (nearly 30 percent on average, and over 70 percent in some countries). Additionally, a greater dependency on the natural environment increases the sensitivity of SIDS to environmental degradation. For example, SIDS account for a majority of countries most dependent on fish and seafood consumption globally.[12] Additionally, SIDS rely on coral reefs for over 20 percent of their overall tourism revenue (increasing to as much as 60 percent).[13] Thus, degradation of the surrounding oceans has an immediate and wide-scale impact on livelihoods and food security. The fact that SIDS' domestic economies are highly interlinked, within their small context, means a shock in one sector can wreak havoc across the country at large.[14] The result of all these realities is the fundamental dependence of the well-being of the populations on the health of the environment.[15]

SIDS have demonstrated a strong commitment to deliver on international agreements such as SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 14 (life below water), and SDG 15 (life on land), and the global SIDS Agendas such as the SAMOA Pathway. Yet, their vulnerabilities and unique challenges continue to slow progress.

Chart 1: GEF Programming by Funding Source

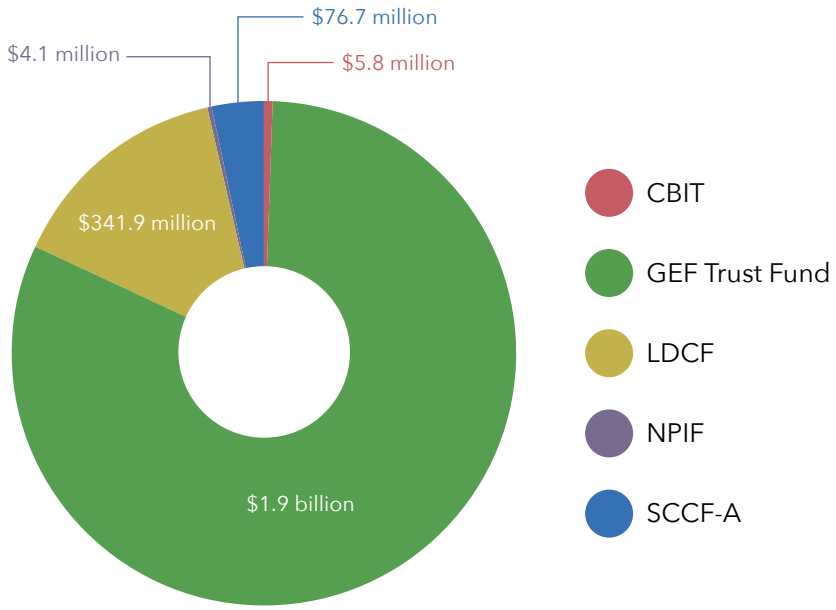


Chart 2: GEF Programming by Focal Area

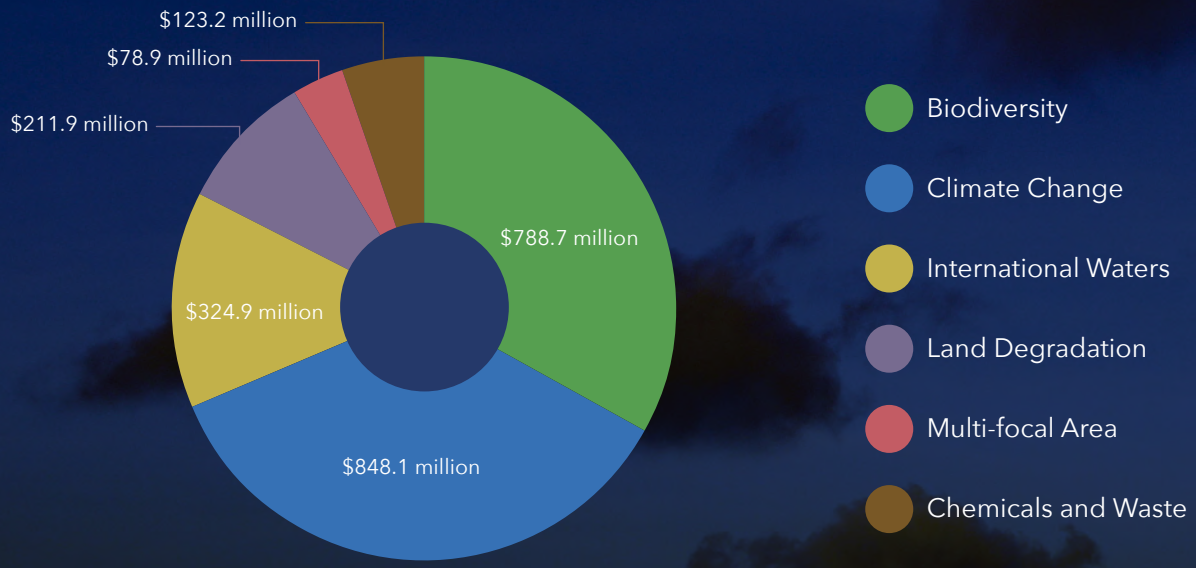
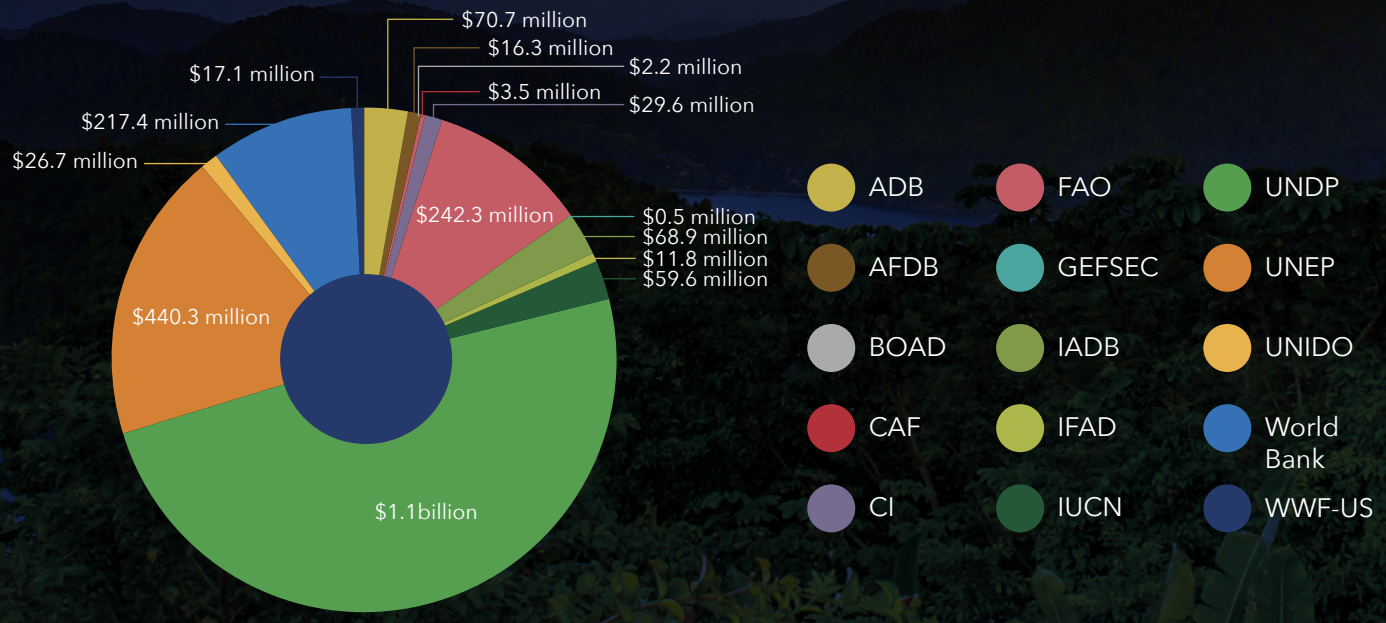


Chart 3: GEF Programming by Agency



Total funding up to February 2024


YAMAHA

Highlights from the GEF Portfolio

In response to their unique realities, SIDS have been taking steps to transition to ocean-based green economies, or blue-green economies, through integrated solutions including 'whole of island' and 'ridge to reef' approaches to sustainability. The GEF has been collaborating with SIDS to help bolster their resilience through investments in their blue (marine and freshwater) and green (terrestrial) environments.

