

## A 'SAMOA PATHWAY' TOWARDS EMPOWERING AND FULFILLING THE RIGHTS OF ALL CHILDREN

*UNICEF Contribution to the 2014 Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States*

**"We, the delegates from the three SIDS regions representing the voices of young people from SIDS have a vision: A self-sustaining, climate resilient, peaceful, healthy, inclusive, democratic and transparent society where all young people are empowered as equal partners in global efforts for sustainable development....If the leaders of today, partner with the leaders of tomorrow, we can ensure harmony in achieving sustainable development."**

*– Statement by the Major Group of Children and Youth to the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Inter-Regional Preparatory Meeting in Preparation for the Third International Conference on SIDS, Samoa-2014; Barbados, August, 27th 2013*

*Children are both the makers and the markers of healthy, sustainable societies. They are also the "canary in the coalmine" -- the earliest warning we get when things are going very wrong. They are the first to suffer the adult sins of omission (neglect of their needs) and commission (violence and other violations of their rights) and are often quick to show the effects. Children's nutrition, health, safety, education and other rights are inextricably linked to future economic growth and shared prosperity, to a safe and protected natural environment and to more stable societies. Simply put, if the world does not invest in the rights, empowerment and well-being of people -- starting when they are born -- any efforts in trying to achieve the future Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be futile.*

*The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is a key occasion for securing a better future and advancing sustainable development, and it is an important milestone in the Post2015 Development Agenda/SDGs process. UNICEF has a long-term and firm commitment in supporting SIDS to achieve the aspirations articulated in the (2014) *SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway* as well as the (1994) *Barbados Plan of Action (BPOA)*; the (2005) *Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI)*. Further, UNICEF's commitment to SIDS has already been translated into specific support. For example, *A Promise Renewed*, UNICEF's joint initiative with governments to end preventable child and maternal deaths, has been signed by 14 Pacific Island Countries (PICs) in 2012 and four studies on addressing child health bottlenecks provided key evidence at the Pacific Health Ministers' annual meeting, leading to commitments in the meeting resolution to reduce maternal and child mortality. In the Eastern Caribbean, with UNICEF's support, progress on enabling environments for children include: (i) St Lucia approving its National Early Child Development Policy, (ii) St. Kitts and Nevis approving three Children's Bills and launching its national Social Protection Strategy, and (iii) Grenada launching its Child Protection Authority and its national Social Protection Policy.*

*The SAMOA Pathway recognizes the importance of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other international instruments" and governments' responsibilities to "respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all." Fulfilling the rights of children, as outlined in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, is not only essential for the children for which they are intended, but are the critical foundation for achieving robust, equitable and sustainable progress in the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development. As we celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the CRC this November and look forward to the adopting of a Post-2015 Development*

Agenda next year, it is important to reflect on and recognize that the sustainability, progress and very existence of our future societies on a healthy planet rests on having children and young people that are healthy, well-educated, protected and empowered, so that they can best *meet the challenges* and *harness the opportunities* of today and the future.

#### Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

SIDS are at the very front line of countries that will most rapidly and severely feel the effects of climate change. In the most extreme cases, some islands are preparing for the reality of a partial or full evacuation of their homeland as it is taken over by a rising sea-level. Meanwhile, all SIDS are grappling with issues such as loss of biodiversity, deforestation, limited and often deteriorating access to clean fresh water and increasingly severe weather events and natural disasters. The dire consequences of ocean acidification loom large on the horizon.

The children of today and tomorrow will be the ones who are actually living in this new reality. There must be a clear and central focus on ensuring that they are able to survive and thrive, and that they are a part of whatever “adaptation” plans are devised and implemented.

Children are also the most vulnerable population to an unstable climate because they are physiologically and metabolically less able than adults to adapt to heat and other climate-related exposures; demand adequate nutrition for cognitive and physical development and are often dependent on adults for their safety during extreme weather events.

By 2020, it is estimated that 175 million children are likely to be affected every year by the kinds of disasters brought about by climate change.<sup>1</sup> Trauma and displacement brought on by disasters can result in children being out-of school and at increased risk for exploitation, trafficking or being victims of violence. Furthermore, it is often the poorest children and families who are living in the areas that are most prone to hazardous climate conditions or in housing not built to withstand the effects of extreme weather. A focus on building the resilience of the most vulnerable, especially children and young people, must be prioritised.