At the heart of GEF financing is a dedication to delivering global environmental benefits and local adaptation benefits, while ensuring a healthy, productive, and resilient environment that underpins the well-being of people and a sustainable economy. As such, projects and programs have evolved from simply addressing environmental challenges to innovative and integrated approaches addressing the drivers of environmental degradation, working across sectors to bring together diverse stakeholders and ensure long-term impacts. This continuously evolving integrated approach has been particularly crucial for SIDS, due to their small size and interconnected nature.

GEF initiatives have facilitated cooperation among SIDS to tackle transboundary issues such as migratory fisheries and pollution and have promoted shared management of critical freshwater and marine resources. GEF projects have enhanced nature conservation and restoration, established new protected areas, and built capacity for planning and effective landscape management. Additionally, GEF projects reduced levels of toxic chemicals like mercury and persistent organic pollutants (POPs), helped establish environmental funds creating innovative long-term financing mechanisms, and supported SIDS in adopting renewable energy and energy efficiency practices.[16]

Finally, with a sharp focus on climate change adaptation and resilience, the GEF's support to SIDS through the LDCF and SCCF has built resilience to climate change at the systems level while also embracing a

whole-of-island approach. Adaptation finance has supported SIDS with strengthening agriculture, food security, and health systems; water and energy security; early warning and climate information services; nature-based solutions to reduce exposure to climate impacts; and meeting urgent needs in areas such as infrastructure, restoration, and disaster risk management.

Moreover, through enabling policy reforms, data collection, reporting, capacity building, knowledge management, information sharing, and multi-stakeholder partnerships, interventions equip SIDS with the tools they need for sustained environmental outcomes.

GEF financing has also included direct support to community interventions through the UNDP-GEF SGP, some of which have been successfully scaled up to larger national level projects. For example, a "Nature is our best defense" SGP project in the Seychelles was successfully scaled up to a $3.9 million (with $27.3 million in co-financing) full-sized project titled, "A Ridge-to-Reef Approach for the Integrated Management of Marine, Coastal, and Terrestrial Ecosystems in the Seychelles," which also built on lessons learned from the Pacific Ridge to Reef program. Some SIDS, such as Cabo Verde[17] and Maldives,[18] created grant mechanisms within larger projects that supported community-led micro-projects, including a financing structure which provided additional funds for well-executed micro-projects.

Throughout these initiatives, the GEF has sought to actively elevate the people who care for and depend on their environments in the design, implementation, and management of projects, including those most vulnerable populations such as Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, and youth. This is especially crucial in areas where traditional communities depend on subsistence and income-generating activities related to the natural environment, as is the case in many SIDS. Through GEF-financed projects in SIDS, expected beneficiaries are 68 million people including at least 2 million people through LDCF/SCCF funds, a majority of whom are female.[19]

CSOs have been and continue to be a critical link between local communities and policy makers/decision-makers. This means that CSOs are often poised to contribute valuable insight on the local context at the grassroots levels when seeking to identify projects, programs or intiatives, from objective setting, to outlining main components and outcomes that may be most effective and/or practical.

– BONITA BERNARD
GYBN Caribbean
Steering Committee Member

Building Resilient and Sustainable Societies

Resilience, in its multifaceted dimensions, is a key aspect of GEF interventions in SIDS. The GEF recognizes resilience as a key cross-cutting theme underpinning investments overall. In a SIDS context, building resilience in the social-ecological systems which support their societies and economies has been an important feature. Thus, to build resilient societies, the GEF is enabling SIDS to enhance their capacity to deal with change and continue to develop in the face of climate change impacts, biodiversity loss, and mounting pollution, ensuring that SIDS are equipped to withstand and adapt to these complex and interconnected threats.

Marine, freshwater, and terrestrial ecosystems in SIDS are the basis of key economic sectors, including but not limited to agriculture, fisheries/aquaculture, and tourism. Each of these sectors is complex and navigate a four-way relationship between local populations, other local economic sectors, fragile environmental ecosystems, and external political-economic pressures.[20]

The examples below show that GEF investments have enhanced resilience at national scales, as well as at the sectoral level. Through the application of various approaches such as mainstreaming climate change adaptation and biodiversity, management of shared water resources, community-based fisheries management, and integrated landscape planning, key sectors including fisheries, agriculture, and tourism can develop more sustainably. These projects overall, which primarily aim to maintain the health of ecosystems, undoubtedly have the potential to strengthen economies and safeguard livelihoods.

Efforts toward bolstering the resilience of supportive sectors including public infrastructure, water, and energy sectors, as well as integration of climate resilience into overarching development policies and plans, have also been a feature of SIDS projects over the past 30 years.

GEF Small Grants Programme

For over 30 years, the GEF SGP has supported communities and civil society organizations across SIDS in identifying, designing, and implementing locally-led initiatives that address the unique environmental and development challenges experienced by SIDS.

The SGP takes a 'landscape-seascape' programming approach across the 37 SIDS where SGP is currently active. The areas of work include climate change adaptation and disaster management; clean and sustainable energy access; biodiversity conservation and management; international waters; chemical and waste management with emphasis on plastic management; promoting blue and circular economy approaches; food security, sustainable agriculture and fisheries; and sustainable tourism. In SIDS, SGP brings together civil society, government, the private sector, and other local stakeholders via multi-stakeholder governance platforms to facilitate knowledge exchange, policy dialogues, scale-up and replication of best practices.

These locally-led initiatives, therefore, promote community-based innovation, capacity development, sustainable livelihoods, and South-South cooperation and play a key role in being socially inclusive to ensure the most vulnerable and marginalized, including women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and persons with disabilities are empowered.

By nurturing robust and sustainable blue and green economies, creating lasting partnerships, and fostering innovation in various sectors, the GEF endeavors to empower SIDS to cultivate a resilient foundation for sustainable development, improving practices across 71.7 million hectares of land[21] and enabling SIDS' ability to thrive in the face of adversity and uncertainty.

Resilient and Sustainable Economies

To increase the resilience of SIDS economies, SIDS are utilizing GEF funds not only to work in economic sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and tourism, but also supportive sectors including public infrastructure, water, and energy sectors. This is evidence that SIDS are well-positioned to advance integrated approaches for a resilient blue and green economy.

The "Integrated Economic Development and Community Resilience Project" in the Solomon Islands, with $4.6 million in GEF financing and $19 million in co-financing, aims to enhance infrastructure access, implement climate resilience actions, and increase provincial government accountability. It supports the implementation and enhancement of small-scale infrastructure projects and climate adaptation measures such as water supply systems and coastal protection seawalls, particularly in rural areas. The project is also providing support to develop climate-resilient construction standards and training provincial officers. This will contribute to mainstreaming climate resilience across the Solomon Islands, with the possibility to expand solutions and lessons learned to other Pacific islands. It is one of 69 LDCF SIDS projects which have contributed to the 354 climate resilience policies and plans created with support under the LDCF/SCCF window.

The "Sustainable Energy Access to Manage Water Resources: Addressing the Energy-water Nexus" project in Cabo Verde, with $1.8 million in GEF financing and $14.9 million in co-financing, tackles barriers to renewable energy (RE) and energy efficiency (EE) in water resource management. Early successes include training 20 trainers and 50 market enablers in the integration of RE and EE in water resource management; identifying 20 energy-water nexus investment projects to receive technical and financial support from the project; and publishing a decree law to regulate and incentivize the creation of Energy Service Companies.

Gender

Men and women in SIDS face the ever-constant threat of natural disasters, which increase their vulnerability and heightens the already existing gender inequalities between the most vulnerable groups. Women, in particular, are among the most affected groups in SIDS, having historically been ignored or silenced. In addition, gender inequalities manifest differently across SIDS regions, reflecting differences in countries' socio-economic and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, countries in SIDS have, to varying degrees, introduced or expanded gender-responsive policies, strategies, and programs in their climate change and environmental policies, empowering women and girls, and other marginalized groups. The GEF has supported the implementation of gender-responsive actions and worked to improve women's access to natural resources, as well as essential services such as water, energy, and financial mechanisms. Looking ahead, the GEF is seeking to adopt a more inclusive approach, integrating the voices of all marginalized groups, including women, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, the youth, and people with disabilities, among others.

I work mainly with the fisheries sector, working especially with artisanal fishers. I think that this group is probably on the forefront of climate change impact. In 2023, we saw the worst case of coral bleaching that we've seen, and we're still just about to start to assess the impact that it has had on reefs and, of course, then on fishers.

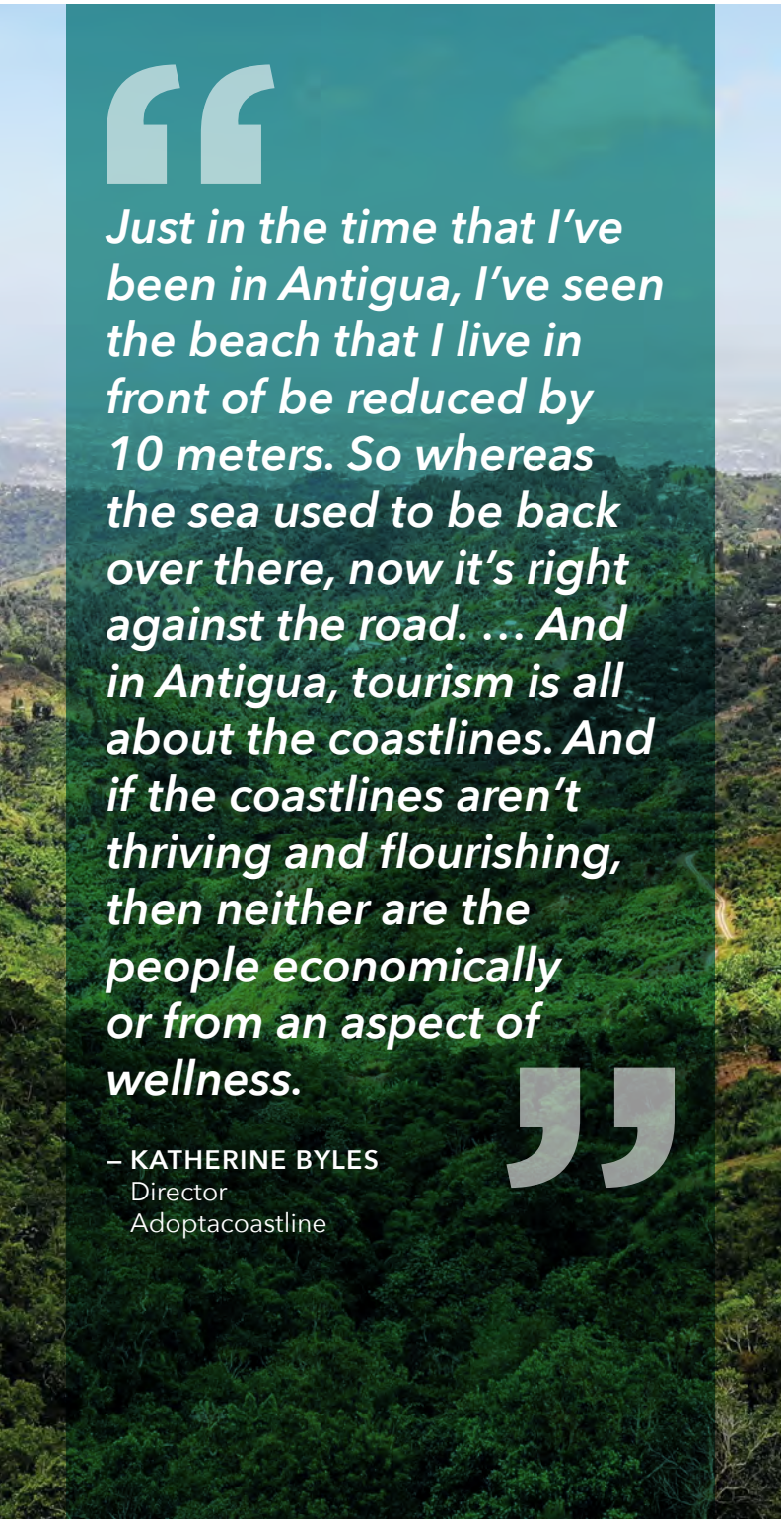
– INILEK WILMOT
Manager
Oracabessa Bay Fish Sanctuary

Resilient and Sustainable Fisheries

Many SIDS rely heavily on fisheries for food security, livelihoods, and exports, with fish exports making up nearly 60 percent of GDP in some countries[22] (e.g., Kiribati, Marshall Islands). However, due to unsustainable practices, the ecosystems supporting these sectors face numerous pressures both in the sea (e.g., overfishing, pollution, climate change) and on land (e.g., agricultural run-off and coastal urban development), leading to species and habitat loss and destruction of ecosystems, thereby threatening the resilience of the sector. Notably, climate change, which exacerbates these challenges, is projected to lead to significant changes in the productive capacity of the oceans, especially in the tropics where most SIDS are located, and even more so in the South Pacific.[23] Therefore, GEF projects prioritize enhancing resilience and reducing vulnerability of the natural resources which support fisheries in SIDS while reducing vulnerabilities and building capacity among fisherfolk and aquaculturists. During GEF-8, expected results include 2.1 million metric tons of marine fisheries moved to more sustainable levels and 36 shared water ecosystems being put under new or improved cooperative management.

For example, the "Climate Change Adaptation in the Eastern Caribbean Fisheries Sector" project with $5.5 million in GEF financing from the SCCF and $37.5 million in co-financing, pioneered climate change adaptation in the fisheries of seven Caribbean SIDS.[24] As a foundational initiative, the project facilitated the formulation and implementation of a large number of management plans for fisheries and aquaculture, including management plans for marine areas, conch, fish aggregating devices, and sargassum; established new standards, including on sargassum management and the translation of international safety at sea protocols into training materials; and provided crucial safety training and equipment for fisherfolk.