The *Samoa Pathway* calls for a number of actions to be taken on climate change and disaster risk reduction including the need for “long-term climate finance” and implementing “the Hyogo Framework for Action and work[ing] for an ambitious renewed international framework for disaster risk reduction post 2015 that builds on previous achievements, prioritizes prevention and mitigation, and incorporates implementation frameworks to address implementation gaps if and when they exist.” UNICEF believes that a strong global climate agreement in Paris next year, capable of both safeguarding the future for SIDS and supporting their development is essential, especially for children and young people living in SIDS today and future generations.

#### Child Poverty, Education and Youth Employment

While poverty is a frequent focus of development debates, too rarely do we focus on the issues of *child poverty*. Children not only find themselves overrepresented among the poor, but poverty in childhood has particularly devastating effects, often resulting in deficits that cannot be later overcome, and with consequences across generations. Put another way, for a child, poverty can last a lifetime and beyond, first becoming adult poverty and then being passed to the next generation of children.

It is vital that the new development agenda includes an explicit focus on child poverty. Further, for a number of SIDS countries looking at income poverty alone may mask the full dimensions of poverty that

children experience. As such new poverty goals should allow for the measurement of the multidimensional poverty children experience.

A crucial area in breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty is education. While *access* to education was a primary concern of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), providing *quality* education, improving *learning outcomes* and equipping children with the *knowledge and skills necessary to find employment* must be the additional focus of the new SDGs.

Because many SIDS are geographically and economically isolated, it is particularly important that children and young people growing up in SIDS are acquiring quality education and skills that will allow them to successfully compete both domestically and internationally. In the *Major Group of Children and Youth's Statement* at the Barbados Preparatory Meeting, youth participants highlighted the need to revamp "the school core curriculum such that it targets 100% Education for Sustainable Development which includes elements of environmental education, self-development and leadership, entrepreneurship and social business, experiential learning, community values, inter-culturalism, and vocational training."

The *Samoa Pathway* as well as the *Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Education Strategy* highlight the need to "provide high quality education" and "increase investment in education, training and skills development for all, including vocational training" so that "all people have the necessary skills and can take advantage of employment opportunities to lead productive lives." With nearly 40% of the world's unemployed being youth<sup>2</sup>, and 75 million youth worldwide looking for work<sup>3</sup> this is an acutely pressing issue for young people, including those living in SIDS, today. UNICEF also believes that the importance of *early childhood education* is a key foundation for setting children on a path for better learning. Additionally, education must be *inclusive*, especially of girls, children with disabilities, indigenous children and other children that have historically been marginalized or excluded from educational opportunities.

#### Violence, Exploitation and Abuse of Children

The MDGs were silent on the issues of violence, exploitation and abuse of children. The fundamental right to live free from fear must be a cornerstone of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and expressed through explicit goals and targets. The emotional and physical consequences of violence, exploitation and abuse manifest in a host of ways, including poor mental and physical health, temporary or permanent disabilities, poor performance in school and increased risk of drug and alcohol abuse. In turn, the effects of violence reverberate far beyond the physical and emotional scars left on the individuals who experience it, with devastating effects for societies and across all dimensions of development.

Violence, particularly against children and women, is a major issue in many SIDS. For example, an estimated 6 in 10 Pacific women have experienced gender-based violence<sup>4</sup>, some of the highest reported rates in the world. Approximately 70 percent of adults in Pacific Island Countries (PICs) admit to using violent punishment on children at home.<sup>5</sup> Tackling the issue of violence perpetrated against children and women will be essential for the development progress of SIDS. The 2012 *Bridgetown Declaration* and the *Break the Silence on Child Sexual Abuse* campaigns in the Eastern Caribbean area from Trinidad and Tobago to the Turks and Caicos Islands are encouraging signs that the issue is beginning to get the attention at the highest levels of government.

The *Samoa Pathway* particularly recognizes the need to “ensure peaceful societies and safe communities” and how the problems of “gang and youth violence,” “trafficking in persons” and “violence against women and girls” – among others – negatively impact SIDS’ development and, therefore, must be addressed. UNICEF believes that a specific target on eliminating abuse, exploitation and all forms of violence against all children – *both boys and girls* – must be a specific target and focus of the Post-2015 Agenda, including through monitoring the incidence of violent injuries as well as deaths.

#### Health, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Nutrition

Improving the health, nutrition and overall well-being of children and young people is a primary concern for SIDS, including reducing child and maternal mortality, NCDs and stunting and other forms of malnutrition.