In the Pacific region, a series of GEF projects over the last 30 years have addressed oceanic fisheries challenges. For example, the "Pacific Islands Oceanic Fisheries Management Project," with $10.9 million in GEF financing and $79.1 million in co-financing, worked with 15 SIDS[25] to strengthen tuna fisheries management and enhance the environmental quality of the West Pacific Warm Pool. Prior to GEF interventions, the West/Central Pacific region was one of a few tropical oceanic areas where fishing by the world's highly industrialized tuna fleets had limited regulation. Lack of binding agreements governing cooperation in commercial fisheries at the regional level, and governance issues at the national level, needed to be addressed.[26] The project facilitated the the establishment and operation of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries (WCPF) Commission, supporting countries in ratifying the Convention for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the WCPF, and improving fisheries monitoring and data gathering capacity. In the long term, these efforts contributed to the sustainable management of economically important tuna fisheries, protected threatened species and habitats, and



empowered Pacific SIDS in negotiating fishing resource access within their EEZs. Continuing this momentum, recent GEF investments have focused on enhancing fisheries management in the West Pacific Warm Pool. For instance, the "Mainstreaming climate change and ecosystem-based approaches into the sustainable management of the living marine resources of the WCPFC" project, with $10 million in GEF financing and $93.2 million in co-financing, aims to mainstream ecosystem-based approaches and climate change adaptation into sustainable fish stock management in 14 SIDS.[27]

In addition, the recent Challenge Program for Adaptation Innovation is supporting innovative approaches to resilience such as insurance schemes for fisherfolk and coral reef protection. The Challenge Program catalyzes innovation and harnesses the power of private sector actors to enhance the impact of climate change adaptation, by testing and validating scalable and bankable investment models and technologies. In its first round, the Challenge Program supported "Public-Private Partnerships for Coral Reef Insurance in Asia and the Pacific," aiming to establish a sustainable financing mechanism and reef insurance product in Indonesia that would be extended to Fiji and the Solomon Islands. The Challenge Program also supported "Financial tools for small scale fishers in Melanesia," which aims to deploy financial products for climate resilience and adaptation in target communities of Fiji and Papua New Guinea, including short-term premium finance for community coverage for 'proof of concept.'

Resilient and Sustainable Tourism

Tourism is the largest economic sector for many SIDS, leveraging their unique natural and cultural environments. It contributes significantly to GDP, on average accounting for almost 30 percent, with this share over 50 percent for the Maldives, Seychelles, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Grenada[28]and representing 9 percent of overall exports of SIDS globally. However, the sector is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change such as sea-

level rise and climate induced weather events. In addition, unchecked growth of tourism can strain the social-environmental systems of SIDS,[29] leading to degradation of ecosystems and depletion of natural capital. At the same time, SIDS as a tourist destination in high demand is due primarily to their natural environments. The sector can in turn drive support for good environmental management as well as provide financial resources for the management of these resources.

The "Increasing Climate Change Resilience of Maldives through Adaptation in the Tourism Sector" project, with $1.7 million in GEF financing and $1.7 million in co-financing, has empowered tourism-associated communities to implement concrete adaptation projects, enhancing resilience to climate-related hazards, and trained tourism operators and government representatives on climate risk financing options in the Maldivian context. In Cabo Verde, the "Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into the Tourism Sector in Synergy with a Further Strengthened Protected Area System" project, with $3.7 million in GEF financing and $10 million in co-financing, has focused on habitat protection, ecotourism planning, and regulatory frameworks to integrate biodiversity into tourism. Notably, it succeeded in establishing management and ecotourism plans for nine protected areas and increased the designated protected areas in Cabo Verde by over 21,000 hectares.

Building on these successes, upcoming projects draw from lessons learned. For example, the "Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Change Mitigation in Sustainable Tourism Development in Cuba" project, with $3.6 million in GEF financing, will strengthen the institutional, regulatory, and financial-economic framework of the tourism sector in Cuba, while collaborating closely with the private sector to mainstream biodiversity conservation in their practices. Among other things, it will certify hotels with sustainable environmental and energy management systems and collaborate with hotels to find technological solutions for improving their energy performance.

Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture

SIDS have a long history of agriculture. This has included a mix of intensive commercial scale agriculture (such as sugar cane) as well as subsistence food production to meet domestic demand.[30] Today, high-value agricultural exports remain a critical economic activity for many SIDS,[31] making up an average of 23 percent of GDP in least developed SIDS and 7 percent of GDP in upper middle-income SIDS in 2015.[32] Agriculture has led to the degradation of landscapes and forest loss, driving more than 90 percent[33] of tropical deforestation worldwide. In parallel, this critical sector has high levels of exposure to the impacts of climate change, with a projected 25 percent productivity loss in the next 50–70 years if farmers do not adapt their practices.[34]

Even though SIDS have a long agricultural history, they import high quantities of food, with approximately half of SIDS now importing over 80 percent of their food. SIDS are taking action to enhance their food security by increasing local food production.[35] Through GEF investments, SIDS are taking steps to ensure the growth is sustainable and resilient by applying sustainable land management and regenerative and climate resilient agriculture approaches.

Projects such as the "Integrated Landscape Management for Addressing Land Degradation, Food Security and Climate Resilience Challenges in The Bahamas" with $5.7 million in GEF financing and $156.1 million in co-financing, and "Sustainable Food Systems and Integrated Land/Seascape Management in the Marshall Islands" with $2.1 million in GEF financing and $6.8 million in co-financing, and "Adapting to Climate Change and Enabling Sustainable Land Management through Productive Rural Communities in Timor-Leste" with $9.8 million in GEF financing and $25.3 million in co-financing, aim to improve food system management through regenerative agriculture and resilient green and blue food production systems. These projects have in common that they work with stakeholders all along the supply chains and across the

agricultural sector to achieve these results, an important lesson from previous projects. Hence, all three projects will work with policy makers to strengthen policy and governance for integrated climate-resilient environmental and agri-food system management; train farmers to apply to demonstrate sustainable land management, regenerative agriculture, and resilient green and blue food production systems; and work with eco-social business ventures and private sector buyers to incentivize and improve the market conditions for the uptake and replication of integrated environmental management and climate-resilient food production.

Protecting and Improving Landscapes and Seascapes

SIDS have a wide array of contrasting landscapes in a relatively small land area, a combination of factors that helps explain how SIDS support 12 percent of the global bird population and 10 percent of mammals in small land areas.[36] Additionally, SIDS are made up primarily of marine territories hosting a large part of the ocean's biodiversity, including nearly 20 percent of the world's coral reefs.[37]

However, 75 percent of all recorded extinctions occur on islands,[38] deforestation of mangrove forests (with SIDS holding 11 percent of the world's mangroves) is accelerating,[39] and as much as 70 percent of coral reefs worldwide are threatened.[40] Nonetheless, only 9.6 percent of Pacific SIDS' territorial waters, 4.8 percent of Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea SIDS' territorial waters and 2.5 percent of Caribbean SIDS' territorial waters are protected.[41]

Over the past three decades, the GEF has been at the forefront of supporting environmental leadership and fostering innovation in SIDS to conserve and enhance their landscapes and seascapes. Most recently, this work has focused on three objectives: improving conservation, sustainable use, and restoration of natural ecosystems; effectively implementing the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols; and increasing mobilization of domestic resources for biodiversity. Additionally, the GEF's focus has also been on ecosystem-based land management approaches that prioritize the connectivity of landscapes and seascapes, aiming to mitigate the drivers of environmental degradation within countries and across regions. For example, through GEF initiatives, SIDS are projected to protect an additional 91.4 million hectares of terrestrial areas and 117.9 million hectares of marine areas as well as improve management for biodiversity of an additional 501.1 million hectares. These approaches are in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework as agreed at CBD COP15. The GEF is also providing support for its implementation in SIDS through the GBFF.

A notable example has included the GEF's support to transformative institutions such as the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF). Following the commitment of several Caribbean SIDS to effectively protect 20 percent of their nearshore marine ecosystems by 2020, the GEF provided financing through four projects that supported the establishment of the CBF and national conservation trust funds in eight countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines). In particular, the "Sustainable Financing and Management of Eastern Caribbean Marine Ecosystems" project, with $8.8 million in GEF financing and $10.1 million in co-financing and five participating SIDS,[42] helped create and capitalize the CBF, which continues to play a key role in biodiversity conservation in the Caribbean today. These trust funds are now established national institutions that use revenue from an

So the big vision of the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund is a Caribbean region in which both the people and the environment thrive. And how do we go about that? ... One of the things that we've thought about a lot is making sure that this is not the traditional style of project funding that comes, gives us some money and then leaves. So the idea of the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund and the National Conservation Trust Funds that we've formed is to create opportunities for long term funding ideas, long term considerations of the principles of conservation and ones that are relevant to the countries themselves.

– KAREN MCDONALD GAYLE
Chief Executive Officer
Caribbean Biodiversity Fund

endowment and resources they raise from the private sector and others to fund priority conservation needs, such as funding additional park rangers, and community-based projects. Recognizing the importance of a healthy environment to their livelihoods, local contributors to national conservation funds have included government tourism enhancement funds, supermarkets, banks, and tourism operators. These organizations have also filled a key gap to channel hurricane recovery funds from donors to communities for rebuilding and recovery.

The GEF's support for combating land degradation through sustainable land management (SLM) has evolved over the years to address the need for an integrated approach that balances sustainable use of productive landscapes with maintaining livelihoods. Early investments in capacity building for SLM in SIDS have paved the way for targeted support in implementing land degradation neutrality targets, aligning with principles outlined by the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework. Additionally, there has been an enhanced focus on addressing drought, recognizing its significant impacts on landscapes and communities in SIDS. Through these approaches, GEF initiatives are projected to support SIDS in restoring an additional 4.6 million hectares of land.

Led by governments, civil society organizations, and local communities, GEF-funded projects have implemented best practices in ecosystem management, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable land use. Lessons learned from these initiatives have emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement. These collaborative efforts not only enhance environmental conservation and quality of life but also promote sustainable development by ensuring the equitable distribution of resources and benefits.

Landscapes and Biodiversity

A small land area makes the impact of poor land management and unsustainable use and management of terrestrial biodiversity even more present and urgent. Integrated approaches which address land degradation and terrestrial biodiversity challenges together with related issues such as invasive species management, habitat protection, and regenerative soil practices are crucial.

GEF-funded projects, such as the "LDC and SIDS Targeted Portfolio Approach for Capacity Development and Mainstreaming of Sustainable Land Management" umbrella project with $26.9 million in GEF financing and $31 million in co-financing, laid essential groundwork. It developed global and regional tools, guidelines, manuals, knowledge networks, and communities of practice, and achieved notable successes in countries. For example, in Mauritius, the project influenced the broader enabling environment towards a longer-term sustainable land

My organization is one of the beneficiaries of a GEF Small Grants Programme in Guyana. And through this project, we are able to ensure that persons with disabilities have food security and be able to have financial independence. Through this project, we are able to build six shade houses for different organizations for persons with disabilities that will generate income for that organization and provide employment and income for the members. And at the same time, we are providing tools and materials to 90 persons with disabilities to ensure that they can grow their own food at home, to have food security, and at the same time sell the surplus to generate income.

– GANESH SINGH
SGP Grantee

management perspective, and in Dominica, sustainable land management was mainstreamed into national development policies, plans, and regulatory frameworks. Building on this success, the "Caribbean SIDS Multi-country Soil Management Initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and Sustainable Food Systems (SOILCARE)" regional project with $8.2 million in GEF financing and $25.8 million in co-financing, involving eight SIDS,[43] further strengthens technical capacities for informed decision-making on integrated land management and is exploring the possibility of establishing a transformative fund mechanism to support the implementation of land degradation neutrality targets. Jointly supported with the SCCF and the GEF Trust Fund, the project contributes to the 160,300 hectares of land managed for climate resilience.

The GEF has also provided support to address invasive alien species (IAS) through numerous projects. In the Pacific, the GEF provided financing to the Secretariat of the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) to establish the Pacific Regional Invasive Species Management Support Service (PRISMSS) which provides support to all SPREP member countries to address IAS from prevention to eradication. PRISMSS provides a central resource to national governments through training, technical support, and matchmaking with partners. In addition, the "Strengthen National and Regional Capacities to Reduce the Impact of Invasive Alien Species on Globally Significant Biodiversity in the Pacific" project, ($6.3 million in GEF financing and $22.2 million in co-financing) supported the development of comprehensive IAS management frameworks for invasive species in four SIDS.[44] Successes have included: the eradication of invasive rodent species in the Marshall Islands; the largest rats eradication in the tropical Pacific (Late island, Tonga); an ongoing control program for the yellow crazy ant in Tuvalu; ongoing marine invasive species management in Niue; and ongoing weed control and restoration plans in all four participating countries. PRISMSS has also been working to gather the evidence base for how addressing IAS has climate change adaptation benefits, such as reducing storm water flows and improving reef health. Other donors have recognized the valuable role of PRISMSS ensuring that it will last well past the initial GEF project.

Ecological Restoration

Forests, covering more than 30 percent of the Earth's land surface, are vital for biodiversity and climate regulation and support 1.6 billion forest-dependent people. However, pollution and deforestation threaten the integrity of forest ecosystems, with less than two-thirds of tropical rainforests remaining intact, nearly half of them in a degraded state.[45]

As of 2021, eight of the world's top 12 most forested countries (defined as the share of forest area in total land area) are SIDS,[46] some part of globally significant forest biomes. As such, SIDS are utilizing GEF funds in protecting, restoring, and regenerating their forests, as well as managing forests ethically and sustainably. For example, the "Landscape Restoration for

Ecosystem Functionality and Climate Change Mitigation in the Republic of Sao Tomé e Príncipe" project, with $4.7 million in GEF financing and $16.7 million in co-financing, promotes the restoration and sustainable management of the forest ecosystems of Sao Tome and Principe to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation and stop and reverse forest and soil degradation. Early successes include the production of a National Forest and Landscape Restoration Plan, including landscape-specific plans for four landscapes covering approximately 38,000 hectares; eight nationally implemented public-private restoration projects under implementation; and as of 2023, over 5,000 hectares of agroforestry systems, 2,500 hectares of degraded secondary forests, and 82 hectares of mangroves restored.

Marine Ecosystems, Coastal Areas, and Reefs

Many SIDS are made up primarily of vast marine ecosystems, making marine conservation a top priority for GEF financing. Alongside projects that increase fisheries resilience and build capacity, numerous initiatives aim to sustainably manage and conserve these marine resources.

In the Caribbean, SIDS initiated the "Integrating Watershed and Coastal Area Management in the SIDS of the Caribbean" project as a pioneering effort. The project, with $13.8 million in GEF financing and $98.3 million in co-financing, aimed to mitigate the impacts from watersheds and coastal areas in 13 SIDS[47] on the marine environment. For example, the project implemented waste management activities in the Bahamas; helped mitigate the impacts of industrial wastes in the Dominican Republic; and introduced a coastal reforestation program in Trinidad and Tobago.

Subsequently, the successful $7 million ($47.6 million in co-financing) "Sustainable Management of the Shared Marine Resources of the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystems" and its $12.5 million ($13.4 million in co-financing)

Blended Finance Program and SIDS

The Blended Finance window has provided another opportunity for SIDS to access GEF funding for innovative initiatives.

With the Seychelles Blue Bond, the World Bank put together an innovative financing package that mobilized $15 million of private sector investment to support the ocean economy and helped the Seychelles' government save over $8 million in interest charges over 10 years. The proceeds will finance the sustainable transition of small-scale fisheries including the rebuilding of fish stocks, harvest control, and complement marine projects. The project is expected to generate 5 million hectares of sustainable-use marine protected areas.

In addition, the newly approved "Innovative use of financial instruments for Biodiversity Conservation and Restoration in Latin America and the Caribbean" project, seeks to establish a regional facility to support biodiversity conservation and restoration in line with the Global Biodiversity Framework in at least three countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. This blended finance structure offers an innovative solution to acute conservation challenges by combining credit enhancement from IDB and GEF guarantees with a powerful incentive for conservation efforts: The GEF guarantee can convert to a grant targeted at conservation efforts if certain conservation milestones are met. Reflows from the GEF non-grant investment are from the premium of the guarantee on a yearly basis ($1.7 million) and uncalled guarantees that do not have a convertibility event (up to $39 million, depending on different scenarios of meeting conservation commitments). The project is expected to improve management of 2.1 million hectares of terrestrial protected areas and 40.6 million hectares of marine protected areas, as well as restore 200,000 hectares of land and benefit 310,000 people (50 percent female). With GEF support, IDB will seek to replicate and scale up the successful debt for nature sovereign debt conversions of Barbados and Ecuador's Galápagos Islands.