NCDs are a significant concern for SIDS and many SIDS are monitoring NCDs as part of their localization of the MDGs’ global framework. Children are particularly vulnerable to NCDs because their bodies and brains are still developing, especially in the first 1000 days of life. There is increasing incidence of obesity in children, especially adolescents, putting them at risk for diabetes. Pregnant women with diabetes or hypertension are in a high risk childbirth group. There is a clear and strong link between environmental pollution and increased incidence of NCDs, such as chronic respiratory diseases. Children are more vulnerable to air pollutants than adults because they take in more air in relation to their body weight; experience greater exposure to ground level contaminants due to height and behaviour; and have immature immune systems and metabolic functions to help them detoxify exposure to allergens and toxins.<sup>6</sup>

Malnutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and stunting are also critical issues for children in many SIDS. Many islands are not able to domestically produce diverse food sources and importation of diverse and nutritious food can be expensive, making the poorest children particularly vulnerable to malnutrition – whether that be undernutrition or obesity. Threats to SIDS’ fresh water sources serve to exacerbate the problem as children with chronic and severe diarrhoea (caused by lack of access to clean fresh water) cannot absorb the critical nutrients they need from the food they consume, resulting in malnutrition, stunting or death.

Comparatively speaking, the prevalence of HIV is low in many SIDS, for example in Pacific Island Countries. With a sustained focus on access to information and proper investment in HIV interventions, policies, and systems, there is the historic opportunity to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and AIDS-related deaths among children in many SIDS. This must be pursued as part of the new SDGs.

The *Samoa Pathway* recognizes the need for “strengthening of health systems, promoting effective implementation of universal health coverage, the distribution of medical and drug supplies, education and public awareness, and incentivising people to lead healthier lives through healthy diet, nutrition, sports and education.” UNICEF believes that the issues of health, nutrition and water and sanitation are essential elements for the Post-2015 Agenda and supports the expression of these issues as “headline” goals in both the *Open Working Group on SDGs Final Report* and the *SAMOA Pathway*. Focusing on reducing inequalities and reaching the hardest-to-reach will be particularly important for achieving equitable progress and ensuring that no one is left behind.

### Conclusion

The challenges faced by SIDS must be boldly and strongly addressed in the new global development agenda. UNICEF's core mandate, as enshrined in our Mission Statement is "ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children - victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation and those with disabilities." The children and young people of SIDS face some unique and particular vulnerabilities, today and in the future. A key strategy to achieving progress for children living in SIDS in the Post-2015 era is allocation of resources – financial, managerial, planning and organizational – to prioritize the rights of children. This should also be informed by *evidence*, with more collection, analysis and use of data that can be disaggregated by sex, age, race, ethnicity, income, location, disability, and other grounds most relevant to specific countries and contexts. All partners – including governments, international development institutions, businesses and civil society – will need to work together and commit resources to national institutions to ensure that all children and young people living in SIDS have the opportunity for a brighter future.

<sup>1</sup> Save the Children (2006) "Legacy of Disasters: The impact of climate change on children", [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/legacy-of-disasters\\_1.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/legacy-of-disasters_1.pdf)<sup>2</sup> ILO

(2012) "Working with youth: Addressing the youth employment challenge"

[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---ed\\_emp\\_msu/documents/publication/wcms\\_181907.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ed_emp_msu/documents/publication/wcms_181907.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> ILO (2012) "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2012", [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_180976.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_180976.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *Post-2015 Pacific Consultation Outcomes Document*, organized by UNDP, ESCAP, ADB and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat; 10-12 October 2012, Nadi, Fiji.

<sup>5</sup> *UNICEF Pacific Talking Points and Briefing Notes for SIDS Meeting*, Apia, Samoa, 25 August-5 September 2014

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF (2013) "Sustainable Development Starts with Safe, Healthy and Well-Educated Children" [http://www.unicef.org/post2015/files/SD\\_children\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/post2015/files/SD_children_FINAL.pdf)