Phase 2 extension fostered ecosystem-based management and an ecosystem approach to fisheries governance in 13 and 14 Caribbean SIDS[48] respectively, notably developing a regional planning framework to address transboundary issues as they relate to Living Marine Resources.

The regional "Pacific Islands Ridge-to-Reef National Priorities" or "Ridge to Reef" series of projects built on lessons learned from these and similar projects to provide an integrated approach to protecting biodiversity and ecosystem functions. In this integrated approach, marine management is combined with water, land, forest, and coastal management to ensure a country-wide transformation of the social-environmental system. More recent projects such as the "Coral Reef Rescue: Resilient Coral Reefs, Resilient Communities" project with two SIDS[49] out of a total of six countries, $7 million in GEF financing and $71.3 million in co-financing, focus more specifically on creating national climate refuge coral reef hubs. Together, these projects push transformational levers at all scales—local, national and regional—to ensure coherence.

In the Cook Islands, the recent "Enhancing biodiversity considerations and effective protected area management to safeguard the Cook Islands integrated ecosystems and species" project, with $3.5 million in GEF financing and $27.6 million in co-financing, aims to safeguard globally significant biodiversity and core ecosystem services through mainstreaming

environmental issues in key development sectors. This will support the country in managing its marine protected area, Marae Moana, which comprises its entire Exclusive Economic Zone (an area of 1.9 million square kilometers) and is one of the largest marine protected areas in the world. The project will help develop and implement a National Environment Information System and Island Environmental Management Plans in target protected areas, and will support the Cook Islands in establishing a new Rarotonga Cloud Forest protected area.

Ensuring a Livable Future

In addition to the interventions outlined above, the GEF has played a crucial role in supporting a livable and secure future for SIDS communities by tackling waste and pollution, expanding access to RE and EE systems and supporting sustainable urban development.

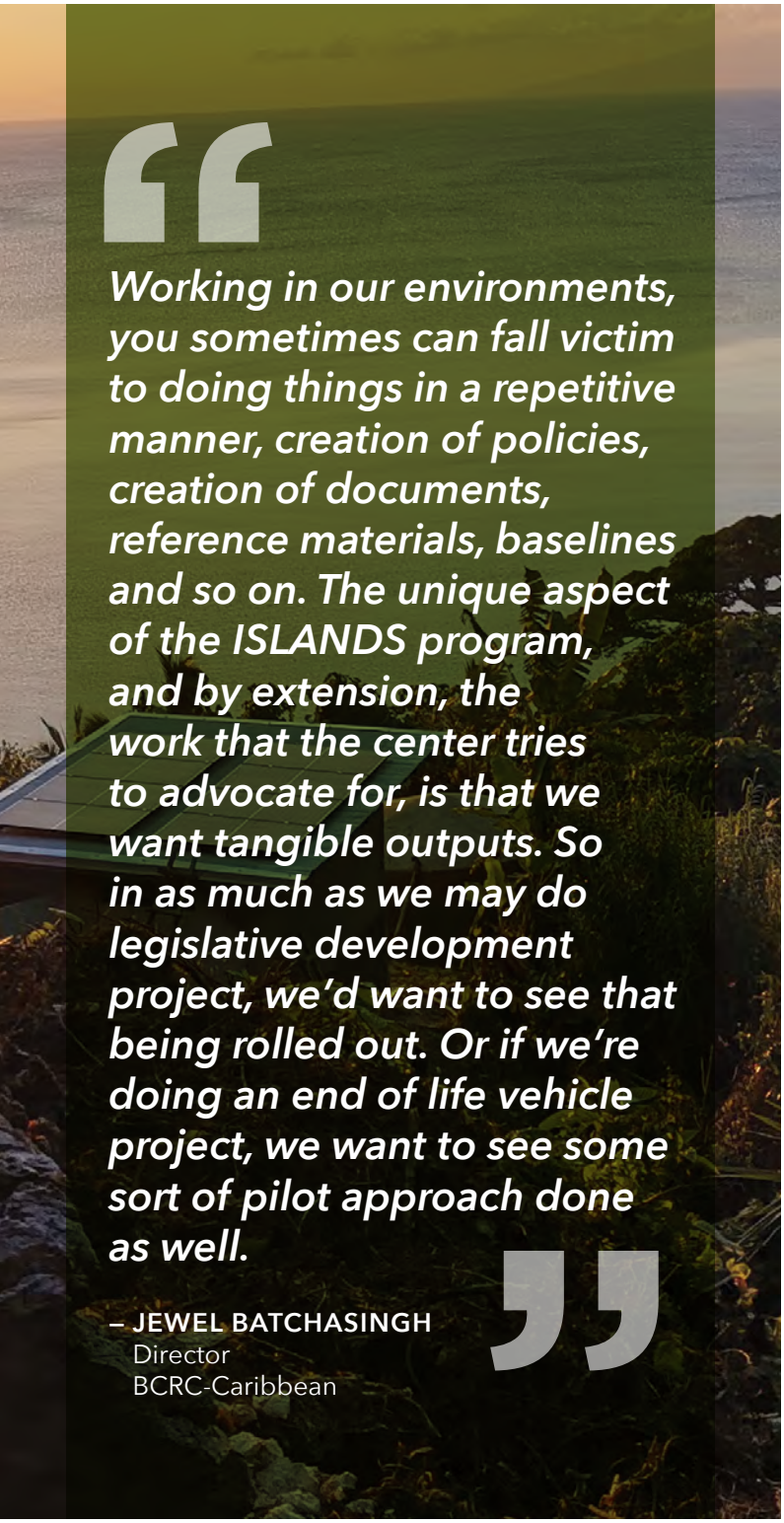
The limited size of SIDS poses challenges for waste management and pollution as impacts are disproportionately larger than for large countries. The GEF supports efforts to protect SIDS ecosystems and communities against hazardous chemicals, waste, and pollution through several regional and national projects to address sustainable management, elimination, and disposal of harmful chemicals and wastes and products that contain hazardous chemicals. These investments are expected to reduce 36.8 thousand metric tons of toxic chemicals and reduce and avoid 1,441.1 grams of toxic equivalent of POPs and over 2 million tons of plastic.

Sustainable and affordable energy supplies, which consist of RE development and EE promotion, are crucial to SIDS in their pathways to achieve SDG 7 and the Paris Climate Agreement. Based on this premise, the GEF supports projects and programs to facilitate increased access to RE and EE technologies as well as the development of green transportation systems to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality. All in all, GEF projects will support SIDS to mitigate 1,452.5 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e).

Sustainable urban development is another key focus area for the GEF in SIDS, as rapid urbanization in low-lying areas poses significant challenges to environmental sustainability and social equity. Roughly 26 percent of SIDS' land area is less than five meters above sea level and almost 30 percent of SIDS populations live in low-lying areas.[50] In some SIDS, such as in Maldives, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Cook Islands, and the Bahamas, these percentages can reach over 70 percent.[51] In many of these countries including Federated States of Micronesia and Solomon Islands, high sea levels and swells have already resulted in the displacement of people.[52] GEF projects promote integrated approaches to urban planning and development, emphasizing the importance of reducing environmental impact in SIDS. This has included prioritizing urban and community adaptation to climate change including investments in climate information and early warning systems to enhance preparedness to climate-related hazards. Investments in resilient infrastructure such as coastal protection measures and flood management systems help SIDS better withstand the adverse effects of sea-level rise, storm surges, and extreme weather events.

Protection Against Hazardous Chemicals and Waste

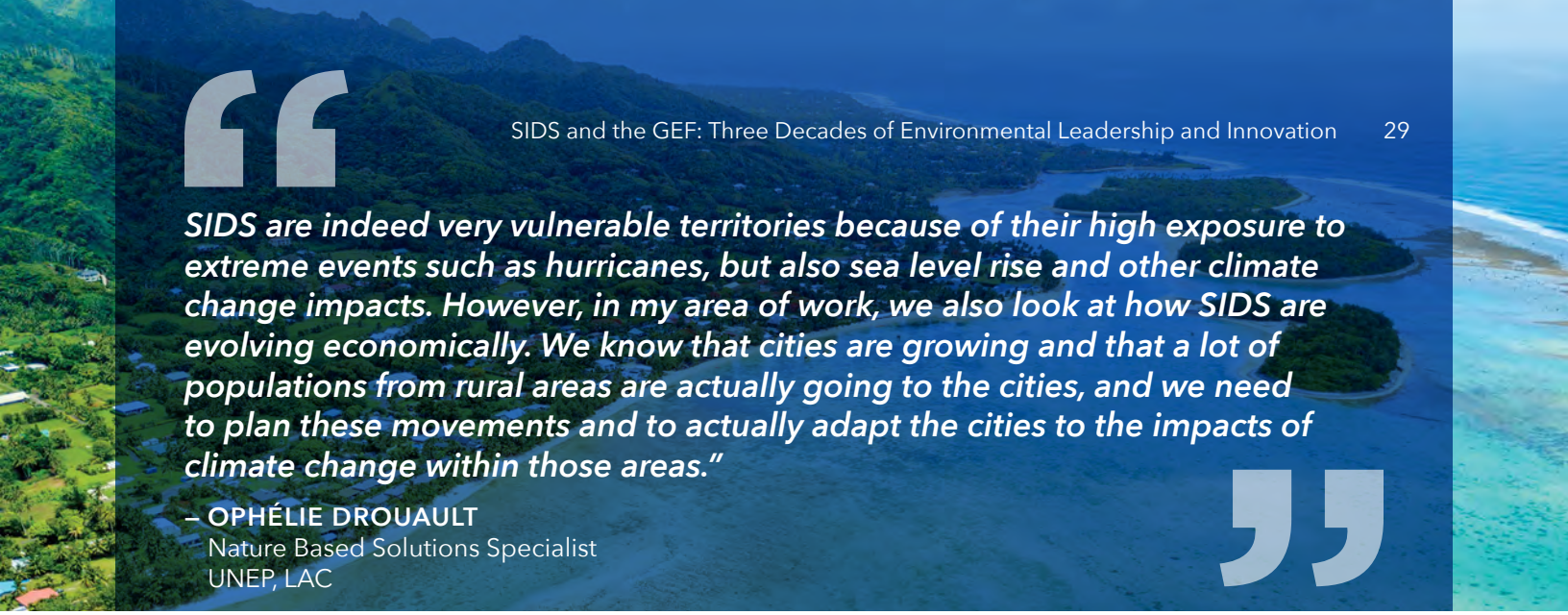
As import-dependent countries with limited landmasses and high population densities, SIDS tend to produce relatively large volumes of waste, including a wide variety of different types of hazardous and toxic wastes which SIDS do not have the capacity or treatment facilities to address. These wastes include waste produced by local populations, and from waste-intensive



economic sectors such as tourism, including both solid waste and wastewater. In a changing climate, these high volumes of waste create an increasingly precarious situation for already fragile ecosystems and vulnerable communities.

As the financial mechanism for the Stockholm Convention on POPs, the GEF has developed and implemented projects and programs to address these issues. For example, the "Development and Implementation of a Sustainable Management Mechanism for POPs in the Caribbean" project with $8.8 million in GEF financing and $21.1 million in co-financing, enables eight SIDS[53] in the Caribbean region to reduce and eliminate the threats of POPs. Successes include waste separation programs in Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Lucia and the implementation of sound waste management practices for key waste streams (e.g., medical waste, e-waste) in Belize and Suriname. The "CReW+: An Integrated Approach to Water and Wastewater Management Using Innovative Solutions and Promoting Financing Mechanisms in the Wider Caribbean Region" project with 12 SIDS out of a total of 18 countries[54] and $14.9 million in GEF financing and $150 million in co-financing, implements innovative technical small-scale solutions in the Wider Caribbean Region using an integrated water and wastewater management approach building on sustainable financing mechanisms.

At the same time, the "Implementing Sustainable Low- And Non-chemical Development in SIDS" (ISLANDS) program with $75 million in GEF financing and $440.2 million in co-financing, aims to prevent chemical accumulation in 36 SIDS[55] worldwide by managing existing chemicals safely, closing material loops, and reforming supply chains. It is eliminating hazardous substances like obsolete pesticides and PCBs while establishing circular waste systems for e-waste and plastics. Public-private partnerships, such as in Cuba with Iberostar Group and in the Dominican Republic with Carnival Cruise Line, are streamlining waste processing, while in the Pacific a collaboration with Swire Shipping is facilitating the transport of end-of-life vehicles to



SIDS are indeed very vulnerable territories because of their high exposure to extreme events such as hurricanes, but also sea level rise and other climate change impacts. However, in my area of work, we also look at how SIDS are evolving economically. We know that cities are growing and that a lot of populations from rural areas are actually going to the cities, and we need to plan these movements and to actually adapt the cities to the impacts of climate change within those areas."

– OPHÉLIE DROUAULT
Nature Based Solutions Specialist
UNEP, LAC

regional facilities for processing. An accompanying Caribbean incubator facility is financing the strengthening of policy and financial frameworks and channeling financing to SIDS' private and public sectors.

Decarbonized Power Systems and Zero-emissions Mobility

Most SIDS possess ample renewable energy potential from wind, solar, marine, and other endemic resources. Tapping into these opportunities, including the modernization of the energy sector and other climate mitigation measures, not only support sustainable development in SIDS, but also resilient development. For instance, reducing SIDS' dependence on expensive imported fuel would enhance economic resilience[56] by saving foreign exchange and reducing exposure to global fuel supply disruptions. Renewable energy could also lower water demand and more decentralized energy generation could help to localize and buffer disruptions from extreme weather events.[57]

Small energy systems make island grids good candidates to demonstrate the shift in power generation from fossil fuels to indigenous energy sources. The transition to cleaner, more efficient power sources, such as renewable energy, reduces dependency on imported fossil fuels, increases access to affordable and reliable electricity, and supports climate change mitigation by reducing carbon dioxide emissions, while promoting more resilient power systems. Through GEF investments, SIDS have been able to expand access to, and outlay of, renewable energy technologies to accelerate energy efficiency adoption and the introduction of electric mobility through capacity-building and electric vehicle demonstration.

In Jamaica, the "Deployment of Renewable Energy and Improvement of Energy Efficiency in the Public Sector" project with $1.3 million in GEF financing and $10.7 million in co-financing, trained more than 30 solar photovoltaic technicians, helped to establish standards for post-secondary education programs on sustainable energy, assisted in the development of the national guidelines for solar photovoltaic operations and maintenance, and commissioned investment-grade energy audits and rooftop solar photovoltaic systems for health care facilities. Similarly, the "Strategic Program to Promote Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Investments in the Electricity Sector of Sao Tome and Principe" project with $1.6 million in GEF financing and $23.4 million in co-financing, is developing national renewable energy and energy efficiency action plans and minimum energy performance standards for the Atlantic Ocean SIDS.