# Small Island Developing States

## Data & Analytics Section, DRP, UNICEF

### 28 August 2014

Source: SOWC 2014 Statistical Tables

Country	Population (thousands) 2012		Under-5 mortality rate (U5MR) (per 1,000 live births)		Neonatal mortality rate (death within first 28 days)		Stunting (%) moderate and severe		Immunization coverage (%) DPT3		Primary school participation Net enrolment ratio (%)		Birth registration (%)		Use of improved sanitation facilities (%)	
	under 18	under 5	1990	2012	2012	2012	2008-2012*	2012	2008-2011*	2005-2012*	2012	male	female	total	2012	2012
<b>UN Members (38)</b>																
1 Antigua and Barbuda	27	7	24	10	6	85	98	87	85	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2 Bahamas	100	29	23	17	8	—	98	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	92
3 Barbados	65	18	18	10	10	—	87	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4 Belize	132	38	43	18	9	19	98	—	—	95	—	—	—	95	—	91
5 Cape Verde	183	49	62	22	10	—	90	95	92	91	—	—	—	65	—	65
6 Comoros*	346	115	124	78	31	30	86	—	—	88	x	—	—	—	—	—
7 Cuba	2,298	532	13	6	3	—	96	98	98	100	y	—	—	93	—	93
8 Dominica	22	6	17	13	9	—	97	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
9 Dominican Republic	3,725	1,063	60	27	15	10 x	85	93	91	82	—	—	—	82	—	82
10 Fiji	300	91	31	22	10	—	99	—	—	—	—	—	—	87	—	87
11 Grenada	35	10	22	14	7	—	97	96	99	—	—	—	—	98	—	98
12 Guinea-Bissau*	801	265	206	129	46	32	80	77	73	24	—	—	—	20	—	20
13 Guyana	340	89	60	35	19	18	97	81	85	88	—	—	—	84	—	84
14 Haiti*	4,262	1,250	144	76	25	22	60	—	—	80	—	—	—	24	—	24
15 Jamaica	947	254	30	17	11	5	99	83	81	98	—	—	—	80	—	80
16 Kiribati*	39	11	94	60	22	—	94	—	—	94	—	—	—	40	—	40
17 Maldives	120	36	94	11	6	19	99	94	95	93	—	—	—	99	—	99
18 Marshall Islands	19	5	49	38	16	—	80	—	—	96	—	—	—	76	—	76
19 Federated States of Micronesia	45	12	55	39	16	—	81	—	—	—	—	—	—	57	—	57
20 Mauritius	307	70	23	15	9	—	98	—	—	—	—	—	—	91	—	91
21 Nauru	4	1	58	37	21	24 x	79	—	—	83	—	—	—	66	—	66
22 Palau	7	2	34	21	10	—	89	—	—	—	—	—	—	100	—	100
23 Papua New Guinea	3,218	982	89	63	24	44 x	63	—	—	—	—	—	—	19	—	19
24 Samoa	84	25	30	18	7	—	92	91	96	48	—	—	—	92	—	92
25 São Tomé and Príncipe*	90	31	104	53	20	29	96	—	—	75	—	—	—	34	—	34
26 Singapore	1,094	269	8	3	1	4 x	96	—	—	—	—	—	—	100	—	100
27 St. Kitts and Nevis	17	5	29	9	7	—	97	86	89	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
28 St. Lucia	54	14	22	18	10	—	98	88	88	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
29 St. Vincent and the Grenadines	34	9	25	23	15	—	96	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
30 Seychelles	25	7	17	13	8	—	98	—	—	—	—	—	—	97	—	97
31 Solomon Islands*	268	82	39	31	14	33 x	90	88	87	—	—	—	—	29	—	29
32 Suriname	177	46	51	21	12	9	84	92	93	99	—	—	—	80	—	80
33 Timor-Leste*	611	180	171	57	24	58	67	91	91	55	—	—	—	39	—	39
34 Tonga	46	14	23	13	7	—	95	—	—	—	—	—	—	91	—	91
35 Trinidad and Tobago	330	97	33	21	15	—	92	98	97	97	—	—	—	92	—	92
36 Tuvalu*	4	1	58	30	13	10 x	97	—	—	50	—	—	—	83	—	83

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	2012	2012	1990	2012	2012	2012	2008-2012*	2012	2012	2008-2011*	male	female	2005-2012*	total	2012	2012
37 Vanuatu*	108	35	35	18	9	26	x	68	-	-	-	-	43	-	58	-





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	under 18	under 5						male	female		

#### Notes

- Data not available.
- x Data refer to years or periods other than
- y Data differ from the standard definition or refer to only part of a country. If they fall within the noted reference period, such data are included in the calculation of regional and global averages.
- \* Data refer to the most recent year available during the period specified in the column heading.
- \*\* Excludes China.

<sup>g</sup> Regional averages for underweight (moderate and severe), stunting (moderate and severe), wasting (moderate and severe) and overweight (moderate and severe) are estimated using statistical modeling of data from the UNICEF-WHO-World Bank Joint Global Nutrition Database, 2012 revision (completed July 2013). The severe underweight indicator was not included in this exercise; regional averages for this indicator are based on a population-weighted average calculated by UNICEF.