In terms of green public transportation, projects under the "Global Program to Support Countries with the Shift to Electric Mobility," which has projects in Antigua and Barbuda ($3.2 million in GEF financing) and Seychelles ($424,000 in GEF financing) have had encouraging starts, such as trainings on e-bus projects and commencing the development of a Technology and Infrastructure Plan in Seychelles. The potential success of these projects is strengthened by their linkages to broader modernization programs targeting sectors such as public transport provision and large fleet management, as well as GEF waste management projects for SIDS that tackle end-of-life vehicles. Additional countries included in this

program are Grenada, Jamaica, Maldives, and St Lucia, with the latter planning to develop electric mobility policies, business models, and finance schemes, including the implementation of electric mobility programs as part of an overall shift to sustainable, low carbon transport sector.

Urban and Community Adaptation

Urbanization in SIDS is in line with the global urbanizing trend, with over 60 percent of the population of SIDS globally already living in urban areas. This poses a development and adaptation challenge, as SIDS' urban areas are among the most exposed to the effects of climate change worldwide.[58] Characteristics that make SIDS cities and urban populations particularly vulnerable to climate change include the dominance of a single urban center in most SIDS, or 'the primary of capitals' (a distinct feature of SIDS), and the fact that the infrastructure base that supports vital socioeconomic sectors of island economies (e.g., seaports, airports, public service facilities, tourism infrastructure) tend to occupy low-elevation coastal locations.

Despite these concerns, SIDS—and in particular their cities—also possess numerous sustainable development opportunities and adaptation opportunities. Adaptation measures include planting trees and food forests, improving water catchment, and implementing more robust early warning systems for extreme weather events.

Under the project "Building Climate Resilience of Urban Systems through Ecosystem-Based Adaptation in Latin America and the Caribbean," with $6 million in GEF financing and $29.7 million in co-financing, Jamaica planted nearly 10,000 trees and seedlings for the rehabilitation of the upper watershed of Kingston, restored 2 hectares of wetland in Port Royal, and distributed 466 fruit

Engaging the private sector as agents of transformation

The GEF's support for private sector engagement builds on a strong track record of successful partnerships in SIDS and seeks to bring the private sector strengths of innovation, financial capacity, and market connectivity to build the scale and durability needed for successful SIDS projects.

Through its private sector engagement strategy, the GEF works with multistakeholder platforms that bring together key SIDS actors (government, local leaders, citizens, investors, IPLCs, and CSOs) with all scales and types of private sector actors relevant to SIDS economies to deliver enduring social, economic, and environmental benefits.

trees to schools and communities, as well as 219 bee colonies along with equipment and training. Under the SCCF-funded "Pacific Resilience Program" with $5.5 million in GEF financing and $40.2 million in co-financing, Tonga completed and made operational two Emergency Operation Centers; precipitated work on a Multi-hazard Early Warning Center in the capital of Nuku'alofa; and reconstructed, retrofitted, and updated 43 classroom buildings across 25 school sites to enhance climate resilient standards and increase access to water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities. This project contributes to the 30,800 people LDCF/SCCF-funded projects plan to train on resilience across LDCs and SIDS worldwide.

Integrated Approach Programming

Throughout the 30-year history of SIDS and the GEF working together to tackle complex challenges related to environmental degradation and climate adaptation, the need for integrated solutions has become increasingly clear. As a result, SIDS are currently included in many of the GEF's global Integrated Programs (IPs) with one solely dedicated to the SIDS—the Blue and Green Islands Integrated Program.

The Blue and Green Islands IP, which includes 15 SIDS, aims to facilitate nature-positive development and reduce ecosystem degradation in SIDS by valuing nature and applying nature-based solutions with specific application to the food, tourism, and urban sectors. First, it will integrate the value of nature into fiscal planning and policies of key economic sectors, to strengthen policy coherence and domestic resource mobilization for nature and climate integrated development. Second, it will apply nature-based solutions at scale in the food, tourism, and urban sectors, following the successful 'ridge to reef' and 'whole of island' approaches developed in previous and concurrent projects. To achieve these two goals, the program will leverage a robust network of partners and stakeholders across participating countries, including government ministries, civil society, and the private sector, alongside sub-regional SIDS organizations.

The Amazon, Congo, and Critical Forest Biomes IP, which includes SIDS such as Guyana, Suriname, Papua New Guinea, Guinea Bissau, and Sao Tome and Principe, also aims to increase protection of intact forests and improve management of forest landscapes for sustainable livelihoods. In tandem, the countries aim to improve regional collaboration to protect and sustainably manage their shared natural heritage. These efforts will serve to maintain the integrity of intact tropical forest landscapes in SIDS and larger biomes of which they are a part, such as the Amazon and Indo-Malayan forests. This builds on previous investments in these countries through earlier phases of the program as well as national projects.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the Eliminating Hazardous Chemicals from Supply Chains IP supports transformation of the annual Carnival celebration, which is deeply woven into the economy and culture of the country. The project supports circular and sustainable interventions to support the environmental impacts of the fashion sector as related to Carnival.

Other IPs will support the Cook Islands and the Dominican Republic to transition towards a circular economy for plastics;[59] Grenada, Maldives, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago to curb coastal pollution from agricultural, industrial, and municipal sources;[60] Haiti and Sao Tome and Principe to restore degraded ecosystems;[61] Solomon Islands, Grenada, and Nauru to support the transformation of food systems;[62] Mauritius and Trinidad and Tobago to strengthen institutions and catalyze investments for accelerated nature-positive, net-zero pathways.[63]

Looking Ahead: Resilient and Sustainable Economies for the Future

As we move into the post SAMOA Pathway era, the GEF continues to recognize SIDS as a special case for sustainable development given their unique vulnerabilities.

The GEF will continue to enable SIDS to deliver on their global commitments with a view to fostering environmental protection and planetary sustainability, building resilient economies and ensuring a secure future. As the past 30 years have shown, SIDS demonstrate the potential to innovate and lead on interventions and initiatives to safeguard their environment. With the *Healthy Planet Healthy People Framework* as a premise, the GEF will continue to provide support to SIDS to advance integrated approaches, which recognize the interdependency of people and nature.

Just as SIDS challenges are interconnected, so too solutions must be integrated to ensure that root problems are tackled and to avoid burden shifting. As a result of integrated financing, SIDS could bolster the transition towards blue-green economies, enhance food security through sustainable management of marine resources, improve freshwater resource management, and strengthen infrastructure resilience against external shocks.

Building on previous lessons and scaling existing initiatives, there are opportunities to expand on and explore a range of initiatives such as new sustainable tourism models, aim for environments free from pollution with an end to landfills, further embed the use of valuation for decision making and expand usage of natural capital accounting, and work more broadly on ocean health looking at ridge to reef and beyond.

Overall, the integrated achievement of SDGs and multilateral environmental agreements holds the promise of a more secure and sustainable future for SIDS, safeguarding their unique environments and ensuring their long-term prosperity.

Acronyms

AIS	Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction
BGI (Project)	Blue and Green Islands
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBF	Caribbean Biodiversity Fund
CBIT	Capacity building Initiative for Transparency
CLME	Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EE	Energy Efficiency
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GBFF	Global Biodiversity Framework Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IP	Integrated Program
IWCAM (Project)	Integrating Watershed and Coastal Area Management in the Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean
ISLANDS (Project)	Implementing Sustainable Low- And Non-chemical Development in SIDS
LDC	Least Developed Country
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
LME	Large Marine Ecosystem
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
NPIF	Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund
PCB	Polychlorinated biphenyl
PNG	Papua New Guinea
POP	Persistent Organic Pollutants
RE	Renewable Energy
SAMOA (Pathway)	Small Island Developing State Accelerated Modalities of Action
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGP	GEF Small Grants Programme
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WCPF	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries
WCPFC	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

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